



TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY
CENTRAL TEXAS™

MSW Program

Field Instruction Manual



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Introduction

The MSW Program is part of the Department of Arts & Humanities in the College of Arts & Sciences at Texas A&M University- Central Texas.

The MSW program at TAMUCT offers a specialization in advanced Generalist Practice. Students may enter the program as a 60-hour student who learn generalist practice in the first year. In the second year of the program (last 30 hours) students learn to become advanced generalists. Students entering with a BSW from a CSWE accredited program or its equivalent may enter the advanced generalist year directly after graduation.

The TAMUCT MSW Field Instruction Manual is provided to explain the nature and scope of our field practicum for students, agency field instructors, community agencies, and interested others who wish to further the cause of professional social work education. It is our desire to work cooperatively with agency professionals in our common goals to help clients and communities and to bring about services to deal with the social and personal problems that exist in our communities.

Program Mission

The mission of the Master of Social Work Program at A&M University-Central Texas, a Hispanic Serving Institution in Central Texas, is to prepare high-quality graduates for leadership as advanced generalist social workers through education delivered in a rigorous and student-centered learning environment that promotes social work professional behavior, values and ethics, human and community well-being, respect for human diversity, challenges oppressive practices, within a global perspective, and is guided by a person-in-environment framework, knowledge based on scientific inquiry, and social work competencies in for urban and rural communities. The MSW program also prepares graduates for becoming licensed social workers and for further education.

The program is intended to prepare professional social workers for advanced level social work and leadership across a wide range of human service, health care, behavioral health, and protective service positions.

Generalist Social Work Practice:

Generalist practice is grounded in the liberal arts and the person-in-environment framework. To promote human and social well-being, generalist practitioners use a range of prevention and intervention methods in their practice with diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities, based on scientific inquiry and best practices. The generalist practitioner identifies with the social work profession and applies ethical principles and critical thinking in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Generalist practitioners engage diversity in their practice and advocate for human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice. They recognize, support, and build on the strengths and resiliency of all human beings. They engage in research-informed practice and are proactive in responding to the impact of context on professional practice.

Advanced Generalist Practice:



Advanced generalist practice is grounded in the professional foundation and incorporates the person-in-environment framework, strengths, and a problem-solving method. Its interventions extend and enhance the foundation competencies through a multi-system model which may incorporate a field of practice. Preparation for the advanced generalist provides theories, practice techniques, knowledge and application of values and ethics that prepare students for more complex generalist practice scenarios/ situations or enhanced roles within generalist practice settings. Advanced generalist practitioners identify with the social work profession and apply ethical principles and critical thinking at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Advanced generalist practitioners use a range of prevention and intervention methods in their practice with diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities, to promote human and social well-being. Advanced generalist practice employs best practices and is based on scientific inquiry. Advanced generalist practitioners engage diversity in their practice and advocate for human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice. They recognize, support, and build on the strengths and resiliency of all human beings.

The Social Work Field Placement

The purpose of the Social Work Field Placement is to integrate the social work knowledge, skills, values, and cognitive abilities learned in the classroom in a professionally supervised practical setting through the demonstration of the nine social work competencies identified by the Council on Social Work Education. The student's academic and practical learning experiences help to develop students into professional social workers.

Setting up a field placement is a complex process requires some advanced planning as the program approves all field placements with input from students. The Field Coordinator attempts to match students with placements for which they are best suited. As part of the placement process students are required to submit a field application and are required to attend a field orientation session.

Criteria for Admission to Field

- Admission to the MSW program
- Commitment to social work ethics & values
- Maintain a 3.0 GPA.
- Be in good academic standing.
- Complete the field application process.
- Attend the field orientation within the week of starting a field placement.
- Acceptance for field placement by the field agency.
- Students will be offered one agency field placement. Should this placement not work out, consultation with the Field Coordinator is needed to determine the next course of action.
- Students who exhibit behaviors inconsistent with the NASW Code of Ethics may not receive a placement until any behavioral issues are addressed.
- Some life circumstances such as criminal convictions, adult or child protective services referrals, medical or mental health conditions may make finding a field placement more



difficult. Students are asked to be honest with the Field Coordinator on the field applications about these issues.

- **Students who are unable to meet one or more of the above criteria may have delays or may be denied a field placement.**

The MSW Field Placement

The MSW field program consists of 3 courses. SOWK 5384 Field Instruction I. SOWK 5385 Field Instruction II, and SOWK 5985 Field Instruction III.

