



UNIVERSITY *of* MARYLAND
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Experiential Learning Plan

2020-2021 Academic Year

The spread of COVID-19 around the country and globe continues to present significant challenges for social work education. Each social work student, teacher, field instructor, and program is unique, and so have been their responses to this pandemic. In response to the continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the University of Maryland School of Social Work remains committed to supporting social work education.

During the past six months, Interim University President Bruce Jarrell has led the Crisis Management Advisory Group (CMAG) and convened meetings of the COVID-19 Recovery Task Force comprised of 12 focus areas. One of the focus areas is the Experiential Learning Work Group (ELWG) which has addressed matters related to field placements, internships and practicums for students attending schools on the UMB campus.

The ELWG presented its recommendation to CMAG on Tuesday, August 4 and received approval to implement them effective the 2020-2021 academic year. The Office of Field Education (OFE) organized a School of Social Work Experiential Learning Work Group (SSWELWG) to develop a plan that builds upon CMAG's approved policies and procedures. Chaired by Associate Dean Samuel B. Little, PhD, the SSWELWG is comprised of faculty, field staff, liaisons and students in the MSW program as well. Members are Caroline Long, PhD; Franklin Chappell, MSW; Denise Chop, MSW; Caron Branch-Cox, MSW; Cheryl Day, MSW; Donna Earling, BS; Gisele Ferretto, MSW; Angela Jachelski, MSW; Monifa Johnson, MSW; Maryrejahllil Lanier, student; April Latson, MSW; Debra Linsenmeyer, MSW; Laura Loessner, MSW; Coretta McKenzie, MSW; Barbara Nathanson, MSW; Jackie Ogg, MSW; Joy Scalabrin, student; Everett Smith, MSW; Michael Woolley, PhD; and, Pamela Young, PhD.

As you may well know, field education is the signature pedagogy of the social work profession (Council on Social Work Education, 2008). Thus, field education is designated as the synthetic, integrative curricular area in which students are socialized to the profession. During good and challenging times, we continue to prepare MSW students for careers in the profession. Providing virtual and in-person field experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic confirms the belief that *"field is the heart of social work education."*

This plan summarizes the modifications to field education for the 2020-2021 academic year. Please note that some of the details may be revised subsequently as new policies for experiential learning may unfold during the coming months.

The plan acknowledges that the safety of students, field instructors and clients are paramount to all stakeholders.

Requirements of Field Placement Agencies

1. Agencies that would like their students to complete in-person field activities must submit an [*In-Person Field Education Proposal form*](#) to confirm their ability to provide in-person field safely, as well as their readiness to provide student learning opportunities. The requested information will be used to approve the agency's request.
2. Agencies must review the [*Statement of Risk*](#) with students during the agency orientation. The goal of this review is to inform students fully of the risks they may be exposed to by attending an experiential learning activity. Students will acknowledge in the Electronic Field Notebook (EFN) that they received a copy of the Statement of Risk.
3. Agencies should encourage students to participate in SAFE on Campus (Symptom Assessment for Employees on Campus), the university's COVID-19 system to track and monitor employee and student exposure and illness on and off campus.
4. Agencies should review and sign an addendum to the Affiliation Agreement executed by the School and active field placement agencies. The addendum covers changes and/or new responsibilities of the School of Social Work and the agency as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The OFE will send this addendum to agencies prior to the start of field.
5. Students will be provided one cloth mask by the School of Social Work. Students will be responsible for providing additional cloth masks. In some instances, students may be required to wear more Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) than just a cloth mask to complete field activities. In these situations, the agency must provide the additional PPE to the students.
6. Agencies should participate in virtual orientations, town hall meetings and other venues scheduled to prepare for the start of, and for ongoing field education during the 2020-2021 academic year.

Modifications for Field Education

We expect at least 50% of students in the MSW program to begin field with in-person field activities, and hope that number will rise with a healthier climate. We will offer the new option for students to complete a portion of their field experiences virtually as well so we may engage all students in field. Remote field activities can include engagement in field-related assignments, training, and virtual meetings. Students understand that client-related virtual meetings should be conducted in accordance with field site policies for secure communications.

