

NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY
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

Academic Year 2026 – 2027

This handbook guides students and practicum instructors through the process and purpose of practicum education. Changes may be made at any time during the year with notification.

Practicum Support Team

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Chapter 1: 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.

The journey begins when a student chooses a degree in social work. This choice is usually built on the passion to change and influence individuals, families, and communities. Students bring their hearts to social work. They develop their minds by studying social work practice theories and research. Finally, students bring their hearts and minds to the final step as they learn how to engage in the practice of social work. Practicum is the combination of a student's heart, mind, and hands.

Important Notice

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 sections relevant to their place in the BSW or MSW program.

Glossary of Key Terms

The following terms will appear throughout this handbook:

Term	Definition
Generalist Year	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.
Advanced Generalist Year	The second placement of the Traditional MSW program and the first placement of the Advanced Standing MSW program, completed by all MSW students.
CSWE	Council on Social Work Education — the accreditation body that provides standards all accredited social work programs must adhere to.
EPAS	Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards — the framework guiding social work education accreditation.

NASW	National Association of Social Workers — the organization that guides professional social workers in ethical decision-making.
Practicum	A course of study designed to prepare students to engage in practice, allowing students to perform professional tasks under mentorship.
Practicum Seminar	A concurrent course allowing for self-reflection and growth about the practicum experience.
Practicum Director	College faculty member providing leadership in the administration of the practicum education program.
Practicum Coordinator	College faculty member providing oversight, direction, and support to students, seminar liaisons, and practicum instructors.
Practicum Site	The agency or organization that agrees to host a student for their practicum.
Practicum Team	Primarily the Director and Coordinators; may include the Faculty Seminar Liaison in some circumstances.
Seminar Liaison	The faculty member linking the SSW, the agency, and the student — monitoring, consulting, and intervening as needed.
Practicum Instructor	A staff member holding a BSW/MSW degree with two years post-graduate experience who provides practicum instruction.
Site/Task Instructor	Agency staff providing daily oversight to a student who does not hold a social work degree.
Student Support Meeting	A meeting where the student and practicum support team discuss issues arising during practicum.
Tevera	The practicum database system that manages placement information, time logs, evaluations, and forms.
SSW	The New Mexico State University School of Social Work.

Chapter 2: Purpose of Practicum Education

Practicum education lays a solid foundation integrating the definitions, goals, and competencies that the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) proposes. Each CSWE 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 elements.

CSWE Competencies at a Glance

#	Competency	Core Focus
1	Ethical & Professional Behavior	Applying NASW Code of Ethics, professional conduct, technology ethics, and supervision.
2	Human Rights & Justice	Advocating for human rights and advancing social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.
3	Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion	Anti-racist practice, cultural humility, self-awareness, and managing bias and privilege.
4	Practice-Informed Research	Using ethical, culturally informed approaches in research and applying findings to practice.
5	Policy Practice	Identifying and influencing social policy at local, state, federal, and global levels.
6	Engagement	Applying human behavior knowledge and empathy to engage with clients and communities.
7	Assessment	Collaborative, culturally responsive assessment with individuals, families, and communities.
8	Intervention	Evidence-informed, culturally responsive interventions and effective transitions/endings.
9	Evaluation	Evaluating practice outcomes using qualitative and quantitative methods to improve effectiveness.

Competency Descriptions

Competency 1: 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. Social workers apply rights-based, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lenses to understand the profession's history and recognize historical and current contexts of oppression.

Students will:

- Make ethical decisions by applying NASW Code of Ethics standards and relevant laws

- Demonstrate professional behavior, appearance, and oral, written, and electronic communication
- Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes
- 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 has fundamental human rights and critically evaluate the distribution of power and privilege in society to promote justice by reducing inequities.

Students will:

- Advocate for human rights at individual, family, group, organizational, and community system levels
- 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 influence practice. Diversity and intersectionality shape human experiences and identity development and affect equity and inclusion.

Students will:

- Demonstrate anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practice at all levels
- Demonstrate cultural humility by applying critical reflection, self-awareness, and self-regulation to manage the influence of bias, power, privilege, and values

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.

