



MSW Field Education Manual

2022-2023

Department of Graduate Social Work
WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY | WWW.WCUPA.EDU



**DEPARTMENT OF GRADUATE SOCIAL WORK
FIELD EDUCATION MANUAL 2022-2023**

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General Information

Introduction to Field Education

Field Education, a core component of the MSW curriculum, allows students to develop and demonstrate generalist and specialized competencies in structured practice settings. MSW students are placed in a wide variety of settings such as hospitals, schools, substance abuse treatment programs, child welfare agencies, advocacy and policy organizations, and agencies that serve older adults, veterans, and military families.

The connection between the theoretical and conceptual contributions of both the classroom and the field experience are firmly supported by the curricular design of the MSW Program: 1) the concurrent nature of the practice and field courses; 2) the integrated role of practice faculty as both classroom instructors and field liaisons; and 3) the close and collaborative relationships that the program maintains with field partners.

The unique Field Education experience provides:

- A personalized placement process in which our directors of field education collaborate with students to identify field sites
- Two, nine-month placements that promote growth in students' competence and independence over time
- A platform from which to measure student's learning and application of social work skills
- Integrated Practice classes that enhance students' experiential learning

In accordance with the [Council on Social Work Education \(CSWE\)](#), all students must complete at least 952 hours of field experience to graduate. Hours are completed through two separate field experiences, the first totaling 448 hours and the second totaling 560 hours. West Chester University's MSW Department partners with hundreds of agencies in the region, allowing us to meet students' diverse interests within the social work profession.

All field placements are arranged by the department's directors of field education, rather than by students. It is recommended that individuals apply early to receive the broadest availability of placement opportunities.

As prescribed by the CSWE, academic credit cannot be given for life or work experience, or for internships outside of an accredited graduate social work program.



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Field Terminology

A review of relevant terminology follows:

Generalist Year – The initial portion of the MSW program that includes generalist coursework and fieldwork. In the full-time two-year program, this is the first year of the program. For part-time students Generalist Year will extend beyond a one-year period.

Specialized Year – The second portion of the MSW program that includes advanced coursework and fieldwork specific to individuals, families and communities. This is when students will learn advanced skills identified in the MSW Program's specialization and associated competencies.

Director of Field Education (also known as *Field Director*) – The MSW department staff member/s who works to identify field placement opportunities and match students to sites to complete their field education experiences. We have two Directors of Field Education, one for the West Chester campus and one for the Philadelphia campus. These staff members allocate 100% of their time to the role of Field Director.

Field Agency (used interchangeably with *Field Site* or *Field Placement*) – The place where students will complete their field education experience. This may be a hospital, school, government agency, etc.



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Faculty Field Liaison – The faculty member who is the bridge between the student and the MSW Field Instructor during the field experience. The faculty field liaison leads the corresponding classroom practice course associated with a students’ field experience, conducts site visits, and is a key component of the learning process.

MSW Field Instructor – The individual at the field agency who holds a Master of Social Work degree from an accredited CSWE program and has a minimum of two years post MSW practice experience. They provide supervision, mentoring and evaluation of the student’s field experience.

Task Supervisor - The individual at the field agency who provides supervision of daily tasks but does not meet the criteria to serve as the Field Instructor.

External MSW Supervisor – The individual who does not work at the student’s field agency but who holds a Master of Social Work degree from an accredited CSWE program and has a minimum of two years post MSW practice experience. They provide Field Instruction for students who are supervised solely by a Task Supervisor at their field agency.

Calendars

- [Field Education Calendar](#)
- [Seminars in Field Education \(SIFI\) Schedule](#)

This Seminar in Field Instruction (SIFI) series of seven 3-hour sessions is designed for field instructors of undergraduate and graduate social work students. Each session will be a blend of lecture, discussion, interactive exercises, and time for participants to present issues, questions and/or concerns arising from the supervisory relationship. Field instructors who have not yet completed the SIFI course at WCU or another accredited social work program are expected to attend. However, all social work field instructors are invited and welcome to attend regardless of years of service or the number of students previously supervised.

Standards of Professional Behavior

The West Chester University MSW Program is committed to preparing students to respond to the needs of vulnerable and oppressed individuals, families and communities through the lens of human rights and social and economic justice. To that end, we hold ourselves and our



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students to the highest standards of professional behavior and to the [NASW Code of Ethics](#). The following expectations apply:

Performance

- Meets attendance expectations of classes, field placement and other meetings with regularity and reliability
- Notifies professors, field instructors and colleagues prior to any absences or late arrivals
- Arrives for class, field placement and other meetings prepared to participate
- Meets course expectations

Conduct

- Demonstrates integrity and honesty in all matters
- Demonstrates willingness to work collaboratively with others
- Shows respect for others' opinions
- Remains open to positive and constructive feedback from peers, faculty, staff and field instructors
- Demonstrates a willingness to understand and engage difference and diversity

Communication

- Demonstrates effective and respectful verbal and non-verbal communication (e.g. eye contact, personal space)
- Demonstrates the ability to discuss and process information
- Articulate ideas, thoughts, and concepts clearly

Self-Awareness and Self Control

- Communicates effectively and respectfully
- Demonstrates an awareness of personal strengths and challenges
- Demonstrates an understanding of the appropriate use of self-disclosure
- Demonstrates emotional regulation
- Demonstrates unimpaired judgment and decision-making

Use of Technology

- Uses public and private technology (including but not limited to social networking, texting, emailing, voicemail, data storage) in a professional manner
- Abides by specific classroom and field policies regarding use of all technologies
- Follows the ethical and legal standards for privacy and confidentiality in accordance with state, federal, agency and institutional standards



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Field Curriculum and Course Descriptions

Field education, also referred to as field experience or field practicum, is an essential part of your study in the MSW program. You will have the opportunity to apply what you are learning in the classroom to a social work setting. The field experience allows you to develop key social work skills in a supportive environment where you are encouraged to lean outside your comfort zone and learn from your mistakes.

The field education experience requires 952 hours of fieldwork over two placements, a generalist placement and a specialized placement. Generalist field placement requires 448 hours of fieldwork (16 hours per week) and focuses on the development of core competencies such as utilizing ethical principles to conduct practice. Specialized field placement requires 560 hours of fieldwork (20 hours per week) and emphasizes development of skills in advanced generalist or clinical settings.