- SOWK 5384 & SOWK 5385 are taken in the foundation year, typically in conjunction with a practice methods class. Students are in an agency under professional social work supervision. They must accrue 225 clock hours in the agency when professional supervision is available for each course.
- SOWK 5985 is taken in the specialization year by either students who have completed the foundation course sequence or students who have been awarded advanced standing based on academic performance in a CSWE accredited BSW program where that degree was awarded. Students must accrue 510 clock hours in the agency when professional supervision is available for the semester in which it is taken.

These field placements involve more than just accumulating clock hours in the agency setting. Regular social work supervision of at least one hour per week is required and students must complete assignments and activities to help develop and demonstrate social work competencies. The individual learning contract is the guide for this activity. Each student in field instruction must be covered by professional liability insurance for each academic term while in field.

The social work competencies for field are the same for all field placements, although the expectations for behaviors differ between the foundation and specialized field. The social work competencies are:

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Competency 2: Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and Environmental Justice

Competency 3: Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice

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

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

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

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

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



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

Readiness for Field Instruction

Based on information obtained from the students' field applications, input from other social work faculty, interviews with students, and review of the eligibility criteria for field, the Field Coordinator selects an appropriate placement. Subsequently the student must be interviewed and accepted for placement by the agency and supervisor.

Students may provide input as to the type of placement they want or perhaps even the agency, but students do not choose their own placement and the Field Coordinator at TAMUCT should be the one who approaches the agency about a potential placement.

Process for Getting a Field Placement

- Step 1:** Students attend a mandatory pre-field orientation and submit application for field placement
- Step 2:** Student completes an interview with Field Coordinator
- Step 3:** Student and agency field instructor/task supervisors have interviews
- Step 4:** Agency acceptance of the field student or review information for another placement
- Step 5:** Field assignments given to agency field instructors & students
- Step 6:** TAMUCT secures Professional Liability insurance for the student.
- Step 7:** (If needed) Complete any background checks, health or drug testing, and any immunizations. There may be some cost incurred by the student for some of these
- Step 8:** At least one week prior to the start of the semester the student and agency field instructor meet to establish a schedule for field hours when semester begins
- Step 9:** Within two weeks of the start of the semester the student must submit an individualized learning contract. This should be prepared in collaboration with the field instructor.
- Step 10:** The student and field instructor should meet at least one hour per week in professional supervision. (The supervisor must have an MSW and two years of post-master's experience).
- Step 11:** The TAMUCT Field Liaison should visit with the student and the Field Instructor at least once per semester.

Note: Students should not begin the field placement before the first day of class or after the end of classes because the professional liability insurance is not in effect. Failure to complete these steps in a timely way may result in a delay in starting a field placement or a placement becoming unavailable.

Field Placements

Students entering field placement should understand that a placement is selected for the values of the social work learning experience. This selection process considers several factors including the availability of professional social work supervision, the interests of the student, availability of the placement to work with the MSW program and student providing learning experiences,



and the match between the student and the placement. The relationship between the field agency and the MSW program is formalized through a contract which takes some time to develop.

Students often make requests to schedule field placements on weekends and evenings. During such hour's professional supervision is often very limited and there are few placements that can provide this. There are also limits on the number of students an agency and supervisor can take on, as these agencies provide internships for other schools and other professions.

Field Placement in the Place of Employment

Some students request to receive a field placement in the place of their employment. These placements are not encouraged but may be permitted under some circumstances. To be placed in an employment-based internship, students must complete an additional application process and obtain the approval of the Practicum Education Coordinator. The purpose of this is to ensure quality field placement.

- Students in employment-based field placements will be expected to fulfill the same requirements as other students in internship.
- While performing their field responsibilities, students in employment-based internship must identify themselves to clients as social work students to ensure appropriate differentiation from their regular employment roles.
- Employers and practicum supervisors will ensure that the tasks used for student assignments are not the same as the assignments counted toward the field placement.
- Employers will agree to grant their student-employees the appropriate amount of time during the workday to fulfill their practicum requirements.
- Field Instructors supervising employment-based students must meet the same educational and supervisory qualifications established required of all practicum instructors as defined by CSWE.

