

Westfield STATE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

PRACTICUM EDUCATION MANUAL

BSW & MSW PROGRAMS

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I. INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL WORK PRACTICUM EDUCATION

Social Work Practicum Education is a partnership involving the Social Work Department, Practicum Education Program, faculty, staff, community partners, supervisors, and students. This manual will outline:

- BSW, MSW Foundation, and Advanced MSW practicum placements
- Application and assignment process
- Selection of internship sites and supervisors
- Roles and responsibilities of all participants
- Key policies and procedures

Students, practicum supervisors, and faculty liaisons are required to thoroughly review this manual. It serves as an outline of policy/procedures and a reference and should not be a substitute for communication with Practicum Education staff. For questions, contact the Practicum Education Program.

Use of This Manual with the Applicable Program Manual

This manual should be used alongside the (BSW or MSW) Program Manual, available on the program website. The Program Manuals each cover broader curriculum, faculty, and policies not repeated here.

Overview of the Practicum Internship

The practicum is Social Work's "signature pedagogy," as recognized by the Council on Social Work Education. It allows students to apply classroom knowledge in real-world settings, demonstrating skills with clients under supervision. This integrated learning experience helps students develop social work values, professional identity, and competence. Classroom and practicum learning are complementary and mutually enriching.

Social work students are viewed as active learners who take what they learn in the classroom into the practicum internship and bring what they learn in the practicum internship back into the classroom. Students acquire research-based, conceptual, and theoretical knowledge about practice and policy issues relevant to their practicum experiences in both the classroom and in the internship placement setting. At the same time, they develop an understanding of and capacity to apply the practice-based knowledge and experience of both their classroom instructors and their agency instructors and co-workers. Drawing upon their experiences in the practicum, students learn from each other, as well as from the instructor in the classroom.

Both the BSW and MSW Foundation practicum experience are rooted in the generalist social work approach while the MSW Advanced practicum experience focuses on clinical integration.

Competency-Based Education in the Practicum

Social work education is competency-based, focusing on integrating and applying knowledge, values, and skills in practice. Competence is assessed through observable behaviors. You will be expected to identify opportunities within your practicum setting where you will demonstrate each of the competencies.

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and our social work program recognize, the demonstration of competence is informed by the holistic dimensions of knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes that include the social worker's critical thinking, affective reactions, and exercise of judgment regarding unique practice situations.

CSWE Core Competencies and Observable Changes

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

- a. make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics within the profession as appropriate to the context;
- b. demonstrate professional behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;
- c. use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and
- d. use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.

Competency 2: Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and Environmental Justice

- a. advocate for human rights at the individual, family, group, organizational, and community system levels;
- b. engage in practices that advance human rights to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice

Competency 3: Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice

- a. demonstrate anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practice at the individual, family, group, organizational, community, research, and policy levels; and
- b. demonstrate cultural humility by applying critical reflection, self-awareness, and self-regulation to manage the influence of bias, power, privilege, and values in working with clients and constituencies, acknowledging them as experts of their own lived experiences.

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice

- a. apply research findings to inform and improve practice, policy, and programs; and
- b. identifies ethical, culturally informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive strategies that address inherent biases for use in quantitative and qualitative research methods to advance the purposes of social work.

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

- a. use social justice, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lenses to assess how social welfare policies affect the delivery of and access to social services; and
- b. applies critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

- a. apply knowledge of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, to engage with clients and constituencies; and
- b. use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to engage in culturally responsive practice with clients and constituencies.

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

- a. apply theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as other culturally responsive and interprofessional conceptual frameworks, when assessing clients and constituencies; and
- b. demonstrate respect for client self-determination during the assessment process by collaborating with clients and constituencies in developing a mutually agreed-upon plan.

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

- a. engage with clients and constituencies to critically choose and implement culturally responsive, evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals; and
- b. incorporate culturally responsive methods to negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of clients and constituencies.

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

- a. select and use culturally responsive methods for evaluation of outcomes; and
- b. critically analyze outcomes and apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Generalist Social Work Practice

According to the **Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)**, the BSW and MSW Foundation practicum are both based on **generalist practice**, which is characterized by the following elements:

- **Foundation in Liberal Arts:**
Generalist practice is grounded in the **liberal arts** and the **person-environment construct**—a framework that emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals and their environment.
- **Human and Social Well-Being:**
Practitioners aim to promote **human and social well-being**, utilizing a variety of intervention and prevention strategies across diverse and varying client systems (micro, mezzo, macro).
- **Ethical Practice:**
Generalist practitioners apply **ethical principles** and **critical thinking** to their work. They engage in **research-informed practice** and remain proactive in understanding the impact of the social and professional contexts in which they work.
- **Advocacy for Human Rights and Social Justice:**
Generalist social workers are advocates for **human rights** and **social, racial, economic, and environmental justice**, working to empower individuals and communities, recognizing their **strengths and resiliency**.
- **Incorporating Diversity:**
Generalist practitioners emphasize **diversity** in their work and build on the unique needs and experiences of individuals and groups.