Generalist Field Courses

WCU's MSW students are required to complete field courses (SWG 501, 502) and field practicums (SWG 596, 597) as a part of the generalist curriculum. The course descriptions guide the work to ensure students are meeting the required social work competencies with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

SWG 501 Social Work Generalist I Course Description

SWG 501 is the first of two required generalist year practice courses. It provides an introduction to strengths-based generalist practice with individuals and families using a collaborative approach. The course is designed to allow students the opportunity to demonstrate generalist level competencies.

Grounded in a person and environment construct, an appreciation of oppressive systems, and respect for human diversity, SWG 501 provides students with generalist knowledge, skills and values necessary for generalist social work practice with individuals and families. This course is taken concurrently with the Generalist Field Practicum, SWG 596, as a way to provide students with the opportunity to integrate their developing competencies across knowledge, values and skills.

SWG 502 Social Work Generalist II Course Description

Building on SWG 501: Generalist Practice I, this course focuses on theory and practice for work with groups, including therapeutic units, families, groups within organizations, teams, and community groups. In accordance with social work values, special attention is given to diverse



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populations. This includes individuals, groups, and communities affected by different forms of oppression on the basis of perceived age, ability, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, and gender.

Grounded in a person and environment construct, an appreciation of oppressive systems, and respect for human diversity, SWG 502: Generalist Practice II provides students with generalist knowledge, skill, and values, and cognitive affective capacity necessary for social work practice with families and groups. This course is taken concurrently with the Generalist Field Practicum, SWG 597 to provide students the opportunity to integrate developing competencies.

SWG 596/597 Generalist Field Practicum I/II Course Descriptions

SWG 596/597 consist of a structured field experience at an assigned practicum site for 16 hours per week during the academic semester. Included in the 16 hours is a mandatory 60-minute individual supervisory session with an approved Field Instructor, as well as at least 30 minutes of additional supervisory time in group or other settings. Grounded in a person and environment construct, an understanding of oppressive systems, and respect for human diversity, the course provides students with the opportunity to develop competencies for generalist social work practice with individuals and families.

Within the generalist field practicum, students must complete 224 hours each semester for a total of 448 hours over the two courses.

Specialized Field Courses

Specialized practice opportunities are designed to allow students the opportunity to develop and demonstrate the competencies that MSW faculty members developed to reflect the program's specialization. This approach to social work addresses well-being from a trauma-informed, recovery perspective grounded in human rights, while recognizing that focusing on human rights is key to social justice and sustainable wellness.

SWG 561 Specialized Social Work Practice with Individuals Course Description

Building on the strengths-based, collaborative model of social work practice covered in SWG 501 and 502 (or 503 for Advanced Standing students), this course focuses on theory driven and evidence-based practice with individuals. Theories and models of practice to be covered in this course include attachment theory, object relations theory, cognitive-behavioral theory, humanistic/feminist theories, relational theory, social constructivist theory (which underlies the narrative approach) and the crisis intervention model. Each of these theoretical orientations



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provides a different lens through which to conceptualize clients, ultimately, guiding assessment, intervention, and evaluation of practice in a theoretically congruent manner. The use of each of these theoretical approaches in short term treatment and crisis intervention will also be explored and critiqued. Special attention will be given to the way in which abilities, class, ethnicity/racial identity, gender identity, and sexual orientation shape concern/"problem" identification and affect engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation. The integration of social work values and ethics within the context of the therapeutic relationship will be emphasized.

SWG 563 Advanced Practice II: Integrative Seminar Course Description

Building on the strengths-based, collaborative model of social work practice covered in generalist practice courses and the trauma-informed and recovery-oriented theories and models of specialized courses, this seminar prepares students to respond to the impact of trauma, loss, and grief on individuals, families, and communities within a human rights and social justice framework. There are three main foci for the course: Interprofessional Collaborative Practice; crisis theory, response to traumatic loss, and grief; and instilling hope for recovery. The capstone assignment for this course (and for the MSW curriculum) is an interprofessional simulation involving preparedness and response to a community-wide crisis affecting individuals, families, and communities.

SWG 598/599 Course Descriptions

These two specialized field practicum courses consist of a structured field experience at an assigned practicum site for 20 hours per week during each of the two academic semesters. Included in the 20 hours is a mandatory 60-minute individual supervisory session with an approved Field Instructor, as well as at least 30 minutes of additional supervisory time in group or other settings.

Within the specialized field practicum, students must complete 224 hours each semester for a total of 448 hours over the two courses.

Competencies and Behaviors

Generalist Year

Students in their generalist year of practice are provided with generalist knowledge, skills and values necessary for generalist social work practice with individuals and families. Competencies are measurable behaviors comprised of knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive/affective processes. Students in their generalist year practice courses will be expected to demonstrate



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competency in the following nine competency areas as evaluated by observable behaviors related to each:

Generalist Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant laws and regulations that may impact practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision-making and how to apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. They also understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers understand the profession's history, its mission, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession. Social Workers also understand the role of other professions when engaged in inter-professional teams. Social workers recognize the importance of life-long learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure they are relevant and effective. Social workers also understand emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice.

Expected Generalist Behaviors

1. 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;
2. Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations;
3. Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;
4. Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and
5. Use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.

Generalist Competency 2: Engage in Diversity and Difference in Practice

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are



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understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power.

Expected Generalist Behaviors

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

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

Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society has fundamental human rights such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers understand the global interconnections of oppression and human rights violations, and are knowledgeable about theories of human need and social justice and strategies to promote social and economic justice and human rights. Social workers understand strategies designed to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social goods, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably and that civil, political, environmental, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected.

Expected Generalist Behaviors

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

Generalist Competency 4: Engage in Practice Informed Research and Research Informed Practice



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Social workers understand quantitative and qualitative research methods and their respective roles in advancing a science of social work and in evaluating their practice. Social workers know the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and culturally informed and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Social workers understand that evidence that informs practice derives from multi-disciplinary sources and multiple ways of knowing. They also understand the processes for translating research findings into effective practice.

Expected Generalist Behaviors

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

Generalist Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

Social workers understand that human rights and social justice, as well as social welfare and services, are mediated by policy and its implementation at the federal, state, and local levels. Social workers understand the history and current structures of social policies and services, the role of policy in service delivery, and the role of practice in policy development. Social workers understand their role in policy development and implementation within their practice settings at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels and they actively engage in policy practice to effect change within those settings. Social workers recognize and understand the historical, social, cultural, economic, organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy. They are also knowledgeable about policy formulation, analysis, implementation, and evaluation.

