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Select forms (Appendices) were adapted from the College of St. Catherine and University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN social work program. Permission to adapt these forms was given by Professor Barbara Shank, Chair, Social Work Department.

PREFACE

The 2008 Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) underscore the importance of the field practicum by designating the field component as the “signature pedagogy” of social work education.

Students of Mississippi State University complete one-third of their total academic social work hours in the field practicum. It is clear that the field component is a necessary and vital part of the total curriculum of baccalaureate social work students. This reinforces the importance of and need for quality field instructors.

The purpose of this manual is twofold: 1) to give field practicum instructors an overview of the field practicum as an initial orientation guide and 2) to serve as an on-going resource guide throughout the student’s field practicum.

Any comments/inquiries regarding information in this manual should be directed to:
Field Coordinator
Mississippi State University
Department of Sociology
Social Work Program
P.O. Box C
Mississippi State, MS 39762
662-325-7881
I. INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

The field practicum is the area of student learning that provides the student with opportunities to apply theories learned in the classroom to the agency setting through a structured and educationally directed environment. All social work majors are required to complete a minimum of 450 hours in the agency setting. The field practicum is the equivalent of 12 semester hours.

In addition to the hours spent in the agency setting, students are required to actively participate in the field practicum seminar experience, meeting for eight all-day seminars during the semester while they are in placement.

STUDENT INSTRUCTION

Although the agency field practicum instructor, the student, and the faculty field liaison are viewed as “partners” for the educational experience of the student, the reality is that the agency field instructor has a major responsibility and opportunity in guiding the student in her/his orientation, assignment of meaningful and stimulating cases, professional role development within the agency, and the modeling and evaluation of the problem-solving method in generalist social work practice. By creating and maintaining an atmosphere for learning, the field practicum instructor will continue to grow as a professional social worker by keeping abreast of the changes in social work practice.

The field instructor is charged with the following ongoing responsibilities of:

• providing weekly instructional conferences & daily instruction
• informing the social work program field coordinator of any significant barriers that students demonstrate in service delivery
• attending orientation sessions and workshops provided by the Social Work program for field practicum instructors

FIELD PRACTICUM CRITERIA

Criteria for Eligibility of Students for the Field Practicum

Students eligible to complete the field practicum have completed all coursework in the social work program curriculum excluding SW4916/SW4926 and must meet the criteria for remaining in the social work program which include:
1. Maintain an overall GPA of 2.0, with a 2.5 GPA for all social work courses.
2. Must earn a minimum of a "C" in each social work course.
3. Continue to demonstrate an aptitude for a social work career.
4. Adhere to all academic expectations of the university and the social work program.
5. Adhere to the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics.
Criteria for Field Practicum Instructors
In keeping with the requirements of the Council on Social Work Education Accreditation Standards, as well as Mississippi State University’s mission statement in providing strong generalist social work practitioners, the field instructor must be willing to provide students ongoing instruction and supervision and be willing to participate in training for field instructors. The field instructor must be well versed in agency policies and procedures. Additionally, field instructors must be qualified by at least one of the following criteria:

• M.S.W. degree from a CSWE-accredited program with a minimum of two years of post-graduate experience
• B.S.W. from a CSWE-accredited program with a minimum of three years post-graduation experience

Any exception for which a Field Instructor does not meet the aforementioned criteria, the following conditions must be met: (1) The Field Coordinator must document justification of the exception and agreement of all parties (Field Coordinator, Student, and Field Instructor); and (2) the Field Coordinator must routinely collaborate (face-to-face, by phone and by email) with the Field Instructor and student to ensure the social work perspective is reinforced appropriately throughout the placement experience, and document efforts accordingly.

It is also strongly recommended that the social work practitioner be in his/her current position for a minimum of one year, and that the practitioner is licensed in the state of Mississippi to practice social work.

If the field instructor and the student have had a pre-existing professional or social relationship, this information must be shared with the Field Coordinator so the appropriateness of the placement can be determined.

