

# SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

## BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK



BSW FIELD EDUCATION MANUAL

UPDATED DECEMBER 2020

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## SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK – MISSION STATEMENT

Our **educational mission** is to prepare generalist social work practitioners skilled in critical self-reflection and in working with individuals, families, groups, and communities. We endeavour to prepare Indigenous social workers and child welfare practitioners and we emphasize structural, feminist, Indigenous and anti-oppressive analyses.

Our **scholarly mission** is to share and create collective knowledge and understanding through engaging in critical enquiry and by supporting research and innovative curriculum development at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Our **practice mission** is to act on social justice issues through community change initiatives and anti-oppressive social work. Our political and social responsibility is to participate in and reflect community experiences in all our efforts to challenge oppressive societal structures.

In all our activities, we aspire to create a supportive environment that promotes equity, respect, responsibility, curiosity, collaboration, flexibility, risk-taking and creativity. We support interdisciplinary collaboration. We seek to provide accessible and flexible social work education and we are committed to working across differences, such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, class, abilities, and sexual orientation.

### QUOTE FROM THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATORS

*Field education is considered a central component of social work education because the integration of knowledge, values and skills in the context of field education is a critical and distinctive aspect of social work education. The purpose of field education is to connect the theoretical/conceptual contributions of the academic setting with the practice setting, enabling the student to acquire practice skills that reflect the learning objectives for students...*

## WHAT IS FIELD EDUCATION?

The goal of Social Work education is to develop critically reflective generalist social work practitioners, who can assess and respond to human problems at both an individual and a structural level. Field Education courses provide you the opportunity to practice applying social work theory to your own practice in an evaluative, reflective and disciplined manner.

To complete your degree, you must successfully complete two 350-hour field education placements under the supervision of an experienced professional (field practice) and the guidance of a faculty instructor (through the current online Integrative Practice Seminar).

Placements are completed in a wide range of community and government agencies and can usually be done in your home community. In particular, placements are sought in agencies which offer a varied practice (e.g., working with individuals, groups, families, community involvement, and organizational change); exposure to inter-professional teamwork, non-traditional approaches to practice and innovative settings for social workers.

Although you can choose when during your degree to complete your placements you must apply up to a year in advance of your desired term (*a list of deadlines and links to apply for each course will be available to you after you finish the required introductory information*) and complete the required pre-requisite courses (*as per the UVIC Calendar*).

In the months leading up to your placement, a Field Education Coordinator will work with you to help you refine your learning goals and work out the details of a placement including acceptable supervision.

Availability of placements depends on factors such as your area, access to qualified supervisors, and time of year. Normally each field education placement is for a single term although there is a two term, part-time option from September to April only.

## POLICIES

You are required to abide by all the policies of the Faculty of Human and Social Development and the School of Social Work. Read this section and follow the relevant links.

### [FACULTY OF HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: REQUIREMENTS \(UVIC.CA\)](#)

*Guidelines for professional conduct*

*Unprofessional conduct*

*Practica dates*

*Denial*

*Temporary withdrawal of students pending report*

*Withdrawal*

*Voluntary withdrawal*

*Termination of placement by placement agency*

*Placement evaluation documentation*

*Notification of Undergraduate Records*

*Readmission*

*Appeals*

### [UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA - HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK - POLICIES - UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA \(UVIC.CA\)](#)

*Electronic communications policy (including social media)*

[University of Victoria - Human and Social Development, School of Social Work - Policies - Electronic communications policy - University of Victoria \(uvic.ca\)](#)

## SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK FIELD EDUCATION POLICIES

The faculty reserves the right to approve any agency or institution that provides placements for student placement, and to change any placement assigned to a student. The student, however, has the right to be informed in writing of the reasons for any change in placement.

The faculty accepts responsibility to provide sufficient placement placements within a student's program. Availability of placements requires a signed Placement Agreement.

Access to placements is competitive and may be limited based on availability, geographic location, and specialization.

A student may be required to withdraw from a placement course if none of the available placement agencies will accept the student.

It is the responsibility of the course instructor to inform students of the criteria by which unprofessional conduct will be judged in the placement setting.

## Changing Agencies

After placement commences, changes are only made when the placement is clearly not meeting the student's learning needs. This could occur when there is:

- a previously unidentified learning need which cannot be met in the agency inadequate supervision

- inadequate or inappropriate workload
- personal difficulty of either the student or supervisor which precludes a satisfactory learning experience

- any form of workplace harassment or discrimination

If a change in placement is required, the first placement must be properly and respectfully terminated before any negotiations begin for a second placement. Any change in placement may also require that the student complete extra hours in order to allow sufficient time to demonstrate competence in the new setting and be evaluated on the current learning.

### *Health, Safety and Human Rights*

Students have a right to a safe working environment, free of discrimination and harassment. The University policy regarding discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment of its students and employees, applies to students in the placement setting. The School of Social Work supports this policy and encourages any student who feels that they have been the subject of discrimination or harassment, to discuss the situation with the [Equity and Human Rights office](#). Any concerns may also be discussed with your faculty liaison.

Students and supervisors should also be aware that The University [policy on Religious observances](#) applies to students in placement.

### *Inability to Secure a Placement*

When seeking a placement position, students may apply to a maximum of four agencies in any one semester. If the student is unable to secure a placement they will be allowed to withdraw without penalty from the course and advised on how to pursue a placement in the next semester.

