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# Introduction

This handbook is designed for field students, field instructors, and the University of Detroit Mercy Social Work faculty. In addition, it may be helpful to prospective social work majors who want to learn more about the program and field instruction.

## About the Department of Social Work

University of Detroit and Mercy College of Detroit legally merged in 1991. Both institutions had a longstanding commitment to meet the needs of the poor and to address social injustice in the midst of providing a high-quality educational experience. The University of Detroit's Social Work program was first accredited by the Council on Social Work Education in 1976. Mercy College of Detroit was accredited in 1980. The combined program has continued the tradition of its accreditation by the Council on Social Work Education.

### [Program Goals](#)

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and conceptual frameworks, and given assignments consistent with the goals and objectives for fieldwork.

### Roles and Responsibilities of Field Instruction

The following explanation is meant to clarify the meaning of terms used by the Department of Social Work, referring to the roles of faculty liaison and field instructor, and field placement coordinator. The following role descriptions are offered for clarification: The Faculty Field Liaison and the Field Instructor are two roles related to a student's field placement (or internship, as the field placement is called in some agencies/schools). These roles are distinguished from an academic advisor as noted.

#### Faculty Field Liaison

The Faculty Field Liaison is a full-time or part-time faculty member in the Department who

a task supervisor, an agency employee who works directly in the program area where a student is placed and assists the student with tasks related to their assignments in field education. They also report to the Field Instructor on the student's progress in tasks. The Field Instructor and the task supervisor are not paid by the University for their work in this capacity but are performing valuable professional volunteer service.

The Field Instructor shall:

- Inform the Field Education Coordinator if the student is acceptable for the field instruction site.

- Provide on-site supervision to the student(s)

The student plays a vital role in field education. Student learning is at the heart of the field education program, as such,

The agency shall provide the student with a physical place to work within the agency setting and with necessary supplies for their work (desk, supplies, telephone, computer, support services).

The agency will provide an orientation for students covering rules, regulations, procedures, facilities, and equipment of the agency.

A representative from the agency must sign an affiliation agreement that outlines agency and school responsibilities.

## Field Placement Process

Students are expected to follow the field placement process detailed below to secure a field placement. Students do not develop their own placements. All field placements must be approved by the Field Education Coordinator to ensure they meet the requirements of the program. The University of Detroit Mercy, Department of Social Work cannot guarantee that all students will secure a placement. If students are not able to successfully secure a placement by the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the semester, they may be required to withdraw from the social work program or postpone field placement.

The placement matching process follows these steps:

Student completes the electronic field placement application during the winter semester prior to their senior year. The link to the field placement application will be provided to students via email.

The Field Education Coordinator reviews the completed application and begins to coordinate the placement assignment process. The Field Education Coordinator may also review the student's admissions file, consult with other faculty, and meet with the student as necessary to identify strengths and needs for field education.

Student receives an email from the Field Coordinator regarding the possible agency field placement. The email provides instructions to the student regarding their expected follow-up.

Student schedules an interview at the expected agency site.

Field Instructor and Field Education Coordinator confer to determine whether the student has been accepted to the agency. If accepted, the student is "placed".

If the Field Instructor and/or the student decide the placement is not a good fit, the Field Education Coordinator will work with the student to identify another placement option.

### Unsuccessful Placement Interviews

If a student has one or more unsuccessful placement interviews and the Field Education Coordinator receives feedback relevant to the student's presentation of self, assessed readiness for field, or appropriateness of placement choice or concentration in relation to required

previous experience, the student will be invited to meet with Field Education Coordinator to discuss. Following this discussion, a student may be asked to develop a plan if it is determined that additional supports are required in field placement that must be addressed before continued efforts are made to identify a field placement. This may include a recommendation to select a different concentration. Please navigate to the BSW Handbook policy on student performance.

## Field Education Policies and Procedures

### Placement

The Field Education Coordinator has primary responsibility for selecting agencies that can provide appropriate field education experiences for students. Students do not develop their own placement opportunities, but rather work directly with the Field Education Coordinator in identifying appropriate placements.