Expected Generalist Behaviors

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



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

Social workers understand that engagement is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers value the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to facilitate engagement with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand strategies to engage diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may impact their ability to effectively engage with diverse clients and constituencies. Social workers value principles of relationship-building and inter-professional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate.

Expected Generalist Behaviors

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

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

Social workers understand that assessment is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in the assessment of diverse clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand methods of assessment with diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers recognize the implications of the larger practice context in

the assessment process and value the importance of inter-professional collaboration in this process. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may affect their assessment and decision-making.



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Expected Generalist Behaviors

1. Collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies;
2. 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;
3. Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies; and
4. Select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies.

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

Social workers understand that intervention is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are knowledgeable about evidence-informed interventions to achieve the goals of clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to effectively intervene with clients and constituencies. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing and implementing evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals. Social workers value the importance of inter-professional teamwork and communication in interventions, recognizing that beneficial outcomes may require interdisciplinary, inter-professional, and inter-organizational collaboration.

Expected Generalist Behaviors

1. Critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies;
2. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies;
3. Use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes;



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4. Negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies; and
5. Facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals.

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

Social workers understand that evaluation is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. Social workers recognize the importance of evaluating processes and outcomes to advance practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in evaluating outcomes. Social workers understand qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness.

Expected Generalist Behaviors

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

Specialized Year

Specialized competencies are focused on theory-driven and evidence-based practice with individuals, families, and communities. The field practice experiences will allow students to explore approaches to assessment, conceptualization, intervention, and evaluation across modalities such as Motivational Interviewing, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Narrative Therapy, and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. Specialized practice will pay special attention to the way in which abilities, class, ethnicity/racial identity, gender identity, and sexual orientation shape interventions and engagements with individuals. Competencies are measurable behaviors comprised of knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive/affective processes.



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Students in their specialized year practice courses will be expected to demonstrate competency in the following nine competency areas as evaluated by observable behaviors related to each:

Specialized Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Social workers are expected to recognize ethical and professional tensions apparent in practice, policy, and research scenarios by synthesizing the social work values presented in the NASW Code of Ethics. In the service of social justice through the realization of human rights for individuals, families, and communities, social workers will discern competing factors contained in ethical dilemmas and flexibly apply ethical frameworks for problem solving in such cases. Social workers will display and model consistent professional behavior in appearance, and in oral, written, and electronic communication. Social workers will be clear about their role and function while respecting and understanding the collaborative role of other professionals. Finally, social workers will model reflection and self-regulation of their personal values and maintain professionalism always.

Expected Specialized Behaviors

1. Student identifies and resolves ethical dilemmas in practice with individuals, families and communities in ways that promote social justice and the realization of human rights.
2. Student conducts themselves professionally and ethically in communication and demeanor.
3. Student develops and maintains a professional social work role in interactions and collaborations with interprofessional team members and other practitioners.
4. Student uses supervision and consultation to ensure accountability and responsiveness to the dynamic, changing contexts of social work practice and policy environments.

Specialized Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

Social workers will demonstrate a nuanced understanding of dimensions of multicultural diversity and intersectionality when speaking about, writing about, and engaging with individuals, families, and communities. Social workers will extend their knowledge of the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination by presenting as learners and engaging clients and constituencies as experts of their own experience. Social workers will adopt a recovery, resiliency, and capacity building framework when collaborating with individuals,



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families, and communities to promote wellbeing from a social justice perspective grounded in the realization of human rights.

Expected Specialized Behaviors

1. Student extends their knowledge of the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination by presenting as learners and engaging clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences.
2. Student engages in anti-oppressive practice by identifying and suggesting ways to eliminate organizational or program activities that explicitly or implicitly reflect institutional racism, sexism, gender bias, disability bias, and/or other forms of bias/discrimination.
3. Student actively engages in multiculturally inclusive practice, assessment, intervention and evaluation strategies.

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

Human rights-based practice is a social work imperative. In pursuit of social justice and the realization of human rights, social workers will consider historical context and a trauma-informed perspective while critically assessing and mediating the ongoing effects of structural barriers on individuals, families, and communities. By practicing cultural humility and consistently applying a human rights lens to micro, mezzo, and macro efforts in interprofessional settings, social workers collaborate with and empower others to advocate for social, economic, and environmental justice on behalf of individuals, families, and communities.

Expected Specialized Behaviors

1. Student uses cultural humility to learn from and educate individuals, families, and communities about the ongoing effects of structural barriers.
2. Student evaluates and critically analyzes organizational or legislative policies, funding mechanisms, and/or programs using a focus on human rights and social justice.
3. Student seeks out opportunities to observe and/or engage with major stakeholders or advocacy groups relevant to the promotion of human rights and social justice for the populations served by the agency.



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Specialized Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice

Social workers understand qualitative and quantitative research methods for evaluating practice and improving services to individuals, families, and communities. Social workers seek out and prioritize stakeholder input and theory to inform research design and scientific inquiry. Social workers recognize the role of research and evaluation in advancing the knowledge base of clients, practitioners, organizations, and policymakers. Social workers consistently interpret and use culturally relevant research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery that advances the realization of human rights and social justice.

Expected Specialized Behaviors

1. Student translates research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery with individuals, families, and communities.
2. Student seeks and prioritizes stakeholder input to inform practice and research.
3. Student collects, organizes, analyzes, interprets, and/or disseminates data informing practice decisions or evaluating program processes or outcomes.

Specialized Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

Social workers represent, mobilize, and empower disenfranchised populations of individuals, families, and communities to have a voice and advocate in support or opposition to local, state, national, and international policies. They promote the realization of human rights and social justice through engagement in individual and/or collective advocacy efforts. Social workers lead in developing and sustaining interprofessional collaborations to address complex and contemporary issues facing individuals, families, and communities. They synthesize ecological influences impacting social welfare policy relevant to the community, thus, creating a platform for policy change at micro, mezzo, and macro levels. They promote social transformation by fostering individual and collective problem solving, and by critically identifying and applying community organization methods in practice.

Expected Specialized Behaviors



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1. Student analyzes and advocates for policies and procedures that empower and enhance dignity for individuals, families, and communities consistent with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
2. Student seeks out opportunities to engage in collective problem-solving with interprofessional stakeholders and communities to address complex issues.
3. Student represents, mobilizes, and empowers disenfranchised populations of individuals, families, and communities to have a voice and advocate in support or opposition to local, state, national, and/or international policies.