Student Orientation

All students who enter field instruction must attend a TAMUCT MSW Field Orientation prior to entry into the field placement. The purpose of this orientation is to introduce to the expectations for field instruction. This orientation:

- Introduces students to the TAMUCT MSW Field Manual and its location on the MSW web page.
- Discusses the major requirements for completion of the field placement.
- Discusses preparation of the individualized learning contract.
- Covers the field evaluation process and evaluation form



- Covers expectations for working with the agency and field instructor.
- Discusses expectations for working with multiple systems.
- Covers expected professional behavior.
- Covers basic safety protocols.
- Discusses the need to integrate classroom and field experiences.

Developing a Field Calendar

- Students and Field Instructors should familiarize themselves with the academic and field calendar.
- Students should not begin working with clients in the agency until the first day of classes and must remain in the field placement until the last week of classes even if they have completed all the number of placement hours required.
- Students may attend an agency orientation prior to the first day of field placement, and those hours may be counted towards the student's total earned hours.
- Students are expected to adhere to a set weekly schedule for Field placement Practicum Education. This schedule should be developed with the Field Instructor.
- A standard Field instruction day consists of 7 work hours and 1 hour for a meal/break.
- Field hours may not be front loaded. Any hours beyond the required number will not be carried over or maintained from semester to semester or year to year.
- Students are to record the total number of hours spent in their Field placement course each day on the TAMUCT timesheet. These hours should be submitted weekly with the Field supervisor's signature. Students should track their total hours in field, but the MSW office will also keep a record for the total hours from the timesheets that are submitted electronically.
- Students must make up any time lost due to holidays, illness, weather days, emergencies, or delayed start to Practicum. The student, Faculty Liaison, and Field Coordinator are required to ensure that the minimum number of Field hours are completed for each semester.

Attendance in Field Instruction

- Students are to follow the agency's policies in the event of inclement weather. However, students are encouraged to use their judgement about traveling.
- In the event of absence due to inclement weather, the student, Field instructor, and the Field



Coordinator will create a schedule for the student to make up lost hours.

- Students must notify their Field instructor in advance of any unplanned or upcoming absences from the Practicum course.
- Excessive absences may lead to suspension or termination from the Field instruction course, and/or a failing grade in addition to dismissal from the program.
- If a student leaves the Field instruction earlier than the specified end date, the student may lose the placement and forfeit their hours.

Timesheets

Time sheets are used to track and document the number of field hours completed by a student. It is essential that these hours be reported to the MSW program in a timely and accurate manner. The minimum number of field hours is required to successfully complete the course and there is no provision for an incomplete because hours outside the academic term are not covered by liability insurance. Consequently, students are expected to:

- Report field hours honestly and accurately.
- Sign and get a field instructor signature on each timesheet.
- Any alteration of a signed timesheet must be initialed by both student and supervisor.
- Timesheets should be submitted every week. Late submission may receive point penalties.
- Each timesheet should be on the appropriate electronic timesheet form.
- Any time reported during customary mealtime must be explained.
- No time for commuting to and from the agency may be counted.
- Students are responsible for correctly summing and tracking their own field hours.
- Any falsification of hours is grounds for immediate termination from field and/or the MSW program.

Student Travel and Safety Procedures

If students are assigned to home or community visits, agencies are expected to take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of students. Any concerns the student has regarding either home or community visits should be discussed with the Field Instructor or Task Supervisor. If the issue is not resolved, the student should speak with the TAMUCT Faculty Field Coordinator or Field Liaison.

- Students should not transport clients, especially in their own cars.
- These safety guidelines should be observed for planning either home or community visits:
 - Visit between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.



- Visit accompanied by a co-worker.
- Inform the Task Supervisor or Field Instructor of the time and place of the home visit.
- Plan a route in advance.
- Use main streets for traveling on foot.
- Meet a client in a community meeting place (e.g., church, community center) if it is appropriate and feasible for the client.
- If it is not safe to enter a building alone, ask the client to meet you at the front door of the building and accompany you to the apartment.
- Use caution when entering elevators and stairwells.
- Carry official identification that establishes your status as an agency representative.
- Bring a charged cell phone.
- Use care in carrying bags and do not wear expensive jewelry.