Students will:

- Apply research findings to inform and improve practice, policy, and programs
- Identify ethical, culturally informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive strategies that address inherent biases in research methods

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

Social workers identify social policy at local, state, federal, and global levels that affect well-being, human rights, justice, service delivery, and access to social services.

Students will:

- Use social justice, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lenses to assess how social welfare policies affect service delivery
- Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and justice

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

Social workers value the importance of human relationships and understand theories of human behavior and person-in-environment.

Students will:

- Apply knowledge of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, to engage with clients and constituencies
- Use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to engage in culturally responsive practice

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.

Students will:

- Apply theories of human behavior and culturally responsive frameworks when assessing clients and constituencies
- Demonstrate respect for client self-determination by collaborating in developing a mutually agreed-upon plan

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

Social workers critically evaluate and apply knowledge in selecting culturally responsive interventions with clients and constituencies.

Students will:

- Engage with clients and constituencies to critically choose and implement culturally responsive, evidence-informed interventions
- Incorporate culturally responsive methods to negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of clients

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

Social workers evaluate processes and outcomes to increase practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness using anti-racist and anti-oppressive perspectives.

Students will:

- Select and use culturally responsive methods for evaluation of outcomes
- Critically analyze outcomes and apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness

Chapter 3: Roles and Responsibilities

Successful practicum education depends on clear roles and active collaboration among all parties. The following outlines the responsibilities of each participant.

Roles Overview

Role	Key Responsibilities
Practicum Director	Program leadership, accreditation compliance, affiliation agreements, Tevera oversight, handbook development.
Practicum Coordinators	Student placement, agency vetting, seminar support, monitoring student progress, conflict resolution.
Faculty Seminar Liaison	Site visits, seminar facilitation, student support, monitoring learning contracts, grade assignment.
Student	Active learning, NASW Code adherence, timely communication, completing Tevera documentation, professionalism.
Practicum Instructor	Weekly supervision (min. 1 hr), learning contract development, evaluation, Tevera documentation.
Site/Task Instructor	Daily oversight where no social work-degreed supervisor is available; performance feedback.

Director of Practicum Education

The Director of Practicum Education is a college faculty member charged by CSWE to provide leadership in the on-going administration and implementation of the practicum education program in accordance with EPAS.

Key responsibilities include:

- Develop, implement, and administer BSW and MSW practicum programs in accordance with CSWE EPAS
- Prepare and manage all documents pertaining to practicum education for CSWE reaffirmation
- Oversee Practicum Coordinators and Graduate Assistants
- Train and provide oversight of faculty seminar liaisons for all program options
- Initiate, manage, and collaborate with University Contracts to implement Affiliation Agreements
- Develop, organize, and maintain the Tevera practicum database system
- Design and deliver orientation and training to students, practicum instructors, and seminar liaisons

- Provide a yearly schedule of deadlines for applications, placements, assignments, and evaluations
- Monitor and address complexities in practicum, including student support meetings
- Mediate and develop appropriate processes for prompt and equitable conflict resolution

Practicum Coordinators

Practicum Education Coordinators are college faculty members providing oversight, direction, and support in compliance with CSWE EPAS. Programs are divided by location.

Key responsibilities include:

- Facilitate the practicum placement process and monitor student and agency progress
- Conduct student pre-placement interviews including assessment of professional goals and readiness
- Recruit, assess, and onboard all new practicum sites
- Approve practicum at employment placements, winter break schedules, and scheduling changes
- Coordinate compliance with background checks, health regulations, and grant requirements
- Grade, monitor, and approve Tevera documentation including time logs and evaluations
- Facilitate student support meetings and communicate with appropriate practicum team members

Faculty Seminar Liaison

The Faculty Seminar Liaison provides the critical link between the School, the agency, and the student. They monitor, consult, and intervene to ensure a quality practicum experience.

Key responsibilities include:

- Conduct a minimum of two virtual/in-person site visits per Fall semester and one per Spring semester
- Monitor practicum performance, evaluations, and time expectations
- Provide final oversight of learning contracts to ensure appropriate skill development
- Offer consultation, mediation, and support regarding student or agency concerns
- Facilitate seminar course discussion and provide students assistance integrating classroom and practicum learning
- Assign final grades for practicum and/or seminar
- Grade, monitor, assess, manage, and approve Tevera documentation

Student

The social work student is the essential person in the practicum experience. Students are not volunteers nor employees, but apprentices who need guidance and mentorship in the learning process.

