

CSUN

CALIFORNIA  
STATE UNIVERSITY  
NORTHRIDGE

CSUN MSW Program  
Field Instructor Manual



## **Field Instruction and MSW Internships**

### **What is field instruction?**

Field instruction involves a commitment to teach graduate level MSW students the necessary skills and tools to provide services in your agency. These skills may be associated with micro, mezzo and or macro social work practice. The Field Instructor is a mentor and supervisor who will provide the student with direction and feedback regarding their assigned tasks. The Field Instructor models ethical social work practice in accordance with the NASW Code of Ethics and the organization's policies and protocols.

### **How does field instruction differ from supervision?**

Field instruction involves assisting students in the integration of their coursework material into real life experience working with individuals, groups and communities. Students are learners and not experts. Students come in with varied levels of knowledge and skill based on their own individual life experiences. Field instruction is an extension of teaching and the university classroom. The Field Instructor is a co-educator at the students' internship. This differs from supervision where the supervisee has a degree and an assumed knowledge base, but is only honing their skills in preparation for licensure or as a requirement of the agency's provision for assurance of quality service.

### **What is involved in having a MSW Intern?**

CSUN MSW students will have two internship experiences during their graduate education. Each internship is approximately 8.5 months long and entails completion of 450-600 hours between September and May. The number of total hours will vary depending on whether the student is in their foundation or concentration year of the program and will also vary with the format of their program. Please refer to the CSUN Field Models handout located on our web page for more details.

## **Roles**

### **Field Instructor**

The Field Instructor (FI) is the MSW or LCSW at the internship site who will be responsible for supervision of the MSW intern(s). Agencies without an onsite MSW will need to identify an Offsite Consultant Field Instructor who meets the university requirements. If the agency does not have anyone that they can identify, the university does have a list of LCSWs who are interested in providing consultant field Instruction, most often for a fee.

### **Offsite Consultant Field Instructor**

The Consultant Field Instructor (CFI) is a model that is sometimes used in agencies where a full time MSW or LSCW is not on staff or in cases where the number of interns is beyond what would be considered reasonable and ethical for the current MSW staff to oversee. The CFI fulfills the role and assumes the responsibility as the Field Instructor, but there is another layer of accountability. In this model it is vital that the CFI has regular communication with the agency preceptor or task supervisor to assure that the student is developing skills as reported in supervision and to make sure that the CFI is in sync with the agency mission and policies regarding provision of services.

### **Preceptor**

A Preceptor is an employee of the agency who is not the student's Field Instructor. This person may have a related degree, but is not necessarily a social worker. This person may be responsible for assigning clients or tasks to the student(s). A Preceptor is often utilized in an internship when the agency FI or CFI is not available at the site to work with the student. The FI or CFI may have other responsibilities that leave the student without direct access for some or most of their internship hours. In these situations it is vital that the student have an assigned preceptor to seek out for guidance.

Not all students will have an agency Preceptor (task supervisor). For many students they will be assigned to a Field Instructor who work for the agency and that same person will not only provide supervision, but will also be directly responsible for assigning and monitoring all assignments and task within the agency.

### **Field Liaison**

The Field Liaison is a university faculty member who is assigned to teach the field seminar and monitor the students' progress throughout the internship. The Field Liaison will meet weekly with the student in class and will make a visit each semester to the students and the Field Instructor at the agency site. The Preceptor may also be included in this visit. The Field Liaison is available to assist both the student and the agency with any issues or concerns that may impact the students learning.

## **Field Director**

The Field Director coordinates the field education process by development of curriculum, recruitment of agency internship sites, consultation and supervision of Field Liaisons, provision of training for new and continuing Field Instructors, and evaluation of faculty and site performance. The Field Director is involved with any situation where an issue is not able to be resolved within the standard policies for addressing field concerns on behalf of the student or the agency.