Agency Criteria
It is necessary that the agency has a well-developed professional role for social work practitioners. This is particularly important in those agencies where social workers are not the primary service providers (e.g. hospitals, health departments, schools, etc.). The agency should make adjustment of the field practicum instructor’s assignments to allow adequate time for the development and implementation of field practicum instruction with regular access to the field instructor.

The agency is also selected due to its involvement with the social work program in making recommendations in selection of field instructors based upon the field instructor’s commitment to the social work profession, demonstrated competency in practice and willingness to learn effective teaching strategies for beginning level generalist practice social work students. The agency must be an Equal Opportunity Employer.

The social work program welcomes community agencies’ interest in becoming approved field sites for social work students. We particularly welcome agencies that serve diverse populations and those that provide the student with social work values, ethics, knowledge, skills and
cultural competencies in working with a wide range of clientele. Potential settings are visited by
the Field Coordinator, the Social Work Program Director, or other social work faculty to
determine if the agency is appropriate for providing the type of field instruction that would
carry out the objectives of the field education program.

The following criteria are considered in the determination of agency appropriateness:
• Agency must be related in their purpose to the mission, goals and objectives of the Social
  Work Program
• Agency administration supports the philosophy of professional education and is willing to
grant staff time to supervise and direct student instruction
• Agency is conducive to learning
• Agency’s philosophy of service must be compatible with the philosophy, values, and ethics of
  the social work profession
• Agency must be clear about their programs and methods
• Agency’s programs must offer students a wide range of learning opportunities to work with
  varying client systems
• Agency must have qualified field instructor(s)
• Agency must not depend on students to fulfill basic staffing needs
• Agency maintains and observes policies of nondiscrimination in relation to clients, staff,
  students, and faculty
• Agency must make reasonable arrangements for students with regard to space and
  equipment

II. MISSION STATEMENTS

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

Mississippi State University is a public, land-grant university whose mission is to provide access
and opportunity to students from all sectors of the state's diverse population, as well as from
other states and countries, and to offer excellent programs of teaching, research, and service.

Enhancing its historic strengths in agriculture, natural resources, engineering, mathematics, and
natural and physical sciences, Mississippi State offers a comprehensive range of undergraduate
and graduate programs; these include architecture, the fine arts, business, education, the
humanities, the social and behavioral sciences, and veterinary medicine.

The university embraces its role as a major contributor to the economic development of the
state through targeted research and the transfer of ideas and technology to the public,
supported by faculty and staff relationships with industry, community organizations, and
government entities.

Building on its land-grant tradition, Mississippi State strategically extends its resources and
expertise throughout the entire state for the benefit of Mississippi's citizens, offering access for
working and place-bound adult learners through its Meridian Campus, Extension, and distance learning programs.

Mississippi State is committed to its tradition of instilling among its students and alumni ideals of diversity, citizenship, leadership, and service. For more information, access to the mission statement is available at [www.president.msstate.edu/mission.php](http://www.president.msstate.edu/mission.php)

**COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES**

The educational mission of the College of Arts & Sciences is two-fold: to provide students with a liberal education which will facilitate intellectual development and stimulate a life-long pursuit of knowledge, and to give students an in-depth education in at least one specialized area necessary to prepare them for a career or for advanced study.

The College offers curricula in the fine arts, the humanities, and the natural, physical, and social sciences. These curricula are designed to introduce students to the basic methods of inquiry in diverse disciplines, to develop their analytical abilities, to improve their skills in writing and speaking, and to broaden their perspectives on humanity and culture in the natural and technological worlds. Additionally, they provide intensive preparation in one or more academic disciplines.

A liberal education attained in this context should ensure that graduates of the College have gained an understanding and appreciation of human culture. They should have examined the social, historical, political, philosophical and economic dimensions of the human condition and mankind’s perception of the world as it is expressed through the fine arts, language, and literature. They should have learned the use of quantitative and scientific methods and should have participated in the universal quest to comprehend natural phenomena and to utilize this knowledge beneficially and ethically. For more information, access to the mission statement is available at [www.cas.msstate.edu/about/mission/](http://www.cas.msstate.edu/about/mission/)