Key responsibilities include:

- Participate actively in the placement process within required timeframes
- Conduct themselves as social work professionals adhering to the NASW Code of Ethics
- Develop and negotiate a learning contract consistent with CSWE competencies
- Communicate promptly with practitioners, coordinators, and faculty liaisons
- Seek supervision when there is any doubt about actions on behalf of the agency or clients
- Complete all Tevera assignments and documentation by scheduled due dates
- Participate in evaluation of the practicum agency, instructors, and program
- Ensure personal issues do not interfere with social work practice with clients

Practicum Instructor

Practicum instructors are integral to student development, helping students take responsibility for the profession, value diversity, and implement the goals of social work.

Key responsibilities include:

- Orient the student to agency policies, procedures, safety, documentation, and confidentiality
- Provide a minimum of one hour per week of individual educational instruction (or 1.5 hours in small groups)
- Create a safe learning environment where students feel free to ask questions
- Consult and negotiate with the student to develop a learning contract consistent with CSWE competencies
- Notify the faculty seminar liaison immediately of any serious concerns regarding student performance
- Assess student performance at evaluation periods identified by the practicum program
- Monitor, assess, grade, and sign Tevera documentation within appropriate timeframes
- Participate in mandatory orientation prior to or at the beginning of practicum

Site/Task Instructor

The site/task instructor is an appropriately degreed or subject expert from the agency who provides daily oversight where a degreed social worker is not available. Not all students will have a site/task instructor.

Key responsibilities include:

- Focus instruction on direct day-to-day skills development and discussion of student practicum experience
- Orient the student to agency policies and procedures when the practicum instructor is not present
- Assist the student and practicum instructor with development of the learning contract
- Participate in the student performance evaluation process
- Provide feedback and evaluation of the practicum education program
- Notify the faculty seminar liaison immediately of any serious concerns related to student performance

Chapter 4: Practicum Education Policies

Important Notice

Students are required to adhere to all of the following policies as they develop, engage in, and complete their practicum. Planning for practicum begins at least one semester BEFORE practicum starts. Failure to comply with these policies can impact development of a practicum and can result in not completing the social work program in a timely manner.

NASW 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.

The core values of the social work profession include:

- Service
- Social Justice
- Dignity and Worth of the Person
- Importance of Human Relationships
- Integrity
- Competence

All social work students are required to read and adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics throughout their practicum.

Ethical Behavior and Non-Academic Good Standing Policy

Non-academic good standing refers to professional performance. Students must demonstrate behaviors consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics, the NMSU Student Social Code of Conduct, and SSW BSW/MSW policies.

Unprofessional performance that may result in corrective instruction, disciplinary action, suspension, or a failing grade includes, but is not limited to:

- Lack of commitment to the values and ethics of the social work profession
- Inability to maintain positive and constructive interpersonal relationships with clients, colleagues, and instructors
- Inability to perform professional duties due to personal problems
- Refusal to accept and follow through on practicum placement assignments
- Attendance problems or failure to communicate about schedule changes
- Violation of professional relationship boundaries, including inappropriate physical contact, harassment, or social/sexual involvement

- Violation of client and/or agency confidentiality
- Criminal charges reflecting behaviors incompatible with social work ethics
- Inappropriate use of AI technology in assignments unless approved and appropriately cited

Readiness for Practicum

Students entering practicum must demonstrate readiness for professional social work practice. Concerns about readiness may result in a student being asked to postpone practicum for one year. Circumstances that may raise concerns include: NASW Code of Ethics violations, deceitful practices (plagiarism, forgery), harassment, persistent substance abuse, inability to engage with diverse individuals, and criminal background issues not fully resolved.

Dual Relationships Policy

Practicum instructors and students are expected to maintain a professional relationship throughout their collaboration. NASW Code of Ethics Standard 2.07 strictly prohibits any romantic or sexual involvement between practicum instructors and students.

The School of Social Work will NOT assign students to placements involving:

- Supervision by a family member or friend
- Supervision by another student in the MSW program
- Supervision by the student's current employment supervisor
- Placement in an agency where the student or family member is an active or recent client
- Other placements where existing relationships may impair meeting educational goals

Communication and Confidentiality Policy

Communication between the faculty seminar liaison, practicum instructor, and student is a critical component of all placements. Professionalism must always be maintained.