Field Instruction Roles and Definitions

The **Field Instructor** provides ongoing professional social work supervision to the students during the term of the field placement. A **Field Instructor must have the MSW from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education and two years of post MSW experience.** A social work license is preferred. The Field Instructor provides educational direction for the student in meeting the individualized learning contract, ensuring that all five generalist systems are addressed, that specialized experiences for more than one of these systems are available, and providing ongoing social work supervision. They are responsible for supervising, teaching social work knowledge, values, skills, ethics, and evaluating student performance using the TAMUCT Field Instruction Evaluation form. The Field Instructor also verifies a student's hours in field and signs off on the timesheet submitted to TAMUCT. expectation is that the Field Instructor provides a minimum of one hour of professional supervision for the student each week. The TAMUCT MSW program at TAMUCT provides an orientation for Field Instructors twice each year and Field Instructors are strongly encouraged to participate in this. A field Instructor may be employed in the same agency as the student, but Field Instructors may provide their supervision externally if the placement agency does not have a Task Supervisor who meets the qualifications for a Field Supervisor.

A **Task Supervisor** is a professional in an agency setting who is qualified to provide daily instruction but does not meet the minimum requirements for being a Field Instructor. Preferably the task supervisor has a degree in social work from a CSWE accredited program. A task supervisor orients the student to the agency, the agency policies and procedures, and staff. The



Task Supervisor provides ongoing direction and oversight for the student activities in the agency. A Task Supervisor may communicate with the Field Instructor and the TAMUCT Field Coordinator if needed about a student's activities in the field agency. A Task Supervisor typically supports a student's activities in meeting the Individualized Learning Contract and in gaining practice experiences working with multiple systems. An orientation to the Field Program is provided at least twice per year and new task supervisors are required to attend.

The **TAMUCT Field Coordinator** is the faculty member in the TAMUCT MSW program tasked with providing administration and oversight to the Field Instruction program. The Field Coordinator is a faculty member and is employed by TAMUCT. The Field Coordinator administers the placement of students in Field Instruction and leads the Field orientation for students and for Field Instructors and Task Supervisors. The Field Coordinator is responsible for developing and recruiting new agency placements, developing contracts with field agencies, coordinating the purchase of professional liability insurance, coordinating the collection of time sheets, and evaluating field instruction placements. The Field Coordinator may also serve as a Faculty Field Liaison and may serve as instructor of record for Field Instruction Courses. The Field Coordinator updates field instruction policies and procedures and updates the Field Instruction Manual.

A **Faculty Field Liaison** is a TAMUCT faculty member who may be assigned duties as a **Field Instructor** to provide contact with TAMUCT and professional supervision to student(s). A Faculty Field Liaison must meet the requirements of a Field Instructor and provides by regular supervision for students and evaluates them.

Responsibilities of the MSW Field Coordinator

The TAMUCT MSW Field Coordinator is a member of the MSW faculty who reports to the MSW program Director and is responsible for providing overall administrative oversight and educational direction for field instruction. The Field Coordinator works with students, social work faculty, Field Supervisors, Task Supervisors, Field Liaisons, field agencies, and the MSW Field Advisory Board to assure compliance with CSWE educational standards and to maintain a quality field education program. Additional responsibilities include:

1. Conducts the initial screening of students applying for a placement and assess their readiness for placement.
2. Conducts a mandatory pre-field orientation with all students who plan to enter a field placement for the following semester.
3. Review student field applications and determine the agency placement site for each student.
4. Provides suggested learning goals to aid in the design of the individual contract that ensures student learning experiences with multiple systems.
5. Conducts at least one field visit with the student and Field Supervisor during the course of the academic term if the Field Coordinator serves as Field Liaison for those students.



6. Facilitates a resolution to field-related problems that may arise.
7. Provides guidelines and evaluation tools for the evaluation of the student in field instruction.
8. Provides training and orientation on the MSW Field Program and placement supervision to Field Supervisors and Task Supervisors at least twice per year.
9. Monitor and evaluate the quality of practicum experiences provided by the agencies used as field placements. This includes routine preparation of data collection instruments, routine data collection and analysis, and submitting an annual report to the MSW program director.
10. In collaboration with the MSW program director coordinates appointments to the MSW Field Advisory Board, conducts meetings of the Advisory Board at least twice per year. Submits reports of these meetings to the program faculty.

