

## **GUIDELINES FOR FIELD PRACTICUM IN PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT**

Professional employment and learning are not inconsistent, but there is a difference of emphasis between the roles of students and of staff and the balance between the goals of educational development and delivery of service to clients.

In the interest of assisting students and agencies, the School of Social Work has adopted basic policy guidelines for the development of a field practicum in the student's place of employment. These policies are designed to ensure the accomplishment of the educational goals and objectives. It is recommended that students who are involved in the two-year program do one of the two field placements in another field agency. Exceptions to this policy must be worked out with the student's field faculty liaison and the Director of MSW Field Education. The following policy guidelines are currently in use:

1. When can the agency of employment be utilized as a practicum setting? \*
  - a. When the agency has available either different divisions or learning assignments which will provide the student with practice experiences different from the current job description;  
**and**
  - b. When the agency has available a qualified, licensed MSW who can serve as the field instructor, and who is not the designated supervisor for the routine work tasks the student performs in the agency. This is to ensure in part that the field instructor is free to focus on the educational aspects of the practicum rather than the workload issues. The agency and the field instructor are expected to make a commitment to provide 1 and 1/2 hours of field instruction weekly to the student. If the field instructor has never supervised a graduate student before, it is necessary to attend a Field Instructor Orientation session and field instructor training sessions;  
**and**
  - c. When the agency and the Graduate Program of Social Work can agree that the assignments given to a paid practicum student are consistent with the educational objectives of the Program, and that the assignments (client caseload, groups) show evidence of sound educational design and planned development of the student's skills. This may mean lighter caseloads, planned and varied assignments for educational purposes and/or additional hours above the normal work week to achieve the practicum requirements;  
**or**
  - d. When a student is new to an agency which would otherwise qualify as a practicum settings and the work assignments meet the Program's educational objectives as addressed in "c" above.

2. What is the procedure for initiating a request for paid practicum?

In developing paid placements it is expected that students will take the initiative by making the proposal to the Director of MSW Field Education and by following the Self-initiated Placement Process. In addition:

- a. The "Field Practicum Agreement in Place of Employment" form must be approved and signed by all parties, then reviewed and approved by the Director of MSW Field Education, prior to the beginning of the field practicum.
- b. The student is advised that if the paid placement is found to be unacceptable, the student then must agree to another placement approved by the Graduate Program of Social Work or agree that there is a possibility of not being able to begin the practicum in the following semester.
- c. It will be the responsibility of the field faculty liaison to determine in an ongoing fashion that the paid practicum is consistent with the educational objectives of the Program and the proposal made by the student. If assignments do not meet the Field Education Contract and if no attempt has been made to alter the assignments, the placement may be terminated.

\*Adapted from University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work Field Manual.