## **Agency Administrator/Internship Coordinator**

Some agencies, especially those with larger internship programs, have a Coordinator who will be responsible to work with the MSW field department to recruit, select and assign students to internships. This person may also be a Field Instructor, but in many cases is an Administrator who oversees the larger process within the agency.

**Responsibilities** – Field Instructors will follow the FI Code of Ethics and have the following qualifications:

### **Field Instructor Code of Ethics**

- Maintain and promote an environment in which each student is treated with respect throughout interactions in the office and the community.
- Be punctual in meeting with your students for regularly scheduled field instruction, for a minimum of one hour weekly, and in meeting with the Field Liaison.
- Maintain professional back-up availability to the student and enforce safety procedures.
- Be prepared for field instruction by:
  - assuring sufficient number and variety of cases/assignments to student;
  - consistently reading and commenting on educationally based recordings;
  - reviewing records and other recordings; and
  - following up on student questions/concerns in a timely fashion.
- Teach material in accordance with the course syllabus (themes), the students' Learning Agreement, the field and classroom course objectives.
- Give timely feedback to students regarding field assignments.
- Give appropriate grades consistent with the grading policy.
- Meet deadlines for submission of field evaluations each semester.
- Keep appropriate professional boundaries and maintain confidentiality in student relationships in order to maintain your role as an educator.
- Promote and maintain a respectful, professional, collaborative environment regarding student issues.

### **Field Instructor Qualifications:**

- A MSW degree from a CSWE (Council on Social Work Education) accredited program
- 2 years of post-graduate experience as a MSW
- Completion of the Field Instructor Training course
  - May be done concurrently with first assigned intern
  - May be completed at one of the other local MSW programs, if preferred

### **Supervision requirements**

**Agency Orientation:** The student will receive a full orientation which includes all pertinent information regarding the agency services, policies and safety protocols. An orientation checklist is available for you in the students learning agreement on the IPT (Internship Placement Tracking) Database.

**Weekly supervision:** Each student is to meet weekly with their Field Instructor for one hour of individual supervision, unless alternate suitable arrangements have been approved by the Field Director. Supervision will include review of assigned work with support of learning and constructive feedback.

**Review of weekly EBRs (Educationally Based Recordings):** Each week, starting in mid-late September, the student will turn in an EBR to reflect their work with a client, family, group, community or participation in a meeting. The student will complete 8 in the fall and 10 in the spring. This may be completed during internship time at the agency, but is up to the discretion of the Field Instructor, time permitting. The Field Instructor will review the EBRs and use as a teaching tool to promote students development as a professional.

**Evaluation:** The Field Instructor will complete the midterm and end of the semester evaluations for their assigned student(s) on IPT. These evaluations should reflect an accurate picture of where the student is in their skill development. In addition to completion of these documents the Field instructor is responsible to bring any concerns to the attention of the student's Field Liaison, so that both can work to develop a supportive plan to address professional development.

**Site Visits:** The Field Instructor will provide a time each semester for the Field Liaison to meet at the agency with the Field Instructor, student and if applicable, the Preceptor. At out of area placement sites, this visit may be conducted via video conferencing (i.e. Zoom).

**IPT (Internship Placement Tracking)** – Is our student management data base. Here you will find the learning agreement and evaluations for all of your students. Please see the IPT Manual for Field Instructors available on our webpage for information on using the IPT system.

## **Learning Agreement**

This is the contract between the Field Instructor, the student, and the agency. The student is responsible for completing the contract with the exception of section VII, which will be completed by the Field Instructor. The Field Instructor will assist the student in identifying learning activities associated with the 9 CSWE Competencies which inform MSW Education. The Field Instructor will sign off on the agreement to acknowledge that it is complete and approved.

## **Evaluations**

Student will be evaluated 4 times over the course of the internship. There are comprehensive evaluations at the end of each semester and mid-term evaluations at week 8 (approximately) of each semester.