Key requirements:

- Students must be cautious about breaching confidentiality in email, text, blogs, and social media
- Information from the practicum site is prohibited from use in personal communication without written permission
- HIPAA standards must be carefully reviewed and followed
- Students are cautioned against using personal cell phones for conducting agency business
- Password protections should be implemented on personal devices used for professional business

Seminar Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend each seminar meeting and participate in class discussions and activities.

- Students must be present for at least 70% of the course in person
- More than 30% absences over the semester will result in an automatic course failure
- Missing more than 15 minutes of class time will be counted as an absence
- Cameras are expected to be on during synchronous course sessions

Credit for Life or Work Experience Policy

Although previous work experience will support participation in the practicum experience, under no circumstances will previous life or work experience substitute for practicum hours. Please refer to the applicable BSW or MSW Program Student Handbook for the full Credit for Life or Work Experience Policy.

Regarding previous coursework: Practicum credits from other universities typically do not transfer and will only be approved with written request, syllabi, evaluations, and hours from a CSWE-accredited program. It is strongly recommended that students complete a full practicum experience at NMSU.

Transportation Policy

NMSU and the School of Social Work shall not be responsible for managing any requirements for transportation as part of practicum, does not maintain insurance for student driving, and does not review or validate the student's driving record.

- Students are responsible for providing their own transportation to and from the practicum site
- Students are NOT allowed to transport clients in their own personal vehicles
- Agencies requiring students to drive for agency business must verify that the agency's liability insurance covers students transporting clients in an agency-approved vehicle

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. Having a criminal record may negatively impact professional licensure and employment opportunities.

- Students must comply with all agency background check policies, including drug testing and vaccination requirements
- Since convictions may have implications for placement, students are required to discuss past and current concerns with practicum coordinators during the placement process
- Students must take the initiative to discuss background check results with the agency and practicum instructor

- The agency has final decision-making authority based on background information received

Social Media Guidelines

Students must adhere to social work values and ethics in their use of social media and other communications tools on both personal and professional settings. Issues such as confidentiality, dual relationships, conflict of interest, and informed consent extend into the virtual world. Students should review the NASW Social Media Toolkit for guidance on professionally appropriate social media use.

Academic Honesty Policy

All students are expected to read and comply with the Academic Integrity Policy stipulated in the NMSU University Policy. This includes prohibitions on plagiarism, falsification, and the inappropriate use of AI technology in any written assignments or tasks in practicum or seminar unless approved and appropriately cited.

Practicum at Place of Employment Policy

Employment-Based Placement is defined as when a student completes their practicum at their current place of employment and is reassigned to a new service delivery area or new learning activities. While the SSW does not encourage placement at employment, it is allowed in certain circumstances.

The following criteria **MUST** be maintained:

- The agency must meet the same criteria as all other practicum sites
- The student must be assigned a Practicum Instructor who does not currently or previously supervise their employment
- Student must have practicum assignments that are fundamentally different from their current job, 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 the student has not completed a practicum at the agency previously
- All required documents must be completed by required placement dates

Safety and Risk Management Policy

Safety in practicum education should be taken seriously. The Practicum Education Program defines two broad categories of safety:

Direct Client Safety

For students who engage with individual clients, group, or family systems:

- Review agency safety policies and procedures at the beginning of practicum
- Follow agency procedures to ensure safety of the student, clients, and community
- Document and immediately report any incident involving a threat to student safety to the practicum instructor and faculty seminar liaison

Environmental and Community Safety

For students who engage in community settings or high-risk environments:

- Communicate with practicum instructor and faculty seminar liaison regarding the situation
- Remain calm and cooperate with law enforcement or emergency responders
- Monitor and respond to emails from the University and SSW regarding circumstances
- Follow local, state, and federal guidelines to ensure safety

Insurance Policies

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, and students are not covered by NMSU workman's compensation for practicum.

Liability Insurance: NMSU, through New Mexico State Risk Management, provides professional liability coverage for students enrolled in health care instructional programs for the academic year. Students are not required to obtain additional student liability insurance, but may do so if desired.