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

The mission of the Mississippi State University Department of Sociology is to integrate our research, service and teaching into a holistic educational experience, as suited to the land-grant mission of a research-intensive university. We provide a high quality undergraduate education to students majoring in criminology, social work, and sociology within the liberal arts education mission of the College of Arts & Sciences. Our graduate programs train sociology students at the master’s and doctoral levels, integrating students into academic research. We foster an intellectual environment for professional growth and development that prepares students to be critical thinkers with strong communication skills for use in the global environment, preparing them for careers and/or graduate studies. For more information, access to the mission statement is available at [www.sociology.msstate.edu/about/](http://www.sociology.msstate.edu/about/)
SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

The mission of the Social Work Program is to educate students for entry-level generalist social work practice with preparation grounded in the liberal arts perspective, the social work profession’s history, purposes, and philosophy and is based on social work knowledge, values and skills.

The mission of the Social Work Program is congruent with the missions of the University and the College in that it seeks to offer excellent educational opportunities in instruction, research, and outreach, while fostering a commitment to the life long pursuit of knowledge. For more information, access to the mission statement is available at http://www.sociology.msstate.edu/undergraduate/social-work/about/mission-statement-values/

III. SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

PROGRAM’S GOALS

The Social Work Program’s Goals are:

1. To provide an educational environment that models social work values, ethics, and ideals and encourages the development of critical thinking skills.

2. To provide a curriculum that promotes competent baccalaureate generalist social work practice and is responsive to the changing political, social, cultural, economic and global influences based on current research and evidence-based practice information.

3. To prepare competent entry-level social work practitioners for generalist practice with diverse populations and client systems of various sizes and types, particularly those marginalized by social and economic injustice.

These program goals contribute to the University’s priorities and goals, which include:

- Foster Teaching and Learning
- Promote Research and Creativity
- Expand Outreach and Engagement
- Encourage Globalization
- Enhance Institutional Culture and Environment

ADVISORY BOARD

The Social Work Advisory Board is comprised of representatives from the state and local community, including social workers and concerned citizens. The Board seeks to:
• Provide information to the program regarding current community activities, needs, and goals.
• Review programmatic assessment data and give feedback about the program’s activities, curriculum, and instructional services.
• Advocate for the program and the profession.
• Serve as engaged role models for students.

For more information, access to the board’s mission and vision statement is available at http://www.sociology.msstate.edu/undergraduate/social-work/alumni-field/ and a current list of board members is available at http://www.sociology.msstate.edu/undergraduate/social-work/alumni-field/advisory-board-members/

COMMITMENT TO NON-DISCRIMINATION AND ANTI-HARASSMENT

Mississippi State University’s Social Work Program is conducted without discrimination and harassment based upon race, color, ethnicity, sex, pregnancy, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, status as a U.S. veteran, or any other status protected by state or federal law. Specific information concerning the university’s operating policy on Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (OP 03.03) is accessible at http://www.policies.msstate.edu/policypdfs/0303.pdf

The Office of Diversity and Equity Program is a necessary resource of MSU and should be utilized as needed in the protection of our field students. University policy is to comply fully with the requirements of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as well as other applicable laws and their implementing regulations. In addition to the link above about our commitment to non-discrimination and anti-harassment, the following links may be helpful in providing information about how we address sexual misconduct issues and ways we try to optimize the learning environment of all students.
• Sexual Misconduct (OP 03.04): http://www.policies.msstate.edu/policypdfs/0304.pdf
• Students with Disabilities (OP 91.122): http://www.policies.msstate.edu/policypdfs/91122.pdf

EXPECTED EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF THE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

Expected educational outcomes of the social work program are consistent with the competency-based standards set forth by the Council on Social Work Education. Students are afforded the opportunity to achieve mastery of the related component behaviors throughout the curriculum, but particularly through the field practicum experience.