Specialized Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, and Communities

Social workers cultivate collaborative helping alliances across client systems drawing on theory and evidence to inform engagement. Utilizing an ecological perspective, social workers will build on generalist skills of empathy and reflection to engage multiculturally diverse individuals, families, and communities by employing knowledge of relationship dynamics and power differentials. Social workers will engage effectively with interprofessional groups, teams, and organizations to promote human rights and social justice in an ever-changing social and political context.

Expected Specialized Behaviors

1. Student works collaboratively with multiculturally diverse individuals, families, and communities and interprofessional teams to establish goals and outcomes.
2. Student seeks out opportunities to engage in dialogues with stakeholders and other relevant members of the varied communities to promote inclusive practices that empower and respond to the needs of individuals, families, and communities.
3. Student applies an intersectional analysis of dynamics of power and privilege to engagement with vulnerable individuals, families, and communities.

Specialized Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, and Communities

Social workers will augment their assessment skill repertoire with additional culturally relevant evidence-based practices consonant with social work values, including those that are ecological, trauma-informed, and use a recovery approach. These specialized assessment methods incorporate interprofessional collaboration to address complex situations faced by multiculturally diverse clients who, often, have had their human rights violated.

Expected Specialized Behaviors



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1. Student uses an ecological, trauma-informed, and recovery-focused perspective to inform the conceptualization of the needs and strengths of individuals, families, and communities.
2. Student assesses readiness for change from an ecological and multiculturally diverse perspective in practice with individuals, families, or communities and plans intervention strategies accordingly.
3. Student collects, organizes, and interprets data relevant to individual, family, or community systems to develop mutually agreed upon intervention plans and goals.

Specialized Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, and Communities

Effective interventions with clients and constituencies requires a sensitivity to readiness for change and a depth of knowledge about the range of best practice and evidence-informed interventions applicable for individuals, families, and communities. Social workers understand theories of trauma and recovery relative to individual, family, and community functioning, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to effectively intervene with client systems. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-informed interventions to achieve goals in micro, mezzo, and macro practice. Above all, social workers value the importance of collaboration in interventions, recognizing that beneficial outcomes may require multi-level and interprofessional collaboration along with client feedback to advance social justice and realize human rights.

Expected Specialized Behaviors

1. Student implements client-centered interventions that enhance resiliency, support recovery, and build capacity with individuals, families, and communities.
2. Student adapts interventions to account for the unique ecosystemic context of individuals, families, and communities.
3. Student takes a proactive approach to intervention strategies, working collaboratively to build client or community capacity to develop, implement, and sustain their own solutions to problems.

Specialized Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, and Communities

With evaluation being a critical aspect in the delivery of social services, social workers will competently evaluate their evidence-based social work practice and promote professional accountability. This, in turn, advances practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social worker's participation on interprofessional teams will utilize multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to create and implement evaluation plans to monitor processes and assess



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outcomes for individuals, families, and communities. Social workers also recognize the importance of dissemination of practice evaluations through professional venues to advance the realization of human rights and social justice.

Expected Specialized Behaviors

1. Student uses supervision to evaluate their own practice effectiveness and the effectiveness of intervention strategies used in practice.
2. Student applies culturally relevant theories of human behavior and stakeholder input to guide evaluation of practice with individuals, families, and communities.
3. Student analyzes, monitors, and evaluates interventions and program processes and outcomes.

Evaluation of Learning

Overview

Student performance in field practicum is evaluated through a variety of measures designed to be supportive and collaborative. Both the Field Instructor and the Faculty Field Liaison contribute to the student's evaluation including:

- Student's self-reflection in Learning Agreement
- Direct observation of student
- Process recordings (only required in the first field practicum)
- Practice vignettes and self-reflections in the Learning Agreement and the Final Evaluation

Additionally, Field Instructors will evaluate:

- Reports of direct observation of student from other team members
- Weekly supervision and ongoing consultation
- Collaborative assessment of mid-semester and end-of-semester performance

Additionally, Faculty Field Liaisons will evaluate:

- Field discussions in practice class or field seminars
- Ongoing consultation with student and Field Instructor
- Ratings and comments from the Field Instructor on mid-semester and end-of-semester evaluations



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The Faculty Field Liaison has sole responsibility for grading student performance in field practicum. While s/he may rely on insight from the Field Instructor, the grade is ultimately the decision of the Faculty Field Liaison in accordance with the course syllabus.

Learning Agreements

In the beginning of the semester for each Field Practicum course (SWG 596/597/598/599), a Learning Agreement is a required assignment. The Learning Agreement is designed to facilitate the collaborative development of a plan for student learning in the Field Practicum. The Learning Agreement promotes a conversation between the Student and the MSW Field Instructor with the aim that they will formulate a plan together to identify practice competencies relevant to professional goals, opportunities available to develop these competencies, and a sequence that supports the learning process.

Field Instructors design and assign appropriate fieldwork practice activities to create opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate across the core components of each practice year:

- Generalist Year: individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- Specialized Year: individuals, families, and communities

MSW Field Instructors are expected to actively engage in a process of guidance, observation, and feedback on the student's development of these generalist competencies. This process is fundamental not only to the student's professional development but also to a valid process of evaluation. In cases where a Task Supervisor is involved in the assignment of routine tasks, *ad hoc* supervision, and mentoring, the Task Supervisor should submit their independent assessment to the Field Instructor who will incorporate this supplementary information into the end of the semester evaluation.

The Learning Agreement is organized into learning goals aligned to the appropriate practice year. This applies to all students in all types of field settings.

Learning Goals must:

- Adhere to the SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound)
- Be supported by at least two objectives
- Include a mechanism for evaluation



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Mid-Semester Evaluations

For each Field Practicum course (SWG 596/597/598/599), MSW Field Instructors complete a Mid-Semester Evaluation to document and discuss the students' progress towards the learning agreement goals. Ideally, evaluation of performance in field practicum is a collaborative process between the Student and Field Instructor. Through the Mid-Semester Evaluation, the Field Instructor identifies the students' strengths and weaknesses in demonstrating the social work competencies and if needed, a correction plan is enacted to assist the student.