### *Paid Placement*

In general, a social work placement is an unpaid educational experience. The issue of paid placement has been raised numerous times and discussed within the school. This issue has also been under study by the CASWE (Canadian Association of Social Work Educators). This issue needs to be looked at closely, as it raises several complex questions and considerations. These include:

**Learning needs of students.** A placement is an educational opportunity in which the student is offered tasks to meet specific learning objectives. The student participates in establishing these learning goals and may request assignments which will enhance learning. The student should be able to indicate that they do not want to do certain tasks that they already have a level of skill and experience in, or that do not fit with their learning goals. On the other hand, an employee is hired to perform tasks based on the needs of the employer. In an employment relationship (including most co-op placements), the employee's learning needs are second to the agency's needs.

**Evaluation.** When someone is hired to do a job, they are expected to bring a level of competence. In placement, the purpose is to gain experience and competence. Expectations of students and of employees are different, and a student must be evaluated as a learner.

**Race, class, and gender issues.** The school recognizes that for many students, there are serious financial barriers to spending an extended period of time in an unpaid placement. The possibility of receiving payment for time spent in placement might make social work education more accessible for students marginalized with respect to class, race, socioeconomic background and lack of access to financial resources. We are also aware that it is primarily fields of study that are dominated by women that require unpaid placement work (social work, nursing, child and youth care etc.) while other fields (law, public administration, computers) offer paid placement work or co-op placements).

The School will consider students' proposals for paid placement on an individual basis. A proposal for paid placement must address the following points:

- The placement experience must be different than the student's regular workplace and previous volunteer or work experience. Fourth-year placement must be different than the third-year placement.
- If the placement is in the student's current field or current place of employment, the placement position needs to clearly be focused on new learning. The student must be able to leave the "worker" role and step into a new role as a learner. This difference in roles should be reflected in:
  - a change in supervisor.
  - a change of responsibilities.
  - an increased complexity of tasks.
  - a change in agency or, in a large agency, a change in program or physical setting.
- The student needs to demonstrate a plan, developed in collaboration with the agency supervisor, that addresses:
  - how the student and supervisor will ensure that the student's learning needs will remain a priority throughout the course of the placement
  - how any difficulties-- such as performance problems-- will be addressed

- how the student will be evaluated—e.g. Are the expectations of the student different than they would be of an employee? Are there any contradictions or dilemmas that arise and how will these be handled?

The agency must indicate their written agreement and assurance that the student's educational needs will be met. To this end, there needs to be a separate supervisor for the educational contract, separate from the usual work supervisor. This separation protects the student, allows them to take risks, and to respectfully be critical of the workplace without putting their employment or their placement in jeopardy.

Proposals need to be submitted, in advance, to the Field Education Coordinator. These will be brought to the Placement Team for consideration. You **must** receive approval from the School before accepting a paid placement position.

#### *Requests for Exceptions to Placement Policy*

Any requests for special exceptions to placement policy should be brought by the student to the Field Education Coordinator. The Field Education Coordinator will seek advice and guidance from the Placement Team and senior administration. Exceptions may be granted in circumstances of specific educational need or extreme personal circumstances.

#### *Sick Time*

Students are responsible for completing the required number of hours in their placement. Two sick days per placement are allowed without a make-up requirement. If more than two days are missed due to illness, this time needs to be made up. This should be negotiated between the student and the agency supervisor. The student should also notify the faculty instructor of the arrangements made.

#### *Strikes, Job Action and Population Health Directives*

When the placement setting experiences labour disruption in the form of job action and strikes, students are expected to honour and respect any picket lines in their setting. Where this brings undue hardship, students should discuss a plan of action with their faculty liaison. Should a student be in a placement that is closed due to health concerns, they should immediately inform their faculty instructor (liaison). Students are not considered part of essential workplace services during a health crisis.

Credit will not be given for any time lost while agencies are out on strike or closed.

#### *University Contracts and Liability Insurance*

The University of Victoria requires a Placement Agreement with agencies which provide placement opportunities for students. The major reason for such an agreement is to clarify that the University will maintain comprehensive liability insurance, saving harmless the agency against all liability which may result from any negligent acts of the instructors, students and staff of the University.

The contract between the University and agency is not student specific but outlines the legal responsibilities of the university and the agency. This contract is negotiated by the General Counsel's Office at UVic, not by the School of Social Work. Each new affiliation agreement is designed specifically for the host agency and will be sent directly to the agency for review prior to signing.

#### *Denial of Placement, Withdrawal and Directed Placements*

According to the policies of the Faculty of Human and Social Development, a student's application for a placement may be denied if the field coordinator in consultation with the faculty and director of the school deem that a student's preparatory work is insufficient and/or incomplete to reasonably assure they will be successful in their placement. Students will be given the opportunity to work with the school to produce a plan to address gaps in learning which should lead to a greater likelihood of success in their upcoming placement. The student may appeal the denial of placement.

Students may be required to withdraw from the placement with a failing grade if their performance in the placement or their placement preparation is considered unsatisfactory by their supervisor and faculty instructor (liaison).

If recommendations regarding specific learning needs are encountered in any prerequisite courses the school reserves the right to place the student in a placement where these concerns would be addressed and monitored. When there is a clear indication of a particular learning need, the student will be guided by the faculty instructor (liaison) and field education coordinator in the choice of a placement where this learning need could best be met. This is referred to as a directed placement.

Directed placements are also used in the case of missed opportunity. Students and faculty in consultation may wish to ensure that a particular skill or area is available to the student in the placement and therefore, seek a directed placement.

If a student receives a failing grade for the placement or if a placement change is required as described in the above, the following policy will apply in seeking a repeat or directed placement. A directed placement is one where the student's choice of placement must be made in consultation with the faculty. A directed placement may be recommended because of a learning need which could not be met in a previous placement or course.