Council on Social Work Education. (2022). *Educational policy and accreditation standards for baccalaureate and master's social work programs*. <https://www.cswe.org/getmedia/bb5d8afe-7680-42dc-a332-a6e6103f4998/2022-EPAS.pdf>

REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW

FOUNDATION – BSW Students & First Year MSW Students

Hours: 400hours – 14-16 a week

Focus: Generalist Social Work Skills

Supervisor Requirements: BSW/MSW

Supervision Requirements: One hour a week of clinical supervision and an additional hour a week of task-oriented/group supervision

ADVANCED – Second year MSW students

Hours: 500hours – 18-20 a week

Focus: Building upon generalist social work skills and introducing clinical & diagnostic skills

Supervisor Requirements: LICSW preferred, LCSW at minimum

Supervision Requirements: One hour a week of clinical supervision and an additional hour a week of task-oriented/group supervision

BSW PRACTICUM: STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS

Duration and Placement:

The BSW practicum is typically completed over *two semesters* during the senior year, consisting of an *internship placement* and a *weekly integrative field seminar*. The internship requires a *minimum of 400 hours* (about *14-16 hours per week*) in an approved setting under the supervision of a *professional social worker*.

BSW Practicum Focus:

The practicum aligns with the *BSW Program Mission* and emphasizes the development of core *generalist social work practice* knowledge, values, skills, and ethics. Students are expected to engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities in a variety of contexts, using diverse prevention and intervention methods.

The **BSW Practicum** is designed to be a comprehensive, immersive experience that prepares students for **generalist social work practice**. It combines practical, hands-on experience with academic reflection, professional development, and ethical inquiry. The practicum experience not only supports the development of critical social work competencies but also serves as a foundational step in the journey toward becoming a well-rounded, ethically responsible, and competent social worker.

- **Minimum Hours:** 400 hours (14-16 hours/week)
- **Key Components:**
 - Internship Placement
 - Weekly Integrative Field Seminar
- **Generalist Social Work Practice Goals:** Promote human well-being, use diverse interventions, advocate for justice, and engage with diverse populations.

By the end of the practicum, students will be better equipped to handle the complexities of social work practice, demonstrating the knowledge, skills, and ethical commitment required for entry-level practice in a range of social work environments.

MSW PRACTICUM: STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS

Duration and Placement:

Westfield State University's MSW program offers different timelines to complete the curriculum (see Program Manual for details). Full-time or part-time Traditional Option students complete both a Foundation and Advanced Practicum, while Advanced Standing students typically complete only the Advanced Practicum.

- The Foundation Year practicum spans *both semesters of the first year for full-time* MSW students, and *both semesters of the second year for part-time* students. Its focus aligns with the Social Work Program's goal of preparing graduates with the knowledge, values, and skills for generalist social work practice.
- The Advanced Year practicum typically spans both semesters of the second year for full-time MSW students and third or fourth years for part-time students. Advanced Standing students complete it in their one-year program. The Advanced Practicum focuses on developing advanced clinical practice knowledge, values, and skills.

- The Foundation Practicum requires 400 hours (about 16 hours/week), while the Advanced Practicum requires 500 hours (about 20 hours/week), totaling at least 900 hours of supervised practice in approved settings over the course of your MSW degree.

MSW Practicum Focus:

Foundation year placements should offer generalist practice experience, while Advanced year placements must provide advanced practice opportunities, as defined by the program and the Council on Social Work Education. Given the MSW program's clinical focus, Advanced Practicum must involve settings where clinical skills can be applied directly.

The **MSW Practicum** is designed to be a comprehensive, immersive experience that prepares students for **generalist social work practice** and integration of a **clinical focus and skills**. It combines practical, hands-on experience with academic reflection, professional development, and ethical inquiry. The practicum experience not only supports the development of critical social work competencies but also serves as a foundational step in the journey toward becoming a well-rounded, ethically responsible, and competent social worker.

- **Minimum Hours:**
 - FOUNDATION: 400 hours (14-16 hours/week)
 - ADVANCED: 500 hours (18-20 hours/week)
- **Key Components:**
 - Internship Placement
 - Weekly Integrative Field Seminar
- **Generalist Social Work Practice Goals:** Promote human well-being, use diverse interventions, advocate for justice, and engage with diverse populations.
- **Advanced Practicum Goals:** The Advanced Practicum challenges students to apply and integrate theory, practice, and research in human behavior, social work practice, policy, and electives. The goal is to demonstrate competency for entry-level clinical practice as outlined in the nine Advanced competencies.