End of Semester Evaluations

End of semester evaluations are administered through the Social Work Education Assessment Project (SWEAP). The Field Placement/Practicum Assessment Instrument (FPPAI) was developed to assess student practice of the EPAS Core Competencies in Field Placement/Practicum. The FPPAI consists of a series of items, related to each EPAS Core Competency, and related behaviors, to be scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale by the field instructor. In addition to the quantitative portion of the FPPAI, the assessment also includes an optional qualitative questionnaire/text.

Placement Process

Field Readiness Checklist

This checklist reviews the timeline for when students should be completing the appropriate field tasks to ensure a smooth transition into their field placement. The timeline includes the following:

- ✓ Completion of field application in TK20
- ✓ Time/Day availability for field placement
- ✓ Scheduling to meet with the Field Director
- ✓ Selecting field placement site preferences
- ✓ Discuss employment-based field placement options (if applicable)
- ✓ Review of the referral process/connecting students to a field site for an interview
- ✓ Setting up the field Interview with field site
- ✓ Completing all necessary clearances and purchasing Professional Liability Insurance
- ✓ Additional requirements for the field placement site (additional health or drug screenings, vaccinations)



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- ✓ Receive an EPIC program (HRSA Grant Program) overview
- ✓ Connecting with field instructor to coordinate schedule and complete onboarding requirements
- ✓ Attending student field orientation

Field Application

The application addresses the requirements for completing field placements, such as, completing their field placement during consecutive Fall and Spring Semester, the hour requirements, the expectation that students are expected to commit at least one full day in field during normal business hours (evening/weekend only opportunities are not available), expectations around Employment Based Field Placements, purchasing professional liability insurance and obtaining the appropriate clearances starting each year of field, completing additional health or drug screenings required by the field placement site, and understanding the policies around students driving clients.

Students are also expected to review and sign that they understand that they are agreeing to abide by the NASW Code of Ethics, Academic Integrity Policy, WCU Graduate Social Work Standard of Professional Behavior and the WCU Graduate Social Work Policies in the Graduate Catalog, and that they are responsible for adhering to the policies of their field placement site. For a list of all these agreements and policies, please click [Graduate Social Work Field Policies](#).

Any student requesting a generalist or specialized field placement for the following Academic Year must complete the field application in TK 20. *A generic cover letter and resume are needed to complete the application process.* Students are encouraged to utilize campus resources: Student Success Center (Philadelphia Campus) or the Career Development Center to develop a cover letter and update their resume. During the field placement matching process, the student's resume and cover letter will be sent to a potential field placement site by the field director.

The field application is completed by all rising generalist and specialized year students *before* meeting individually with the field director to discuss field placement options.

- 11/1: The Field Application in TK20 opens for rising Specialized Year students to complete.
- 12/1: The Field Application in TK20 opens for rising Generalist Year students to complete.



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- All current Generalist and Specialized Year students are expected to complete their field application for the following academic year before January 15th.

Once this application is complete, students may contact their field director to schedule their initial field placement planning meeting. Students will not be referred to potential field placements until they have met with their field director. Students will be referred to one placement setting at a time by the field director. If the student is offered the field placement following the interview, they are expected to accept the opportunity and remain committed to the field placement site for the full academic year.

Review the [MSW Field Education website](#) or refer to the Graduate Social Work Resources D2L page.

For more information and guidance for completing the field application in TK20, please click on the links below:

- [All Guides are on the TK20 Website](#) (Click Social Work)
 - [Field Applications Guide](#)
 - [How to Complete a Social Work Application](#)
 - [How to Edit a Social Work Application and How to Reset Your Password](#)
- [Creating a TK20 Account](#)
- [Did you forget or need to change your TK20 Password?](#)

Procedure for Matching Student and Site

The identification of a field placement is a collaborative process between the student and the Director of Field Education, who meets individually with each student to explore placement possibilities. Students submit a resume and complete an application providing information about career goals, experience, strengths, challenges, and other details that guide the placement process. Students are asked to be flexible and open to a variety of learning opportunities. Once a student is accepted at a field site, this placement cannot be changed without advising.

- The Director of Field Education discusses possible placements considering the students:
 - Learning needs and professional interests
 - Level of professional development based on life and social service experience
 - Course work in the program
 - Geographic location and available transportation
 - Unique circumstances



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Evening and weekend-only placements are not available. Students are required to have some weekday hours at field sites to participate in learning activities that are only available during the day such as case consultations, staff meetings, and professional training.

Students who are also enrolled in the **Graduate Certificate in Gerontology** program must make the field director aware of the need for an approved aging services field site early on in the placement process.

Students who have satisfactorily completed their generalist field practicum are required to update their field practicum application before meeting with the Director of Field Education to guide the selection of the specialized placement. Students must also renew their liability insurance. All students completing a field placement must fulfill any additional requirements specific to the site where they are placed.

Field Committee

The field committee is comprised of the Practice Instructor/Field Liaison, Assistant Dept. Chair & Graduate Coordinator, the Field Committee Chair, and both campus Field Directors. The field committee convenes to discuss field practices, policies, and protocols related to field education.

The committee will also review requests for a change in placement or when a student is terminated from their field placement site. The committee will review the student's performance in field thus far, including their responses to our standard reflection questions, and share the significant areas of concern and acknowledge the challenges which impacted the student's performance into the assessment process.

Procedure for Change in Placement Proposals

There are structured next steps required for a proposed change in field placement. This process could take several weeks to complete, we advise that students continue fulfilling the field hours throughout this process.

The next steps would be:

1. Student has conversation with Field Instructor
2. Student and Field Faculty Liaison will discuss a plan for preserving the field placement and developing goals that will fulfill your learning expectations.



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3. If there is still a request for a change in field placement, we would require the student to complete a Self-Reflection Assignment. We ask the students to take a week to reflect and complete this assignment.
4. Once the Self-Reflection is complete, the Field Committee will review the reflection and decide the next steps.
5. The student would then be made aware of the outcome of this meeting.
6. There is no guarantee that a student will be replaced.

Removal from Field/Remediation Plan

The field committee meets to discuss the student's dismissal from their field placement. The committee is comprised of the Practice Instructor/Field Liaison, Assistant Dept. Chair & Graduate Coordinator, the Field Committee Chair, and both campus Field Directors. As a program committed to social justice and human rights, we serve as gatekeepers to the social work profession, where vulnerable populations are the primary recipients of services. Therefore, we must continually assess our students' readiness for field.

The committee will review the students' performance in the field thus far, including their responses to our standard reflection questions, and share the significant areas of concern where the student is not meeting expectations. We acknowledge the challenges which impacted the student's performance into the assessment process.