The present course instructor or placement faculty liaison defines with the student (and the present agency where applicable) a statement of the student's:

- strengths, knowledge, and skills
- identified learning needs or areas of concern requiring particular attention during the placement
- learning goals
- specific requirements

This statement, signed by both student and faculty instructor, is placed on the student's file and shared with prospective agencies. Where the student has a different perspective of his/her learning goals, needs or concerns, the student will be encouraged to write a statement to this effect which will also be shared with prospective agencies.

The choice of possible agencies and supervisor for a repeat or directed placement will be based on the student's learning needs. The choice and rationale is discussed with the student by the faculty instructor. The student makes a choice from the identified agencies. A potential agency receives the written statement of learning needs along with any regular documentation for the placement. The agency then decides whether to accept the student for an interview and, if appropriate, subsequent placement.

Up to a maximum of six agencies will be asked to review the application and consider the identified student for placement. If all six agencies do not accept the student, the faculty will be asked to assess the situation and make a decision regarding withdrawal.

Following placement, a special contract focused on student learning needs and with special monitoring of progress is arranged between agency, faculty instructor and student.

During the time period of the placement, the student should be free of any encumbrances and duties from their regular workplace. The student should not continue to be responsible for cases or expected to be "called out" while at their field placement.

In general, placement placements are open to all eligible students. That is, a placement will not be developed for a particular student to the exclusion of other students. However, a spirit of equity will prevail. There are occasions when a student or group of students may be perceived as at a disadvantage and special arrangements may be necessary. The faculty has the sole authority to make final decisions regarding the suitability of placement proposals.

## CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK REQUIREMENTS

*For current links and forms, consult the Field Education site*

### **Placement NOT in British Columbia**

If you do not reside in BC and do not intend to complete a placement in this province, you are not required to obtain a Ministry of Justice Criminal Record Check.

However, you will have to identify and meet any individual agency or provincial requirements regarding criminal record checks.

### **Placement in British Columbia**

The BC Criminal Records Review Act states that *“An educational institution must ensure that every registered student who will work with children or work with vulnerable adults undergoes a criminal record check.”*

- This means that **your Criminal Record Check must be completed before you will be allowed on site for your placement.**
- UVic will only accept a criminal record check done by the Ministry of Justice.
- The results of the check will be sent directly to the School of Social Work.
- The Ministry has a processing fee for the CRC – as of January 2017, it is \$28.00 - subject to change.

## FIELD EDUCATION COURSE OBJECTIVES & PRINCIPLES

*For a list of current courses consult the Field Education site and the UVic Academic Calendar.*

### *Objectives*

In addition to the following list of objectives, students are expected to develop their own individual learning objectives. There are additional specific objectives for placement students in the Indigenous and Child Welfare Specializations (see the later section on Specializations).

- To develop the ability to engage in and integrate critical self-reflection.
- To engage in critical inquiry.
- To develop the ability to articulate and critique various relations of power.
- To strengthen understanding of, and ability to engage with, Indigenous communities and concerns.
- To strengthen understanding of, and commitment to, social justice.
- To develop the ability to effectively engage in Anti-Oppressive Practice.
- To develop the ability to work effectively as a generalist practitioner.
- To develop the ability to engage with and apply social work values and ethics.

### *Principles*

- The service needs of the consumer must take precedence over the learning needs of students, when the two are in conflict.
- Within the limitations of a placement, students are expected to carry a reasonable workload and are not to be unduly protected.
- Equal importance must be given both to the acquisition of knowledge and to the practice of skills, as in other courses. Students will be expected to learn from the wisdom of colleagues and consumers as well as from academic sources.
- Field practice should be an individualized course, with a particular opportunity for students to develop self-initiated learning. Students should identify their learning needs, optimum learning methods, and seek to achieve personal and professional learning objectives.
- The agency accepts the student as a developing professional social worker and will not use students to meet staffing needs nor withhold appropriate assignments because of student status.
- Field education agencies are selected by the agency's congruence with the goals of the School of Social Work and by the ability of the agency to offer the student the variety, range, and intensity of experience to achieve these goals.

## FIELD EDUCATION FOR SPECIALIZATIONS

### *Indigenous Specialization*

This specialization is a concentration within the BSW program, and its intent is to create opportunities for Indigenous BSW students to focus your undergraduate program on preparing for leadership roles as a helper in Indigenous communities. You will have significant opportunity to learn with other Indigenous students and faculty in the School. This specialization is limited to Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit students (or by permission of the Director) although some indigenous agencies may accept non-Indigenous students.

This specialization will encourage you to:

Explore and affirm your own indigenous identity.

Work alongside Indigenous human service workers, political leaders, and Elders.

Build a knowledge base that is informed by Indigenous ways of knowing, learning, being, helping.

Balance the structural, feminist, and anti-oppressive social work perspectives available through courses that prepare all BSW students to work with diverse populations of students, faculty, and community groups.

### *Indigenous Child Welfare Specialization*

This specialization is designed for those students who are following the Indigenous Social Work Specialization and who wish to include within it a preparation for child welfare work in Indigenous communities. The School has worked closely with the Caring for First Nations Children Society in the creation of this specialization. It combines courses from the Indigenous and Child Welfare Specializations.

### *Child Welfare Specialization*

The Child Welfare Specialization is a program of studies that prepares students for child protection and/or child welfare work in government and other settings, while also satisfying the general practice criteria that are required for BSW accreditation and entry into the profession of social work. Students enrolled in the Child Welfare Specialization will do their 400-level placement in a Child Protection (404) or Child Welfare (404A) setting.

A Child Protection placement must be completed in an approved child protection agency under the direction of a child protection social worker.

