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**College of Health, Education
and Social Transformation**
School of Social Work

Practicum is the Heart of Social Work Education



Practicum Education Handbook

Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Program
Master of Social Work (MSW) Program

This handbook is designed to guide students' and practicum instructors' as to the process and purpose of the practicum education program. Changes may be made at any time during the year with notification.

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Practicum Education

Welcome to one of the most anticipated and exciting components of your social work education practicum. Practicum is where student learning of theories, values, ethics, and skills connects to the real-world practice of social work. Practicum education benefits from the contributions of many community social workers who serve as practicum instructors and faculty seminar liaisons. Without this support, students would not be able to participate in the most essential part of their educational journey-- practicum. The journey begins when a student chooses a degree in social work. This choice is usually built on the passion they possess to want to change and influence individuals, families, and communities. Students bring their hearts to social work. They then develop their minds by studying social work practice theories and research. They become great problem solvers and scholars. Finally, students bring their hearts and their minds to the final step in the journey as they learn how to engage themselves in the practice of social work. Practicum is the combination of a student's heart, mind, and hands.

This handbook contains information regarding NMSU Departmental policy, practice standards, and processes to which the student must comply for completion of the practicum requirement and ultimately, graduation. Students and practicum agencies are strongly encouraged to read and focus on those sections relevant to their place in the BSW or MSW program. This handbook will help students understand the connection between practicum education and over all course of their social work education.

Congratulations on beginning your journey to becoming a social worker. Even though the destination may be the goal, the learning is in the journey.

NMSU Practicum Team

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Glossary of Terms

The following terms, defined here, will appear throughout the handbook:

Generalist Year – Refers to the Senior practicum in the BSW program and the first practicum in the Traditional MSW program. All BSW students must complete this practicum to graduate. Traditional MSW students must complete this year before moving on to the advanced generalist year.

Advanced Generalist year – Refers to the second placement of the Traditional MSW program and the first placement of the Advanced Standing MSW program. The Advanced Generalist year is completed by all students admitted to the MSW program.

CSWE – Refers to the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). CSWE provides the accreditation standards to which all accredited social work programs must adhere.

EPAS- Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards

NASW – Refers to the National Association of Social Workers. NASW is an organization that guides professional social workers to make ethically sound decisions in their everyday practice.

Practicum – Refers to course of study that is designed to prepare students to engage in practice. It is designed to allow the student to perform professional tasks while being mentored and instructed by professionals.

Practicum Seminar – Refers to the course a student is enrolled in during the concurrent enrollment of practicum, that allows for self-reflection and growth among other students about the practicum experience.

Practicum Director – Refers to the college faculty member who provides leadership in the on-going administration and implementation of the practicum education.

Practicum Coordinator – Refers to the college faculty member who provides oversight, direction, and support to students, seminar liaisons and practicum instructors.

Practicum Site – Refers to agency or organization that agrees to host a student for their practicum.

Practicum Team – Refers primarily to the Director and Coordinators, but in some instances/circumstances may include the Faculty Seminar Liaison.

School (SSW) – the New Mexico State University School of Social Work (SSW)

Seminar Liaison – Refers to the faculty member who provides the link between the SSW, the agency, and the student. The practicum seminar liaison coordinates with the practicum team to monitor, consult, and intervene when necessary to ensure a quality practicum experience occurs for all students.

Practicum Instructor – Refers to a staff member employed by the agency or community member who holds the BSW and/or MSW degree with two years post graduate experience. The Practicum Instructor provides practicum instruction and guidance to reinforce the social work perspective.

Site/Task Instructor – Refers to staff person employed by the agency, who provides daily oversight to a practicum student but does not hold a social work degree. Some students will not have this role at their agency depending on the agency's structure.

Student Support Meeting- Refers to a meeting in which the student and practicum support team come together to discuss issues that may come up during practicum and/or in the Social Work program

Tevera – Refers to the practicum database system that manages practicum placement information.

PURPOSE OF PRACTICUM EDUCATION

Council on Social Work Education Competencies & Behaviors

Practicum education lays a solid foundation in all of the above definitions and goals. Additionally, The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) proposes Competencies that apply throughout a student's social work education. Each competency describes the knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes at the generalist level of practice followed by a set of behaviors that integrate these.

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant policies, laws, and regulations that may affect practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand that ethics are informed by principles of human rights and apply them toward realizing social, racial, economic, and environmental justice in their practice. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision making and apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize and manage personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. Social workers understand how their evolving worldview, personal experiences, and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers take measures to care for themselves professionally and personally, understanding that self-care is paramount for competent and ethical social work practice. Social workers use rights-based, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lenses to understand and critique the profession's history, mission, roles, and responsibilities and recognize historical and current contexts of oppression in shaping institutions and social work. Social workers understand the role of other professionals when engaged in interprofessional practice. Social workers recognize the importance of lifelong learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure relevant and effective practice. Social workers understand digital technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice.

Social workers:

- a. make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics within the profession as appropriate to the context;
- b. demonstrate professional behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;
- c. use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and
- d. use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.

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

Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society has fundamental human rights. Social workers are knowledgeable about the global intersecting and ongoing injustices throughout history that result in oppression and racism, including social work's role and response. Social workers critically evaluate the distribution of power and privilege in society in order to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice by reducing inequities and ensuring dignity and respect for all. Social workers advocate for and engage in strategies to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social resources, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably and that civil, political, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected.

Social workers:

- a. advocate for human rights at the individual, family, group, organizational, and community system levels; and
- b. engage in practices that advance human rights to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.

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

Social workers understand how racism and oppression shape human experiences and how these two constructs influence practice at the individual, family, group, organizational, and community levels and in policy and research. Social workers understand the pervasive impact of White supremacy and privilege and use their knowledge, awareness, and skills to engage in anti-racist practice. Social workers understand how diversity and intersectionality shape human experiences and identity development and affect equity and inclusion. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of factors including but not limited to age, caste, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, generational status, immigration status, legal status, marital status, political ideology, race, nationality, religion and spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that this intersectionality means that a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege and power. Social workers understand the societal and historical roots of social and racial injustices and the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination. Social workers understand cultural humility and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, racial, technological, and cultural exclusions, may create privilege and power resulting in systemic oppression.

Social workers:

- a. demonstrate anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practice at the individual, family, group, organizational, community, research, and policy levels; and
- b. demonstrate cultural humility by applying critical reflection, self-awareness, and self-regulation to manage the influence of bias, power, privilege, and values in working with clients and constituencies, acknowledging them as experts of their own lived experiences.

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

Social workers use ethical, culturally informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive approaches in

conducting research and building knowledge. Social workers use research to inform their practice decision making and articulate how their practice experience informs research and evaluation decisions. Social workers critically evaluate and critique current, empirically sound research to inform decisions pertaining to practice, policy, and programs. Social workers understand the inherent bias in research and evaluate design, analysis, and interpretation using an anti-racist and anti-oppressive perspective. Social workers know how to access, critique, and synthesize the current literature to develop appropriate research questions and hypotheses. Social workers demonstrate knowledge and skills regarding qualitative and quantitative research methods and analysis, and they interpret data derived from these methods. Social workers demonstrate knowledge about methods to assess reliability and validity in social work research. Social workers can articulate and share research findings in ways that are usable to a variety of clients and constituencies. Social workers understand the value of evidence derived from interprofessional and diverse research methods, approaches, and sources.

Social workers:

- a. apply research findings to inform and improve practice, policy, and programs; and
- b. identify ethical, culturally informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive strategies that address inherent biases for use in quantitative and qualitative research methods to advance the purposes of social work.

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

Social workers identify social policy at the local, state, federal, and global level that affects well-being, human rights and justice, service delivery, and access to social services. Social workers recognize the historical, social, racial, cultural, economic, organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy. Social workers understand and critique the history and current structures of social policies and services and the role of policy in service delivery through rights-based, anti-oppressive, and anti-racist lenses. Social workers influence policy formulation, analysis, implementation, and evaluation within their practice settings with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers actively engage in and advocate for anti-racist and anti-oppressive policy practice to effect change in those settings.

Social workers:

- a. use social justice, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lenses to assess how social welfare policies affect the delivery of and access to social services; and
- b. apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.

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 individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers value the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and person-in-environment and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to facilitate engagement with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are self-reflective and understand how bias, power,

and privilege as well as their personal values and personal experiences may affect their ability to engage effectively with diverse clients and constituencies. Social workers use the principles of interprofessional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate.

Social workers:

- a. apply knowledge of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, to engage with clients and constituencies; and
- b. use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to engage in culturally responsive practice with clients and constituencies.

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. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, and they critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in culturally responsive assessment with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Assessment involves a collaborative process of defining presenting challenges and identifying strengths with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities to develop a mutually agreed-upon plan. Social workers recognize the implications of the larger practice context in the assessment process and use interprofessional collaboration in this process. Social workers are self-reflective and understand how bias, power, privilege, and their personal values and experiences may affect their assessment and decision making.

Social workers:

- a. apply theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as other culturally responsive and interprofessional conceptual frameworks, when assessing clients and constituencies; and
- b. demonstrate respect for client self-determination during the assessment process by collaborating with clients and constituencies in developing a mutually agreed-upon plan.