The decision to deny the replacement of a student is in accordance with the Graduate Social Work Department's Field Placement and Dismissal Policies.

If a student is not going to be replaced, they are directed to withdraw from their practices classes and encouraged to discuss this process with their Graduate Coordinator. In our experience, students dismissed from the field are more successful when they have time to focus on reflection and personal growth and have a lighter course load while in the field.

In the letter to the student, informing them of this decision there will be a list of stipulations that the student would need to complete to be reconsidered for a field placement in the following academic year.

Procedure for Transporting Clients

Students participating in field experiences pursuant to their course of study may be required to transport clients to the agency for which they are participating in field experience. It is



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recommended that students transport agency clients in agency vehicles. If an agency vehicle is not available, however, and the student chooses to transport an agency client in their personal vehicle it is mandatory that the student have adequate automobile insurance to cover any incidents that may occur during transportation of the agency client. Therefore, students are encouraged to contact their insurers prior to the commencement of their field practicum to discuss their coverage and any questions that they have about using their personal vehicles to transport clients.

Extended Hours Plan

Students who are employed full-time or have other extenuating time commitments that prevent them from completing the standard 16 or 20 hours per week of field, may be approved for Extended Field hours. Extended hours enable students to complete the same total number of required hours, but over more weeks, to reduce the average number of hours per week.

Generalist Year

- Total of 224 hours per semester for field practicum courses (SWG 596 and SWG 597)
- Average of no fewer than 12 hours over 20 weeks = 224 hours
- Includes field hours over breaks, including winter break between semesters and/or after the end of spring semester

Specialized Year

- Total of 252 hours per semester for field practicum courses (SWG 598 and SWG 599)
- Average of no fewer than 13 hours for up to 20 weeks until 252 hours completed
- A written plan for extended hours must be negotiated with the proposed field site's Field Instructor when the student interviews for the placement to ensure that the placement organization is in agreement with and willing to accommodate the extended hours plan.
- The student must submit all required documents to the Director of Field Education before beginning any field hours.
- The Director of Field Education must approve the plan for extended hours.



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- Acceptable activities before classes start include participating in orientation, job shadowing, and learning about the agency and its policies.
- Field practicum extended hours continue through WCU's winter and spring breaks and into the summer until all required hours are completed.
- The total number of hours per semester must be completed before the student can begin the next practicum course.
- Student must maintain an accurate log of completed field hours, signed by the Field Instructor and submitted to the Faculty Field Liaison.
- The Director of Field Education serves in lieu of the Faculty Field Liaison during extended hours outside of the scheduled semester. Students with a plan for extended hours will typically receive a grade of NG until required hours are completed and the Faculty Field Liaison assigns a final grade.
- A written plan for extended hours, separate or combined with an employment-based plan, must include:
 - Proposed start date for the field practicum hours
 - Projected end date for the completion of the required number of hours (224 or 280)
 - Days, specific times/hours, and total number of hours projected each week
- The extended hours plan must be signed by the:
 - Student
 - Student's employment supervisor (if applicable)
 - Proposed Field Instructor and proposed task supervisor (if applicable)
 - Director of Field Education

The written plan must be submitted to and approved by the Director of Field Education before the start of the semester. The plan is also submitted to the student's Faculty Field Liaison as an attachment to the student's Learning Agreement.

Employment Based Field Placements

- Employment-based field placements may be approved if the workplace is able to offer the student:



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- New assignments different from the student's role as an employee, which will meet the student's learning needs
- A Field Instructor who has an MSW (with two years post-MSW experience) and is someone other than the student's work supervisor
- A signed Affiliation Agreement with West Chester University
- To maintain the integrity of the student/Field Instructor relationship, dual relationships should be avoided. For example, the student and field instructor should not be friends or socialize outside of the work environment.
- The student, in consultation with the employer, must submit a written plan to the Director of Field Education for review.
- To ensure that all parties agree about the employment-based field practicum and that there will be no conflicts of interest between a student's field practicum assignments and work assignments, or between a student's Field Instructor and work supervisor, the plan must be signed by the:
 - Student
 - Student's employment supervisor
 - Proposed Field Instructor and proposed Task Supervisor (if applicable)
 - Director of Field Education
- The proposed plan must be submitted to and approved by the Director of Field Education prior to the start of the semester. The plan is also submitted to the student's Faculty Field Liaison as an attachment to the student's Learning Agreement.

Integrated Employment-Based Field Plan

As a program aligned with anti-oppressive practices, this plan provides MSW students currently working in social services the opportunity to complete field hours within their current role as an employee. Students whose applications are accepted would be permitted to count their work hours towards the required number of weekly field hours.

Here are the main criteria:

- You must be hired by a social service agency (not a staffing or temp agency).



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- You must clearly link your employment tasks to the 9 social work competencies and their concomitant generalist/specialized behaviors. There also must be opportunities for new learning and growth as a social work student.
- You must take responsibility for identifying an individual with an MSW and 2-years post graduate experience to serve as your Field Instructor in a supervisory capacity. *This individual may not be your employment supervisor.*
- If there is not a MSW with 2 years post-graduate experience, please be in contact with your field director ASAP.
- You may not apply for this plan for both years of field at the same place of employment.

Important things for you to consider:

While this integrated employment-based plan provides important opportunities for students to complete field practicum requirements, it also has the potential to *negatively impact future employment opportunities*.

The gold standard of field education has long been practicum experiences that provide students opportunities to learn new skills and develop specialized competencies. In some cases, current employment situations can provide these opportunities; in some cases, they cannot.

There would be significant implications for not developing these competencies, and therefore, we require a careful process to ensure that only appropriate employment plans are approved.

Students who experience a loss or change of their current employment, and subsequently dismissed from field, are at-risk of receiving a failing grade for field.

Clearances

Graduate Social Work students must complete clearances prior to entering their field practicum. Based on all standard affiliation agreements, all social work students must obtain **professional liability insurance, PA child abuse history certification, and a PA State Police Criminal Background Check**. Graduate Social Work students will also need to complete the Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse - Online Training Certificate. Upon confirmed placement, students should contact their field practicum site to inquire about any additional clearances needed and to ensure all onboarding criteria is met.