A Child Welfare placement may be completed in an approved government or community agency involved in the support of children and families. You will work with a Field Education Coordinator to ensure all learning objectives for the placement can be met.

## ROLE-BASED RESPONSIBILITIES & COMMON TERMS

For a current list of Social Work Faculty and Staff see the [School of Social Work website](#).

### THE STUDENT

The student carries responsibility for their professional development as a social worker. It is expected that the student will take an active part in defining their learning needs to assess and prioritize agencies at which these can best be met. For more information on identifying your own learning goals see the Identifying Goals/Researching Agencies Addendum.

It is expected that the student will:

- Take an active part in defining their learning goals and prioritizing agencies at which these can best be met.
- Participate as required in completing the placement contract between the agency and the School.
- Participate as required in the development of a learning contract with the agency supervisor and Liaison.
- Share responsibility with the agency supervisor to ensure that adequate supervision occurs.
- Fully participate in all aspects of the Integrative Practice Seminar portion of the placement course
- Consult with the Liaison and arranges with the agency supervisor make up hours for time missed due to illness/emergency.

### THE FIELD EDUCATION COORDINATOR

Provides the initial communication between the agency, the student, and the School of Social Work. They are also responsible for the non-academic administrative component of the placement.

Provides information to students, liaisons and field supervisors regarding the expectations and process involved in social work practice education. Their role is one of education and administration. In consultation they arrange student placements with existing and new placement.

The Coordinator:

- Supports students to find suitable agencies through discussion of their learning needs and interests.
- Initiates contact with the agencies to provides information about the School as a whole, as well as current field education procedures and evaluation methods.
- Assists the student and agency to complete the required placement contract, which includes confirming an appropriate supervisor for the student.

- Supports the agency supervisor by ensuring they are aware of and have access to School resources.
- Reviews completion of pre-placement requirements (criminal record clearance, required immunizations, confidentiality agreements, etc.)
- Prepares and monitors affiliation agreements and other relevant insurance policies.
- If a separate social work consultant will be working with the student and agency, the role and the nature of the contact have been negotiated this should be included in the student's placement contract.
- Develops, monitors, and evaluates all aspects of placements

## LIAISON (FACULTY INSTRUCTOR)

The Liaison is a University of Victoria, School of Social Work professor or Sessional Instructor and is the person responsible for the academic component of the placement. They meet with the agency supervisor, evaluate the student's performance, and submit a complete or incomplete grade for the placement.

The Liaison serves as a resource person and facilitator of student learning while acting as a consultant and ambassador for the School of Social Work. The School of Social Work endeavours to have an Indigenous faculty person available as additional support for Indigenous students.

The Liaison:

- Facilitates class discussion, evaluates assignments, and encourages personal reflection through the Integrative Practice Seminar.
- At the beginning of the term, initiates contact with students and agency supervisors to introduce the objectives and structure of the course.
- Arranges at least 3 meetings during the term that are attended by the student and the agency supervisor.
  - A first meeting for introductions and to support development of the learning contract.
  - A mid-point meeting to help identify student learning and development goals.
  - A final meeting to enable closure for the student, agency, and school.
- Offers space for weekly one-on-one student consultation for the duration of the term.
- Completes a final student evaluation which results in a grade of complete or incomplete (there are no letter grades for placement courses).
- Provides guidance to the student and agency supervisor if there are issues which disrupt or end a placement.

## AGENCY SUPERVISOR

The agency supervisor is the individual in the setting where the student is placed who provides the day-to-day placement supervision of the student. This is also the person who establishes the

tasks and responsibilities that are to be assigned to the student. They are the direct link for both the student and the School of Social Work with the agency, as well as the principal learning resource for the student.

The agency supervisor:

Outlines for the Field Education Coordinator and the Liaison the tasks and responsibilities of a student placement, including the skills and knowledge the student should start with, and what they would acquire.

- Identifies the agency contact who has the authority to sign an affiliation agreement between the agency and the School.
- Completes the placement contract with the participation of the student and field education coordinator, where appropriate. The contract should spell out the planned tasks and responsibilities of the student. It should also include a statement of the anticipated hours or work and the supervision structure and timing.
- Arranges orientation of the student to the agency during the first week of the placement.
- Ensures that placement contract commitments (such as appropriate student supervision and consultation) are carried through and initiates change in the contract if appropriate.
- Prepares their portion of the interim and final evaluation of the students' progress.
- Maintains contact with the Liaison, and brings to their attention to any questions, issues, or suggestions respecting the student or policies of the School.
- In the event of an absence longer than one week, designates an appropriate alternate and notifies the student and Liaison of this temporary change.

If an agency supervisor does not hold a social work degree, the Liaison will provide additional social work support to students.

## COMMON FIELD EDUCATION TERMS

### *Field Education site*

This is the Brightspace site that current registered School of Social Work students access to find placement course application links, information, and deadlines.

### *School of Social Work website*

This is the home of the School of Social Work on the UVic website.

### *Field Education Courses*

Also called placements, these courses have two concurrent parts: the field placement at an agency (the placement) and the online course facilitated by the liaison (Integrative Practice Seminar or IPS).

### *Field Education Application*

Students must apply through a link the field education site for each placement course. Deadlines for each course application are listed on the field education site.

### *Placement Agreement*

The Field Education Coordinator assists the student and agency supervisor to fill out this form which formalizes the field placement.

### *Field Education Learning Contract and Evaluation*

With guidance from the Liaison, the Student and Agency Supervisor fill out the learning contract portion of this form during the first few weeks of a placement. The evaluation is completed in the same way but is done at the mid-point and the end of the placement. The student downloads this form from the IPS site.