### Challenges Securing Field Placement

Occasionally students may interview at multiple agencies and not be offered a field placement. The Department of Social Work cannot and does not guarantee that students will successfully secure a field placement. If a student is not offered placement after three interviews, it is the student's responsibility to schedule a field advising appointment to discuss barriers to placement with the Field Education Coordinator. If no match is found after three interviews, a review of the student's appropriateness for placement will be conducted by the department faculty. Students that are repeatedly experiencing unsuccessful interviews may not be allowed to continue with the placement process. They may be offered the opportunity to delay placement until the following academic year. Students shall not continue in their seminar coursework, as field instruction and seminar must be taken concurrently.

### Dual Relationships

Students are not permitted to be placed at agencies where family members are employed or are receiving services. The Department of Social Work discourages and, in most situations, will not approve placement of students in agencies where they have been employed, or where they have previously received services as a client. These recommendations exist to protect students,



assignments, this includes a change from a worker-supervisor relation to a learner-teacher relationship. It also implies a sincere effort to avoid creating work responsibilities that might jeopardize the student's opportunity to use the learning experiences that have been selected for practicum purposes.

Students should be aware that consequences may arise from a change in employment status or management at their agency. If a student's employment is terminated by an agency, it could jeopardize the ability to complete field requirements. In the case of termination, the Department of Social Work shall investigate the reason for termination before the student could be reassigned to a new field placement. Reassignment and continuation of field placement is not guaranteed. The approval and acceptance of the agency field instructor rest with the Department of Social Work. The agency must agree to comply with all practicum policies delineated in the University of Detroit Mercy Department of Social Work field manual and affiliation agreement.

### Academic Credit for Life/Work Experience

Academic or field practicum credit is not granted for life experience or professional work experience.

### Attendance

Students are expected to be at the agency on a consistent, regular basis throughout both semesters in order to complete the total field hours required. Students cannot work extra hours each week in order to complete the total field hours required.

## Student Safety

There are inherent risks in social work practice. Therefore, agencies, agency field instructors,

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX") prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs and activities. Title IX applies to public and private educational institutions that receive federal funds – including the University of Detroit Mercy.

Generally, sexual harassment and sexual assault are considered discrimination on the basis of sex. Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment includes a range of behaviors from catcalling, staring at body parts, and inappropriate jokes to sexual assault and rape. The sex of the harasser and the person being harassed is irrelevant.

Unwelcome means that the person being harassed did not request or invite the behavior and regarded the conduct as undesirable or offensive. A failure to complain or flat out say "no" does not mean that the conduct was welcome. In some situations, a person may not be able to complain about unwelcome behaviors because of a power imbalance.

Title IX requires the University of Detroit Mercy to respond to certain harassment on the basis of sex which it knows about or reasonably should have known about. Specifically, the University must:

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the social work program and their field practicum may be subject to dismissal from the social work program and may be unable to secure a social work license and/or job upon graduation.

Students are evaluated on these professional standards in all areas of the BSW and MSW program including admissions, academic classes, and field practicum. Students are expected to possess these attributes and skills at a level appropriate to their year in the program.

### Professionalism

Students are expected to follow agency rules and policies. They are expected to be punctual and dependable. They are expected to demonstrate professional behavior in their interactions with clients, agency staff, and the University of Detroit Mercy faculty and staff. Students should provide services to clients that are based on relevant social work knowledge and research. Students must demonstrate an ability to prioritize responsibilities and complete assignments.

### Interpersonal Skills

Social work students demonstrate the interpersonal skills needed to relate effectively to other students, faculty, staff, clients, and other professionals. These include showing respect for and consideration of others, listening skills, and the ability to communicate effectively both verbally and non-verbally. Students take appropriate responsibility for their actions and consider the impact on others. They work effectively with others, regardless of the level of authority. Students advocate in an appropriate, respectful and responsible manner taking into consideration the complexity of each situation. They use proper channels for complaints, conflict resolution, and grievances. Students demonstrate a willingness to receive feedback from faculty and field instructors, administrators, staff, and colleagues in a positive and respectful manner.

### Values

Students must demonstrate a commitment to the core values of social work including service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence.

### Diversity

Social work students must value diversity. Students must serve in an appropriate manner all persons seeking assistance in their agency regardless of race, color, religion, age, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, income, protected veteran status, genetic information, limited English proficiency, or any other status protected by applicable federal, state, or local law.

Students must not impose their own personal, religious, and/or cultural values on others and must know how their own background and value base affect his or her interactions with clients. Students must be willing to reflect on and change their behavior when it interferes with their ability to work with a client.