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. Social workers understand theories of human behavior, person-in-environment, and other interprofessional conceptual frameworks, and they critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in selecting culturally responsive interventions with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-informed interventions and participate in interprofessional collaboration to achieve client and constituency goals. Social workers facilitate effective transitions and endings.

Social workers:

- a. engage with clients and constituencies to critically choose and implement culturally responsive, evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals; and

- b. incorporate culturally responsive methods to negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of clients and constituencies.

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 evaluate processes and outcomes to increase practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social workers apply anti-racist and anti-oppressive perspectives in evaluating outcomes. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in evaluating outcomes. Social workers use qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness.

Social workers:

- a. select and use culturally responsive methods for evaluation of outcomes; and
- b. critically analyze outcomes and apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities of the Director of Practicum Education

The Director of Practicum Education is a college faculty member who is charged by the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) to provide leadership in the on-going administration and implementation of the practicum education program in accordance with the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). The Director of practicum education is part of the NMSU School of Social Work (SSW) administrative leadership and collaboratively works with faculty and staff. They provide oversight to the practicum education team by managing the development, implementation and evaluation of all components of practicum education for all options of the BSW and MSW programs.

Responsibilities include:

- Develop, implement, and administer the BSW and MSW practicum education program in accordance with CSWE EPAS.
- Work with administrative team to prepare and manage all documents pertaining to practicum education program for CSWE reaffirmation of accreditation standards.
- Oversee the Practicum Coordinators and Graduate Assistants associated with the practicum education team.
- Train and provide oversight of faculty seminar liaisons for all options of the BSW and MSW program.
- Develop and foster the retention of practicum education program sites in collaboration with practicum coordinators.
- Initiate, manage, and collaborate with the University Contracts Office to implement Affiliation Agreement and other contractual agreements between the University, departments/programs, and community agencies.
- Identify, review, interpret and ensure compliance regarding practicum education with Federal regulations, State statutes, CSWE accreditation standards, SSW policy and procedures.
- Develop, organize, and maintain practicum database tracking system, Tevera. This includes but not limited to development of the processes for student and agency access; implementation and monitoring of electronic forms, database training for students, agencies, faculty seminar liaisons and program coordinators, and addressing issues related to financial access.
- Develop, review and revise the practicum education handbook for BSW and MSW programs to establish relevant practicum policies and procedures, evaluations, forms and documents to align with CSWE EPAS requirements in collaboration with practicum coordinators and program coordinators.
- Design and deliver orientation and training to students, practicum instructors and seminar liaisons.
- In Collaboration with the practicum team and committee, develop the curriculum for BSW and MSW practicum and seminar courses, to include the development of course syllabi, universal canvas course shells, and monitor course implementation.
- Provide yearly schedule for practicum education including deadlines for application, placement, assignments and evaluations related to practicum placement.
- Collaborate with SSW director, BSW and MSW program coordinators to facilitate integration of practicum education with other components of the academic curricula.
- Monitor, assess and address complexities in practicum in consultation with practicum coordinators, seminar liaisons, students, agency and practicum instructor as necessary, including student support meetings.

- Mediate and develop appropriate processes to provide for prompt and equitable resolution of conflicts in collaboration with BSW and MSW program coordinators and SSW policies.

Responsibilities of the Practicum Coordinators

The Practicum Education Coordinators are college faculty members who provide oversight, direction, and support to students, faculty seminar liaisons and agency practicum instructors involved with the practicum education program in compliance with CSWE EPAS. Programs are divided by location with the online based practicum coordinator managing the online MSW program and Las Cruces based practicum coordinator managing the residential BSW and MSW program. Practicum Education Coordinators collaborate with the Practicum Director, BSW and MSW Program Coordinators to align practicum education with academic programs.

Responsibilities include:

- Facilitate practicum placement process including planning and implementing fair, and monitoring student and agency progress to determine final placement.
- Facilitate student pre-placement interviews including long- and short-term professional goals. Coordinator will monitor and assess student readiness for practicum experience.
- Recruit, assess and develop all new sites during placement process that includes vetting agencies, initiating onboarding paperwork, conducting individual agency meetings to discuss practicum expectations, policies, and procedures, and providing information regarding online resources available (i.e. Practicum Education Handbook, trainings).
- Approval of practicum at placement of employment between students and agencies when the practicum site is also the student's employer, as guided by CSWE standards and relevant practicum policy.
- Approval of winter break, onboarding, and scheduling changes regarding hours while at practicum.
- Coordinate, communicate, and ensure compliance with practicum stipulations and requirements from various agency and university policies and procedures including but not limited to local, state, and federal background checks, state and federal grants, and health regulations.
- Assist in delivering orientation and trainings to students, practicum instructors and seminar liaisons.
- Assist and monitor practicum settings and practicum instructors to assure their willingness to abide by practicum education goals and policies.
- Collaborate with Director of Practicum Education to foster the retention of practicum sites.
- Collaborate with Director of Practicum and Practicum Committee in the development of the curriculum for BSW and MSW practicum and seminar courses. Assist in the development of the course syllabi, create universal canvas course shells, collaborate with seminar liaisons to deliver curriculum and monitor course implementation during Fall and Spring semesters.
- Monitor, assess, manage, and provide advisement for students in practicum in collaboration with seminar liaisons and practicum director.
- Engage and address complexities in practicum in consultation with practicum director, seminar liaisons, students, agency and agency practicum instructors and additional faculty as necessary in compliance with established policies and procedures of the practicum education program.
- Coordinator will facilitate support meetings and will communicate with appropriate practicum team, faculty, and staff.

- Mediate and ensure that appropriate processes are in place to provide for the prompt and equitable resolution of conflicts in compliance with practicum education program policies and SSW policies.
- Grade, monitor, assess, manage and approve Tevera documentation including weekly time logs, evaluations and any additional documentation needed.

Responsibilities of Faculty Seminar Liaison

The faculty seminar liaison is an important person in a student's practicum experience. They are the representatives of the School of Social Work (SSW) that provide the link between the school, the agency, and the student. The Faculty seminar liaison monitors, consults, and intervenes in collaboration with Practicum Team when necessary to ensure a quality practicum experience occurs for all students. Seminar focuses on facilitating student led problem-solving, providing support and integration of knowledge and application in practicum education. Practicum coordinators and director may also fill the role of faculty seminar liaison.

Responsibilities include:

- Monitor the practicum placement through virtual and in-person site visits as well as written and verbal communication with both students and practicum instructors.
- Conduct ongoing dialogue regarding the practicum performance, evaluations and time expectations of the practicum with students and practicum instructors.
- Maintain knowledge and understanding of the CSWE competencies and behaviors.
- Schedule, at minimum, two virtual/in-person site visits per Fall semester and one virtual/in-person site visit per Spring semester during the practicum. Additional visits can be made at the discretion of the practicum team, faculty seminar liaison, student, or practicum instructor.
- Final oversight of the learning contract to assure the student has the opportunity to develop and practice a range of knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes.
- Offer consultation, mediation, and support regarding student or agency concerns or disputes utilizing channels of communication to ensure maximum practicum experiences for students via the telephone, email, or by a site visit.
- Collaborate with Practicum Director and Coordinator in mediation process and assist with development of learning or support actions to resolve situation and/or change of placement or rights and responsibility actions.
- Attend/schedule meetings with Practicum Director and Coordinators, including student support meetings.
- Facilitate seminar course discussion and provide students assistance in practicum expectations to integrate classroom and practicum experience learning.
- Read and respond/provide feedback to students' class assignments.
- Provide a syllabus for content of seminar instruction.
- Assist students with integration of coursework and practicum experiences.
- Grade, monitor, assess, manage, and approve Tevera documentation including weekly time logs, evaluations and any additional documentation needed.
- Assign final grade for practicum and/or seminar.

Responsibilities of Student

The social work student is the essential person in the practicum experience. Students are expected to take an active role in the development of knowledge, skills and values required for professional social work practice. Students are not volunteers nor employees, but apprentices who need guidance and mentorship in the learning process. Therefore, it is expected that the student participates in the planning and implementing of their learning experience while in practicum.

Responsibilities include:

- Participate in practicum placement process by meeting with practicum coordinator within appropriate timeframe. Students will complete the application and take an active role in the placement process within the deadline.
- Demonstrate professionalism while securing a placement in identifying an appropriate practicum site in collaboration with practicum coordinator.
- Conduct themselves as social work professionals by adhering to the NASW Code of Ethics.
- Review agency policy and procedures, as directed by the practicum instructor.
- Act within the requirements of that agency. This includes, but is not limited to, adhering to policies regarding safety, documentation, practice and procedures, confidentiality for both the agency and clients, the use of technology policies, and dress code.
- Develop and negotiate an appropriate learning contract with their practicum instructor and seminar liaison drawing on the learning objectives of the student and opportunities that the agency can provide consistent with the CSWE competencies and behaviors.
- Adhere to practicum placement and program timeframes.
- Attend and participate in practicum seminar and discussions with the faculty seminar liaison.
- Communicate with the practicum instructor and the faculty seminar liaison regarding the practicum placement, especially if difficulties arise that could disrupt practicum.
- Adhere to the practicum channel of communication outlined in the “Resolution of Concerns” section of the handbook to address concerns or disputes.
- Demonstrate readiness to learn during practicum. This includes but is not limited to preparing and utilizing practicum instruction, engaging in self-reflection and self-evaluation, and identifying strengths and learning needs.
- Respond to communications from the practicum director/coordinators, practicum seminar liaison, and placement sites in a timely manner.
- Seek supervision when there is any doubt about actions they are taking or on behalf of the agency or clients.
- Ensure that personal issues do not interfere with social work practice with clients.
- Student is responsible for disclosing any personal relationships that may exist at their practicum.
- Complete all assignments associated with practicum by scheduled due dates.
- Students will have knowledge of technology and be able to navigate utilized software used in seminar and practicum.
- Participate in evaluation of practicum agency, practicum instructors, and practicum program.
- Read, understand, and follow this handbook. (If clarification is needed, seek support of practicum team or support services.)