## STEPS FROM APPLICATION TO PLACEMENT

### KEY STEPS IN YOUR JOURNEY

#### *Application*

Complete an application through Survey Monkey

After the deadline, the School will verify that you have a valid criminal record check on file with us (if you are doing your placement in BC) and have the required pre- or co- requisites planned.

#### *Coordinator Matching*

Approximately 3 weeks after applications are due, you will be matched with a Field Education Coordinator who will lead you through the steps to securing a suitable placement.

Once Coordinators have been assigned to students, you will receive an email with the contact information for your Coordinator.

#### *Registration*

You cannot register yourself for any Field Education course. The School checks pre-requisites and does a bulk registration of all students for the term once registration opens.

#### *Liaison Matching*

A few days before the start of the term, you will receive an email with contact information about your Faculty Liaison (your instructor for the Integrative Practice Seminar portion of every Field Education course).

#### *Integrative Practice Seminar & Brightspace access*

You will have access to the IPS on Brightspace on the first day of the term. Not all Liaisons start instruction on the first day, so check the site for the actual start date.

Field Education courses only appear under "All Courses" in Brightspace, not under the list of courses for a particular term.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### *How do I register for a field education course?*

Unlike other courses where you can self-register, **you must apply** for your placement course approximately 2 terms in advance. Current application requirements and deadlines are available on the [Field Education site](#). Prerequisite lists are available in the [Academic Calendar](#).

### *What is a Prior Learning Assessment?*

Those students who enter the program with significant social work or social justice experience may elect to complete a third-year placement through Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) rather than a field placement.

This is a full-time-only online course where students demonstrate the learning they have gained from previous human services work. The student transcript will show that this placement was obtained through a Prior Learning Assessment. More details on the PLA can be found on the [Field Education site](#).

### *How do International Placement Placements work?*

*International Placements are considered on an individual basis for 4<sup>th</sup> year placement only.*

International placements need careful thought and much planning. You must apply a year ahead of time to ensure that the placement will happen and will be successful.

To work effectively with the faculty Liaison for the seminar portion of the course, the agency supervisor needs to be able to converse in English and be available during the local daytime hours of Pacific Standard Time.

Things to consider about an international placement:

- Why are you interested in an International placement?
  - This is not a tourist opportunity and needs to be undertaken for educational reasons. Often students are returning to a culture and geography that they or their parents were part of, and that has its own special challenges.
- What are your language skills?
  - It has been found that without an understanding of the language of the street, your ability to integrate and come away with a positive learning experience can be severely limited.
- How resilient are you?
  - Placement in a place far from the familiar can be trying, exhausting, and you need to be able to expect the unexpected and thrive.
- Can you meet the Visa requirements to study in the country?

- Although the Field Education Coordinator can support you, ultimately the student is responsible for ensuring they have the correct documentation to enter and study in the country.

### *Where can I do a placement?*

Placements are completed in a wide range of community and government agencies and can usually be done in your home community.

Where feasible, you may complete both your 3<sup>rd</sup> year placement and 4<sup>th</sup> year placement in the geographic area of your choice, although international placement is reserved for 4<sup>th</sup> year students only.

### *How do I find a placement?*

After the application deadline for your chosen term, a Field Education Coordinator will work with you to identify a suitable field placement and approach the agency on your behalf.

The Coordinator will help you refine your learning goals and work out the details of placement and supervision. Availability of placements depends on factors such as your area, access to qualified supervisors, and time of year.

Addendum A of this document is a student guide for identifying your learning goals and researching agencies.

### *Can I start talking to agencies about a possible placement now?*

While you can do “hands off” research about agencies in your community, wait for your Field Education Coordinator to approach the agencies on your behalf.

Our community partners have requested that you don’t call them directly because with the volume of post-secondary students looking for placements they would be overwhelmed by calls. Our Coordinators are also your best bet for navigating placement application processes, which can vary widely.

### *I have daytime commitments. Can I complete a placement on evenings and weekends?*

Most agencies are only able to offer placement supervision during weekday daytime hours. You should not expect to be able to complete your placement on evening and weekends. Your Field Education Coordinator can help you come up with a solution.

### *Can I do a part-time placement?*

We offer a part-time placement from September – April only.

However, some placements are only available as full-time (in one term). Your Field Education Coordinator will help you identify suitable part-time options.

*Can I be placed in a Health Authority/work in another country/do research etc. for my placement?*

It depends. Look through the BSW Field Education Manual for more details on eligibility on International Placements etc. You will work out the details with your Field Education Coordinator who is assigned to you after the application deadline for your chosen term.

*Can I do a placement at my current or new workplace?*

It depends. You will discuss this with your Field Education Coordinator who is assigned to you after the application deadline.

Field Education prioritizes both new learning and solid supervision. A workplace proposal must be approved by the Associate Directors and endorsed by your workplace. Your Coordinator will assist you with this paperwork.

Details on workplace proposals Please see the policy section of this document for details on proposals for employer-paid workplace placements.

*Can I be placed at more than one agency during a term?*

Each placement is normally completed in one agency only. This is based on the principle that you need time to observe and practice to gain competence and a sense of confidence.

*Who can supervise a placement?*

Usually, a placement agency supervisor would hold a BSW or MSW. Supervisors with substantial other human services experience will absolutely be considered by the school.

*If I apply for PLA, do my references have to be in by the application deadline?*

Ideally, yes. However, if you get the first part of the application in by the deadline, we can usually arrange a later deadline for the required supporting documents.

*Do I have to complete the criminal record check before I apply?*

The School is required to have on file a valid criminal record check received directly from the Ministry of Justice for you to start a placement in BC. Criminal record checks are valid for 5 years so you will most likely only have to apply once during your degree. If your placement is in another province, it is your responsibility to find out and meet the background check that is required by the agency where you are placed.