#### Self-Awareness

Social work students know how their own values, beliefs, attitudes, and past experiences affect their thinking, behaviors, relationships, and overall practice. Students examine their internal processes, their strengths, limitations, and suitability for professional practice. Social work students demonstrate an awareness of how others perceive them and are willing to change behaviors that are non-

accordance with such policies and/or if disclosing information is necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm to a client or other identifiable person. Students should not disclose identifying information about clients in seminar and other classes.

### Sexual Relationships and Physical Contact

Students should not engage in physical contact (such as hugging or massaging clients) with clients when there is a possibility of psychological harm to the client as a result. Students should under no circumstances engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with current or former clients – or with other individuals with whom clients maintain close personal relationships where there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client. Social work students, not their clients, assume the full burden of setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries.

### Social Media Guidelines

Social media channels, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, and various blog sites are just a few examples of new and exciting ways to connect with others and share information. Likewise, technology has broadened social workers' capacity to assess and manage information about clients, influence policy, address social justice issues, and receive supervision. However, the rapid growth of social media communication tools and their ease of accessibility can also have unintended and potentially damaging consequences to users if basic guidelines are ignored. Students are expected to adhere to social work values, ethics and engage in professional conduct as outlined in the NASW *Code of Ethics* when using social media communication tools, whether using a personal site(s), agency site(s), or University site(s).

### Addressing Difficulties and Challenges in Field

The Department of Social Work is committed to assisting students to maximize their learning opportunities and experiences in a field placement. Issues, concerns, and demonstrated difficulties need to be identified and addressed in a professional manner in order to provide

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2. If the issue at hand cannot be resolved directly with the Agency Field Instructor, the student will contact their Faculty Field Liaison and consult regarding the potential arrangement of a face-to-face meeting among all concerned. The Faculty Field Liaison may use teleconference or video technology as a more responsive way to meet with agencies that may otherwise require significant travel time. Such a meeting will serve to clarify problems, discuss potential solutions, and attempt to develop a plan that will allow the practicum to go forth.
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In the event that an agency wishes to immediately suspend or terminate a practicum placement due to unprofessional behavior of a student, safety concerns for clients, or unethical behavior of students the Agency Field Instructor is requested to:

1. Contact the Faculty Field Liaison immediately to discuss the circumstances leading to the situation.
2. The Agency Field Instructor and/or Faculty Field Liaison will then contact the Field Education Coordinator to inform of the decision to terminate a student.
3. Inform the student verbally (with written follow-up) of the reason for the suspension or termination.
4. Work with the Faculty Field Liaison to accomplish any follow-up activities or meetings that need to occur in order to appropriately end the placement.
5. Discuss with the Faculty Field Liaison and Field Education Coordinator ways in which the situation leading to the termination can be avoided in the future, and how the agency and university can work together to promote social work education.
6. If appropriate, the Field Education Coordinator will work with the Faculty Field Liaison and the student to identify other placement options. The Department of Social Work cannot guarantee that a second field option will be available.
7. Termination from a field placement may result in a grade of F in field, which would disallow the student to continue in the program.

#### Concerns of the Faculty Field Liaison About the Student

1. The Faculty Field Liaison will address any concerns with the student and see if the issues or concerns can be directly worked out.
2. If the issue at hand cannot be resolved directly with the student, the Faculty Field Liaison will notify the agency and the Field Education Coordinator of their concerns and a meeting will be arranged to address the Faculty Field Liaison's concerns.
3. If appropriate, the Field Education Coordinator will work with the Faculty Field Liaison and the student to identify other placement options. The Department of Social Work cannot guarantee that a second field option will be available.
4. If indicated, a student may be referred to the Office of the Dean of Students to address any concerns.

#### Concerns of the Faculty Field Liaison About the Agency

1. The Faculty Field Liaison will address any concerns with the agency and see if the issues or concerns can be directly worked out.
2. If the issue at hand cannot be resolved directly with the agency, the Faculty Field Liaison will notify the agency and the Field Education Coordinator of their concerns and a meeting will be arranged to address the Faculty Field Liaison's concerns.
3. If appropriate, the Field Education Coordinator will work with the Faculty Field Liaison and the student (or external site program coordinator) to identify other placement options.

