

GUIDELINES FOR SELF-INITIATED FIELD PLACEMENTS

Students occasionally have an interest in a practicum setting that is not on the School-Initiated opportunities list. Students are encouraged to explore these placement opportunities, under the following guidelines.

POLICIES AND PARAMETERS

Any student who wishes to pursue a self-initiated placement needs to be informed of and adhere to the following policies and requirements:

1. The student must attend the mandatory Student Orientation to MSW Field, and adhere to the guidelines and timelines outlined there.
2. The student must inform the field faculty liaison or Director of MSW Field Education of the intention to pursue a self-initiated placement. ***This must be done before contact is made with any agency.*** In some cases, the faculty may determine that it is not suitable to approach an agency for an internship.
3. Once the student has approval to approach a particular agency, the student should arrange to send application materials (cover letter, resume, and application to field) to the prospective field instructor. It is suggested that students interview several field instructors and agencies in order to compare and contrast and to select the most appropriate placement.
4. In order to meet the challenges of educating social work students and to meet the requirements of the Council on Social Work Education Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), the field instructor must meet the following criteria:
 - a. All field instructors must hold the MSW degree from an accredited school of social work and must have two years post-MSW experience.
 - b. All field instructors must also be licensed social workers or be included in a legal exemption category.
 - c. Field instructors supervising clinical practicum students must be Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers or Licensed Independent Social Workers, or be included in the legal exemption category.
 - d. Field instructors must have an interest in and time to fulfill the responsibility of teaching social work students.
 - e. Field instructors should have the capacity to be supportive in the educational relationship, an integral part of the learning process.

PROCESS FOR OBTAINING APPROVAL OF PLACEMENT

1. Inform the Director of MSW Field Education of your intent to pursue a self-initiated placement before contacting agencies and field instructors. Get instructions, ask questions, and clarify the process before beginning the search.
2. In order to avoid problems, consult with the Director of MSW Field Education throughout the process. Keep the director informed about the agencies and field instructors with whom you intend to interview to make sure they are not on the opportunity listings and that they meet the criteria.
3. After you have conducted the interviews, submit a Self-Initiated Placement Proposal to the Director of MSW Field Education. The proposal should include a description of the proposed practicum, including anticipated assignments and responsibilities.
4. Consultation with a field faculty liaison is recommended in order to discuss your preferred choice.
5. The Director of MSW Field Education will then contact the potential field instructor you prefer in order to:
 - a. Discuss expectations, responsibilities, and additional information about the field program.
 - b. Review the completed Field Instructor Agreement Form to establish eligibility.
6. Based on the above, the Director of MSW Field Education will make a decision about whether the placement is approved or not.
7. The field office will notify you regarding approval or disapproval of the placement.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR SETTING UP YOUR OWN PLACEMENT

1. Keep informed and adhere to the general guidelines and timelines of the MSW field placement process, as well as the guidelines specifically for self-initiated placements.
2. Inform the Director of MSW Field Education of your plans to pursue a self-initiated placement early and stay in contact throughout the process. Seek advice from the director about resources.
3. Research agencies that you may be interested in to understand the range of services and learn about the professional qualifications of staff. Use resources and networking. You *may not* use agencies listed in the School-Initiated opportunities list.
4. Be prepared to sell the program and yourself. Read the MSW Field Education Manual carefully so you can inform the agency contact person about the School's requirements, such as total number of hours and hours per week, when placement starts and ends, the mutual responsibilities of all parties, the contracting and evaluation process, and the criteria for field instructors supervising MSW students (see MSW Field Manual, *Selection of Agencies and Field Instructors*).
5. Be clear about the process and policies for self-initiated placements so you can inform the agency contact person.