

PURPOSE OF FIELD EDUCATION

Field education is an integral part of the social work program at Springfield College, which has a single curricular concentration in advanced generalist practice. Field education is provided through two years of field practica and field seminars.

The field practicum sequence serves as the link between knowledge gained in the classroom and the practice of social work from an advanced generalist perspective. Within the field sequence, components of the Practice, Human Behavior in the Social Environment, Policy, and Research sequences are integrated and practiced by social work interns.

The overall purposes of the practica are: (a) to enhance the student's ability to apply social work values, theory, skills and knowledge to a broad range of systems; (b) to provide opportunities for students to learn to foster empowerment among vulnerable populations; and (c) to provide a setting in which the mission and goals of the Social Work Program may be actualized.

Students have the opportunity to apply and refine values, knowledge, and skills under the guidance of experienced social work practitioners who serve as Field Supervisors. These field practicum experiences are brought back to the classroom and seminars where they are further examined within the context of the knowledge, values, and skills of the social work profession.

The field practicum is an agency-based practice experience where students develop professional social work competence in the application of advanced generalist concepts that are presented and discussed throughout the academic curriculum. The practicum provides an opportunity for students to perform, with supervision, a planned variety of multilevel social work interventions, to learn to work effectively in different social work settings, and to understand the everyday operations of community and social service systems.

The practicum requirements are structured around four areas of learning to ensure that students gain experience in developing a full range of advanced generalist social work practice skills. The four areas of learning are: (1) Direct service with individuals and families, required in both years; (2) Group work, required both years; (3) Community development and organization, required in the foundation year; and (4) Administration and organizational development, required in the second or concentration year.

The Springfield College School of Social Work places students in a variety of agencies throughout New England and New York State. Students are exposed to a wide range of practice opportunities with clients of diverse backgrounds in both urban and rural settings. Appropriate field settings include a range of human service, educational, health, and criminal justice settings where students work with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

The field seminars serve as an additional link between knowledge gained in the classroom and the field practicum experience. They provide the student with additional opportunities to bring to student colleagues and seminar instructors their practicum experiences allowing enhanced integration of the knowledge, values, and skills of the social work profession.

DESIGN OF FIELD PRACTICUM SEQUENCE

A. FOUNDATION YEAR:

MSSW 684 & MSSW 685 Field Practicum MSSW 684L & MSSW 685L Field Seminar

In the foundation year, students spend a total of fifteen hours per week in the field for fifteen weeks each semester, fall and spring, for a total of 450 hours. Within the overall framework of generalist practice, field practicum during the foundation year focuses on direct service with individuals, families, small groups, and communities. Direct service with individuals and families involves assessment and intervention planning, case management, and counseling. Students are expected to lead, or co-lead, one or more groups, in which, when possible, they will have had a direct role in planning and organizing. The direct service component requires students to: (a) obtain experience with individuals and families conducting psychosocial assessments (see outline in Appendix B) and counseling, (b) facilitate interagency collaboration and referral on behalf of clients, and (c) obtain experience in leading or co-leading a wide range of groups (counseling, self-help, education, and support).

Community work involves a range of activities, including opportunities to apply group skills to plan and conduct community-based meetings, conduct community assessments, and work to promote the empowerment of communities (see Foundation Year Objectives for details). The foundation year practicum helps students integrate an understanding of individuals within the context of particular communities, as well as the force communities can exert in making changes on their own behalf. Students are required to design and implement a community project where they apply and expand their conceptual understanding of community practice. The project should achieve one or more of the following results: (1) enhance the agency's understanding of the community it serves through a process that involves the community, (2) enables the community to obtain information or resources it wants or needs, or (3) supports the community's capacity to act effectively on its own behalf.

The field practicum in the first year includes a forty-five minute field seminar which meets four times each semester. This seminar provides a forum where students engage with faculty and student colleagues in exploration of social work practice issues. Using the field experience as the basis for discussion, the seminar is devoted to peer support, idea sharing, and problem solving. An emphasis is placed on the value of process recordings as tools to help students learn elements of the helping process and evaluate their own practice.

On average, a minimum of 20% of field hours should be devoted to group work experiences and to the community component of the first placement. It is expected that the actual amount of time per week used for each area will vary over the course of the placement.

In addition to the field seminar, students enrolled in MSSW 684 and 685 must take, concurrently, MSSW 631: (Practice 1) Assessment, Goal Setting and Practice Techniques with Families and Small Groups, and MSSW 632: (Practice 2) Assessment Goal Setting, and Practice Techniques with Groups and Communities. These foundation year, three-credit practice courses provide the

theoretical knowledge and the skills to undergird the foundation year practicum experience with a framework appropriate to field education learning objectives. Students are also provided with opportunities to develop assessment and policy and program development skills in HBSE 1 and 2, Social Welfare Policy and Services 1 and 2, and Social Work Research 1 and 2.

COMMUNITY COMPONENT

GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS

To gain firsthand experience working with community service providers, residents and/or consumers within the community context;

To apply conceptual knowledge in work with community members; and

To provide leadership in the development and execution of a community project that:

- a. enhances understanding by the agency of the community it serves (through a process that involves the community); and/or
- b. enables the community to obtain information or resources that it wants; and/or
- c. supports the community's capacity to act effectively on its own behalf.

EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY PROJECTS

SW intern worked with agency staff, consumers, representatives of other agencies, and the media to develop and implement an "anti-stigma" campaign related to the difficulties experienced by community residents with psychiatric disorders. The goals were to organize a collaborative effort that would make the larger community aware of the stereotypes of those with mental illness, with attention to the rejection, isolation, and other harm they often cause.

SW intern took a leadership role in an advocacy campaign on early childhood education/intervention issues to educate the public and legislators. As part of a statewide organizing effort for "Early Childhood Legislation Day," the intern worked with parents served by the field agency to organize local planning and action prior to the day of the event as well as participation at the state capitol during the event. The intern provided information and training to the parent participants and developed logistical supports (materials, transportation, etc.).

SW intern worked with service providers in county to create a map of services available to women released from the local Correctional Center with a clear protocol for making the necessary linkages. Service gaps were also identified.

SW intern developed a directory of local services for Latino residents (in Spanish) with essential information needed to access the services.

SW intern worked with the administrators and students in a university community to assess the need for a stress management program, and then designed and implemented the program in collaboration with community members.

B. CONCENTRATION YEAR:

MSSW 686 & MSSW 687 Field Practicum MSSW 686L & MSSW 687L Field Seminar

In the second or concentration year, students are in field practicum twenty hours per week for the 15 weeks of each semester, fall and spring, for a total of 600 hours. Within the overall framework of advanced generalist practice, the field practicum during the concentration year focuses on direct service with individuals, families, and groups at a more advanced level. In the second year students also study administration. Practicums provide opportunities for students to focus on certain aspects of agency management, with an emphasis on how leadership and administration impact on direct service and communities. Students build upon the initial direct practice skills studied and developed during the foundation year and incorporate concepts of community work (e.g., assessments and community meetings) as they focus on the skills of administration and management.

Direct service in the concentration year builds on the first year foundation experience. Students are required to engage in: (a) experiences with more diverse, vulnerable client populations requiring multilevel interventions including counseling and advocacy; (b) more challenging relationship building; (c) group developmental and leadership experiences; (d) a more sophisticated use of self in the helping process, with advanced skill in relating to clients who are different from the student in race, background, personality, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status; and (e) activities requiring movement from larger community systems interventions to agency level interventions to direct service interventions, as needed, with increased comfort levels and flexibility.

Administration within the advanced generalist perspective is understood to incorporate the knowledge acquired as a direct practitioner and community worker in order to manage agencies in a way that contributes to the well-being of both clients and communities. Students are expected to develop and lead an administrative project that will enable them (1) to work with agency administrators, (2) to get an inside look at how an organization functions, and (3) to contribute to the development of new information, policies, resources, or programs within the organization. In carrying out this project, they should apply and expand their conceptual knowledge of administration and organizational development.

Students increase their hours in the field during the concentration year to have greater opportunity to integrate the skill sets they have learned during both years of practicum. The field practicum in the second year includes a field seminar that meets four times per semester for forty-five minutes. This seminar also provides an opportunity for students to engage with faculty and student colleagues to explore contemporary social work practice issues. Peer support, idea sharing, and problem solving continue to be the focus.

On average, a minimum of 20% of field hours should be devoted to group work experiences and to the administrative component of the placement. It is expected that the actual amount of time per week used for each area will vary over the course of the placement.

Students in the second year of field practicum must concurrently enroll in: MSSW 633: (Practice 3): Advanced Generalist Practice 1, Vulnerable Populations; and MSSW 634: (Practice 4): Advanced Generalist Practice 2, Supervision and Administration.

ADMINISTRATIVE/ORGANIZATIONAL COMPONENT

GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS

To gain experience working with agency administrators;

To gain greater understanding of how organizations function;

To apply conceptual material about organizational development and administration; and

To provide leadership in the creation and implementation of a project that contributes to the development of new information, policies, resources or programs within the agency.

EXAMPLES OF ADMINISTRATIVE/ORGANIZATIONAL PROJECTS

SW intern supervised six undergraduate students from an area college who were working on an art project at a correctional facility. The students came weekly and worked with a group of 10-15 inmates. The intern's responsibility was to supervise the students educationally, with regard to their leadership skills and interaction with the group, and administratively, with regard to compliance with the many institutional regulations and guidelines.

SW intern led a process to develop a new agency policy for the solicitation of funds from the community and their distribution among agency programs. The project involved convening a committee of senior agency administrators and program managers to work together to develop the new policy. The intern was responsible for organizing meetings, creating agendas, and facilitating the group's process.

At a family service agency, a SW intern led a process working with agency leaders to submit grant proposals to secure funds for creating three murals to "dress-up" new office/program space in an old warehouse. Two thousand dollars were received through three small grants to provide for supplies and the guidance of a local artist who worked with families and staff to construct the murals.

In an outpatient counseling center, two SW interns reviewed agency intake procedures and solicited staff input regarding problems and suggestions. They then designed new intake procedures which were adopted by the agency. This change helped to shorten the waiting time for newly referred clients.

At a child and family agency, an intern worked with agency and school personnel to develop a grant proposal for an after-school group services program. The intern organized the process, took responsibility for the research and writing, and interfaced with the necessary community agencies.