Criteria for Approving Field Agencies

The MSW Program at TAMUCT approves field instruction agencies in which the student can be provided with an opportunity to apply the knowledge, skills, and values learned in the academic setting to practical problems in social welfare agencies. The program values agencies where the student can get diverse experiences with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. These experiences are important for students at the generalist and advanced generalist levels. Close professional supervision fosters professional growth, socialization to the profession, and helps students integrate the theoretical with the practical. All field placements of MSW students are in social welfare agencies that have entered a contractual, educational partnership with the TAMUCT MSW program

In addition to the ability to deliver generalist and advanced generalist experiences for MSW students, additional criteria for selection of Field agencies include the following:

- a) The agency must be willing and able to provide a quality educational experience based on the CSWE's competencies and behaviors.
- b) The agency must be willing and able to expose students to diverse experiences.
- c) The field agency should create an environment conducive to ethical behavior as contained in the NASW Code of Ethics
- d) The agency must provide services that are recognized as having a credible social service function.
- e) The agency must be willing and able to provide an agency-based supervisor who meets the criteria to be a field instructor/task supervisor.
- f) If the agency does not have a qualified social work supervisor, they must be willing to allow the student to meet for one hour weekly with an external social work Field Supervisor.



- g) The agency and its Field Supervisor or Task Supervisor must be able to attend the TAMUCT MSW Field Instruction Orientation.
- h) The agency must have sufficient staff available to carry out its mission without dependence on the MSW field instruction student.
- i) The agency must be able to provide suitable work accommodation and support for the TAMUCT MSW student.
- j) The agency must not allow MSW students to transport clients or agency employees in their personal automobiles.
- k) The agency must not require MSW students to use their personal cellular phones to conduct agency business.

Criteria for Approving Field Instructors and Task Supervisors

The MSW field instruction program utilizes community professionals who can provide quality learning experiences for students. Field supervisors must have a MSW degree and two years of post-MSW employment experience. Not all placement agencies have social work staff who meet these criteria. If an agency can offer valuable learning experiences, then a Task Supervisor in the agency may be approved to offer day-to-day supervision to the student. However, all MSW students in field placement must have regular social work supervision from a qualified Field Supervisor, even if that supervision is provided external to the placement agency. TAMUCT MSW faculty may serve as Field Supervisors on an as needed basis.

- a) Agency field instructors and task supervisors must be able to provide quality educational experience based on the 9 CSWE's competencies and provide students exposure to working with multiple systems.
- b) Agency field instructors must have the MSW from a CSWE-accredited social work program and at least two years' post-degree practice experience. If the agency does not have a qualified field instructor on staff, the agency may identify a task supervisor who preferably has a social work degree and at least two years of experience in the current or similar agency setting. The task supervisor must allow the student to meet weekly outside of the agency with an identified field supervisor.
- c) Agency field instructors and task supervisors must be supportive of the TAMUCT MSW Program's mission, definition of generalist social work practice, advanced generalist practice, as well as the values and ethical standards of the NASW *Code of Ethics*.
- d) Agency field instructors and task supervisors must have sufficient time to meet the educational needs of the student. For field supervisors this includes a minimum of one hour per week of formal supervision, during which the student's performance with the field placement agency, progress toward meeting the expectations of the field contract, and strengths and challenges are discussed.
- e) The agency field instructor and task supervisor must be willing and able to participate in evaluative field visits with the student, and TAMUCT Field Liaison. At least one field evaluative visit per academic term is required. The field evaluation of the student is based on the learning contract and recorded to the TAMUCT MSW Field Evaluation form and submitted online. The field instructor is responsible for completing the student's field evaluation.



- f) The agency field instructor and task supervisor must be able to complete and submit an evaluation of the experience with the MSW field education program.
- g) The agency field instructor and task supervisor must participate in at least one orientation to field placement, provided by the TAMUCT MSW Field Coordinator.
- h) After a new field agency successfully completes new supervisor orientation and submits a completed Field Instructor Information Form, a professional resume, and a Social Work Field Placement Contract the agency is approved as a field placement site for MSW students.

Professional Social Work Supervision

Students must receive one hour of professional social work supervision per week to assist in their development as professional social workers and to become socialized to the profession. The student is expected to be prepared for supervision and make notes to document the sessions. These sessions may be virtual but should be synchronous. Supervision should begin the week after the first week of field instruction. Students are expected to participate in professional social work supervision throughout their field placement. The time spent in supervision may be counted in the weekly field instruction hours reported on the time sheet.

Employment-Based Field Placement

Occasionally students may request a field placement in the agency in which they are currently employed. Some of these employment-based placements may be approved by the MSW program provided that these placements can provide educationally directed experiences that are equivalent to those of the other students. Towards the goal of achieving parity in all MSW field placements the following policies and criteria have been developed.