You can apply for your CRC after you have submitted your placement application, but it may take a few weeks (or sometimes longer) for your CRC to be completed. Application procedures are listed on the Field Education site for registered Social Work students.

*What if I can't find a placement?*

Our experienced Field Education Coordinators help most students find a placement. Your Coordinator will help you decide on your options if a placement can't be found. Also see the Policy section of this document for more information.

*What can I expect to do during a placement, and how do I prepare?*

Tasks during a placement vary from agency to agency. More detailed information on what to expect and how to prepare can be found in Addendum B – Getting started in your placement.

*What if I encounter problems during my placement?*

Any difficulties in placement need to be discussed with the faculty Liaison (Integrative Practice Seminar instructor). If a move is required for whatever reason, the student must engage in termination with the first agency in a respectful manner, before moving on to a new placement.

If a student must leave a placement, the replacement placement must be of sufficient length for an adequate learning experience to take place and for the student to be evaluated. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that the student can move to an alternate placement and simply complete the remaining hours. Usually this would mean at least 80% of the time in the placement would need to be completed following a move.

## APPENDIX A - STUDENT FIELD GUIDE – IDENTIFYING LEARNING GOALS & RESEARCHING AGENCIES

### IDENTIFYING YOUR LEARNING GOALS

Before you decide on which agencies might work for your placement, you first want to consider your experience, current knowledge, and skills. To identify areas in which you feel competent, and others where you would like to develop, you can start by examining your own resume.

#### *Where Have You Worked?*

What kind of organizations (bureaucratic, unstructured, or etc.) have you been involved with, either in a paid capacity or as a volunteer? What have your responsibilities been? What kind of supervision have you had? Have you mostly worked independently (e.g., crisis line worker) or as part of a team (e.g., group home worker)? What models of practice and philosophies have been prevalent in the agencies where you have worked or volunteered (e.g. feminist, medical model, etc.)?

#### *What Areas of Knowledge and Skill Have You Developed?*

What areas do you feel you have a working knowledge of (e.g. substance abuse, adoption, etc.)? What populations have you worked with (involuntary clients, children, etc.)? What skills have you developed (e.g. eligibility assessment crisis intervention, etc.)? What methods have you used (e.g. individual, telephone only, etc.)?

Think about areas you might wish to deepen your knowledge in, or skills you would like to extend. Think about the type of organization structures and cultures you have worked in and how you have felt about the fit with your own learning style. You may note that you feel more comfortable in the highly structured setting you have worked in than in the more informal ones. It may strike you that you have only observed one approach to working with, for example substance abuse, although you are aware of other perspectives.

#### *Where do you want to go from here?*

What areas of interest would you like to pursue? What new skills would you like to learn? Are there value or ethical issues you wish to test out or strengthen through your field education? Do you want to challenge your comfort level by working in an agency that has a different structure or culture than you have generally experienced?

#### *Outline Your Learning Goals*

At this point you should have a fairly clear idea of what you would like your placement to look like. List your learning goals concretely under the headings of knowledge, and skills that you hope to achieve. Make a few notes about the kind of setting you would like to work in, and the type of supervision that you think you would most benefit from.

### *Availability & Personal Circumstances*

How many hours a week can you do over how many weeks? What hours of work can you do—are you available on weekends or evenings? Do you have a car if that is required? Do you have any special needs that must be considered?

### SUGGESTIONS FOR EXPERIENCED STUDENTS

All students enter the program with a variety of life, volunteer, academic and paid experience. Some students have extensive experience in one or more areas of social services. These students are encouraged to step totally outside their present knowledge base and try an area of social work unfamiliar to them. Placement is a time to discover, to reach for new learning and explore different aspects of our diverse profession. The School will assist students to tailor placement to suit individual needs. Experienced students may embark on a variety of senior placement activities, for example:

- Community development work for a new community resource.
- Teaching at a community college in a Social Service Worker program. Revitalizing a branch of your local Social Work professional organization
- Developing workshops and training fellow social workers.
- Working in policy and administration, planning and research.

Students in their 4<sup>th</sup> year placement may consider a research placement within a field agency. They should also ensure that someone in the agency will be able to continue with the research after the placement is completed. Unless the student has a significant research background, the current UVic School of Social Work research course will be considered a pre-requisite for a research-based placement.

Students with significant social work/ social change experience may also wish to challenge the first placement. Prior Learning Assessment is available for Social Work 304 only.

## FINDING A SUITABLE AGENCY

### *Before you approach an agency*

Allow us to respect the time and resources of community and government staff and agencies. For this reason, we ask that you not contact agencies directly to discuss placement, without checking in with the appropriate placement coordinator first. This is especially important for students seeking placements in high population areas, where higher numbers of students may be contacting a limited number of agencies

Students outside urban centres area may have more flexibility in approaching local agencies but must **contact their field education coordinator before approaching any agency.**

### *Researching Agencies*

By now you should have a good idea of both what you bring with you to a placement, and what you want from your placement.

Find out about each potential agency before you take the next step. What services do they offer? Who do they provide service to?

Call your field education coordinator to discuss your learning goals and the agencies you hope to apply to. They may have some information about the agencies that they can share.