By the end of the practicum, students will be better equipped to handle the complexities of social work practice, demonstrating the knowledge, skills, and ethical commitment required for entry-level practice in a range of social work environments.

THE INTEGRATIVE SEMINAR

In addition to the internship placement, all practicum students across BSW & MSW Programs participate in a **weekly integrative seminar** throughout both semesters of their practicum year. This seminar is an essential part of the practicum experience, providing several benefits:

- **Discussion and Reflection:**
Students come together to discuss their practicum experiences, learn from each other, and reflect on their professional growth. This allows students to gain insight into different practice settings and expand their understanding of the social work profession.
- **Personal and Ethical Development:**
The seminar provides a space to examine **personal values** and ethical dilemmas that arise in social work practice. By discussing these issues in a group, students can further develop their ethical decision-making and self-awareness.

- **Integration of Knowledge and Experience:**
The seminar offers opportunities to integrate academic learning with field experiences through structured assignments, activities, and group discussions. These activities are often linked to assignments from other social work courses, reinforcing the connection between classroom learning and real-world practice.
- **Broadened Exposure:**
The seminar brings together students from a variety of practice settings, allowing them to broaden their exposure to different types of social work practice. This encourages students to think critically and learn from their peers' diverse experiences.
- **Competency Development:**
A central goal of the seminar is to help students demonstrate competency in **entry-level generalist practice**, aligned with the **nine BSW social work competencies** and the observable behaviors associated with each.

BSW: The Social Work Practicum Courses: SOCW 0351 and SOCW 0352

MSW: The Foundation Practicum Courses: SOCW 0561 and SOCW 0562

MSW: The Advanced Practicum Courses: SOCW 0661 and SOCW 0662

Goals and Assignments in the Seminar

Each semester of the practicum will have specific goals and assignments that are outlined in the course syllabus. These goals may evolve throughout the course to meet the specific needs of the seminar group. Some typical objectives include:

- **Connecting Theory to Practice:**
Encouraging students to link **theoretical knowledge** from their coursework to their hands-on experiences in the field.
- **Professional Development:**
Fostering the development of **professional identity** and preparing students for the responsibilities and challenges of **entry-level social work practice**.
- **Critical Reflection:**
Promoting regular reflection on personal growth, challenges faced in the field, and strategies for overcoming obstacles.

Assignments to seminar sections are made by the Practicum Education Program to ensure the best learning environment, considering placement location, student experience, and group needs. Students remain in the same seminar for both semesters.

II. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE PRACTICUM PLACEMENT PROCESS

Preparing for the Practicum Placement Process Agreement

Students should begin thinking about their practicum experiences early, alongside their application to the BSW/MSW program. It's recommended to complete placements in two different practice areas to broaden knowledge.

Foundation year placements should offer generalist practice experience, while Advanced year placements must provide advanced practice opportunities, as defined by the program and the Council on Social Work Education. Given the MSW program's clinical focus, Advanced Practicum must involve settings where clinical skills can be applied directly.

Students should plan their time commitment to the practicum, coordinating with employers and support systems to adjust availability in daytime schedules as needed. ***While social work may occur at all hours, adequate supervision for essential learning opportunities are predominately available during the daytime.***

Applying for the Social Work Practicum Internship

Active students will receive an email in the Fall Semester with instructions for applying for the next academic year's practicum. Practicum Placement Agreements will be emailed directly to students and are available on the practicum website. Students not actively enrolled during the application period must contact the Practicum Education Program directly. Newly accepted full-time students must complete the practicum placement contract within ten days of acceptance.

The application outlines expectations and requires details about student interests, previous experience, availability, and preferences, along with a current resume. Students seeking an employment-based internship must submit a secondary application. Late or incomplete applications may delay placement.

The placement process is collaborative and requires constant and consistent communication from the student to the practicum advisor. All communication will occur through student's WSU email year-round. Students are expected to respond to practicum advisors in a timely fashion. Practicum education staff will assess readiness for placement based on the student's Practicum Placement Agreement, academic progress, and possibly an interview. In addition to these factors, readiness will be assessed by a student's ability to demonstrate the following throughout the placement process; inability to demonstrate such may cause a delay in practicum.

- **Competency 1: Professional Behavior** (effective communication, maintaining commitments, being positive representation of WSU),
- **Competency 5: Policy Practice** (following placement procedures in place and seek clarification from advisor as needed)
- **Effective communication & collaboration** with the practicum education team (similar to expectations within a placement setting seeking consultation & direction)

While educational needs are the primary factor, student preferences regarding practice areas, populations, and locations are also considered, though not always met.

Students may not commit to a practicum placement, including employment-based internships, without approval from practicum education staff. The final placement decision rests with the Practicum Education Program. The practicum department may decide, in collaboration with a student, to explore potential sites not affiliated with the program, but it is not guaranteed. Students must not contact potential sites directly without prior conversation and approval from the Practicum Education Program.