Outcomes/Competencies (see bold) with related component behaviors are as follows:
Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

A. Make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context
B. Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations
C. Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication
D. Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes
E. Use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior

Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

A. Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels
B. Present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences
C. Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies

Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice

A. Apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels
B. Engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice

Competency 4: Engage In Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice

A. Use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research
B. Apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings
C. Use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

A. Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services
B. Assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services
C. Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

A. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies
B. Use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

A. Collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies
B. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies
C. Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies
D. Select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

A. Critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies
B. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies
C. Use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes
D. Negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies
E. Facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

A. Select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes
B. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes
C. Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes
D. Apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

IV. FIELD PRACTICUM LEARNING EXPERIENCE

FIELD PRACTICUM COURSE INFORMATION

Description:
SW 4916/4926. Social Work Field Practicum/Seminar I and II. (12 hours) (Prerequisites: SW 4713 and SW 3533). These courses provide students opportunities to apply generalist social work practice methods by completing a minimum of 450 supervised hours in a social work agency. All students entering field should have a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 and a social work grade point average of 2.5, as well as meet all other criteria for being in the Social Work Program (see p. 5 of this manual).

Course Objectives:
Course objectives are specifically linked to all 31 component behaviors (see pp. 10-12 of this manual) essential to social work practice as determined by the Council on Social Work Education. Due to the comprehensive nature of the field experience, upon completion of these courses, students should be able to:

1. Accomplish a supervised learning experience in an agency setting in order to apply and integrate theoretical learning with practice experience (Course objective linked to CSWE Component Behaviors: 2B, 3A, 6A, & 8B).

2. Analyze the structure and function of resource and delivery systems within the agency and community (Course objective linked to CSWE Component Behaviors: 1D, 5A, & 7B).

3. Develop the ability to utilize professional social work supervision as a mechanism to improve one’s own practice (Course objective linked to CSWE Component Behaviors: 1E, 7D, 8C, & 9D).

4. Understand one’s own values and ethics and how these affect working with different client systems (Course objective linked to CSWE Component Behaviors: 1A, 1B, & 9C).
5. Develop and implement a plan for improving the well being of people based on the program assessment and exploration of obtainable goals and options (Course objective linked to CSWE Component Behaviors: 3B, 5B, 7C, 8A & 8E).

6. Apply knowledge, values, and skills with diverse populations including people of color, women, children, aged, physically and mentally challenged, socially and culturally diverse groups, the oppressed and populations at risk (Course objective linked to CSWE Component Behaviors: 2A, 2C, & 6B).

7. Apply research methods in evaluating one’s own practice and client service delivery (Course objective linked to CSWE Component Behaviors: 4A, 4B, 4C, 7A & 9B).

8. Nurture completion of a practicum experience that affords social work students with the opportunity to demonstrate the integration of critical thinking skills with various other social work skills essential for graduating from an accredited social work program (Course objective linked to CSWE Component Behaviors: 1C, 5C, 8D, & 9A).

Degree Requirements:
In addition to the liberal arts foundation core courses, and in keeping with the university’s focus of emphasizing effective communication, social work students must complete a computer literacy course. The Department of Sociology is fortunate to have its own computer lab for social work students to use.

Additionally, MSU requires a writing course either as a specific course offering or by strong evidence that the requirements are met through “writing across the curriculum.” The social work program believes that writing serves as an impetus to clearer-thinking, more critical analysis, more precise interpretation of assessment, and increased self-awareness. Because social work is a professional degree, it is imperative that social work students are trained to communicate effectively. It is the social work program’s belief that using a “writing across the curriculum” more effectively meets this goal. The social work curriculum maintains a minimum of two (2) major writing requirements in each class with numerous minor writing assignments. SW4713 is designated as the specific course reflecting particular focus on writing efforts.

A complete guide to the social work curriculum for program completion and degree attainment is accessible at https://www.sociology.msstate.edu/files/sw_regular_curriculum.pdf and a complete listing and description of all social work courses is accessible at https://mybanner.msstate.edu/. For the latter address, select the Course Catalog Option followed by choosing Social Work from the Subject drop-down menu and click Display Courses.

LEARNING RESPONSIBILITIES
The field placement is a partnership of learning. This learning experience links the knowledge, skills and values learned in the academic setting to the practice setting. In order for the most positive outcomes of the field placement to occur there must be an understanding of each person’s role in this process. The key people involved are: the student, the field agency
instructor, and the field coordinator. Therefore, it is very important that each person understand their respective roles and responsibilities, as well as the role of the other individuals.