Responsibilities of Practicum Instructor

Practicum instructors are an integral part of the practicum experience by helping students to identify with and take responsibility for the professions, to value and affirm diversity and culturally sensitive practice, and to implement the goals of the profession. Practicum instructors contribute to the professional development of future social workers by providing students an opportunity to develop and practice social work skills in real world setting.

Responsibilities include:

- Orient the student to the agency including but not limited to personnel policies and procedures related to a weekly schedule, safety, documentation, transporting clients, emergency contacts, social media, and confidentiality.
- Create a safe learning environment where students feel free to ask questions and allow time for reflection and the active application of knowledge and skills with client systems including assignments for practicum and seminar.
- Instructor is responsible for disclosing any personal relationships that may exist within practicum agency and student.
- Provide opportunities for students to observe early on, with the expectation that the student will gradually take on more independent work and assignments (under supervision). The student should manage approximately 1/3 of the caseload of a regular worker.
- If the student is concurrently employed in the agency, the practicum instructor should also assist the student in adhering to the guidelines in this handbook that address that circumstance. If the student is to receive a stipend from the agency, the practicum instructor should also facilitate that process while maintaining the educational intent and focus of the practicum placement.
- Consult and negotiate with the student to develop a learning contract that outlines specific opportunities, responsibilities and tasks consistent with the CSWE competencies and behaviors.
- Assign reading, writing, task, or training assignments as needed to benefit student learning and services provision.
- Provide individual educational instruction to each student, at a **minimum of one hour per week**, or small group instruction for a **minimum of one and half hours per week**, with individual sessions with students as needed. The instructor will assist in monitoring progress toward meeting the learning contract goals and assessing the student's knowledge, skills and values.
- Provide on-going performance feedback and instruction through students' assignments on Tevera.
- Notify the faculty seminar liaison immediately of any serious concerns or problems related to student performance and/or attendance.
- Assess student performance at the evaluation periods identified by practicum program. The input of other social workers and staff may be considered.
- Monitor, assess, grade and sign documentation within appropriate timeframe.
- Meet with faculty seminar liaison and student to monitor progress in learning contract.
- Communicate with Practicum Director and Coordinators to facilitate a positive, cooperative relationship between agency and school, including informing the school of any agency or organizational problems that would affect student learning including but not limited to major change in agency administration, agency disruptions that affects continuation of student in placement, or change in practicum instructor circumstance.
- Participate in mandatory orientation prior to or at the beginning of the practicum.

- Participate in practicum instructor trainings, continuing education offerings and other support available to increase skills and understanding practicum education.
- Provide feedback and evaluation of practicum education program.

Responsibilities of Site/Task Instructor

The site/task instructor is an appropriately degreed or subject expert from the agency that does not hold a social work degree who provides daily oversight, mentorship and guidance to a student where a degreed social worker is not available within the agency. Although the site/task practicum instructor cannot maintain the same level of participation as a practicum instructor, they should strive to perform in a similar fashion. Not all students will have a site/task instructor during their practicum.

Responsibilities include:

- Instruction will focus on direct day to day skills development and discussion of student practicum experience.
- If the practicum instructor is not at the agency, then the site/task instructor assumes the responsibility for orienting the student to the agency including but not limited to personnel policies and procedures related to a weekly schedule, safety, documentation, transporting clients, emergency contacts, social media, and confidentiality.
- Site/ Task Instructor is responsible for disclosing any personal relationships that may exist within practicum agency and student.
- Assist the student and agency practicum instructor with the development of the learning contract.
- Participate in the student performance evaluation process identified by faculty seminar liaison.
- Participate in continuing education hours and orientation available through the School.
- Provide consultation regarding student performance if circumstances arise that may require remediation or disciplinary actions.
- Provide feedback and evaluation of practicum education program.
- May make reading assignments regarding specific populations, techniques, and/or other social work information and resources.
- Provide on-going performance feedback and instruction through students' assignments on Tevera as determined with practicum team.
- Monitor, assess, grade and sign documentation within appropriate timeframe.
- Notify the faculty seminar liaison immediately of any serious concerns or problems related to student performance and/or attendance.
- Communicate with Practicum Director and Coordinators to facilitate a positive, cooperative relationship between agency and school, including informing the school of any agency or organizational problems that would affect student learning including but not limited to major change in agency administration, agency disruptions that affects continuation of student in placement, or change in practicum instructor circumstance.

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PRACTICUM EDUCATION POLICIES

Students are required to adhere to ***all of the following*** New Mexico State University, School of Social Work, and BSW or MSW Program policies and practices as they develop, engage in, and complete their practicum. Planning for practicum begins at least one semester **BEFORE** the practicum starts. Failure to comply with the following policies can impact the development of a practicum and can result in not completing the social work program in a timely manner.

National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession's focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living.

Social workers promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients. "Clients" is used inclusively to refer to individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. Social workers are sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice. These activities may be in the form of direct practice, community organizing, supervision, consultation, administration, advocacy, social and political action, policy development and implementation, education, and research and evaluations. Social workers seek to enhance the capacity of people to address their own needs. Social workers also seek to promote the responsiveness of organizations, communities, and other social institutions to individuals' needs and social problems.

The mission of the social work profession is rooted in the set of core values. These core values, embraced by social workers throughout the profession's history, are the foundation of social worker's unique purpose and perspective:

- Service
- Social justice
- Dignity and worth of the person
- Importance of human relationships
- Integrity
- Competence

This constellation of core values reflects what is unique to the social work profession. Core values, and the principles that flow from them, must be balanced within the context and complexity of the human experience. All social work students are required to read and adhere to the [NASW Code of Ethics](#).

Ethical Behavior and Non-Academic Good Standing Policy

Non-academic good standing in Practicum Education refers to professional performance. Students are required to demonstrate behaviors consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics, and the NMSU Student Social Code of Conduct (SSCC) and School of Social Work BSW/MSW Policies. Student conduct towards clients, student colleagues, practicum instructors, agency personnel, and/or the practicum team will be evaluated based on these professionally established guidelines. Additionally, students are expected to comply with the *Student Responsibilities Policy* outlined in BSSW and MSW Student handbooks.

All practicum students should be familiar with the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and the [New Mexico Social Work Examiners Standards](#) or State [Social Work licensing board](#) in which the student resides. Requirements regarding data privacy as outlined in the Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information ("Privacy Rule") implemented in the [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act 1996 \("HIPPA"\)](#). Students should adhere to these standards throughout their social work practicum.

Any complaints produced by clients, agency personnel, student colleagues, faculty members, and/or the practicum seminar liaison including, but not limited to, the following areas may result in corrective instruction, disciplinary action, suspension, and/or a grade of Unsatisfactory (U) or Failing Grade in either or both practicum and seminar. If complaints are made, students will be provided due process to respond to allegations. Additionally, reconsideration of the student being retained in the practicum and/or dismissal from the BSW or MSW program are possible. Here are examples of complaints and violations of this policy:

Unprofessional performance can include, but is not limited to:

- a lack of commitment to the values and ethics of the social work profession;
- the inability to establish and maintain positive and constructive interpersonal relationships with clients, colleagues, and practicum instructors;
- the inability to perform professional duties due to personal problems;
- refusal to accept and follow through on practicum placement assignments;
- the inability to accept constructive feedback from the practicum instructors and/or practicum faculty;
- attendance problems or failure to communicate with practicum instructors about schedule changes outside of the originally established practicum schedule;
- the inability to meet deadlines or complete responsibilities and duties;
- the inability to apply professional skills and knowledge gained through classroom learning to the practicum experience;
- violation of professional relationship boundaries including, but not exclusively, inappropriate physical contact, any harassment, social/sexual involvement, or emotional abuse;
- violation of client and/or agency confidentiality;
- evidence of impairment that, in the judgment of the placement agency or faculty seminar liaison, jeopardizes the primary client and/or agency interests;
- disciplinary action as a result of academic performance;
- criminal charges that reflect personal behaviors incompatible with the expected behaviors and/or ethics of professional social workers;
- any behavior that is incompatible with the NASW Code of Ethics/Practice Standards/HIPPA (e.g., falsifying records, misrepresentation of work performed, misleading consumers, harassment of practicum instructor, agency personnel, clients, fellow students, and/or faculty).
- Inappropriate use of AI technology in any written assignments or tasks in practicum site or seminar classes unless approved and appropriately cited.