Student Placement Suggestions

As an active participant in the learning, students can present suggestions to their practicum advisor for review and approval. Please note, these are suggestions and are not guaranteed to be approved.

Below are the requirements that are only applicable when first discussed and approved by the practicum advisor at the start of the placement process.

1. All student identified placements must be reviewed and approved by the designated practicum education advisor. Failure to present your placement to your practicum advisor may result in it not being approved and/or delayed entrance to placement.
2. All student identified agencies must follow practicum education guidelines for learning opportunities and supervision within their setting. (hours, supervision, placement focus, etc.).
 - a. Agencies must sign an affiliation agreement and provide supervisor resume & credentials.
3. Should a student elect to identify their own placement and be unsuccessful in presenting one to their advisor **by the first of July**, prior to their placement year, the placement may not be approved and/or student may require a delayed entrance into practicum.

Geographic and Scheduling Considerations

Students in the Westfield On-Grounds Program can expect placements within a 60-mile radius of the WSU campus. Online program students should expect placements within Massachusetts, with possible exceptions for nearby states (e.g., Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York) if arranged early and with program staff involvement. Students should be prepared for the possibility of longer commutes (up to one hour from their home) depending on placement availability.

Because of agency guidelines, staff/clinical meetings, and supervisor availability, **most placements occur during daytime hours**. Students should plan their time commitment to the practicum, coordinating with employers and support systems to adjust to daytime availability. The Practicum Education Department does not guarantee the availability evening/weekend placements, as these are rare. Overnight and summer placements are not an option and cannot be approved.

Full-time students must assess their ability to work while completing their practicum hours (16 for Foundation, 20 for Advanced). Part-time students may apply for placements with evening or weekend hours, though they are not guaranteed.

Placement Availability and Flexibility

Placement availability varies annually, and some sites may not be available each year. Students may need to accept placements that don't match their primary interests or preferred locations but still offer valuable learning opportunities. Some sites have specific deadlines or limited availability, and students may need to adjust their preferences.

While social work may occur at all hours, adequate supervision for essential learning opportunities is predominately available during the daytime.

STUDENTS MAY NOT COMMIT TO A PRACTICUM PLACEMENT, INCLUDING EMPLOYMENT-BASED INTERNSHIPS, WITHOUT REVIEW & APPROVAL FROM PRACTICUM EDUCATION STAFF.

Employment-based Practicum Placement

Students wishing to complete their practicum at their place of employment must indicate this preference on their Placement Process Agreement. Students then submit an additional Employment-based Proposal which should first be discussed with the Practicum Department, and upon receiving approval, then submit the plan with signatures obtained from employer. This is available via the Social Work Practicum Education website.

An **employment-based practicum placement** typically involves the employer granting release time for the student to use regular work hours for practicum activities that meet the program's requirements. This type of placement is preferable to an "add-on" placement, which requires additional unpaid hours. Students should carefully consider the feasibility of balancing full-time employment and graduate coursework alongside a 16-20 hour/week practicum, especially in the full-time MSW program.

Regardless of whether the practicum is part of regular employment hours or additional unpaid hours, a separate set of responsibilities and supervision is required within the organization.

Employment-based Placement Proposal Procedures

Students requesting an employment-based practicum must collaborate with the Practicum Education Program and their employer to develop an Employment-Based Practicum Placement Contract. Students are responsible for completing the proposal, obtaining necessary approvals, and securing the required wet signatures from their employer. The Practicum Education Program will then assess the placement by interviewing the student and potentially conducting a site visit if the agency is not an existing WSU practicum partner.

Employment-Based Proposals: Outline the proposed placement based off conversations with the student's employer. Signatures are not required for the first submission of the proposal as it should be presented for feedback from the practicum department prior to finalizing an employment-based contract.

Employment-Based Contracts: Confirmed proposed placement between the student and their employer, after obtaining feedback from student's assigned practicum advisor. Wet signatures are required for this contract. This contract will be reviewed and approved by the practicum department and is only finalized when the student and practicum supervisor receive an approval email from the student's practicum advisor.

Employment-Based Placement Requirements

For an employment-based practicum to be approved, the following criteria must be met:

1. **Employment Status:** The student must ideally have been employed at the organization for at least 3 months before applying for a practicum.
 - Should a student seek employment for a start date that aligns with their practicum start date, their new role & duties may be considered to apply as their practicum duties so long as they are offered 1 supervision hour specific to their practicum experience.
 - All students considering this option, do so with the understanding that should there be a probationary period or issue that results in the student leaving that job

the practicum department does not guarantee an alternative option and their practicum could be delayed as a result.