Students will not send clearances or professional liability insurance to anyone at WCU, unless directed by the affiliation agreement on file. Students are responsible for obtaining their clearances, any fees associated with onboarding practices, keeping copies of these documents, and providing copies to their field practicum site, upon request. It is strongly suggested that



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students contact their field practicum site for complete details as early as possible in the placement process.

For additional information, please visit the [Social Work Clearances website](#).

Student Protection Clearances Policy

Students participating in internships for academic credit are required by many affiliation agreements to obtain criminal record and child abuse clearances. There are two types of affiliation agreements for student internships, standard and non-standard. *Standard affiliation agreements* require students to obtain clearances and produce them directly to the internship site. Students will produce their clearances upon the site's request. *Non-standard affiliation agreements* vary in negotiated terms and are reviewed individually by the Office of Academic Affairs Agreements and Contracts to ensure compliance with WCU's legal obligations under the agreement and applicable laws.

Criminal justice information is protected by both federal and state laws. No WCU employee may review, collect, store, or disseminate student criminal record or child abuse clearances unless it is required by law or required in order to comply with the terms of a non-standard affiliation agreement. If it is required by law or affiliation agreement, the clearances will be managed only by the Dean's designated and trained staff, and in accordance with the applicable laws, University policies, and the specific terms of the affiliation agreement. The Dean's designated staff will be required to undergo security clearance training per the University's CJ CHRI Policy.

Drug Screening

Many field sites require drug screening prior to the start of the practicum experience. Testing could capture any marijuana use, including use of medical marijuana that has been prescribed by a physician. **The decision to permit prescribed levels of marijuana is solely at the discretion of the Site.**

For Partner Agencies

Selection Criteria

A field practicum site is selected based on the site's ability to provide students with opportunities to:



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- Practice social work with individuals, families and communities, including groups and larger organizations for Generalist Field students, and advanced practice opportunities for Specialized Field students
- Engage in social work practice that is consistent with the values, ethics, principles and theories of social work and the mission of West Chester University Graduate Social Work Department
- Learn through assignments and activities so that the student can achieve the competency behaviors identified for each semester of field practicum
- Practice non-discrimination regarding gender, sexual orientation, race, color, ethnicity, age, religion, or disability in providing services
- Provide orientation to the site services, procedures, human resources policies and guidelines, including safety policies and procedures
- Provide a qualified Field Instructor who has adequate time to supervise the student and meet with the faculty liaison; Completion of the Seminar in Field Instruction series is strongly encouraged for new Field Instructors

Responsibilities of Field Site

- Interview, select and accept students for field placement who are determined by the site to be appropriate
- Provide qualified Field Instructors who have the MSW degree and two years of post-graduate professional experience
- Provide orientation to the student on the social work site, its mission, purpose, functions and services, including safety policies and procedures
- Allow the Field Instructor adequate time to prepare for and provide a minimum of 60 minutes of individual student supervision weekly, to complete in collaboration with the student mid- and final semester evaluations, to attend field instruction information sessions and seminars conducted by the Program and to meet at least once per semester with the Faculty Field Liaison and/or Director of Field Education
- Provide adequate space and learning opportunities for the student to gain appropriate social work practice experience
- Sign an Affiliation Agreement with WCU indicating acceptance of designated responsibilities

Responsibilities of Field Instructor

- Assume primary responsibility for the student's field learning experience
- Develop assignments that assist in meeting the student's learning objectives, ensures the quality of services and protects clients



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- Provide consistent, scheduled, in-person, Field Instruction/supervision at least one hour per week that includes administrative, educational and supportive supervision
- Orient the student to the social work site, its mission, purpose, function and services within the community including safety policies and procedures
- Collaborate with the student to
 - Assess learning needs
 - Develop the student's Learning Agreement
 - Periodically review the Learning Agreement to monitor the student's progress
- Review and comment on the student's process recordings (two required in Generalist/1st field, optional for Specialized/2nd field) and other writing such as reports, and documentation of services provided
 - Provide ongoing, mutual and continuous evaluation and feedback of the student's work with clients, development and demonstration of competency behaviors, and respect for social work values and ethics
 - Collaborate, review and discuss with the student the mid-semester and final evaluations
 - Provide feedback to the Faculty Field Liaison regarding the student's development and demonstration of competency behaviors, and respect for social work values and ethics
 - Alert the Faculty Field Liaison by phone, email or request for a meeting regarding any problematic behaviors or other issues that arise between liaison site visits
- Attend program's orientation session for Field Instructors to become familiar with the MSW curriculum and the processes of field instruction
- Complete the Seminar In Field Instruction (SIFI) series offered by WCU Social Work or by another accredited social work program
- Collaborate with the Director of Field Education to:
 - Develop the site as a field practicum setting
 - Process an Affiliation Agreement
 - Complete a Field Instructor Application
 - Recommend the number and types of students the site can accommodate

Responsibilities of Task Supervisor (if applicable) **

*A Task Supervisor is applicable when the Field Instructor works in another department/program within the agency and the primary day-to-day supervision of the student would be provided by a task supervisor (a person without the social degree but is a key contributor to the student's learning and development).



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*A Task Supervisor is also applicable when a student is completing a field placement at an agency where there is not a MSW with two-years post graduate experience to provide the social work supervision.

- Assign and oversee the day-to-day tasks which contribute to the student's field learning experience
- Collaborate with the Field Instructor to develop assignments that assist in meeting the student's learning objectives, ensures the quality of services and protects clients
- Provide weekly administrative and supportive supervision
- Collaborate with the Field Instructor to orient the student to the social work site, its mission, purpose, function and services within the community including safety policies and procedures
- Collaborate with the student and field instructor to:
 - Assess learning needs
 - Develop the student's Learning Agreement
 - Periodically review the Learning Agreement to monitor the student's progress
- Provide ongoing, mutual and continuous evaluation and feedback
- Collaborate, review and discuss with the student the mid-semester and final evaluations
 - Provide feedback to the Field Instructor and Faculty Field Liaison regarding the student's growth and development
 - Alert the Field Instructor and Faculty Field Liaison by phone, email or request for a meeting regarding any problematic behaviors or other issues that arise between liaison site visits

Field Education Policies

All graduate students are held to the University's [academic policies and procedures outlined in the graduate catalog](#), including policies on Academic Integrity and Student Conduct. Additionally, students in the MSW program are expected to follow the Graduate Social Work Department's [Standards for Professional Behavior](#) as well as department-specific Field Education policies and procedures, which are outlined below.