Learning Responsibilities for Students:

- Participate in planning their field practicum experience; completion of necessary forms at least three months prior to their placement, particularly the Social Work Field Application (Form A).
- Development and use of self as a beginning-level social work practitioner in all aspects of the field practicum.
- Offer Orientation Checklist (Form B) as guide for orientation process and participate in agency based orientation practices.
- Be willing to complete and assume expense of various agency compliance requirements, including but not limited to tests, examinations, vaccinations, background checks, and/or drug screenings— or cooperate freely with alternate placement considerations.
- Follow the policies and procedures of field placement agency to include observing agency hours, dress codes, completion of agency time sheets.
- Initiate the Learning Contract (Form C) with the field instructor and faculty instructor, as well as coordinating time to discuss.
- Participate in the weekly supervision sessions with field instructor.
- Participate in the field seminars held on campus. The mandatory first seminar is required before a student is allowed to begin at the practicum agency.
- Complete course requirements for field practicum and field seminar, including seminar presentations, journaling, and other assignments including agency-based research.
- Complete registration and payment of fees prior to beginning field practicum, at beginning of semester to include graduation fees.
- Inform field coordinator immediately of any practices that are in violation of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics.
- Maintain confidentiality of agency records and client system.
- Consult with the agency about safety and liability.
- Complete the Student Evaluation of Field Practicum Experience (Form E) of the field practicum instructor, the agency, and the field coordinator, and other requested assessment information.
- Complete and document 450 practicum hours.
- Meet all professional development expectations outlined in the Professional Development section of this manual (please see pp.16-17)

Learning Responsibilities for Field Instructors:

- Complete necessary forms for field placement agencies prior to acceptance of any field placement student(s).
- Attend field orientation and training opportunities provided by the social work program.
- Interpret the role of the field practicum student to the agency staff.
- Provide student with a thorough orientation to the agency.
• Schedule time to allow for weekly supervision of the student in order to give feedback and evaluation of progress.
• Provide input to student’s learning contract; evaluate tasks in completing said targets.
• Complete mid-term and final evaluation of student(s) in a timely manner. Assessment instruments are provided by the field coordinator.
• Review time sheet form weekly and provide verification of review and accuracy by signing the respective form.
• Select and monitor cases, 3 minimally, that will serve to incorporate classroom learning with practice through the various systems (e.g. individual, family, small groups, community, and organizations) and levels of practice.
• Contact field coordinator concerning any significant barriers in students’ ability to effectively work with client system.
• Model appropriate and ethical behavior for the students.
• Comply with the program’s commitment to non-discrimination and anti-harassment.

Learning Responsibilities for the Field Coordinator:
• Assist in orientation of field instructors regarding the social work program’s mission and educational objectives for a generalist social work practicum.
• Provide students with opportunities for input in selecting agencies that are congruent with generalist social work practice and an area of interest for each student.
• Clarify for both students and field instructors the course objectives, required assignments, and expected educational outcomes of the field practicum.
• Serve as a consultant and resource to the field instructor.
• Assume responsibility for ensuring the social work perspective is reinforced appropriately throughout each placement experience. For a placement in which the field instructor requires an exception to the outlined criteria, efforts to reinforce the social work perspective and agreement of all parties to the exception should be documented by the field coordinator using the Exception Form (Form G).
• Provide on-site and/or on-campus trainings for the field instructors using the Field Instructor Orientation and Training Checklist (Form D), when applicable.
• Verify agencies and field instructors meet and maintain eligibility criteria outlined in this manual using the Field Placement Affiliation Form (Form H).
• Plan and make provisions for integrative field practicum seminars.
• Maintain documentation of each student’s involvement and participation in the field practicum for a period of time consistent with university policy regarding record keeping and disposal of documents.
• Meet with the field instructor and the student during each semester.
• Participate in the Learning Contract (Form C) with the field instructor and the student.
• Serve as a mediator if problems arise between student and field instructor in the teaching/learning relationship.
INTEGRATING THEORY WITH PRACTICE

The integration of class and field learning begins the semester prior to students entering field through the pre-practicum learning laboratory in SW 4713: Senior Seminar. The students are engaged in hands-on experiences in operationalizing generalist practice principles and values/ethics. They leave the course with an increased awareness of their strengths and needs for improvement.