2. **Class Attendance:** The employer must allow the student to attend required classes.
3. **New Learning Opportunities:** The practicum must offer experiences different from the student's current role, with opportunities to work with new client populations, intervention methods, policies, staff, or other aspects of the agency's work.
4. **Practicum Supervisor Qualifications:**
 - The Practicum Supervisor must have an MSW from a CSWE-accredited program and at least 2 years of post-MSW experience. Resumes are required to be submitted to the practicum department.
 - BSW supervisors are required to have their BSW or MSW
 - Foundation Year Supervisors require only their MSW
 - Advanced Year Supervisors are required to be licensed, LICSW preferred, LCSW at minimum
 - The supervisor must have worked at the agency for at least one year and preferably not be the student's current employment supervisor.
5. **Supervision Requirements:**
 - The supervisor must provide **one hour of individual supervision per week and one additional hour of group or task-oriented supervision per week.**
 - If the supervisor has not supervised social work students before, the agency must allow them to participate in a practicum orientation and Supervision in Practicum Instruction (SIPI) training. Prior SIPI training from another accredited MSW program may be accepted if it meets WSU's requirements.
6. **Agency Affiliation:** The practicum agency must establish a formal affiliation agreement with the WSU Department of Social Work.

Practicum Placement Stipends

In rare cases, practicum placements may offer stipends. However, for a student to receive a stipend during their practicum, they must be considered a student (not an employee) during the practicum hours. Additionally, the practicum site must meet all WSU Social Work Practicum requirements.

The stipend is contingent on the student having a reduced and distinct workload compared to regular employees at the organization, and the student must receive appropriate levels of support and supervision in line with their student status.

The Practicum Department does not guarantee stipends for any student in placement and cannot prioritize a stipend as a placement consideration over meeting the required learning opportunity. Because placements are such a significant portion of a student's week, most students indicate a need for a stipend; for equitable reasons, the practicum department will not make placement decisions based off stipend availability.

Grant opportunities are occasionally available through the social work department. Should a student secure a grant during the placement process, prior to committing to a placement, the practicum department will collaborate to identify a location that meets grant requirements. However, the Practicum Department will not permit students to change of placement for any grants secured after a resume has been sent or a commitment has been made with an agency.

Readiness for Practicum

Students admitted to the BSW or MSW Program are generally expected to begin their practicum on schedule according to their chosen sequence. However, social work faculty recognizes that students come with varying strengths and areas for growth. Students are not expected to be experts at the beginning—or end—of their practicum experience.

Before entering the practicum, students must have acquired and demonstrate the necessary skills and knowledge to protect the well-being of clients, the agency, and the student themselves. The Practicum Education Program may recommend delaying a student's entry into the practicum if the student is not adequately prepared.

Common reasons for a delayed practicum entry include:

1. **Academic Skills Deficiency:**
 - The student may need to strengthen foundational knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes such as clear writing, professional communication, critical thinking, approach to advocacy for self, and judgment in practice situations.
2. **Concerns in Professional Behavior:**
 - Issues with relationship-building, professionalism, respect for diversity, self-reflection, and boundaries.
 - Patterns of unprofessional conduct, such as poor attendance, tardiness, or disrespectful communication, may also contribute to a delay.
 - Inability to seek assistance when difficult life circumstances interfere with successful engagement in programmatic requirements
3. **Two Unsuccessful Pre-Placement Interviews:**
 - Either the student rejects the placement(s), or the agency provides feedback that raises significant concerns about the student's readiness based on social work standards or professional conduct.
4. **Patterns of Unacceptable Behavior:**
 - Demonstrating behaviors such as being repeatedly unprepared, turning in late assignments, or engaging in inappropriate conduct (e.g., verbal/physical aggression or intoxication in class).
 - **Failure to follow through with policies and procedures** throughout the placement process places a student at risk for their practicum to be delayed, potentially without conversation, as it indicates a student may not follow policy/procedure in a placement setting.

Students who have concerns about personal challenges, past criminal history, or struggles with substance abuse or mental health issues are encouraged to discuss these matters with the Practicum Education Director for guidance on readiness and appropriate next steps.

If a delay is recommended:

The student will receive written notification from the Practicum Education staff outlining the specific reasons for the delay. The student may be referred to the BSW/MSW Program Director and/or the BSW/MSW Program Committee for further review and potentially to the Academic Review Committee (ARC).

AGENCY-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS, DUAL RELATIONSHIPS, AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Agency-Specific Requirements:

- Most agencies require **background checks** (CORI), fingerprinting, or checks with the **Sex Offender Registry** before accepting students. Protective Services agencies may check if students have a history of involvement with child or adult protective services.
- Some agencies may also require medical clearances, immunizations, drug screenings, or other additional checks, and students may be responsible for these costs.
- **Travel and Parking:** Many practicum sites require students to travel to client locations, including paying for parking, tolls, or using their own transportation. Students should be prepared for these costs.