When a student already holds a license in social work, other licensed social workers and social work faculty are obligated to report ethical violations. Other professionals with whom the student works in the practicum setting may have similar reporting obligations depending upon their professional codes or workplace policies.

Readiness for Practicum Policy

Students entering practicum should recognize that various facets of their lives can influence their readiness for practicum, encompassing both their conduct beyond the academic realm and within social work practice settings.

It is the student's responsibility to demonstrate readiness for professional social work practice to the satisfaction of the school of social work, including but not limited to interactions with peers, faculty, staff and outside agency personnel, comprehension and integration of academic course content and practical learning and placements.

This policy is to be applied when there is concern about a student's readiness for professional social work practice. The following is a list of circumstances that may raise concerns about professional readiness. In the case that one or more of these concerns arises and prevents the student from demonstrating readiness for practicum, the student will be notified and a student rights and responsibilities meeting will be held to discuss the concerns and agree upon a plan for resolution. In most cases, the student will be expected to postpone practicum for one year or until the concerns are demonstrated to be resolved.

- Evidence of a violation of the NASW Code of Ethics
- Evidence of a violation of the NMSU policies or regulations or School of Social work policies as stated in the student handbooks.
- Engaging in deceitful practices such as falsification, forgery, plagiarism, or misappropriation of records/documents to gain an advantage.
- Harassment, or any threat, intimidation or attempt to harm another person.
- Persistent substance abuse, whether legal or illegal, impairing the student's ability to function professionally.
- Evidence that behavior or attitude has interfered with the student's ability to work with others at the school or in the practicum agency.
- Inability to engage effectively with diverse individuals or diverse perspectives
- Criminal background that has not been fully adjudicated or sufficiently resolved
- Failure to disclose pending criminal charges.
- Ongoing student rights and responsibilities process which has not been fully resolved
- Failure to complete one or more courses in the program, including practicum.
- Failure to adhere to the attendance policy or the school and/or practicum agency.
- Failure to adequately utilize required technology
- Persistent failures in professional communication with appropriate personnel

DUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Practicum instructors and students are expected to uphold a professional relationship throughout their collaboration. It is important to maintain ethical guidelines, such as the NASW Code of Ethics' Standard 2.07, which strictly prohibits any romantic or sexual involvement between practicum instructors and students.

To maintain integrity and prevent conflicts of interest, practicum instructors should refrain from engaging in dual- role relationships with students that could compromise their educational development or lead to favoritism. While building rapport and interacting with students inside and outside the agency can enhance the learning experience, there are inherent risks such as exploitation or compromised academic standards. It falls upon the practicum instructor to mitigate these risks and uphold the educational objectives.

In line with these principles and issues of dual relationships, the School of Social Work will not assign students to placements involving:

- supervision by a family member or friend, whether primary practicum instructor, secondary practicum instructor, task, consultant, or practice consultant;
- supervision by another student in the MSW program, including task supervision;
- supervision by current supervisor at place of employment;
- placement in an agency where the student or a family member is an active or recent client;
- other placements where existing relationships may impair meeting educational goals.

In cases where a student has a pre-existing relationship with a proposed practicum instructor or agency, full disclosure is required. The Director of Practicum Education will evaluate the nature of the relationship to determine its potential impact on the educational experience. This ensures transparency and accountability in maintaining the integrity of the practicum education program.

Communication & Confidentiality Policy

Communication between the faculty seminar liaison, practicum instructor, site/task practicum instructor (when applicable) and/or the student is a critical component to the success of all placements and should occur throughout the practicum. The practicum instructor, faculty seminar liaison, or student may initiate such communication using any of a variety of formats (telephone, email, letters, in person, etc.). The practicum team and faculty seminar liaisons may consult with the Department of Social Work faculty if the need arises.

Professionalism must always be maintained. Students must be extremely cautious about breaching confidentiality when responding to instantaneous communication such as email, text, blogs and social media. The impulse to respond instantaneously to requests for information, even to other professionals, must be resisted. The student's responsibility is to seek supervision when there is *any* doubt about communicating information or acting within or on behalf of the agency or a client. Additionally, **information from the practicum site is prohibited from use in personal communication** (verbally, online, or in print) without written permission of the agency practicum instructor and practicum seminar liaison. This includes sharing information about practicum sites, clients, other students, or staff on social media sites. While students will be discussing their work with clients in seminar and in the agency, strict adherence to confidentiality standards, redacting information from documents or reports, and disguising client data must occur. Breaches of client or agency confidentiality can have serious consequences for the student including dismissal from the program. Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) standards should be reviewed and carefully followed. Students should discuss how these are implemented in their respective agencies with the agency practicum instructor.

Students are cautioned against the use of personal cell phones for conducting agency business. The automatic appearance of personal numbers on a cell phone log allows the client to contact the student at any time regardless of when the student is actually “on the clock” in the practicum setting. Setting appropriate boundaries may be difficult with that level of access. Additionally, inadvertent release of client information through a client call or the observation of names/numbers (for others who might use the student’s cell phone) is also a breach of confidentiality. Password protections should be implemented on personal devices if they are used for professional business. Precautions should be taken to prevent theft or usage by unauthorized individuals.

Practicum Seminar Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend each meeting and participate in class discussions and activities. Students must be present for 70% of the course in person. This means more than 30% of absences over the semester will result in an automatic failure of the course,

- Students are expected to attend class.
- Missing more than 15 minutes of class time will be counted as an absence.
- Synchronous courses: Cameras are expected to be on during class time to increase engagement and connection with the course material.

Credit for Life Experience or Policy

Although previous work experience will support and enhance participation in the practicum experience, under **no circumstances** will previous life or work experience substitute for practicum hours.

BSW students are expected to read and comply with the *Credit for Life or Work Experience Policy* stipulated in the *BSW Program Student Handbook*. MSW students are expected to read and comply with the *Credit for Life or Work Experience Policy* stipulated in the *MSW Program Graduate Student Handbook*.

Previous Coursework Experience

Please refer to Handbook Degree plans/ Transfer Credits

Practicum Credits from other universities typically do not transfer and will only be approved with written request, syllabi from practicum courses and any practicum evaluations and hours from a CSWE accredited program that were completed. It is strongly recommended that the student consider completing a full practicum experience at NMSU instead of transferring credits. This includes two concurrent semesters of Practicum.

The SSW Practicum Director has the right to accept or reject any number of requested transferred credits based on whether the course content aligns with the program and NMSU. Graduate School requirements. Students should refer to the current Graduate Catalog: <https://catalogs.nmsu.edu/nmsu/graduate-school/> for more information.

Transportation of Self & Clients Policy

New Mexico State University and the School of Social Work (SSW) shall not be responsible for managing any requirements for transportation as part of practicum; does not maintain insurance for practicum student's driving or transporting clients in association with their practicum; and does not review or validate the student's driving record or driver's license.

BSW and MSW students in practicum education placements are responsible for providing their own transportation to and from their practicum placement site. Students are not allowed to transport clients in their own personal vehicles.

Agencies that require practicum students to drive for agency business should verify that the agency's liability

insurance policy covers practicum students transporting clients in an agency approved vehicle. It is then the responsibility of the agency, including agency practicum instructors to state whether practicum students are required to drive, travel, or transport clients as part of their duties and to manage any such requirements. Practicum students are informed that agencies requiring driving/transporting of clients may also require the student to submit to a motor vehicle records check and comply with all driving and client transportation policies of the agency.

Criminal Background Check Policy

Professional social workers are increasingly required to undergo criminal background checks, minor and vulnerable adult maltreatment checks, and/or drug tests for practicum placements and employment. The implications of having a criminal record of felonies, gross misdemeanors, misdemeanors and/or arrests may negatively impact future professional licensure and employment opportunities in the social work practicum. Additionally, substantiated complaints of maltreatment against minors and vulnerable adults could prevent a practicum placement and/or employment in setting related to those populations. Due to the specific requirements for diverse practicum placement, students will be required to comply with the agencies background polices. Students should be informed of the required background check which may include drug testing and vaccinations for the agency and how the cost for these requirements will be covered. In some instances, specific agencies may require students to be responsible for the costs associated with these requirements. Cost associated to these requirements are not the responsibility of the SSW or NMSU.

Since legal convictions and/or charges may have implications for practicum placements, students are required to discuss past and current concerns with the practicum coordinators during the placement process. This information will allow the practicum coordinators to effectively provide the student with guidance on the impact on their practicum placement and future professional employment. Some legal accusations, arrests, or convictions may limit placement options or disqualify a student from being able to be placed for practicum. The practicum director and/or coordinators may request further documentation, request to meet with the student, ask the student to submit a written explanation of the information regarding their criminal background information, and/or request any other information considered necessary by the program. If the student is currently involved in a legal case or pending case, please notify the practicum director/ and or coordinators immediately. This information will be discussed with the student and can possibly lead to a delay in practicum placement until legal issues are resolved.

Agencies and practicum instructors assume risk when hosting a student for their practicum placement. It is important for the agency to make informed decisions about students they are accepting to practice social work duties under the social work license of their practicum instructor. Therefore, the ***student is expected*** to take the initiative to discuss background check results with the agency and practicum instructor. The agency has final decision-making power based on any background information they receive, as to whether they will accept the student for placement.