Consequently, upon entering field, they begin discussing their learning goals, based on that pre-practicum experience and self-evaluation, with their field instructors. The integrative process continues through students’ reflections in their field journals, participation in the field seminar, conferences with their field instructors, and their agency-based research projects. Although there has been much preparation in the classroom setting to simulate social work practice through role plays, interviews, as well as increasing self-awareness of diversity, ethics and values, it is through the FIELD PRACTICUM that opportunities present themselves to integrate the theoretical content to practice.

Therefore, the role of the field instructor is critical to the students’ successful completion of the course. The relationship between the field instructor and the field coordinator is vitally important to assure that the student is provided opportunities to integrate social work theory with social work practice.

IV. FIELD PRACTICUM PROCESS

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the field placement is twofold:

1. to give students practice opportunities to apply social work theories and methods learned in academic classes to actual social work situations and
2. to share these experiences with social work students through planned seminars on campus (Please note: this sharing must be done in accordance with standard 1.07(p) of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Students are expected to:

(General)

• attend weekly supervision sessions with the Field Instructor and planned seminars with the Field Coordinator for feedback on improving delivery of services
• demonstrate the ability to plan and organize workload effectively
• work collaboratively within and external of the agency to facilitate the problem-solving method with clients
demonstrate the ability to write and communicate effectively one’s own learning goals and objectives

demonstrate the ability in weekly supervision sessions with the Field Instructor and planned seminars with the Field Coordinator to think critically in analyzing a particular context of social work intervention

demonstrate professionalism in social work values and ethics, confidentiality, supervision and accountability to clients, agency and social work program

manage current life stressors through the use of self-care and other appropriate interventions

(Knowledge)

- demonstrate the ability to relate the practice of social work to theories learned in classroom
- utilize community resources on behalf of client systems
- demonstrate the ability to utilize the problem-solving process to include: assessment, goal setting, contracting, intervention strategies, and evaluation
- demonstrate an understanding of the role of the social work agency to clients and within the community
- demonstrate an understanding of the mission, goals, purpose of the agency, and its relationship to other agencies and organizations within the community

(Skills)

- demonstrate an ability to utilize the problem-solving process with assigned cases to include: problem identification, assessment (data collection and analysis), planning, intervention, evaluation, and termination
- demonstrate an ability to clearly and concisely document case records, case assignments, and other professional correspondence
- demonstrate an ability to interview client system effectively
- demonstrate an ability to plan, initiate, and implement organizing resources for and with the client system, as well as modeling/teaching these methods to client
- demonstrate an ability to effectively work with the following client systems: women, minorities of color, various ethnic and cultural groups
- demonstrate an ability to evaluate self in the helping process and to evaluate practitioner roles within the agency setting

(Values)

- demonstrate an understanding of individual worth and human dignity
- demonstrate an understanding of individual’s right to self-determination
- demonstrate an understanding of the social worker’s responsibility to promote social justice in making social institutions more responsive and humane to individual needs
- demonstrate a respect for the unique characteristics of diverse populations
- demonstrate an understanding of the individual responsibility that social workers have for their own ethical conduct, for the quality of their practice, and for maintaining continuous growth in the knowledge and skills of their profession
ORIENTATION AND GETTING STARTED

It is well documented that changes in role and uncertainty of role expectation(s) increase stress and anxiety. The anxiety that students initially experience can be decreased by having a formal orientation to the agency. See Orientation Checklist (Form B) for specific tasks.

CASELOAD DEVELOPMENT

The student’s first few cases should be very task-oriented. The reason for the client’s involvement with the agency should be clear and specific. Case assignments should be typical of tasks performed by staff that have a B.S.W. degree.

The student is being trained as a generalist social worker (entry-level practitioner), not necessarily as a prospective social worker for your agency. Decrease the student’s anxiety level by assuring the student that it is OKAY to say, “I don’t know, but I will try to find out and get back to you,” if the client asks questions that the student does not know the answer to.