- Employment-based field placements require the approval of the Field Coordinator.
- Some students may meet the field placement requirements by engaging in employment-based internship. To be approved for placement in employment-based field placement students should complete an application specific to an employment-based field placement.
- Students in employment-based field placements will be expected to fulfill the same requirements as other students in internship.
- While performing their field placement responsibilities, students in employment-based field placement must identify themselves to clients as social work interns to ensure clients and staff they are not performing their regular employment duties.
- Employers and practicum supervisors will ensure that the tasks used for student assignments are not the same as the assignments for an individual's work responsibilities.
- Employers will agree to grant their student-employees the appropriate amount of time



during the workday to fulfill their field placement requirements.

- Field placement supervisors in employment-based placements must meet the same educational and supervisory qualifications established required of all practicum instructors as defined by CSWE.

Should employment of the MSW in the field agency end during the term of the placement, the MSW Field Coordinator will assist the student in finding a new field placement.

Conflicts of Interest

Students occasionally get offers to become employed by the agency while they are in field placement. Should a student decide to accept employment while placed in an agency the MSW Field Coordinator should be notified immediately. Procedures for initiating the employment-based field placement in an agency where the student is employed must be initiated immediately to maintain the integrity of the placement. The Field Supervisor or task supervisor must meet the requirements listed in field-based employment policy and agreement must be completed under the same terms as listed in the employment-based field placement policy.

Although it is not common, students may encounter someone with whom the student has a prior relationship that could be viewed as creating a conflict of interest. For example, it could be a relative, someone with whom the student has been involved romantically or financially, or who in some other way might influence professional decisions or actions. Students as future professional social workers are expected to manage these relationships professionally as discussed in the NASW Code of Ethics. Should such a situation arise, whether it be with a client, coworker, or someone who the student encounters regularly, this should be discussed with the Field Supervisor and the TAMUCT MSW Field Coordinator to ensure that the situation is appropriately handled.

Use of Electronic Technology and Media in Field

The use of electronic technology and media has become common in modern life. Social work is no exception. However, when students enter field placement settings, they represent the TAMUCT MSW program and the profession of social work and are expected to act as beginning social workers. Thus, extra care should be used in the application of electronic technology and social media.

The Internet and Artificial Intelligence are powerful tools that can be useful in getting and processing information, but they must be used responsibly and professionally. Social media is another powerful tool that can be used for social networking and information distribution. Social work students as future social workers are expected to act as professional social workers in accordance with the NASW Code of Ethics. Ethical standards place the responsible ethical use of electronic media squarely with the student social worker in field placement.

Participating in social networking and other similar internet opportunities can support a students' personal expression, enable individual social workers to have a professional presence online,



foster collegiality, build camaraderie within the profession, and provide an opportunity to widely advocate for social policies and other communication. But social networking, blogs, and other forms of technological communication may also create some ethical challenges for the student in field placement. For example, these kinds of communication can be widely read and interpreted in a way that confounds professional and personal behavior that may reflect negatively on the social work profession. Clients' social network posts are often available to see but are not reliable sources of information. Artificial intelligence can assist with professional writing but AI technology still hallucinates and can make up information, and the social worker is still responsible for the final product. Thus, it is important to understand the technology, its limitations, and the ethical implications before using it.

Students should weigh several considerations when maintaining a presence online:

- Students should be aware of ethical standards for client privacy and confidentiality that must be maintained in all environments, including online, and must refrain from posting identifiable client information online or conducting any searches using client information.
- When using the internet for social networking, students should use privacy settings to safeguard personal information and content to the extent possible. They should realize that privacy settings are not absolute and that once on the internet, content is likely there permanently. Thus, students should routinely monitor their own internet presence to ensure that the personal and professional information on their own sites and, to the extent possible, content posted about them by others is accurate and appropriate.
- Students who interact with clients, co-workers, or supervisors on the internet, students must maintain appropriate boundaries of the social worker-client relationship in accordance with professional ethical guidelines, just as they would in any other context. The same hold true for your online interactions with supervisors and colleagues.
- To maintain appropriate professional boundaries, students should consider separating personal and professional content online. Should a client seek out a student online, the student should direct the client with the student's professional contact information.
- Students must recognize that actions online and any content posted may negatively impact their reputations among clients and colleagues, may have consequences for their social work careers and can undermine public trust in the social work profession.
- Students are not to research clients' information on the internet.
- Students should limit the use of agency office phones and personal cell phones for conducting personal business except during break times.