BSW students are expected to read and comply with the *Felony, DUI/DWI or Other Criminal Record Policy* stipulated in the *BSW Program Student Handbook*. MSW students are expected to read and comply with the *Felony, DUI/DWI or Other Criminal Record Policy* stipulated in the *MSW Program Graduate Student Handbook*.

Social Media Guidelines

The School of Social work expects students to adhere to social work values and ethics, and engage in

professional conduct as outlined in the NASW code of Ethics to guide their usage of social media and other communications tools on both personal and profession settings. Common issues students may encounter include, but are not limited to confidentiality, dual relationships and conflict of interest, and informed consent extend into the virtual world of the internet and social media. As a social work student, careful consideration of the use of social media for profession activities such as advancing social justice issues and advocating for vulnerable populations is of utmost importance and expected of all students in the School of Social Work, and the social work profession. For examples of ways that social works can professionally use social media check out the last [Social Media Toolkit](#) at NASW.

Academic Honesty Policy

All students are expected to read and comply with the [Academic Integrity](#) stipulated in the *University Policy*.

Practicum Placement at Employment Policy-

Employment-Based Placement is defined as when the student is (whether paid or not paid) completing his or her practicum placement at their current place of employment and must be reassigned to a new service delivery area or new learning activities that meet the required CSWE Practicum Competencies.

Practicum education is strongly committed to ensuring that students assume the role of learner in order for them to achieve their learning goals in practicum settings. The practicum team encourages the student to explore learning experiences outside of their current place of employment. However, the School recognizes that some students have personal economic situations that make it necessary for them to explore practicum opportunities that can provide financial assistance including at their place of employment. Even though the Department does not encourage placement at employment, if a student should find a practicum at their place of employment, they will be allowed to pursue such an arrangement. The SSW recognizes that some activities of employment are not consistent with learning and there is an important difference in emphasis between the goals of education development and the delivery of service as a paid employee.

The student will need to apply for this practicum through a separate process defined in the “Procedures for Practicum Placement” section of the Practicum Education Handbook. The purpose of using a separate process is to ascertain that specific criteria in policy have been established. For the student, it clearly indicates that there must be unique learning opportunities and that these must be separate and distinct from their current employment. For the agencies, the process designates that the student must assume the role of a learner and that the agency will need to create an environment for educational objectives to be fulfilled. Finally, the process provides clarity to the practicum coordinator as to the specific generalist/advanced generalist assignments that will be accomplished. Requests will be assessed case-by-case and are **not guaranteed** for approval until the end of the placement process.

It is recommended that a different MSW supervisor is assigned for the practicum placement portion of the work hours. If this option is not available, the supervisor and student will share a plan to demonstrate how this dual relationship will be managed throughout the internship period.

The Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) standards address the need to maintain the educational focus of the practicum experience and to differentiate between employee and internship activities. This option is considered on an individual basis by the Practicum Placement Coordinator to ensure that students receive a variety of practicum experiences and supervision in the practicum internship.

The following criteria must be maintained:

- The agency must meet the same criteria and expectations for a practicum site as for all other sites to be able to achieve generalist or specialization practicum objectives as outlined in *Criteria for Selection of Agency Settings*.
- Student must be assigned a Practicum Instructor with an appropriate social work degree who does not currently supervise, or has previously supervised, their employment. The Practicum Instructor must meet the same criteria as other Practicum Instructors outlined in *Criteria for Selection of Practicum Instructor* section.
- If an appropriately degreed practicum Instructor is not available, the agency must agree to make arrangements for an outside social worker to provide the student with practicum instruction and assign a site instructor.
- Student must have practicum assignments that are fundamentally different from their current or past job assignments and that expand their professional social work skills and knowledge. A fundamentally different learning environment could be established by two or more of the following:
 - change of unit/department within the agency;
 - change in client population served;
 - assignments are different social work interventions or special assignments.
- Preferred that student has not completed a practicum at agency previously.
- All documents and meetings related to practicum at place of employment must be fully completed by required dates for placement. This includes the agency willing to sign an affiliation agreement with the University or has current agreement.
- Learning contract will have clearly delineated practicum assignments, tasks and/or responsibilities that are imbedded in CSWE competencies and behaviors. The assignments should be aligned with the progressive development of the student's abilities at their academic level. This may require lighter caseloads, more support, and involvement in assignments not typically assigned by the agency for their employment.

Student should be aware that disruptions in employment may affect the student's ability to complete the practicum therefore affecting their ability to complete their degree. If a disruption occurs while the student is completing practicum, an immediate review of the practicum placement will be conducted. The agency, student, and faculty seminar liaison must all agree for the practicum to continue at that agency. If such agreement does not exist, the faculty seminar liaison and the student will work with the practicum team to determine how to meet the practicum requirement. Depending on the circumstances of the disruption of employment, the situation may be addressed under the policies related to Ethical Behavior and/or those related to Practicum. If practicum cannot be completed, this can result in a failing grade for practicum and seminar and can result in dismissal from the program. Additionally, alternative placement may be explored, but is not guaranteed.

Safety and Risk Management Policy

Safety in practicum education should be taken seriously. Familiarizing oneself with sources and types of danger and practicing how to address a potentially unsafe situation can reduce risk to the student, clients, and the community. Students participating in practicum should acknowledge their participation in practicum is not risk-free. The Practicum Education Program defines two broad categories of safety: "Direct Client Safety" and "Environmental and Community Safety".

Direct Client Safety

Direct client safety involves students who engage with individual clients, group or family systems.

Measures expected to address direct client safety:

- Students and practicum instructors need to review agency safety policies and procedures at the beginning of the practicum.
- Students are expected to follow agency procedures to ensure their safety, that of their clients, and the overall safety of the community.
- Following an incident that involves a threat to student safety, the student should document the situation, report it immediately to their practicum instructor and faculty seminar liaison to debrief the occurrence.

Environmental and Community Safety

Environmental and community safety involves students who engage with practicum activities in group settings and in the community. High-risk settings for students in this category may include, but are not limited to community emergencies related to natural disasters; community violence or public health emergencies.

Measures expected to address environmental and community safety:

- Communicate with a practicum instructor and/or faculty seminar liaison regarding situation.
- Inform the practicum instructor or faculty seminar liaison of their safety needs.
- Remain calm, follow and cooperate with law enforcement or others emergency responders who may arrive to assist.
- Monitor and respond to email(s) from the University and SSW to address circumstances.
- Be aware of and follow local, state and federal guidelines and expectations to ensure safety.
- The practicum team and SSW faculty will develop protocols to address specific circumstances related to any public health emergencies and according to CDC guidelines.

National Association of Social Worker (NASW) has guidelines to address safety in the workplace and in academic practicum settings. You can review the entire document at the following link: [NASW Guidelines on Social Work Safety in the Workplace .](#)

Medical Insurance

It is strongly recommended that students maintain medical insurance while in practicum placement. Practicum agencies are not required to provide workman's compensation for students and students are not covered by NMSU workman's compensation for practicum. Health concerns are to be covered by personal medical insurance.

Liability Insurance

New Mexico State University, through New Mexico State Risk Management, provides professional liability coverage for students enrolled in health care instructional program for the academic year. Students are not required to obtain additional student liability insurance coverage. However, if students want or require more liability insurance, they are responsible to purchase additional student liability insurance.

New Mexico State University provides professional liability insurance coverage for students under the Tort Claims Act (1992). The University does not provide vehicle insurance and advises that students not transport clients in their personal vehicles. The student will provide any special documentation requests by the

practicum agency. Any other expectations of the agency related to additional insurance must be negotiated between the student and the agency.

*Out of state students- NMSU does not provide insurance, workman's compensation or any additional requirements that may be required by the state in which you live. Alternative placements may be available but not guaranteed. Remain in contact with the MSW Practicum Coordinator during the Practicum Placement process should the out-of-state agency have additional requirements

Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination in Education Policy

Sexual Harassment and Other Forms of Prohibited Discrimination

Sexual discrimination, including sexual misconduct or sexual harassment shall not be tolerated. Any student who believes that they have been subjected to any form of prohibited discrimination, including sexual harassment or misconduct, should report it to a practicum team member within channel of communication or to the NMSU Office of Institutional Equity. Similarly, any Practicum instructor, employee, faculty, academic administrator or other representative of the practicum agency shall contact the Office of Institutional Equity upon receipt of any report by a student or employee that indicates an incident relating to discrimination or harassment.

New Mexico State University, in compliance with applicable laws and in furtherance of its commitment to fostering an environment that welcomes and embraces diversity, does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, retaliation, serious medical condition, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation spousal affiliation, or protected veteran status in its programs and activities, including employment, admissions, and educational programs and activities. Inquiries may be directed to Title IX and Section 504 Coordinator, Office of Institutional Equity; equity@nmsu.edu.

Title IX prohibits sex harassment, sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, stalking and retaliation. For more information on discrimination or Title IX, or to file a complaint, contact:

Office of Institutional Equity (OIE)

O'Loughlin House, 1130 University Avenue

Phone: (575) 646-3635 E-mail: equity@nmsu.edu

Website: <http://equity.nmsu.edu/>

Persons with Disabilities Policy

BSW students are expected to read and comply with the Disability Access Services NMSU *Policy* stipulated in the *BSW Program Student Handbook*. MSW students are expected to read and comply with the Disability Access Services NMSU *Policy* stipulated in the *MSW Program Graduate Student Handbook*. Access to the [Disability Access Services NMSU](#) website.