Dual Relationships and Conflicts of Interest:

- Students **cannot** be placed in agencies where **dual relationships** exist, such as family members or close personal connections working at or being served by the agency.
 - If any conflict of interest or dual relationship arises (including changes to CORI status, involvement in protective services, or medical issues), the student must discuss the situation immediately with the Practicum Education staff.
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INTERVIEW PROCESS

Once assigned a potential practicum site, students must **contact the site within two business days** to schedule an interview, unless otherwise instructed.

Key Tips for Interview Preparation:

- **Professional Communication:** Review voicemail messages and emails to ensure they are professional. Use a WSU email for all communication.
- **Know the Organization:** Research the organization thoroughly—understand their mission, services, and values. This will help you respond thoughtfully to questions like:
 - Why do you want to be a social worker?
 - Why this particular agency for your practicum?
 - What skills and experiences (personal, academic, or professional) do you bring to this placement?

Students who are also working professionals should balance discussing prior experience with demonstrating readiness to learn and grow in the practicum.

Do not:

- Discuss schedule changes (like evening/weekend hours) unless previously agreed upon with the Practicum Education staff.
- Share unnecessary personal information or respond to inappropriate personal questions during the interview.

- Interview with multiple agencies to compare practicum experiences. You are a representative of WSU, in the same way that we do not send 2 students to 1 placement slot, students are not allowed to simultaneously interview at separate agencies. Students cannot compare sites to determine best fit.

Post-Interview Actions:

- **Follow-up:** Send a brief thank-you note to the interviewer and contact the Practicum Education staff within **two business days** to discuss impressions and next steps.
- **Decision on Placement:** Students must communicate with the Practicum Education staff before rejecting a placement or deciding not to pursue a placement.

Once both the student and the agency agree on the placement, the student must notify the Practicum Education staff **within two business days** to receive formal confirmation. The placement is not considered final until formal notification is received.

UNSUCCESSFUL PLACEMENT PROCESS

If the interview process does not result in a confirmed placement, the student must meet with the Practicum Education staff to assess what occurred and discuss next steps. This could include:

- Feedback from the agency about readiness for practicum.
- Role-playing or additional interview skills practice.
- Exploration of other placement opportunities based on past successful experiences.

If a student has two unsuccessful interviews (either rejecting placements or receiving strong concerns from agencies), they will be referred to the BSW/MSW Program Director or the BSW/MSW Program Committee, and potentially to the Academic Review Committee (ARC) for further review. The practicum placement process will not continue without this referral.

FOLLOW-UP AFTER PLACEMENT ACCEPTANCE

After a student has accepted a practicum placement, it is crucial to maintain clear communication and confirm key details to ensure a smooth start:

1. **Work Hours, Start Dates, and Onboarding:**
 - Students should discuss work hours, start dates, and any onboarding requirements with the practicum site representative **within the first week** after the placement has been formalized.
 - **Confirmation:** It is essential to follow up again **in early to mid-August** (if the practicum is in the fall or later) to confirm contact information and the agreed-upon start date. Sometimes, unexpected changes at the agency (such as staff leave or position changes) can affect the placement. If any aspect of the plan becomes unclear or confusing, students should immediately contact the **Practicum Education Program** for assistance.
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III. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF PRACTICUM SITES AND PRACTICUM SUPERVISORS

Selection and Responsibilities of Practicum Placement Sites

Practicum placements are diverse and can occur across various sectors, including health, education, criminal justice, mental health, and more. These placements provide opportunities to engage with a wide range of populations and practice settings. The organizations selected for student placements must meet several key criteria to ensure they offer a high-quality, professional educational experience.

Criteria for Practicum Placement Sites:

- **Commitment to Professional Education:** The organization must be dedicated to professional education and the application of research-based knowledge.
- **Ethical Standards:** The organization's policies must align with accepted ethical standards for human services and be compatible with the pedagogical goals of the MSW program.
- **Non-Discriminatory Practices:** Organizations must accept students without discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or other protected statuses.
- **Clear Professional Standards:** The organization must have defined professional standards for social work services and ensure that students understand how social work integrates with other professional roles in the organization.
- **Qualified Practicum Supervisors:** Practicum Supervisors must have strong practice skills and experience in developing structured learning experiences. They must also have enough time to dedicate to student supervision, including at least one hour per week of uninterrupted, face-to-face supervision (video conferencing is allowed if approved).
- **Diverse Client Populations:** The agency must offer opportunities to work with diverse client groups and allow students to develop competencies in working across various social contexts.
- **Workplace Resources and Safety:** The organization must provide a safe working environment, resources like computers (if needed), and be accessible to students with disabilities to the extent possible.
- **Safety and Risk Management:** A thorough orientation and ongoing review of safety protocols for staff, students, and clients, especially when the practice setting involves potential risks (e.g., home visits, working with high-risk populations).
- **Mutual Evaluation Process:** The agency should engage in an evaluation process to assess the quality and effectiveness of the practicum experience, with input from the practicum site, the student, and the social work program.
- **Affiliation Agreement:** The organization must sign a formal Affiliation Agreement with the university, detailing the responsibilities of both the student and the site.