Foster creative thinking, by thinking creatively. Students are not under constraints that would prohibit them from making longer, perhaps more supportive visits to aging clients or clients with small children. Perhaps consider polling agency social workers to determine if a special project such as a clothes closet, food bank, etc. might be beneficial to the agency, but workers have not had time to follow through.

The assignment of an actual caseload occurs after the student has received orientation and the learning contract has been developed. The anxiety for students can be reduced by the type of cases that the field instructor assigns. The initial assignments and the student’s success with concrete tasks of cases will go a long way in increasing the student’s self-confidence. The level of difficulty in cases can gradually be increased. NEVER should a field instructor assign “the most difficult cases” to a student because no one else in the agency has been successful, neither should the field instructor utilize the student for additional support staff.

LEARNING CONTRACT

Although each student will have successfully completed the required social work courses, prior to entering the agency, there is a wide range among students’ experiences and learning styles. Therefore, just as assessment is key to effective intervention with clients, so is the assessment of students an integral component of a successful field practicum.

The Learning Contract is the initial step in evaluating where the student is, as well as agency expectations. It is important that the student understand from the very beginning of the placement specific duties and responsibilities are expected from the student. This is particularly important prior to the completion of the field practicum Learning Contract.
Reflective of the Council on Social Work Education’s Competencies and emphasis on competency-based education, the Learning Contract is developed with particular emphasis on the related component behaviors. Essentially, during the field practicum experience, the student should be afforded the opportunity to demonstrate the various component behaviors and document associated plans for completion through the Learning Contract. The learning contract should reflect learning objectives relative to the unique and individualized experience possible through each field practicum placement. Please refer to the Learning Contract (Form C) for more specific information.

SUPERVISION SESSIONS

The field instructor’s role is most important in facilitating an educationally directed field practicum. The supervision sessions play an integral role in shaping the educational experience and ensuring the student’s exposure to an opportunity to achieve mastery of the various practice behaviors targeted.

The field instructor and student are required at least one hour each week for a supervision session. This is in addition to on-going interactions between the field instructor and student during the week. This time is set aside for feedback and on-going assessment, exchange of ideas and plan(s) of action to facilitate reaching the goals of the learning contract.

VI. GENERAL INFORMATION

FIELD PRACTICUM REQUIREMENT

Each student is required to complete field practicum. Although the program recognizes the importance of practice wisdom, NO exceptions are made based on prior work experience. A social worker must possess a conceptualization of practice that is theoretically grounded and must also possess the knowledge to effectively evaluated one’s own practice. This results from the successful completion of the curriculum, including the field practicum component.

If the student is currently working in a social service agency, it is strongly encouraged that said student complete his/her field practicum in another field practicum agency. It is required that the field practicum agency be approved by the Field Coordinator. If in the rare case the student must remain employed in the agency, there must be clearly written objectives and the student must complete field practicum hours in a different unit and with a different supervisor than the supervisor responsible for the student’s paid employment. No academic credit is given for life experience or previous work experience.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All records, interviews, and any other identifying information will be remain in the strictest confidence by the student. Journaling efforts, group seminars, and any required papers relating to the agency must not include names of clients or contain any information that could identify
the client system. The field coordinator should be notified by the student immediately in the event that the student is subpoenaed for an issue related to the practicum experience. Some agencies require additional training regarding confidentiality. Students must comply with completing such requirements as indicated by the agency.

REGISTRATION

Each student is responsible for completing the MSU registration and applying for graduation.

FIELD PRACTICUM TIME SHEET

The Time Sheet (Form F) will assist in documenting both the number of hours spent in the field practicum and activities conducted during the field practicum. Instructions are found on the Time Sheet and SW4916 and SW4926 syllabus. After accurately completing a Time Sheet and obtaining a review and signature from the field instructor, the student should submit it to the field instructor both in electronic and original copy format with the former submitted weekly and the latter approximately biweekly at each on-campus seminar.