Grievance Policy

Grievance procedures have been developed for the use of students and faculty. The procedures are designed to deal with disagreements that may develop. The students may grieve any decision made that will affect the student's outcome for practicum and seminar. Link to New Mexico State University Student Life and Conduct [5.05 Student Grievance Procedures](#).

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POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR SELECTION OF PRACTICUM AGENCIES & PRACTICUM INSTRUCTORS

Locating Placement Sites

The Practicum Team will maintain a computerized database of approved placement sites. New potential practicum placements are initiated, developed, and added to the database each semester. Agencies may come to the attention of the practicum team and faculty through contacts in the community, student interests, and/or by the agency contacting the School of Social Work and expressing their interest in beginning a practicum site. Agencies are screened to assure their willingness to abide by Schools goals and policies, to provide significant learning assignments, and to provide the appropriate level of practicum instruction. The database may be used to locate and explore sites that meet the student's learning objectives. Students are welcome to submit information about other sites for consideration of inclusion in this database.

Online students will assist in the development of appropriate practicum placements. As soon as the student is accepted into the MSW online program, the practicum placement process will be made available for students to engage in this process. The student has extensive input into this process to identify a placement that will meet their learning goals. The Practicum Team have final say in the approval of agencies and practicum instructors to ensure they meet the Schools goals and policies of providing significant learning assignments and appropriate level of practicum instruction.

Any practicum placement agency that is submitted for approval to the Practicum Team needs to be aware that it must be able and willing to complete an affiliation agreement executed between NMSU and the agency. Affiliations agreements are a legal document that can take up to three (3) months to get signed. Students requesting new placement sites should make sure to engage in placement process immediately upon start of the Spring semester or admittance in order to obtain a placement by Fall Semester. Additionally, it is important to know that because of variations in state law, NMSU may not be able to place you in an agency in your state.

Practicum Site Selection

It is the responsibility of the student to find and secure a practicum. The practicum team assists the student by carefully approving the agency and practicum instructor. The factors influencing a placement include an agency's availability, CSWE requirements for appropriate practicum instruction, and other administrative issues that will influence the final placement decision. Practicum placement settings will be selected to ensure that students achieve the goals of each program, including CSWE Competencies and behaviors.

Placements are negotiated between the student, the practicum coordinators, and the agency. The placement is based on the student's practice interests, educational goals, and the availability of agencies that are able to assist in meeting these goals. Fit between the student and the agency is a factor in placement as is agency availability and interest, the information provided by the student and the practicum coordinators, and the interview between the student and practicum instructor(s) and/or other agency staff. The agency has the authority to accept or deny a student for placement. The student also has the right to accept or decline any invitation for placement from an agency. The practicum team has the final authority for approval of all practicum placements.

Practicum sites are evaluated by the students at the end of the practicum. This information, along with the experience the practicum team has with the agency, is used to determine whether a site will be retained on the database. Agencies may also opt to remove themselves from the database or to ask that no students be placed for specified lengths of time. Periodically, feedback will be provided back to agencies as evaluations from students are aggregated to provide a general review of all practicum sites. Aggregated data is used to protect student anonymity.

Criteria for Selection of Practicum Placement Agencies

Practicum education settings will be selected to ensure that students achieve the goals of the BSW and MSW program, including CSWE competencies and behaviors.

Criteria for selection of practicum agencies include:

- Established policies and procedures for service delivery.
- Opportunity for students to practice generalist and advanced generalists social work roles including micro, mezzo and macro focused study.
- Ability for students to achieve the goals of the BSW and MSW Programs, including the nine (9) CSWE competencies and behaviors.
- Operates with the NASW Code of Ethics and values.
- **Provides a practicum instructor who possesses appropriate credentials** for the level of study. (See appropriate level in Criteria for Selection of Practicum Instructors).
- Provision of services is well developed and maintained without the reliance of student interns.
- Allow sufficient time for the practicum instructor to provide effective instruction and mentorship.
- Allow time for practicum instructors to attend conferences or trainings on practicum instruction.
- Provide appropriate accommodations for effective student learning.
- Complete and submit the Affiliation Agreement prior to the start of practicum.

Criteria for Selection of Practicum Instructors

Preparing students to begin professional careers in social work requires a combined effort of the community and social work educators. Practicum instructors are a valuable component of the success of social work education. Therefore, the selection and preparation of practicum instructors is of paramount importance. Preparation for the role of a practicum instructor may be necessary particularly if practicum instruction is a new role. Therefore, the Practicum Education program will provide free, ongoing practicum instructor training and resources to support and grow quality practicum instructors for students.

Criteria for selection of Practicum Instructors include:

- appropriately degreed agency practicum instructor for BSW student instructor must have a BSW or MSW degree from a CSWE-accredited program **and** two (2) years post-social work degree practice experience in social work, or appropriate license.
- appropriately degreed agency practicum instructor for MSW student must have an MSW degree from a CSWE-accredited program **and** two (2) years post-social work degree practice experience in social work, or appropriate license.
- An appropriate Social work license can include, LBSW, LMSW, LCSW, LISW.
- for cases in which an agency practicum instructor does not hold a CSWE-accredited social work degree or does not have the required experience, if that is not available, the agency agrees to make arrangements for an appropriately degreed social worker outside the agency to provide practicum instruction and will assign task/site instructor that will provide agency oversight.

- both BSW and MSW practicum instructors preferred to have at least one year at the current agency;
- may be asked to provide a current resume and/or copy of their social work license.
- ability to complete yearly practicum instructor training;
- demonstrate the desire to teach and demonstrate appropriate skills in practice;
- must be available and present to student when they are at the practicum site or provide appropriate replacement for guidance of students' day to day tasks and responsibilities;
- have interest and time to provide effective weekly practicum instruction for the students;
- adhere to the professional social work code of ethics and values;
- ability to provide constructive feedback for students' learning contract;
- review and sign all documents in Tevera in a timely manner.
- ability to provide feedback and meet with liaison for mid semester and final evaluations

School Support to Practicum Instructors

The School of Social Work practicum education program acknowledges and recognizes the benefits from the contributions of many community social workers who serve as practicum instructors. We appreciate the work and contributions of these partners whose commitment to student learning ensures the development of skilled and ethical social work practitioners. Therefore, we are also committed to the growth of those community social workers and agency partners. The practicum education program will provide the following support to practicum instructors for their professional growth:

- **Certification of Practicum Instructors:** The School provides an orientation that covers the general requirements and procedures of the Practicum Education Program. This orientation workshop will be offered at least twice a year, at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters.
- **Continuing Education Units (CEUs):** Practicum Instructors will also be provided with free training opportunities to increase professional skills and development. These training opportunities will be provided by the University and community training will be passed on to Practicum Instructors. CEUs will be provided at least once per year.

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POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR PRACTICUM PLACEMENT

Practicum Hour Requirements

BSW Hour Requirements

The practicum education program is conceptualized to accommodate students' schedules by spreading the required hours across fall and spring semesters in the student's senior year and is concurrent with coursework. BSW students are required to complete a minimum of 450-hours in practicum. The following table indicates how students will meet that requirement: Add disclaimer about change in hours etc.

# Weeks	Times	Min # hours per week	Equals	Minimum Total Hours
15 weeks (Fall)	X	15 hours **	=	225 hrs
15 Weeks (Spring)	X	15 hours **	=	225 hrs
Sub-Total				450 Practicum Education Hours

Students and their practicum instructors create a weekly schedule that meets both the requirements of the agency and accommodates the student's academic schedule. The scheduled hours should not go below a minimum of 12 hours per week or a maximum hour requirement of 18 hours per week. Student and practicum instructors can agree upon a schedule that fits within the minimum and maximum hours. Students are mandated to attend practicum until the end of the semester regardless of early completion of hours.

Practicum hours cannot be completed early.

Students are expected to discuss the need for a leave from placement (e.g., pregnancy, hospitalization, family death) as soon as possible. If the need for leave is known prior to the placement, the student is expected to discuss the issue with the agency at the initial interview. Student are expected to develop an appropriate plan for leave and how they will make up lost time. For leave request over two weeks, students are required notify the Program Coordinator by completing the *Change of Schedule Form* on Tevera prior to change in schedule.

With prior approval from the practicum instructor and seminar liaison, students may count as practicum hours' time spent attending conferences, workshops, or other training programs. Participation in training and educational activities should have relevance to the student's learning objective and written into the learning plan competencies. Time missed at the agency due to illness, weather (snow days) and holidays must be made up. Students cannot count hours that they travel to and from their practicum agency, travel can be counted if students are traveling from the agency to tasks/assignments such as client home visits, town halls, etc. Extensive time completing required Tevera documents or other assignments not related to agency tasks should not be counted as practicum hours. Homework cannot be completed at practicum site and cannot be counted as hours.