Selection and Responsibilities of Practicum Supervisors

Practicum Supervisors are integral to the development of a student's professional identity and practice skills. They must meet several important criteria to ensure they can adequately guide students through their learning process.

Criteria for Practicum Supervisors:

- **Professional Qualifications:**

- Practicum Supervisors for BSW students must hold at least their **Bachelor's degree in social work (BSW)** and have at least two years of post-degree social work experience.
- Practicum Supervisors for MSW students must hold a **Master's degree in social work (MSW)** from an accredited school and have at least two years of post-degree social work experience.
- **Licensing:** In Massachusetts, supervisors are required to hold a **Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW)** or **Licensed Certified Social Worker (LCSW)** certification. For advanced-year placements, WSU prefers supervisors who have their independent licensure.
- If a supervisor does not meet these qualifications, an alternative plan must be developed, including additional oversight by a faculty practicum liaison or another licensed MSW.
- **Commitment to Professional Development:**
 - Practicum Supervisors should be committed to their own professional development, participating in **WSU practicum orientations, trainings, and events** as possible.
 - **New Supervisors:** They are required to complete or have completed a **Seminar in Practicum Instruction (SIPI)** unless an exemption is granted due to prior experience or other circumstances.
- **Supervisory Responsibilities:**
 - **Weekly Supervision:** Practicum Supervisors must provide at least **one hour of uninterrupted face-to-face supervision** per week, with video conferencing allowed when approved.
 - **Additional Supervision:** Supervisors should ensure at least **one additional hour per week** of group or task-focused supervision is available.
 - **Collaboration with Faculty Liaison:** Regular communication with the student's faculty practicum liaison is essential to ensure ongoing support and address any concerns that arise.
 - **Practicum Site Visits:** Supervisors are expected to participate in **site visits** with the faculty practicum liaison at least once each semester.
 - **Timely Reporting:** Supervisors must complete required **evaluation forms, hours/activity logs**, and any other reports requested by the social work program.
 - **Notification of Staffing Changes:** Supervisors must notify the **Practicum Education Director** in advance of any changes that could affect the student's supervisory relationship.
- **Safety and Risk Management:**
 - Supervisors must provide a thorough **orientation** on the agency's policies, practices, and protocols related to safety, including any potential dangers associated with the practicum assignments (e.g., working with certain populations, travel through high-risk areas).

By ensuring these criteria are met, the practicum experience can provide students with valuable opportunities to apply classroom learning in real-world settings, develop critical social work competencies, and build their professional identity.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT

The Social Work Department at **Westfield State University (WSU)** is deeply committed to ensuring the delivery of high-quality Social Work education at the graduate and undergraduate level. This commitment is reflected in the **Practicum Education Program**, which is managed by the **Practicum Education Director** and aims to provide students with valuable, supervised placement experiences that complement their classroom learning. Below is an outline of the department's responsibilities related to practicum education.

Key Responsibilities of the Social Work Department:

1. **Ongoing Communication and Collaboration with Practicum Sites:**

- The department ensures regular communication with existing and potential practicum placement sites to align their needs with the program's expectations and requirements.

2. **Student-Practicum Site Matching:**

- The department works collaboratively with students to identify a practicum placement that meets their educational needs while aligning with the program's objectives and the student's personal and professional goals.

3. **Application and Interview Assistance:**

- Guidance is provided to students throughout the application and interviewing process with identified practicum placement sites to ensure they are well-prepared and supported.

4. **Communication with Practicum Sites Regarding Student Applications:**

- The department facilitates communication between practicum sites and students, sharing necessary and permissible information, while confirming the status of the student's application/interview process.

5. **Coordination of Documentation for Placement Confirmation:**

- The department handles all necessary paperwork and documentation to formally confirm the student's placement at the practicum site.

6. **Provision of Practicum Education Manual:**

- The department offers a **Practicum Education Manual**, which serves as a guideline and reference for students, practicum supervisors, and faculty practicum liaisons, ensuring clarity and consistency throughout the practicum process.

7. **Structured Orientation for Practicum Supervisors:**

- At the beginning of each academic year, the department provides an orientation for practicum supervisors. This orientation includes:
 - Information about the objectives and requirements of the MSW program.
 - Overview of the components, sequencing, and content of the social work curriculum.
 - Strategies for supervising students at the Master's level.