Out-of-State Students

NMSU does not provide insurance, workman's compensation, or any additional requirements that may be required by your state. Alternative placements may be available but are not guaranteed. Contact the MSW Practicum Coordinator during the placement process.

Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Policy

Sexual discrimination, including sexual misconduct or sexual harassment, shall not be tolerated. Students who believe they have been subjected to prohibited discrimination should report it to a practicum team member or to the NMSU Office of Institutional Equity.

NMSU does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, spousal affiliation, or protected veteran status.

Office of Institutional Equity (OIE): O'Loughlin House, 1130 University Avenue | Phone: (575) 646-3635 | Email: equity@nmsu.edu | Website: <http://equity.nmsu.edu/>

Grievance Policy

Grievance procedures have been developed for the use of students and faculty to deal with disagreements that may develop. Students may grieve any decision that will affect their outcome for practicum and seminar. Please refer to the NMSU Student Life and Conduct 5.05 Student Grievance Procedures for full details.

Chapter 5: Agency and Practicum Instructor Selection

Locating Placement Sites

The Practicum Team maintains a computerized database of approved placement sites. New potential placements are developed and added each semester through community contacts, student interests, and agencies contacting the SSW. Agencies are screened to ensure they meet school goals and policies.

Affiliation Agreement Timeline

Affiliation agreements are legal documents that can take up to three (3) months to get signed. Students requesting new placement sites should engage in the placement process immediately upon start of the Spring semester or admittance in order to obtain a placement by Fall Semester.

Criteria for Practicum Placement Agencies

Practicum education settings are selected to ensure students achieve the goals of the BSW and MSW program, including CSWE competencies and behaviors. Criteria include:

- Established policies and procedures for service delivery
- Opportunity for students to practice generalist and advanced generalist social work roles (micro, mezzo, and macro)
- Ability to help students achieve all nine (9) CSWE competencies and behaviors
- Operates in accordance with the NASW Code of Ethics and values
- Provides a practicum instructor with appropriate credentials for the level of study
- Provision of services is well developed without reliance on student interns
- Allows sufficient time for the practicum instructor to provide effective instruction and mentorship
- Allows time for practicum instructors to attend conferences or trainings
- Provides appropriate accommodations for effective student learning
- Completes and submits the Affiliation Agreement prior to the start of practicum

Criteria for Practicum Instructors

The selection and preparation of practicum instructors is of paramount importance to social work education quality. The Practicum Education program provides free, ongoing training and resources to support quality practicum instructors.

Criteria for BSW student practicum instructors:

- Must hold a BSW or MSW degree from a CSWE-accredited program

- Must have a minimum of two (2) years post-social work degree practice experience, or an appropriate license (LBSW, LMSW, LCSW, LISW)

Criteria for MSW student practicum instructors:

- Must hold an MSW degree from a CSWE-accredited program
- Must have a minimum of two (2) years post-social work degree practice experience, or an appropriate license

Additional criteria for all practicum instructors:

- Preferred to have at least one year of experience at the current agency
- Must be available and present to students when they are at the practicum site
- Must provide effective weekly practicum instruction
- Must adhere to the professional social work code of ethics and values
- Must be able to review and sign all Tevera documents in a timely manner
- Must participate in yearly practicum instructor training

School Support to Practicum Instructors

The SSW acknowledges and recognizes the valuable contributions of community social workers who serve as practicum instructors. The program provides the following support:

- **Certification Orientation:** Covers general requirements and procedures of the Practicum Education Program; offered at least twice a year at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters
- **Continuing Education Units (CEUs):** Free training opportunities to increase professional skills and development, provided at least once per year

Chapter 6: Practicum Placement Procedures

Practicum Hour Requirements

BSW Hour Requirements

BSW students are required to complete a minimum of 450 hours in practicum, spread across fall and spring semesters of their senior year.

Semester	Weekly Hours	Total Hours
15 weeks (Fall)	15 hours/week	225 hours
15 weeks (Spring)	15 hours/week	225 hours
TOTAL		450 hours

The scheduled hours should not fall below a minimum of 12 hours per week or exceed a maximum of 18 hours per week.

MSW Hour Requirements

MSW students must complete a minimum total of 950 hours of practicum work across the generalist and advanced generalist years.