## Termination of Students from Field Placement

Students in field practicum are expected to demonstrate professional behavior, attitude, and demeanor in their practicum agency and their community. Occasionally, serious situations occur in which students fail significantly to adhere to key professional expectations. Failure to adhere to these professional expectations can result in the termination of field practicum and/or removal from the BSW program.

The Department of Social Work reserves the right to have a student write a reflective essay regarding concerns that arise in a field setting, or if a student is dismissed from an agency. The purpose is to help the student to reflect upon the situation and the factors that led up to the situation and ways to consider a professional response to assist with student learning. Students must be able to reflect upon their behavior as an emerging professional social worker. This will allow the Field Education Coordinator to better assess a student's readiness for another field placement. The student may be required to do additional field hours should another placement be secured, and the additional hours will be at the discretion of the Field Education Coordinator. The additional hours will assist with orientation and entrance to a new agency to allow time for the student to integrate into a new agency and be able to demonstrate the field competencies in a practice setting. The Field Education Coordinator and/or Faculty Field Liaison may also develop a Performance Improvement Plan at the student's new field placement to assist the student with being successful. Information may be shared with the new field agency describing the reasons why a student was dismissed from a previous agency and what the student has done to develop professionally and learn from the previous field placement experience. Students may also be referred to the Office of the Dean of Students to address any concerns.

## Resources for Students

Office of the Dean of Students: <https://www.udmercy.edu/life/dean-students.php>

University Wellness Center: <https://www.udmercy.edu/life/health/index.php>

Office of Student Life: <https://www.udmercy.edu/life/slo.php>

Center for Career & Professional Development: <https://www.udmercy.edu/life/career/>

# Guidelines for Field Instructors

The following elements may be helpful for field instruction:

Orientation of the student to the field site:

- Clarify the organizational structure.
- Clarify accountability issues - who is responsible to whom at all levels of the organization.
- Clarify your supervisory styles - expectations, teaching method.
- Clarify your expectations regarding student's attendance at staff meetings.
- Set a mutually agreed upon weekly time period for the field instructor-student conference: one (1) hour minimum per week.
- Develop a student work schedule that should include a minimum of 16 hours per week (for traditional BSW students) or 29 hours per week (for FAST students). Student's time in field instruction should total 200 clock hours per semester.

Pre-learning specifics:

- Clarify the goal and objectives of the agency and in what roles/capacity client contact is made.
- Work with the student to develop learning objectives for the semester.
- Jointly review with the student the University of Detroit Mercy field evaluation form the instrument used at the end of the semester to assess progress.
- Inform the student of various experiences, projects, programs within the agency.

General expectations of the University:

- The student must be allowed contact with clients, client groups, or client systems
- The student is expected to have contact with clients, client groups, or client systems
- The focus should be on learning rather than the number of clients seen/served.
- The student is expected to attend in-service training activities which are available to regular staff members.
- The agency is expected to provide the student with adequate office space, telephone availability, and any other essentials related to the performance of professional responsibilities.

Communications between Field Instructor, Student, and Faculty Field Liaison:

- The Field Instructor should consult with the Faculty Field Liaison when there is some question regarding the appropriateness of any agency assignment.
- If the Field Instructor and a student are having communication issues, the Faculty Field Liaison should be contacted if the problem is unable to be worked out between them.
- Any inappropriate behavior on the part of the student should first be approached in the conference between student and Field Instructor. If inappropriate behavior is not resolved, the Faculty Field Liaison should be contacted as soon as possible. (This also applies to any other professional/personal problems the student might experience.)

Evaluation:

- Evaluation of field instruction students is a continuous process including written as well as verbal feedback from the Field Instructor and Faculty Field Liaison. At mid-semester and the end of each semester, the agency Field Instructor completes an evaluation. All evaluative material is shared with the student. Students receive a letter grade for their field instruction. Field Instructors may recommend a grade but the final responsibility for the grade rests with the Faculty Field Liaison.
- Field Instructors will complete an evaluation for each student at Fall mid- and end-semester and Spring end-semester. The Field Instructor recommends a grade to the Faculty Field Liaison who then is responsible for assigning a final grade.
- At the end of the second semester, the student must turn in an Evaluation of Field Placement which should be used in considering that agency for future placements.

# Acknowledgments

Resources from the North American Network of Field Educators & Directors (NANFED) were used in the development of this handbook.