Here are some hints on how to start:

- Most communities have a social service directory that lists local human service organizations. Usually, these handbooks provide basic information about the purpose and function of each agency listed, who is served, and contact information. In order to find out where to obtain these handbooks, you might phone agencies that are likely to be using them (Ministry of Children and Families offices, hospital social work departments, volunteer organizations, etc.), or ask at your public library. You can usually find directories of social service agencies for your community online as well.
- Discussion with the Human Resource Departments in federal ministries (e.g., Department of Veterans Affairs) and provincial ministries (e.g., Ministry of Children and Families (MCFD) might yield possible placement sites within the government sector. (Refer to the blue pages in your phone book). **Please be advised that Child Welfare Specialization students receive first consideration for MCFD Child Protection placements in BC.**
- People in your personal network may be able to provide ideas or leads. Visit organizations in your community, collect brochures, business cards and suggestions to discuss with your coordinator.

## APPENDIX B - GETTING STARTED IN YOUR PLACEMENT

Relax! You are there to learn, and no one expects you to know everything on day one. The best things you can bring with you are gentle curiosity about the services provided by the agency and a willing hand.

*Things to prepare before arriving on site:*

- Have a copy of your resume on hand. It may have been a while since your supervisor reviewed your application documents.
- Have an idea of the type of learning you want to get out of the placement so that you can discuss this with your supervisor. Supervisors don't always have a particular project in mind, so they tailor the tasks to the interests of the student.

*First meeting with your supervisor:*

- Discuss your previous experience and share your learning interests with your supervisor.
- Find out what the plans are for your orientation/introduction and beginning work with agency; offer ideas from your list.
- Ask about the most pressing service problems and service priorities for the supervisor, staff, and agency.
- If you haven't already done so, make sure you and the supervisor have agreed on a schedule for when you will be on site.
- Schedule supervision times.
- Find out (observe and ask questions about) how to conduct yourself in the office. What do staff wear to work? Where and when are breaks for coffee and lunch? Cell phone use at work?
- Learn where the policy manuals are.

*Orientation ideas*

- Complete any agency specific orientation requirements.
- Ask for a tour of the site if one hasn't been offered.
  - Review policy manuals and safety procedures.
  - Is there a daily schedule of tasks for staff?
  - Ask to review typical client files.
  - Learn what the intake process is for a client. Drop in? Appointment? What type of client support is provided (space/food/referrals)? Who are the people being served?

*Student Safety*

Safety has been traditionally defined as freedom from harm or danger and is often associated with a sense of security. Safety can include emotional, physical, spiritual, or psychological elements of an individual's well being. Social work placements may include risks that are typically associated with professional practice. These risks can be minimized if you develop an awareness of the hazards that are present at the onset of the placement.

Maintaining safety during the social work placement is complex as every practice environment is slightly different. Agency supervisors are a student's best resource because they are knowledgeable about the risks in their environment. It is expected that you will receive a specific orientation to the agency policies and procedures regarding risk management at the outset of your placement. If your agency supervisor does not provide this orientation, then **you must ask for it.**

It is important that you locate and review the safety policies in your agency if they exist. If no safety policies exist, you are responsible for contacting your faculty liaison to discuss strategies for maintaining your safety throughout the social work placement. You have the right and responsibility to refuse to do an assignment when you perceive that your physical, emotional, or spiritual safety may be at risk. If safety concerns arise you should contact your faculty liaison immediately.

Social work students have a responsibility to report abuse and neglect if they witness it in their placement. If you observe abuse or neglect during the course of the placement you must follow the agency protocol for reporting this. We recommend that you discuss the agency policy for reporting with your supervisor. Good communication with your supervisor, and faculty liaison, and awareness of the safety hazards in your placement are key in minimizing safety risks in the placement.

## THE FIRST WEEK

- Familiarize yourself with agency policies including those regarding health and safety, emergency procedures, harassment, and discrimination, etc.
- Begin a file or notebook of questions, issues, etc. for your supervisor or faculty instructor (liaison).
- Learn office routines for obtaining files, using phone (long distance), advising receptionist of your schedule, use of government cars or mileage, keeping work/caseload statistics, giving work to office staff, getting office supplies such as forms.
- Find out from agency supervisor who is “back-up supervisor” when s/he is absent.
- Begin a list of resources used most frequently by the office.
- Plan your time using a daily diary. The first priority will be your supervisor’s orientation program but anticipate “blank spots” by having ideas for your learning.
- Remember to keep your focus on getting to know the clients – this may look like casual conversations as you go about office tasks or more formal interactions.
- Observe others (sit with the receptionist, sit in on intake interview, attend court presentation, go on a home visit with a worker, visit related services such as a foster home or attendance centre).
- Be willing to lend a hand with routine tasks, especially if they involve client contact (examples: serving meals; helping a client find another office or the way out).
- Start find some time to talk to each staff member individually. How did they come to the work? How do they express the core functions of their job?
- Consider the team dynamics in the agency – where would you fit in if you worked at the agency?

### *Ideas to Check with Your Supervisor*

- Read up on typical issues for the clients/consumers presented: the staff of your agency library will have such material or call your liaison.
- Propose to your supervisor that you visit the local resources (formal and informal), e.g. Police, Friendship Centre or other client centres, Employment Counsellor, Public Health Nurse; develop your own list with staff advice; begin your own resources file.
- Read “sample files” or review legislation related to the job and agency material.
- Ask other staff if you can observe their work.
- Attend relevant community meetings or activities—e.g. court hearings, union meetings, town council, school board.

Plan some especially pleasurable and relaxing activity—this is going to feel like a tough week.

## DURING THE SECOND WEEK

- Is supervision time firmly set?
- Review placement contract and firm it up.
- Keep your “questions/observations file” to share with supervisor.
- Possibly you have had concrete tasks assigned if not, seek the opportunity. Ask a worker to observe you so you can get early feedback.
- Hopefully, work is assigned. Review any files, set up your own system for notes, etc.
- Check what’s happening in town that might interest you.
- Contact your liaison —they will be interested to know how you are doing

## DEVELOPING YOUR PLACEMENT CONTRACT

The placement contract is an agreement between the student, the School of Social Work and the placement agency. It should outline the details of the Field Education Placement for the agency, the agency supervisor, the student, and the liaison.