Period	Weekly Hours	Hours
Generalist Year — SOWK 5180/5280 (Fall)	15 hours/week	225 hours
Generalist Year — SOWK 5180/5280 (Spring)	15 hours/week	225 hours
Generalist Year Subtotal		450 hours
Advanced Generalist — SOWK 5190/5290 (Fall)	17 hours/week	250 hours
Advanced Generalist — SOWK 5190/5290 (Spring)	17 hours/week	250 hours
Advanced Generalist Subtotal		500 hours
TOTAL		950 hours

Important Hour Policies

Practicum hours CANNOT be completed early. Students are mandated to attend practicum until the end of the semester regardless of early completion of hours. Time missed due to illness, weather (snow days), and holidays must be made up. Homework cannot be completed at the 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, students may have an ethical responsibility to provide continuity in client contact over the break.

- Students must complete a Winter Break Form with full signatures on Tevera before the end of the fall semester
- Students should take a minimum of two (2) weeks off during the break
- Students can accumulate up to 40 hours during winter break, which count toward Spring semester hours
- Students will only do what is necessary to maintain continuity of care with ongoing cases

Standard Placement Procedures — Step by Step

The following steps must be completed in sequence. The placement process occurs during the spring semester prior to beginning practicum in the Fall Semester.

Step	Action Required
1	Orientation — Attend the mandatory Practicum Orientation scheduled by the Practicum Director to review placement process, Tevera procedures, and deadlines. Missing this orientation will delay placement.
2	Pre-Application Tasks — Complete on Tevera before your coordinator interview: (a) Application for Practicum, and (b) an updated resume upload. Do NOT contact any practicum placements without prior coordinator permission.
3	Placement Interview — Contact your practicum coordinator to schedule an individual interview within the timeframe indicated on the practicum placement calendar.
4	Practicum Fair — Attend the Practicum Fair held in early spring to meet agencies interested in hosting students. Dates will be announced on the SSW website and via email.
5	Engagement with Approved Agencies — Select your top two or three agency interests. Contact the agency, send your resume, complete the agency's application, and schedule an interview.
6	Engagement with New Agencies — If you have information about an agency not yet in Tevera, review placement criteria in this handbook and provide contact information for the vetting process. Online students should bring at least one or two agencies to the coordinator.
7	Communication with Coordinator — Report to the coordinator the date, time, and outcome of each agency interview. Missing due dates or failing to communicate will make you ineligible for placement and may delay graduation.
8	Finalization — After a successful interview, complete the Practicum Placement Agreement on Tevera. The coordinator will ensure an active Affiliation Agreement exists before you begin.

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| 9 | Beginning of Practicum — Practicum begins on the first day of the semester and ends the last day. If the agency requires pre-start onboarding or training (up to 40 hours), notify your coordinator and complete the required steps. |
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Chapter 7: Challenges, Resolution, and Termination

Practicum Education is one of the most rewarding and challenging parts of a student's learning experience. When challenges occur, the expectation is that all parties follow the channel of communication below to resolve concerns early.

Channel of Communication

If a student, practicum instructor, or faculty seminar liaison experiences a problem, they are encouraged to communicate with the concerned party directly first. If not comfortable doing so, or the problem persists, they should move up the chain.

Channel of Communication

Step 1: Concerned party communicates directly with the individual about the concern

Step 2: Concern discussed with Faculty Seminar Liaison

Step 3: Concern discussed with Practicum Coordinator

Step 4: Concern discussed with Practicum Director

Note: See Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Policy for exceptions.

Procedures for Addressing Student Concerns

Immediate Termination

Practicum agencies and the NMSU practicum program have the right to IMMEDIATELY terminate a student from practicum when the student has acted egregiously (e.g., professional misconduct, NASW Code of Ethics violation). Once terminated, the student loses ALL accumulated practicum hours. If a student is terminated from practicum, this will result in a “U” or “F” in both the practicum experience course and practicum seminar course and student can be dismissed from the program.

Phase 1: Support Meeting and Solution-Focused Action Plan

1. The faculty seminar liaison consults with both the practicum instructor and student regarding the concern. The practicum team is notified.
2. The practicum team initiates a support meeting with the practicum instructor, faculty seminar liaison, and student.
3. The practicum team makes recommendations and all parties develop a solution-focused action plan with a given timeline.
 - If the concern is resolved within the timeframe with no further problems, the situation is considered closed.