PAID FIELD PRACTICUM

There should be no expectation of a paid field practicum. The field practicum is a learning experience and is preparation for entry-level social work practice. However, there are some placements that carry a student stipend. See the Field Coordinator for information.

HOLIDAYS

It is understood by the social work program and the student that the student’s first responsibility is to the client system. The social work program further recognizes that the social work student is in a student, (not an employee) role; therefore, the social work program will not require students to work during university holidays. It will be understood that the agency may request that the student work during university holidays and the student will work if the nature of the placement is such that the responsibility to the client system requires this.

TRANSPORATION

Each student is responsible for transportation to and from the field practicum agency. In the vast majority of field placement settings, students are required to have personal transportation. In these cases the social work program requires that the student maintain a current driver’s license. Adequate insurance should be maintained by the student.

The Social Work Program does not provide automobile liability coverage to students. Students assume risk associated with travel for field placement responsibilities. Use expectations of personal automobiles need to be clarified prior to placement. Students should not be required to transport clients in personal automobiles.
LEAVE

On any occasion that the student will be absent from the agency, the student should notify the agency field instructor, first, then the field coordinator. When absence from the practicum is essential, the student should provide satisfactory documentation of the impending absence. The notification of the absence to the field instructor and field coordinator should occur prior to the occurrence of the absence. The student is responsible for working out missed hours with the field instructor. Please refer to university policy regarding attendance at http://www.policies.msstate.edu/policypdfs/1209.pdf

HEALTH LIABILITY

The Social Work Program or placement agency is not responsible for health or injury of the student.

MALPRACTICE INSURANCE

Students are expected to accept the student blanket liability malpractice insurance offered free of charge by the social work program to all field students. A copy of the certificate of insurance is provided upon request to any student or field instructor.

REMOVAL

The Social Work Program has an obligation to protect the program and the profession, and thus reserves the right to remove a student from a field practicum agency. The Field Coordinator may remove a student from an agency due to failure of a student to meet academic, emotional, or professional standards. Such standards may include but are not limited to those outlined in this manual (see for example: Learning Responsibilities for Students and Professional Development expectations), designated in the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, and/or deemed by the field coordinator or the field instructor as unbefitting to a developing social worker. With removal there is no expectation of the student being placed in another agency and the removal may prompt the additional action of dismissal of the student from the Social Work Program. An appeal of the removal may be made to the Social Work Program Director. For any additional appeal actions, the student should comply with reporting channels acknowledged by the university as appropriate.

SYLLABUS

The syllabus for SW4916/SW4926 and this manual serve to complement each other. One cannot be used without the other. Students are advised to review both this manual and the course syllabus thoroughly and address any concerns/questions with the field coordinator.
GRADE SUBMISSION:

The following forms must be completed and received by the field coordinator prior to the submission of the final grade:

- Learning Contract
- Mid-term and Final Evaluations of Student
- All Time Sheets (originals)
- Student Evaluation of Field Practicum

FORM ACCESS

The forms acknowledged for use in this manual are:

- Form A: Field Practicum Application
- Form B: Orientation Checklist
- Form C: Learning Contract
- Form D: Field Instructor Checklist
- Form E: Student Evaluation of the Field Practicum
- Form F: Time Sheet (Option 1 and Option 2)
- Form G: Field Instructor Exception Form
- Form H: Field Placement Affiliation Record

The Social Work Field Practicum Application (Form A) is disseminated to students of SW4713 (taken in semester immediately prior to SW4916/4926) in order to allow adequate time for the application and placement process to occur. Forms B, C, and F of this manual are accessible to enrolled students of SW4916/4926 at the beginning of the semester using myCourses/Blackboard Learn. Field Coordinator utilizes or administers Forms D, E, G, and H in collaboration with the student and/or field instructor.

REQUIRED READINGS

Prior to beginning practicum placement, students should review ethical codes, laws, standards, and policies as provided in the links below.

NASW Code of Ethics
http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp

Mississippi State Board of Examiners for Social Workers and Marriage and Family Therapists - - Rules and Regulations

Council on Social Work Education Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards
By signing below, I acknowledge having read the Field Practicum Manual of the Mississippi State University Social Work Program and agree to comply with the content therein:

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