

(Excerpted from MSW Field Education Manual, 2009 – 2010

pp. 60 & 62 – Field Education Contracts)

## CONTRACTING

Field education relies on mutually-negotiated agreements that articulate expectations between involved partners: the student, the agency and field instructor, and the school and field faculty liaison.

### **Field Placement Learning Agreement**

This concise form is to be completed immediately as the placement begins to clarify basic expectations regarding attendance and responsibilities. Signed copies should be submitted to the field faculty liaison and the student and field instructor should each keep a copy.

### **Field Education Contract**

The Field Education Contract outlines a specific set of learning objectives and creates an overall structure for the placement experience. The contract represents a collaborative effort of the student and field instructor, who work closely to create a realistic, yet challenging, set of learning objectives to guide their work throughout the year. The contract articulates learning opportunities within the five areas of MSW Field Education Objectives: *agency; ethics and justice; self-awareness/communication; practice methods; and supervision/evaluation*. Specific goals within each of those areas are based on the educational needs of the student. Further information on creating the Field Education Contract follows.

### **The First Semester Conference**

The first semester conference takes place at the field agency (arrangements for distance placements may vary). Participants are the field instructor, the student, and the field faculty liaison. In cases where there is more than one supervisor, the Task Supervisor should attend as well. Conferences generally take one hour. If there are several students at one agency working with the same field faculty liaison, scheduling consecutive meetings is helpful. The student is responsible for setting up a date and time that is agreeable to all participants in the conference.

The purpose of the conference is to confirm, clarify, expand, or modify learning objectives and ways of meeting them. This is done through sharing, questioning, and feedback. The Field Education Contract is a working document that is the basis for the conference, and a copy should be sent to the field faculty liaison to review *before* the meeting. Some goals and strategies may need revisions as a result of brainstorming during the conference. The student, the field instructor, and the field faculty liaison are all expected to offer input at the conference. The field faculty liaison may use the opportunity to learn more about the specifics of field assignments.

The final contract, signed by student, field instructor and field faculty liaison is retained by the liaison, and copies are kept by the student and the field instructor. The contract becomes part of the framework for learning at the agency and the basis for future evaluation of the student. Final evaluation of field education takes place just before completion of the required number of hours.

## **Revision of the Field Education Contract**

Revision of Learning Objectives may be necessary following the conference. If revision is necessary, the student is expected to amend the contract and return it to the field faculty liaison within one week after the conference.

## **FIELD EDUCATION CONTRACT GUIDELINES**

Each MSW Field Education Contract provides a guide to the specific learning objectives of students in their field placements. The Field Education Contract is structured as follows:

### **I. MSW Field Education Objectives**

The MSW Field Education Objectives provide the framework for the areas of learning addressed in each field placement, and reflected in each field education contract. The objectives are organized into five areas, listed below.

- Agency
- Ethics/Justice
- Self-Awareness/Communication
- Practice Methods
- Supervision/Evaluation

### **II. Goals**

Within each of the five objective areas, students should identify specific learning *goals*, which reflect personal and professional goals, the learning opportunities of the practicum setting, and the student's developmental level (e.g. foundation vs. clinical social work knowledge and skills).

### **III. Strategies**

Specific steps to move toward each goal should be outlined as a series of *strategies*. For each goal, list several tasks, assignments, or processes that will be used to accomplish it. The strategies will be a series of successive steps that clearly lead to accomplishing each goal. Where applicable, include specific time frames and benchmarks to help track the progress toward a specific goal.

### **IV. Assessment**

For each goal, describe what methods will be used to examine your work and evaluate your progress toward meeting it. Design these to answer the questions: "How do you know this goal has been met?" "How will you know what you have learned?" "How will you know whether your skills are improving?" Direct observation by your field instructor of your interaction with clients is expected, either via audio or video tape, process recording, or being with you in a session with a client. Feedback from other professionals and clients at the agency is encouraged. In order to assess the progress made toward each goal, the contract should clearly identify methods of *assessment* that correlate to each goal.