Professional Social Work Behavior in Field Placement

Students who are in field placement are representatives of the TAMUCT social work program and the social work profession. Therefore, field students are expected to demonstrate



professional standards of practice outlined in the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics. These standards are established to promote good practice for all social workers. And professional behavior including ethical behavior are an important part of the first of the social work competencies. Students who violate these professional behavioral and ethical standards may expect, at a minimum, to see lower evaluations and grades. But in cases where the behavior is serious or repeated further action may be taken including being placed on a development plan or termination from the field placement.

Evaluation of Students in Field Instruction

At the mid-term and at end of each semester the Field Supervisor and student will discuss and prepare an evaluation of the student's performance. Following completion of the evaluation, the Field Supervisor will complete a draft of the evaluation following the evaluation conference. The Field Supervisor and student will then meet to review the final evaluation and sign it. If the student has comments about the evaluation, then these should be added before signing the evaluation.

Signing the evaluation indicates the student has received and read the document. If the student is not in agreement with the evaluation, the Field Supervisor should note that at the end of the evaluation. Students are permitted to attach a rebuttal/addendum to the evaluation if they feel it is not an accurate reflection of their work.

The Field Supervisor will provide a final copy of the evaluation to the student. The student and the Field Supervisor should provide a copy to the Faculty Practicum Liaison.

Grading Field Instruction

- Field Instruction is graded like any other social work course with the criteria for grading listed in the syllabus.
- The Field Liaison or Field Coordinator is responsible for grading the student.
- In determining the grade, the Field Liaison will consider a student's attendance in the Field instruction course, the regularity of attendance, hours completed, professional behavior, and demonstration of attainment of the social work competencies in social work as identified in the Individual Learning Contract.
- If a student wants to appeal a failing grade for field instruction, the student should refer to the MSW program's Student handbook for the policy on grade appeals.

Resolving Concerns with Field Placements

Occasionally practices, policies, or specific situations arise during field instruction that concern students. If students develop such concerns the appropriate procedure for discussing and resolving these concerns is as follows:



- First speak with their agency Task Supervisor or Field Supervisor about the concern
- If the matter is not resolved at this level, the student should contact the Faculty Liaison of the MSW Field Coordinator.
- If the matter is not resolved, the student should speak with the MSW Program Director Practicum.
- Students Should discuss any concerns or challenges they have in field regularly with the Field Supervisor.

Professional Behavior in Field Instruction

As students preparing to enter the social work profession professional behaviors are expected in the field placements made by the TAMUCT MSW program. During classes and the field placement orientation emphasis on learning the elements of the NASW Code of Ethics and using its standards to guide good practice. MSW students represent themselves, the MSW program, and the social work profession while in placement. Students should be aware that not all people in the field agency may be social workers and feel bound by this code of ethics.

The MSW program expects ethical, professional behavior from its students and should the student engage in unprofessional behavior the MSW program may take action to prevent reoccurrence of the behavior. MSW program interventions should focus on developmental learning opportunities for students. However, the type of intervention can depend on the type of unprofessional behavior and the severity of the ethical violation. Ethical violations that are serious and/or repeated could lead to termination of the field by either the MSW program or the field agency/ placement knowing and in the Social Work Program. Reinstatement in field in such cases is not automatic. Some examples of unprofessional behavior in field placement include, but are not limited to:

- Violations of client confidentiality.
- Violations of professional boundaries.
- Engaging in work outside the scope of practice without the use of supervision.
- Missing seminar discussions or field placement to that is negatively impacting the student's performance in the field placement.
- Consistently arriving late to or leaving early from seminars of field placement without prior approval.
- Demonstrating behavior that does not show professional respect towards faculty, staff, and/or clients.
- Demonstrating inability to correct verbal, written, and/or non-verbal communication that is not professionally respectful, is insulting, or demeaning.
- Demonstrating insensitivity for people with diverse backgrounds and/or experiences.
- Consistently displaying difficulty collaborating with peers, staff, and professionals.
- Failing to engage in learning activities and/or field placement assignments.
- Consistently submitting late work.



- Demonstrating non-compliance with the MSW Program's behavioral and academic requirements as outlined in the social work student handbook, and university behavioral and academic requirements as outlined in the TAMUCT student handbook.
- Failing to follow the ethical standards of the NASW Code of Ethics.
- Consistently wearing unprofessional attire for field placement.
- Fraud or falsification of records including the preparation of timesheets.

If you have any questions as to whether your actions or behavior are ethical, please ask your Field supervisor, Field Liaison, or the Field Coordinator.

