

## **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 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 field director may determine that it is not suitable to approach a particular agency for an internship.
3. 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. An interest in and time to fulfill the responsibility of teaching MSW students.
  - b. The capacity to be supportive in the educational relationship, an integral part of the learning process.
  - c. An MSW degree and two years post-MSW practice experience; *and*
  - d. A current social work license (unless in a legal exemption category) as follows:
    - a. LGSW, LISW or LICSW (foundation level placements), *or*
    - b. LICSW or LISW (clinical level placements)

### **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. Once you receive approval to approach a particular agency, send your application materials (cover letter, resume, and Application to MSW Field Practicum) to the prospective field instructor and request an interview.
3. After you have conducted the interview, 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. The Director of MSW Field Education will then contact the potential field instructor 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.

5. The Director of MSW Field Education will make a decision about whether the placement is approved or not. Considerations include:
  - a. Suitability of setting and supervision, as outlined in the *Selection of Agencies and Field Instructors* section of the MSW Field Education Manual.
  - b. Availability of comparable settings in current Opportunities List.
6. The field office will notify you regarding approval or disapproval of the placement.

### **Additional Guidelines for Self-Initiated 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 represent the educational parameters of the field placement, as outlined in the student Field Orientation. This includes level and focus of placement (foundation [generalist practice] or specialized [clinical practice]); number of total hours required for the practicum; range of hours/week; role of concurrent, integrative field seminar and field faculty liaison, including liaison site visits; and field instructor supervisory expectations and credentialing requirements.
5. Be clear about the process and policies for self-initiated placements so you can inform the agency contact person.
6. Students who are interested in exploring options for self-initiated placements are also strongly advised to apply to several agencies on the MSW program's Opportunities List in order to expand options for selecting an appropriate placement.