Field Practicum Policy

Students in the MSW Program must earn a B or better in all field practicum courses (see below). Any grade of B- or lower in a field practicum course must be repeated with remediation. Only one field practicum course may be remediated and a grade of B or better is required before continuing to the next field practicum course.

SWG 596: Generalist Field Practicum I

SWG 597: Generalist Field Practicum II



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SWG 598: Specialized Field Practicum I

SWG 599: Specialized Field Practicum II

Field Placement Policy

If a student is referred to three field placements and not accepted, due to unprofessionalism, the Field Office reserves the right to suspend the placement process. The student may reapply for field placement in the next academic year.

Field Dismissal Policy

Students dismissed from field by their placement agency are subject to penalties which may include, but are not limited to, an F for the course, removal from field, removal from practice and field courses, and/or dismissal from the Graduate Social Work Program. When dismissal from field is related to a violation of the National Association of Social Workers' [Code of Ethics](#) students can be charged with a violation of academic integrity.

Safety, Wellness and Ethics

Safety in the Field

If, at any time, a student feels unsafe, uncomfortable, or unsure about engaging in their field placement, they should reach out to their Field Liaison for support. Student and community safety are WCU's top priority, and we are committed to supporting students in completing their MSW field requirements safely. When in doubt, reach out.

Incidents or injuries of serious nature are extremely rare in the field. We inform students of risk management and safety guidelines so that they can take appropriate precautions to be alert, be aware, be smart, and trust your instincts. Our goal is to facilitate students having a rich, rewarding, and safe field experience.

Students are expected to attend the Field Orientation to become familiar with issues of safety.

It is also expected that field instructors/agencies will provide necessary and appropriate information concerning issues of risks and will inform students of agency policies and procedures to be followed in the performance of field assignments. Students will also be instructed to inquire about this information at the time of orientation to their agency. Where appropriate, this information should include policies/practices regarding building/office security, home visiting, transportation of clients, staffing patterns for evening hours, infectious disease control, working with high-risk populations and other potential risk aspects unique to the specific setting/ populations/communities, etc., in which the student is practicing.



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Recognizing that the issues and dynamics involved in assessing and managing risks are most complex, it is expected that field instructors will carefully consider the assignments given to students and will actively anticipate, supervise and address the management of potential risks to which students might be exposed in their settings. As a guide, it is the school's position that students not:

- drive clients in their personal vehicle. If the field site has a car/van that students use for transporting clients, the student is responsible for verifying that the agency liability insurance policy covers the student.
- make home visits alone unless the client and environment of the home and community are so well known that an assessment of risk has been determined as minimal to almost non-existent;
- be left to staff an office or see clients when no other staff are present;
- be given any assignment that has not been assessed by the field instructor as to its potential risks; and
- be given an assignment with minimal risks without appropriate training or guidance as to precautions that should be taken.

The following are some additional safety guidelines that will help inform you and help prevent unnecessary risk.

- Become familiar with the neighborhood around your field placement. Ask questions, determine where to park, and/or assess the safest way to get from public transportation to your placement.
- Reflect on your personal attitudes, fears, biases, and stereotypes as they pertain to your impressions of the environment around you. If you feel uncomfortable in a certain area, talk to your field instructor. Anticipate how you will handle surprising or unplanned events.
- Review your agency's policies and procedures on risk management. Discuss the procedures with your field instructor as part of your orientation.
- If your field site has clients who are prone to aggression, ask to participate in any staff trainings that involve understanding precursors and predictors of aggressive behavior, reducing the risk of aggressive behavior, de-escalation strategies, non-violent self-defense, and dealing with the aftermath of client aggression. Appropriate roles for students with supervision are: calling for help, critical observation, debriefing with by-



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standers; follow-up and processing with Field Instructor. Agencies must be adequately staffed so that a student is never left alone with clients prone to aggression.

Home Visits

- Communicate! Let your field instructor or designee know where you are going and when you expect to return. Bring a cell phone with you. If possible, go on home visits in pairs.
- Familiarize yourself with where you are going, whether or not there is parking, or nearby public transportation
- Be alert to surroundings.
- If you encounter a client who is agitated, under the influence, or threatening in any way; work to de-escalate. Speak softly, but authoritatively. Ask the person to sit down. If you are still uncomfortable, be empathic, but move towards the exit and let the person know that you will reschedule your visit. Contact your field instructor. In emergencies, dial 911.

(Some of the above info included and adapted from the University of Chicago's Field program)

Wellness

A Lifelong Journey

As social workers, we regularly interact with people who are in vulnerable states often with experiences of oppression and trauma. To do this work ethically, we must ensure that we are well. We must actively engage in activities and practices that support our own wellness, whatever that is – wellness is personal. It may include things such as exercise, yoga, meditation, dancing, prayer or journaling. Whatever it is, we must make it a priority if we are to commit to working with vulnerable populations.

We must also be willing and able to recognize when we are not well and be prepared to seek support and/or make changes. Workers, and even students, who fail to do this are at risk of secondary trauma and eventual burnout. Once we are “burned out” we are no longer able to engage in ethical practice and can put others at risk, even unknowingly.

If you are concerned about your own wellness while a student in the MSW Program, please reach out to a trusted friend, a family member, a professional, your instructor or your advisor. Connection is important when you are feeling overwhelmed.



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Other resources include:

- [WCU Counseling & Psychological Services](#)
- Philadelphia campus students may contact Counseling & Psychological Services at 610.436.2301 or wcucc@wcupa.edu and request an appointment with a counselor on the Philadelphia campus for more info about [counseling on the Philadelphia campus](#) .
- Free [Yoga & Meditation at WCU](#)
- [Campus Recreation Center](#)
- [Free guided meditations](#)
- [The Center for Trans and Queer Advocacy](#)
- [The Resource Pantry: Food/Nutrition, and Other Basics](#)
- [WCU's Department of Public Safety](#) – (610) 436-3311

Ethics

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant laws and regulations that may impact practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision-making and how to apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. They also understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers understand the profession's history, its mission, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession. Social Workers also understand the role of other professions when engaged in inter-professional teams. Social workers recognize the importance of life-long learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure they are relevant and effective. Social workers also understand emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice.

NASW Core Values

According to the [NASW](#), “The mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of core values. These core values, embraced by social workers throughout the profession’s history, are the foundation of social work’s unique purpose and perspective:



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Field Documents

Student Documents

Posted on the [MSW Website](#) and on individual courses in D2L.