- If the concern is not resolved, continues, or intensifies, the situation proceeds to Phase 2.

Phase 2: Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Accountability Process

4. The practicum team notifies the BSW or MSW program coordinator that the student has not made significant progress and is at risk of receiving a grade of 'No Credit.'
5. The student and agency are informed of their participation status in practicum during this phase.

BSW and MSW students are expected to read and comply with the Student Support, Rights and Accountability Process in the applicable Student Handbook.

Procedures for Addressing Agency Difficulties

Concerns about agency settings may originate from students, practicum instructors, faculty liaisons, or community observations. Concerns may include inadequate supervision, inappropriate tasks, safety concerns, or micro-aggressions.

Resolution Steps

1. Practicum team speaks with all parties to assess the situation.
2. Practicum team evaluates individual risk to the student's placement. If no immediate action is needed, the faculty seminar liaison monitors the situation. If the concern is between the current student and practicum instructor, the liaison assists in resolution approaches.
3. Practicum team determines the most appropriate party to discuss solutions with the agency.
4. A meeting is scheduled with agency parties involved. A mutually agreed-upon plan for resolution is developed and may include: adjusting supervision, modifying student tasks, reducing number of students at the agency, implementing safety supports, or temporarily withholding placements.
5. Practicum team monitors the resolution plan until resolved.
6. If a mutually agreed resolution cannot be implemented or the agency concern rises to serious violations, the agency will be changed to 'inactive' status in the database and the Affiliation Agreement will be terminated.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The following questions are among the most commonly asked by students entering and completing their practicum. If you have a question not addressed here, contact your Practicum Coordinator.

Placement & Getting Started

When should I start the practicum placement process?

Planning for practicum begins at least one semester BEFORE practicum starts. The placement process occurs during the spring semester prior to beginning practicum in the Fall Semester. Attend the Practicum Orientation and complete your application tasks on Tevera as early as possible.

Can I choose my own practicum site?

Yes, you have significant input into placement. You may suggest agencies not already in the Tevera database, but all sites must be vetted and approved by the Practicum Coordinator. Do not contact any placement site without prior coordinator permission. The practicum team has final authority for all placements.

Can I complete my practicum at my current place of employment?

It is possible but not encouraged. If approved, your practicum assignments must be fundamentally different from your current job duties (different unit, client population, or interventions). A separate Practicum Instructor who has not previously supervised your employment must be assigned. Contact your Practicum Coordinator to apply through the separate employment-based placement process.

What is a Practicum Fair?

The Practicum Fair is held in early spring and allows students to meet agency partners who are interested in hosting practicum students. Dates are announced on the SSW website and via email. Attendance is strongly encouraged.

How long does it take to get an Affiliation Agreement signed?

Affiliation agreements are legal documents and can take up to three (3) months to finalize. If you are proposing a new agency, start this process as early as possible — ideally at the start of the Spring semester — to ensure placement is ready by Fall.

Hours and Scheduling

How many hours are required for BSW practicum?

BSW students must complete a minimum of 450 hours — 225 hours in fall and 225 hours in spring. The weekly schedule should be a minimum of 12 hours and a maximum of 18 hours per week.

How many hours are required for MSW practicum?

MSW students must complete a minimum of 950 total hours: 450 hours in the Generalist Year (15 hrs/week) and 500 hours in the Advanced Generalist Year (17 hrs/week).

Can I complete my practicum hours early?

No. Students are mandated to attend practicum until the last day of the semester regardless of early hour completion. Practicum hours cannot be completed early.

Can I work during winter break and count those hours?

Yes, under specific conditions. Students may accumulate up to 40 hours during winter break that count toward Spring semester hours. You must complete a Winter Break Form on Tevera with full signatures before the end of the fall semester. Students should take a minimum of two weeks off and only do what is necessary to maintain continuity of care.

What happens if I miss time due to illness or a family emergency?

Time missed due to illness, weather (snow days), and holidays must be made up. If you need a leave of more than two weeks (e.g., pregnancy, hospitalization, family death), notify your Practicum Coordinator by completing the Change of Schedule Form on Tevera prior to the schedule change.