## **Managing Challenges**

At times an issue may arise with a student. It is the expectation that issues will be addressed as they arise and that timely feedback will be given to the student. Sometimes this will require constructive feedback and confrontation. Remember that the student is a learner and that this feedback is vital for their professional development. If the feedback is not then incorporated by the student or if the issue is beyond what the Field Instructor or the agency can address, it is important to include the Field Liaison in the process. The Field Liaison is there to support both the student learning and is also there to support the agency needs as well. The Field Liaison may institute a Student Support Plan to assist in correcting the situation.

## **Risk Management**

### **Liability Insurance**

MSW interns are covered by liability insurance provided by the university. In order for this insurance to be in effect the agency must have an active affiliation agreement with CSUN. We do our best to send out renewals well in advance of the expiration date. The student must also be enrolled in one of the four fieldwork courses to be covered by the liability insurance policy. Students who volunteer at your agency after they have completed their coursework are no longer covered by the liability policy provided by the university and are also no longer under the supervision of their Field Liaison or the CSUN MSW Field Education Department.

### **Importance of Regular Supervision and Documentation**

Weekly supervision, review of all student work at your agency, use of EBRs and documentation of your weekly supervision meetings are all ways to limit your liability regarding the intern's work contributions. The interns work at the agency under your supervision and having a mechanism and documentation to show that this regular supervision has occurred and what was covered is best practice.

### **Supporting Students in Continued Development of Cultural Humility**

Cultural humility has implications for effective social work practice. It leads to a more realistic view of people, and the intersecting cultures that make up identity in each one of us. It is respectful and supports the social work values and ethics that guide the profession. It is important for Field Instructors to introduce this learning process to students. Field Instructors can begin this dialogue with students through a motivational interviewing, cultural identity interview.

Field instructors can start with the following 3 questions:

1. What does culture mean to you?
2. What are two cultural groups you belong to?
3. Share one culture norm/ value you learned in your family? Field Instructors have to take the lead in modeling for students.

### **Training Opportunities**

Each year our department will offer two Field Instructor Training Courses. We offer an introductory training for new field instructors every fall and an advanced training every January. These trainings are free of charge and provide CEUs. The advanced training is by invitation only and is offered to field instructors who are currently supervising CSUN MSW Interns

Another opportunity for continuing education credits is the annual Joint Symposium. This symposium is a half day presentation offering 3 CEUs is free of charge and is a joint collaboration between the eight Los Angeles & Orange County MSW programs.

## **Helpful tips**

1. It is important to practice the parallel process of engagement with clients in the field instruction relationship.
2. Remember to assess the student's learning style.
  - a. [Learning Style Resource 1](#), [Learning Style Resource 2](#), [Learning Style Resource 3](#)
3. Create a process to track and monitor your student's progress in supervision, e.g. a notebook or Word doc.
4. Collaborate with Field Liaison on a regular basis. We are here for you!
5. Have an EBR due date and stick to it. Do not accept more than 2 EBRs in any given week. It is the student's responsibility to complete them in a timely fashion.
6. Having a Preceptor review EBRs, in addition to the Field Instructor, is allowed and it can be useful for student to have another supervisor's feedback.
7. Periodically review student's usage of their EBRs and number completed. Are they completing them to your expectations and using the proper format?
8. As a Field Instructor you are a co-educator in the field process. Your student needs you!
9. Periodically review the student's Learning Agreement to make sure student learning goals are being met.
10. Create a learning plan prior to the student starts
11. Create an agency orientation plan before the student starts
12. Remember to discuss agency safety and risk management issues/plan with student.
13. Create a field instruction date/time with student
14. Discuss field instruction expectations with student
15. Remember field instruction is strengths based
16. Support student appropriately re-framing biases, values, norms, etc.
17. Discuss the process of learning with your student
18. Discuss the process of change with you student
19. Assist and support your student learning practical application skill sets
20. Challenge your student to critically think and to problem solve