The contract is negotiated between the student and the agency supervisor, with input from the School. It should reflect the learning goals of the student, the opportunities available in the agency, and the requirements of the School.

The contract should also reflect both the specific nature of the placement and the principles of Anti-Opressive Practice. The faculty instructor (liaison) will discuss the contract with the student and agency supervisor. When all parties (student, agency supervisor, and faculty instructor (liaison)) have agreed to the contract, it is signed, and each party is given a copy.

The contract should include:

- The specific tasks and responsibilities to be undertaken.
- The skills and knowledge that will be emphasized.
- The amount and nature of supervision that will be provided.
- The general administrative details: office space, hours of work, transportation, beginning and end dates for the placement.

The process of developing the placement contract can be a useful one, as it allows the student and supervisor an opportunity to engage in a discussion of the student’s interests and learning goals and the range of opportunities that are available within the placement agency. Clearly articulating the tasks and responsibilities that the student will be involved in can be helpful in establishing some clarity about the student’s role in the agency. Naming the specific skills and knowledge that will be emphasized can help to guide and direct the placement and to focus the student’s learning. This contract is not intended to be rigid—additions and changes can be made later on if new opportunities or interests arise.

The placement contract also becomes part of the student's evaluation in placement. The "Tasks and Responsibilities" and "Skills and Knowledge" sections of the contract are written into the evaluation forms and the student is evaluated on each of these items. This provides an opportunity to personalize the generic evaluation forms. A student who is doing a research-based placement, a student who is doing a policy-oriented placement and a student who is doing a clinical placement will engage in a range of different areas of practice. Clear and specific placement contracts will ensure that their evaluations reflect their learning. Because the contract becomes part of the evaluation process, it is important to make the objectives as specific, measurable, and concrete as possible.

## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR PLACEMENT

What follows are other specific suggestions on how to get the most value from your placement/placement.

Get into a variety of areas of practice. Do not limit yourself. Stretch your boundaries now, to help you to discover the types of work that you enjoy. Through your placement you may learn what you don't want to do as well as what you would like to do more of. Some students who initially want to "do counseling" exclusively, later find themselves in the role of an administrator, supervisor, or consultant.

Let yourself fit into the agency, instead of trying to make it fit you. Learn as much as you can about the politics of the agency by talking with people who work there, by attending staff meetings, and by asking questions. All of your learning will not result merely from interacting with clients. You can learn a good deal about an agency by being attentive and by talking with coworkers.

Be aware of the toll that your placement might have on you, both emotionally and physically. Certain aspects of your life that you have not been willing to look at may be opened up as you get involved. Know that your increased awareness could lead to more anxiety in your life. Make use of your support networks.

Recognize the limits of your training, practice only within these boundaries, and put yourself in situations where you will be able to obtain supervised experience. Regardless of your educational level, there is always more to learn. It is essential to learn the delicate balance between being overly confident and doubting yourself.

Strive to be flexible in applying techniques to different work situations but do so under supervision. Avoid falling into the trap of fitting your clients to one particular theory. Use theory as a means of helping you understand. Realize that diverse backgrounds necessitate diverse communication approaches. Although it is essential to learn therapeutic skills and techniques, they should be applied in appropriate ways.

If you have a placement that you do not particularly like, don't write it off as a waste of time. At least you are learning that working in a drug-rehabilitation center, for example, is not what you want for a career. Beyond that, it is useful to determine what you don't find productive about the placement and why. You can also think of ways to make your assignment more meaningful, rather than just telling yourself that you'll put in your time and get your credit. There are no doubts at least a few avenues for creating learning opportunities.

Make connections in the community. Learn how to use community resources and how to draw on support systems beyond your office. You can do this by talking to other professionals in the field, by asking fellow students about their connections in the community, and by developing a network of contacts.

Keep a journal, recording your observations, experiences, concerns, and personal reactions to your work. Your journal is an excellent way to stay focused on yourself as well as to keep track of what you are doing.

Be open to trying new things. If you have not worked with a family, for example, observe a family session or, if possible, work with a supervisor who is counseling a family. Avoid setting yourself up by thinking that if you do not succeed perfectly in a new endeavor, you are a dismal failure. Give yourself room to learn by doing, at the same time gaining supervised experience.

Be prepared to adjust your expectations. Don't expect an agency to give you responsibility for providing service before it has a chance to know you. You'll probably start your fieldwork by being in an observing role. Later you may sit in on a counseling group, for example, and function as a co-leader.

Find ways to work cooperatively with other students and to combine your talents with theirs. Look for means of tapping into your own creativity. If you are talented musically, for example, look for a way that you might incorporate music into your field placement activities. If a fellow student has talents in the areas of dance and movement, perhaps you can combine forces in an innovative therapeutic intervention.

Treat your field placement like a job. Approach fieldwork in much the same way as you would if you were employed by the agency. Demonstrate responsibility, be on time for your appointments and meetings, show up for all appointments, and strive to do your best. Although you may be in an unpaid placement, this does not mean you can be irresponsible on the job. Often an unpaid internship can turn into a paid position.

Think and act in a self-directed way. Don't expect the staff to do everything for you and to take all the initiative. Be active and seek ways that you can involve yourself in a variety of activities. If you merely wait for a supervisor or other workers to give you meaningful assignments, you may be less than satisfied with your placement.