MSW Hour Requirements

The practicum education program is conceptualized to accommodate students' schedules by spreading the required hours across fall and spring semesters, in both the generalist and specialization years, concurrent with coursework. The Council on Social Work Education specifies that students must complete a minimum total of 900 hours of practicum work. The following table indicates how students will meet that requirement:

Year of the MSW Program	Hours
Generalist Year (SOWK 5180/5280)	450
Advanced Generalist Year (SOWK 5190/5290)	500
Total Hours	Total = 950

Students accrue practicum education hours for SOWK 5180/5280 Generalist Practicum I/II as follows:

# Weeks	Times	Min # Hours per week	Equals	Total # Hours
15 weeks (Fall)	X	15 hours	=	225
15 weeks (Spring)	X	15 hours	=	225
Sub-Total				400 Practicum Education Hours

Students accrue practicum education hours for SOWK 5190-5290 Advanced Practicum I/II as follows:

# Weeks	Times	Min # Hours per week	Equals	Total # Hours
15 weeks (Fall)	X	17 hours	=	250
15 weeks (Spring)	X	17 hours	=	250
Sub-Total				500 Practicum Education Hours

All students need to be aware of the time commitment required to attend graduate school. Graduate students should take into consideration any outside work and commitments in planning their graduate study. Very few agencies offer paid practicums and rarely will weekend, and night hours be offered due to the lack of practicum instruction opportunities.

Generalist practicum is scheduled for 15 hours per week for 15 weeks in the fall and spring semesters. Advanced Generalist practicum is scheduled for 16-17 hours per week for 15 weeks in the fall and spring semester. Students and their practicum instructors create a weekly schedule that meets both the requirements of the agency and accommodates the student's academic schedule. The scheduled hours should not go below a minimum of 12 hours per week or a maximum hour requirement of 18 hours per week. Student and practicum instructors can agree upon a schedule that fits within the minimum and maximum hours. Students are mandated to attend practicum until the end of the semester regardless of early completion of hours. **Practicum hours cannot be completed early.**

Students are expected to discuss the need for a leave from placement (e.g., pregnancy, hospitalization, family death) as soon as possible. If the need for leave is known prior to the placement, the student is expected to discuss the issue with the agency at the initial interview. Student are expected to develop an appropriate plan for leave and how they will make up lost time. For leave request over two weeks, students are required notify the Program Coordinator by completing the *Change of Schedule Form* on Tevera prior to change in schedule.

With prior approval from the practicum instructor and seminar liaison, students may count as practicum hours' time spent attending conferences, workshops, or other training programs. Participation in training and educational activities should have relevance to the student's learning objective and written into the learning plan competencies. Time missed at the agency due to illness, weather (snow days) and holidays must be made up. Students cannot count hours that they travel to and from their practicum agency, travel can be

counted if students are traveling from the agency to tasks/assignments such as client home visits, townhalls, etc. Extensive time completing required Tevera documents or other assignments not related to agency tasks should not be counted as practicum hours. Homework cannot be completed at practicum site and cannot be counted as hours.

Winter Break Policy

Typically, second semester courses do not officially begin until the third week of January. However, it is a School program requirement that in some instances a student will have an ethical responsibility to provide continuity in client contact and as part of their responsibilities in their agency assignments. The student will maintain NMSU liability insurance between terms if they are working within the scope of agency supervised practicum duties initiated in the fall semester. For liability purposes, before the end of the fall semester, students are required to complete a *Winter Break Form* with full signatures of approval on Tevera that outlines the nature and time frame of the work during break. We understand and support continuity of client care during long breaks, but also wish to balance that with student professional boundary setting and self-care. Therefore, we suggest that students take a minimum of two (2) weeks off during the break and should only be doing what is necessary to maintain continuity of care with ongoing cases. One or two weeks will be determined by the University break as there will be no University oversight of practicum and students will not be able to participate during this timeframe. Students can accumulate up to 40 hours of practicum during the break and they will be allowed to be counted toward the Spring semester hours.

Practicum Placement Procedures

There are two processes outlined in the following pages: The first process, which most students will follow, is the standard practicum placement procedure. The second process is intended only for those students who are anticipating completing their practicum at their place of employment

Standard Practicum Placement Procedures (BSW & MSW)

Students admitted to BSW and MSW Practicum Education Program should note the following paragraphs are presented sequentially and include steps for the student and the practicum team. Compliance with this order of steps is critical. Students *must* follow and complete this process if they intend to begin their practicum on time. The **placement process** for practicum is to be completed during the **spring** semester prior to registration for practicum in Fall Semester. Students submit all application materials on the practicum education database, Tevera. Students having difficulty purchasing Tevera should discuss options with the practicum team to develop a plan so as not to delay the placement process. The forms on Tevera are reviewed by the practicum coordinator and are required to assist in finding an appropriate practicum placement for each student. *At times, the placement process may not represent the needs of every agency; therefore, flexibility and adaptability from the student is necessary.*

1. **Orientation** - The practicum director will schedule a Practicum Orientation with students to review the placement process and procedures in detail including the practicum database system (Tevera), respond to any questions or concerns the students may have, and formally begin the placement process. Students will be required to attend this orientation **before** they are able to apply for admission to practicum. The Practicum Director will post orientations dates and calendar of due date for application tasks on the website and emails. If it is impossible to attend this meeting for any reason, please notify the practicum director as soon as possible. ***Missing the orientation meeting due dates will delay the placement process.***

2. **Pre-Application Tasks** - Students are asked to think carefully about their learning goals as they begin to consider practicum opportunities. When students are considering placement opportunities, they should not contact any of the practicum placements without prior permission of the practicum coordinator. The following tasks are required to be completed on Tevera by the student **before scheduling the practicum interview** with the practicum coordinator:
 - i. Application for Practicum
 - ii. An uploaded, updated resume
3. **Placement Interview** – Students are informed in the practicum orientation that individual student interviews will be scheduled with identified practicum coordinator. Students will need to contact practicum coordinators to schedule a meeting during timeslots indicated in practicum placement calendar due dates. If students are not able to meet with their practicum coordinator with the given timeframe, it is the student’s responsibility to communicate this with the practicum coordinator to arrange an alternative meeting option.
4. **Practicum Fair** – The practicum team will notify the student of practicum fair held in early spring with agencies that want to host students during the Spring semester. Date for Practicum fair will be announced in the school website and emails.
5. **Engagement with Approved Agencies** – In Coordinator meeting student will select their top two/three agency interests to interview with for possible placement. The student will then contact the agency and complete the following: send their resume, complete a separate application through the practicum agency, and schedule an interview with the potential agency.
6. **Engagement with New Agencies** -- Students that have information about an agency that is not approved on the practicum database system, Tevera, will need to review the policies regarding placement and practicum instructor selection in this handbook. If the agency fits the criteria for placement, the student will supply contact information for the vetting process for approval by the practicum coordinator. Online students will bring at least one or two agencies to the practicum coordinator. The student and practicum coordinator will develop a plan on which agencies the student will engage to confirm agencies ability to host student. If agency is interested, student will inform practicum coordinator to start vetting agency. Once vetted the practicum coordinator will inform the student that they can engage in the interview process for possible placement.
7. **Communication with the Practicum Coordinator** – The student will report to the practicum coordinator the date and time of the scheduled interview and apprise them of the outcome of the interview. Students may interview at more than one agency, however securing a placement can be competitive therefore it is important to finalize practicum placement quickly. ***Missing the due dates for placement and not communicating with practicum team will make you ineligible for practicum placement and may delay your graduation.***
8. **Finalization of the Practicum** – After a student completes an interview and the practicum coordinator, student, and practicum instructor agree that a placement will be mutually beneficial, they will complete the Practicum Placement Agreement form on Tevera to finalize the placement. The practicum coordinator will also ensure the appropriate Affiliation Agreement is active between the University and the Agency prior to student beginning practicum. Students are responsible for making sure that appropriate signatures are submitted on all placement forms prior to start of practicum.

9. **Beginning of the Practicum** – Practicum begins on the first day of the semester and ends the last day of the semester. Some agencies might require students to participate in training and onboarding before the semester starts. Agencies will notify students of this expectation prior to acceptance of placement. Students who commit to attend must do so and notify the practicum coordinator of required training. Practicum coordinator may authorize up to 40 hours of training prior to start of placement as long as the student does not have any contact with agency clients. Students will be allowed to count these hours towards their required hours.

Practicum Placement at Employment Policy-

Employment-Based Placement is defined as when the student is (whether paid or not paid) completing his or her practicum placement at their current place of employment and must be reassigned to a new service delivery area or new learning activities that meet the required CSWE Practicum Competencies.

Practicum education is strongly committed to ensuring that students assume the role of learner in order for them to achieve their learning goals in practicum settings. The practicum team encourages the student to explore learning experiences outside of their current place of employment. However, the School recognizes that some students have personal economic situations that make it necessary for them to explore practicum opportunities that can provide financial assistance including at their place of employment. Even though the Department does not encourage placement at employment, if a student should find a practicum at their place of employment, they will be allowed to pursue such an arrangement. The SSW recognizes that some activities of employment are not consistent with learning and there is an important difference in emphasis between the goals of education development and the delivery of service as a paid employee.

The student will need to apply for this practicum through a separate process defined in the “Procedures for Practicum Placement” section of the Practicum Education Handbook. The purpose of using a separate process is to ascertain that specific criteria in policy have been established. For the student, it clearly indicates that there must be unique learning opportunities and that these must be separate and distinct from their current employment. For the agencies, the process designates that the student must assume the role of a learner and that the agency will need to create an environment for educational objectives to be fulfilled. Finally, the process provides clarity to the practicum coordinator as to the specific generalist/advanced generalist assignments that will be accomplished. Requests will be assessed case-by-case and are **not guaranteed** for approval until the end of the placement process.