Procedures for Addressing Field Instruction Performance Concerns

Should concerns arise about a student's performance in field instruction these concerns should be reported to the Task supervisor, Field supervisor, Field Coordinator, or MSW program director. Should the concerns be of a serious nature, they should be provided in written form specifically identifying the student, the concerning behavior, and the behavior's effects or potential on the field agency. Each case will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

1. The Field Supervisor, Task Supervisor, or Field Liaison will notify TAMUCT's Field supervisor regarding the specifics of the problem.
2. The Field Coordinator will meet with the person reporting the concern and the student and attempt to find a resolution to the problem.
3. After sufficient information has been gathered, the student may need to meet with the MSW faculty to discuss a resolution to the problem.
4. If termination from the social work program is the outcome that is decided, the student will have a right to appeal this decision to the MSW program director. Decisions made by the MSW program director may can be appealed to the Chair of the Department of Arts & Humanities and to the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences.

Academic performance is separate from professional behaviors. A student may be in good standing academically and still be dismissed from the field practicum and Social Work Program due to unprofessional behaviors. However, problem behaviors in field may have a negative effect on a student's grade in Field Instruction.

Termination from Field Instruction

- Termination of a student from a field instruction placement may be initiated by the agency in which the student is placed. The termination may either be for cause or for circumstances in the agency that are beyond a student's control.
- When a student is terminated by an agency and the termination is based on the student's performance or behavior, this will affect the student's grade, and the student could potentially fail the course. Much of the determination of what will be done is made by the Field Coordinator, Faculty Supervisor, and Field Liaison.
- Depending upon the circumstances of the termination, especially when the termination is



due to internal factors within the agency (such as the loss of a supervisor), the student may have one opportunity to be reassigned to another practicum setting to complete the field placement. The timing and contingencies of reassignment are key factors and will be evaluated by the Field Coordinator.

- Students who are terminated from two separate practicum placements are automatically referred to the MSW program faculty for review and possible termination from the program.
- Students who do not complete a field placement or who fail a field placement may not enroll in a subsequent field placement without a review by the MSW program faculty.
- Incomplete grades may be given in field instruction only under exceptional circumstances

Resolving Field Instruction Concerns

In the event that a student has a field instruction related concern:

- First speak with their Field Supervisor about the matter.
- If the matter is not resolved by the Field Supervisor, the student should contact the Faculty Liaison.
- If the matter is not resolved in a timely way by the Field Supervisor, the student should speak with the Field Coordinator.

Field Program Evaluations

At the end of each academic year the MSW Field Coordinator will conduct an evaluation of the Field Instruction program.

- This evaluation should be based on regular evaluations of each field placement agency at the end of each academic term.
- This evaluation should be based on the overall quality of the placement provided in terms of supervision, completion of field orientation by Field and Task supervisors, provision of generalist/generalist experiences with multiple systems, evaluations based on the competencies, and responsiveness in working with the MSW program.
- Student exit evaluations on the quality of the field agency and supervisory experiences during the academic term.
- At the end of the academic year the MSW Field Coordinator will produce a report on the overall quality of the field placements and student experiences. The report will list the agencies used with a summary of the fields of practice these agencies represent. This report should include a summary of recommendations for the field program for the following academic year.



MSW Program Field Advisory Board

The purposes of the MSW Program's Field Advisory Board are to:

- Provide input to the MSW Program current information on community and service issues, current needs, trends, and program operations
- Assist in the continuous quality improvement of the MSW program.
- Assist in improving integration between the social work curriculum and field placement experiences
- Enhance collaboration between TAMUCT MSW program, the social work and service community, as well as the broader community served by the TAMUCT MSW program.

Membership Criteria and Term

- Membership in the MSW Field Advisory Board is open to social workers associated with the Field Instruction Program.
- Membership consists of 5 to 7 people with one member serving as Chair, one as Vice Chair, and one as Secretary.
- Membership should represent diverse fields of practice and be representative of the local region.
- Members are appointed for two to three years, and the terms are staggered across the Board. Appointment to the Board may be renewed.
- Members should attend a minimum of 50% of the scheduled board meetings during the term.
- Appointments are made by the MSW program director in consultation with the MSW Field Coordinator.
- One TAMUCT MSW student may be appointed as an ex-officio member of the Board.
- Meetings are to be conducted using Robert's Rules of Order and minutes of the meetings kept.