Can I count conference or training attendance as practicum hours?

Yes, with prior approval from your practicum instructor and seminar liaison. The training must be relevant to your learning objectives and written into your learning plan competencies.

Can I count travel time to and from my practicum site?

No. You cannot count travel time to and from your practicum agency. However, travel from the agency to tasks such as client home visits or town halls may be counted.

Supervision and Instruction

How much individual supervision should I receive?

Your Practicum Instructor is required to provide a minimum of one hour per week of individual educational instruction, or a minimum of one and a half hours per week in small group instruction with individual sessions as needed.

What if my Practicum Instructor is not a social worker?

If your agency does not have a degreed social worker available on-site, the agency must arrange for an appropriately degreed social worker outside the agency to provide practicum instruction, and will assign a Site/Task Instructor for daily on-site oversight.

What is the difference between a Practicum Instructor and a Site/Task Instructor?

A Practicum Instructor holds a BSW or MSW degree (plus two years post-degree experience) and provides formal social work supervision. A Site/Task Instructor is an agency employee who provides daily oversight but does not hold a social work degree. Not all students will have a Site/Task Instructor.

Policies and Conduct

Can I transport clients in my personal vehicle?

No. Students are NOT allowed to transport clients in their personal vehicles. If an agency requires driving as part of practicum, the agency must verify that its liability insurance covers students transporting clients in an agency-approved vehicle.

What happens if I have a criminal background?

Having a criminal record may impact your practicum placement and future licensure. You are required to discuss past and current concerns with your Practicum Coordinator during the placement process. The agency has final decision-making authority on whether to accept a student based on background check results.

Can I use AI tools in my practicum assignments?

AI technology may only be used in written assignments if it is approved by your instructor and appropriately cited. Inappropriate use of AI in assignments or tasks at the practicum site or in seminar courses may result in disciplinary action.

What if I have a dual relationship with my Practicum Instructor?

Full disclosure is required. The Director of Practicum Education will evaluate the relationship to determine its impact on your educational experience. The SSW will not assign students to placements where supervision is provided by a family member, friend, or current employment supervisor.

Can previous life or work experience substitute for practicum hours?

No. Under no circumstances will previous life or work experience substitute for required practicum hours, regardless of how relevant the experience may be.

Can I transfer practicum credits from another university?

Typically, practicum credits from other universities do not transfer. Transfers will only be considered with a written request, syllabi, evaluations, and hours from a CSWE-accredited program. It is strongly recommended to complete the full practicum at NMSU.

Problems and Concerns

What do I do if I'm having a problem with my Practicum Instructor or agency?

Follow the channel of communication: first, communicate directly with the individual. If not resolved or you are uncomfortable doing so, escalate to your Faculty Seminar Liaison, then to your Practicum Coordinator, and finally to the Practicum Director.

Can I change my practicum placement mid-semester?

Changes in placement are rare and only considered under extenuating circumstances, such as the agency not meeting learning goals, significant life events, safety issues, or student

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

What happens if I am terminated from my practicum placement?

If a student is terminated, they lose ALL accumulated practicum hours. Termination may result in a failing grade for practicum and seminar and could result in dismissal from the program. The practicum team will work with the student to explore options, though an alternative placement is not guaranteed.

What if I experience discrimination or harassment at my practicum site?

Report it immediately to a practicum team member using the channel of communication, or report directly to the NMSU Office of Institutional Equity at equity@nmsu.edu or (575) 646-3635. You do not need to address discrimination through the standard channel of communication before reporting to OIE.

Tevera

What is Tevera?

Tevera is the practicum management database system used by NMSU SSW to manage placement information, time logs, evaluations, learning contracts, and all practicum forms. All students are required to use Tevera.

What if I have difficulty purchasing or accessing Tevera?

Contact your Practicum Coordinator as soon as possible to develop a plan so as not to delay the placement process. Do not wait until deadlines are approaching.

Who approves and monitors my Tevera documentation?

Tevera documentation is monitored and approved by your Practicum Coordinator and/or Faculty Seminar Liaison. Your Practicum Instructor is also expected to review and sign documentation in Tevera within appropriate timeframes.