It is recommended that a different MSW supervisor is assigned for the practicum placement portion of the work hours. If this option is not available, the supervisor and student will share a plan to demonstrate how this dual relationship will be managed throughout the internship period.

The following criteria for utilizing the work setting as a Practicum placement has been established by the School of Social Work Office of Practicum Education within the guidelines provided by CSWE. Please verify that the agency and student can fulfill the following guidelines

The following criteria must be maintained:

- The agency must meet the same criteria and expectations for a practicum site as for all other sites to be able to achieve generalist or specialization practicum objectives as outlined in *Criteria for Selection of Agency Settings*.

- Student must be assigned a Practicum Instructor with an appropriate social work degree who does not currently supervise, or has previously supervised, their employment. The Practicum Instructor must meet the same criteria as other Practicum Instructors outlined in *Criteria for Selection of Practicum Instructor* section.
- If an appropriately degreed practicum Instructor is not available, the agency must agree to make arrangements for an outside social worker to provide the student with practicum instruction and assign a site instructor.
- Student must have practicum assignments that are fundamentally different from their current or past job assignments and that expand their professional social work skills and knowledge. A fundamentally different learning environment could be established by two or more of the following:
 - change of unit/department within the agency;
 - change in client population served;
 - assignments are different social work interventions or special assignments.
- Preferred that student has not completed a practicum at agency previously.
- All documents and meetings related to practicum at place of employment must be fully completed by required dates for placement. This includes the agency willing to sign an affiliation agreement with the University or has current agreement.
- Learning contract will have clearly delineated practicum assignments, tasks and/or responsibilities that are imbedded in CSWE competencies and behaviors. The assignments should be aligned with the progressive development of the student's abilities at their academic level. This may require lighter caseloads, more support, and involvement in assignments not typically assigned by the agency for their employment.

Student should be aware that disruptions in employment may affect the student's ability to complete the practicum therefore affecting their ability to complete their degree. If a disruption occurs while the student is completing practicum, an immediate review of the practicum placement will be conducted. The agency, student, and faculty seminar liaison must all agree for the practicum to continue at that agency. If such agreement does not exist, the faculty seminar liaison and the student will work with the practicum team to determine how to meet the practicum requirement. Depending on the circumstances of the disruption of employment, the situation may be addressed under the policies related to Ethical Behavior and/or those related to Practicum. If practicum cannot be completed, this can result in a failing grade for practicum and seminar and can result in dismissal from the program. Additionally, alternative placement may be explored, but is not guaranteed.

PRACTICUM CHALLENGES, RESOLUTION, AND TERMINATION

Challenges and Support

Practicum Education is one of the most rewarding and challenging parts of a student's learning experience.

In practicum; students, practicum instructors and faculty seminar liaisons may encounter an issue or concern. This can be an issue regarding the appropriateness of the practicum placement for a particular student, the ability of the student to meet the agency's expectations or more generally, a concern with student's performance in their practicum placement.

It is a key objective in social work to recognize challenges that occur in relationships and to work towards

resolution. When these challenges occur, the expectation is that the concerned individual follow the channel of communication to resolve the concern. Addressing concerns early can often lead to resolution and successful continuation of practicum.

Situations occasionally develop that require a change of placement during the semester. A change of practicum placement does not occur often and a change of placement will only be considered under extenuating circumstances. Disruptions to practicum placements are infrequent and changes in placement will only be considered under extenuating circumstances. Examples include agency not meeting learning goals of student, significant life events, agency disruptions and serious impediments, health or safety situations, and student impairments that interfere with the professional judgement, performance, or jeopardize the best interest of those whom the social work student is responsible.

No student can change or terminate practicum placement without consultation with faculty seminar liaison and practicum team.

Channel of Communication

If a student, practicum instructor or faculty seminar liaison are having a problem with someone in the practicum, they are encouraged to communicate with that person before discussing it with others. If they are not comfortable doing that, or the problem persists, then they should move up the channel of communication. Please see *Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Education Policy* for exceptions.

The channel of communication is outlined here:

- Concerned party experiences a concern, talks directly to individual regarding concern (student communicates with practicum instructor)
- Concern discussed with Faculty Seminar Liaison
- Concern discussed with Practicum Coordinator
- Concern discussed with Practicum Director

Procedures for Addressing Student Concerns

If there is no resolution to the concern between the student and practicum instructor or faculty seminar liaison, a support meeting process can be initiated. As soon as possible, the support meeting will take place to inform the student of specific behaviors that do not meet the expectations of satisfactory performance and provide supportive feedback and solution focused action plan. Practicum agencies and the NMSU practicum program have the right to immediately terminate a student from practicum when the student has acted egregiously such as, but not limited to, professional misconduct, violation of NASW Code of Ethics, etc. Once a student has been terminated from practicum placement, the student loses all accumulated hours.

The formal process of addressing student difficulties will occur as follows:

Phase 1: Support Meeting and Solution Focused Action Plan

1. The faculty seminar liaison will consult with both the practicum instructor and student regarding the concern. The practicum team will be notified of the concern.
2. The practicum team will initiate a support meeting with practicum instructor, faculty seminar liaison and student.
3. The practicum team will make recommendations, and all parties will develop a solution focused action plan with a given timeline for concerns to be resolved.

- a. If the concern is resolved by the time frame and there are no further problems the situation is considered no longer an issue.
- b. If the concern is not resolved, continues, and/or intensifies then the situation is taken to a phase 2.

Phase 2: Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Accountability Process

1. The practicum team will notify the BSW or MSW program coordinator that student has not made significant progress on solution focused action plan and is at risk of receiving a grade of “No Credit”.
2. Student and agency will be informed of their participation status in practicum during this phase.

BSW students and MSW students are expected to read and comply with the **Student Support, Rights and Accountability Process** stipulated in the *BSW & MSW Program Graduate Student Handbook*.

Procedures for Addressing Agency Difficulties

Students, practicum instructors, or an agency can inform the practicum program of concerns regarding difficulties at a practicum setting. Concerns may also originate through observations by the faculty seminar liaison, students, individuals through community involvement with a practicum setting, or from compiled data from agency evaluations across social work programs.

Concerns might include:

1. Inadequate practicum instruction and/or supervision;
2. Inadequate or inappropriate tasks or responsibilities;
3. Safety concerns;
4. Micro-aggressions; or
5. Any behaviors and situations that affect the student’s ability to successfully complete their learning objectives.

The following steps will be taken to resolve concern(s) with the practicum agency:

Step 1: Practicum team will speak to all parties involved to assess the situation.

Step 2: Practicum team will take into consideration the individual risk to the student placement.

- a. If a student is currently at the agency, it will be determined if the concern is serious enough to take immediate action. If no immediate action is needed, then the faculty seminar liaison will continue to monitor the situation until a more appropriate time for resolution is determined.
- b. If it is determined that the difficulty is between the current student and practicum instructor, the faculty seminar liaison will assist the student in approaches to resolve the situation.
- c. If the conflict continues with no resolution or if it is determined that the current concern is beyond the capacity for a student to address individually with the practicum instructor or agency, Step 3 will be implemented.

Step 3: Practicum team will determine the most appropriate party to discuss solution of the concern(s) with the agency.

- a. Faculty seminar liaisons will be included in situations that involve a current practicum placement.
- b. Practicum director and/or Coordinators will be included:

- a. in situations in which a student practicum placement will be disrupted due to serious concern(s);
- b. when a pattern of concern(s) is determined; and/or
- c. when prior attempts to resolve concern(s) have been unsuccessful.

Step 4: A meeting will be scheduled with parties involved at the agency to address concern(s). These meetings may include the faculty seminar liaison and the student depending on the nature of the concern and the timing of the resolution. A mutually agreed upon plan for resolution will be developed and implemented. Resolution plans may include the following:

- a. adjusting practicum instruction to meet the needs of students and requirements of the School;
- b. adjusting the student's tasks and responsibilities to meet the CSWE competencies and learning objectives;
- c. reducing the number of students assigned to the agency;
- d. implementing supports to address safety or culturally competent social work practice; and
- e. temporarily withholding student placements until the concern(s) have been addressed and resolved.

Step 5: Practicum team will monitor the resolution plan. If a student is currently placed at the agency and able to maintain their practicum during this time, the faculty seminar liaison will continue to monitor the resolution plan until resolved. If the student is not able to continue at the practicum placement or there are no current placements at the agency, the practicum team will continue to monitor the resolution plan. Once concern(s) is rectified, the agency can continue to provide practicum placements in good standing.

Step 6: If a mutually agreed resolution plan cannot be implemented to address concern(s) or the agency concern(s) rises to a level of serious violations, the agency will be changed to an "in active" status in the data base for future students and the Affiliation Agreement (AA) with the agency will be terminated. This decision will not be made with careful consideration, and ideally several attempts to resolve concerns should be attempted. Mutually beneficial relationships with agencies is a cornerstone of the practicum experience. It is important for both parties to be respectful and open to discussions of concerns and resolutions in order to effectively educate future students and protect services for agency clients and constituents.