A number of modifications have been incorporated in our operations and they include the following:

1. Provide field seminars online for first-year students. Field seminar is an opportunity for students to meet virtually and discuss their field experiences. Students learn how to bridge material and concepts learned in the classroom with their practice experiences in field placement. Seminars intentionally include conversations about difference, anti-oppression, privilege and cultural humility. Seminars are led by liaison instructors responsible for ensuring students exercise critical self-reflection and awareness as they move through field experiences.
2. Conduct skills labs modules through webinars and possible use of the simulation lab in the School of Nursing. Online webinars will be offered as well. Additional information will be provided once the arrangements have been finalized.
3. Reduce the number of required field education hours to 85% of total time as approved by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Foundation students must complete 51 days and advanced students are required to complete 76 days for the academic year. Students must have their field schedule approved by the liaison and field instructor. Remote field activity, as well as field supervision and field seminar hours, may be counted toward the accrual of field time.
4. Allow employment-based field placement opportunities for students currently working (or volunteering) in social/human service agencies to count these work hours toward field placement hours if the job duties provide learning/skill development opportunities that meet the nine (9)

social work competencies. These competencies detail the fundamental behaviors students develop and use in their new roles as professional social workers. The 9 core competencies as outlined by CSWE are as follows:

- a. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
 - b. Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
 - c. Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
 - d. Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research- Informed Practice
 - e. Engage in Policy Practice
 - f. Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
 - g. Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
 - h. Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
 - i. Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
5. Promote flexibility to optimize placement opportunities by offering an early start in August, hybrid opportunities starting remotely and converting to in-person field, using telehealth with clients while in-person at the agency, and spring start to field into summer. Field Coordinators will discuss and facilitate the selection of these options with agency personnel during the placement cycle.
 6. Distribute the [UMB Visitors' Policy](#) that provides the framework for guests and affiliates accessing UMB owned or occupied facilities to ensure consistency with health and safety practices of the university.
 7. Provide virtual trainings and orientations for students, field instructors, liaisons and other field education stakeholders. The field calendar for the 2020-2021 academic year will be updated as necessary to reflect these events. Some will offer continuing education credits for field instructors.

International Field Placements

The international field placement program provides social work students the opportunity to spend a semester abroad. Students are immersed in a foreign culture and gain a unique perspective on social work practices while completing an advanced field placement and coursework at either the University of Greenwich in London, England or Rajagiri College of Social Science located in

Kalamassery, Cochin, India. As a result of COVID-19 and restricted university travel policies, international field placements in London and India have been suspended until further notice.

New and Pending Policies

The Office of Field Education (OFE) will continue to provide updates on new policies approved by CMAG to maintain a high-quality field experience for students and agencies. An illness policy for clinical and experiential students is forthcoming pending approval by University Counsel. In addition, the Student and Field Education Handbooks will be updated with new pandemic-related expectations to include requirements for self-screening for symptoms, procuring and wearing appropriate PPE and the consequences for violation.

Town Hall Meetings

The OFE will update students and field agencies by providing regular town hall meetings to discuss changes in field education and engage with students, field instructors and other stakeholders as needed. It is recognized that the impact of COVID-19 can cause many to feel frustrated and overwhelmed. As we collectively tackle the challenges that this disease presents, additional information and resources will be available to affiliates:

- UMB Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website
- Center for Global Engagement
- Counseling for students through the Student Counseling Center
- Student Services Office at the SSW

Contingency Measures for a Partial or Full Shutdown of Field Activities

Field Placement sites and the OFE retain the right to restrict or cancel student participation at any time to protect their safety and wellbeing. Put simply, a partial or full shutdown of field activities may be necessary at some point in the future. Contingency planning is ongoing in collaboration with CMAG and SSWELWG. Should that decision be made, the OFE will adapt and provide ways to create a vibrant experience for students in the virtual world. The Dean of the SSW or her designee, the Associate Dean for Field Education, will issue instructions in the event of a partial or full shutdown of field activities in the future.

Conclusion

The need and demand for social work professionals is high in the region and nationwide. We can be proud of the fact that UMSSW students are rising to the occasion, with their interest in, and willingness to support our agencies in this complex time. Our students are learning to quickly adapt to telehealth and other digital ways of providing services, where feasible, to not only protect their own wellbeing, but also the wellbeing of the clients and communities they serve. It takes immense grit, determination, and bravery to risk one's own health and wellbeing in service to others. We offer tremendous accolades for the journey taken by not only our students, but field instructors, liaisons and others who play a pivotal role in field education.

The gift of our field instructors and agencies is their wisdom that develops future social workers and the profession. The benefits of that gift ripple across all of society. Thus, we expect that our graduating students will leave us better than they found us. Our goal is to improve every year – and this is a year when we are taking large steps in implementing modifications to field education. While the SSW will operate differently this fall, our core values remain as strong as ever.

Thanks for your patience and understanding as we navigate this ever-changing landscape together. Please stay safe and healthy!



Samuel B. Little, PhD, MSW, LCSW-C
Associate Dean, Field Education

Laura Loessner, LICSW, LCSW-C
Assistant Director, Field Education