8. **Supervision in Practicum Instruction (SIPI) Course:**

- For practicum supervisors who have not yet completed the necessary training, the department offers a **Supervision in Practicum Instruction (SIPI)** course. The department also recognizes SIPI courses completed at other accredited MSW programs in New England, and waivers may be granted for prior supervisor experience or other special circumstances.

9. **Online Resources for Practicum Supervisors:**

- The department provides online resources for practicum instructors, which include:
 - Practicum syllabi, program handbooks, and evaluation tools/forms.
 - Contact information for the Practicum Education Director, Program Director, faculty practicum liaisons, and, with permission, other practicum instructors.

10. **Opportunities for Continuing Education:**

- The department offers **no-cost or low-cost Continuing Education Units (CEUs)** for practicum supervisors through educational programs hosted by the **WSU Social Work Program** and in collaboration with the **New England Practicum Education Consortium (NECON)**.

11. **Faculty Practicum Liaisons (FPLs):**

- The department assigns **Faculty Practicum Liaisons (FPLs)** who hold multiple responsibilities, including:
 - Serving as instructors for the **Integrative Practicum Seminar**.
 - Offering ongoing support and communication between the student, practicum site, practicum supervisor, and the Practicum Education Program.

12. Integrative Practicum Seminar:

- The department conducts a **weekly Integrative Practicum Seminar** for all students in practicum placements. The seminar includes:
 - Structured assignments, group discussions, process recordings, integrative journals, and case consultations as learning tools.
 - Opportunities for students to compare practicum experiences, discuss concerns, and engage in experiential exercises that integrate classroom and social work knowledge.
 - Encouraging reflection on personal and professional values and ethics.
 - A forum for presenting clinical case material while protecting client confidentiality.

13. Ethical Guidelines for Practice:

- The department ensures that students receive comprehensive training on **ethical guidelines for practice**, focusing particularly on **client confidentiality** and compliance with **HIPAA regulations**.

14. Safety Guidelines and Collaboration:

- The department includes content in classroom seminars on **personal safety** during practicum placements, including guidelines for working with potentially high-risk populations, methods of intervention, and the specific practice settings where students might be placed.
- The department works closely with practicum sites to ensure students' safety throughout their practicum placements.

15. Monitoring the Quality of the Learning Experience:

- The department regularly monitors the quality of the practicum experience by:
 - Soliciting both formal and informal evaluations from students, practicum instructors, and faculty practicum liaisons.
 - Ensuring that feedback is used to improve and enhance the practicum process for future students.

16. Regular Communication with Practicum Stakeholders:

- The department ensures consistent communication between the Practicum Education Program, Faculty Practicum Liaisons, the Social Work Department, and practicum supervisors.

17. Practicum-Related Forms and Documents:

- The department is responsible for the development, distribution, and maintenance of **practicum-related forms and documents**, including training for students, faculty, and practicum supervisors as necessary.

Summary

The **Social Work Department at Westfield State University** is committed to supporting students through all stages of the practicum process. This includes close collaboration with practicum sites, careful matching of students to placements, ongoing training for practicum supervisors, and providing students with the resources, supervision, and ethical guidelines they need to succeed. With structured orientations, continuous communication, and a focus on safety and quality, the department ensures that students receive a rich and comprehensive practicum experience that enhances their learning and prepares them for professional social work practice.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT DURING THE PRACTICUM

The practicum is a critical component of the **graduate and under-graduate social work** program at **Westfield State University**. Students, with guidance from the **faculty practicum liaison** and **practicum supervisor**, carry significant responsibility for their learning and must actively engage in the formulation and implementation of their practicum experience. Below are the detailed responsibilities and expectations for students throughout the practicum process.

1. Professional Behavior in the Practicum Internship

Students must consistently demonstrate professional behavior while in their practicum placements. Key expectations include:

- **Punctuality and Reliability:** Students must adhere to the agreed-upon schedule, ensuring they arrive and depart on time. If they must miss a day, they should contact the internship site as soon as possible and follow the established process for making up missed hours.
- **Adherence to Social Work Values and Ethics:** Students should conduct themselves in alignment with the **NASW Code of Ethics**, local, state, and national laws. A copy of the **NASW Code of Ethics** is provided in the **BSW/MSW Program Manual**.
- **Dress Code:** Students must dress in a manner that is consistent with the expectations at the practicum site, avoiding overly casual attire such as jeans, tank tops, or casual t-shirts unless specified by the practicum instructor. Professional dress is important for building trust and respect with clients and colleagues.
- **Boundary Maintenance and Dual Relationships:** Students must follow **NASW guidelines** regarding dual relationships and inappropriate behaviors. Any concerns about relationships and boundaries with clients or practicum staff should be discussed with the practicum instructor and/or faculty liaison promptly.

2. PRACTICUM Placement Hours

Students are expected to complete the required number of practicum hours as outlined in Section I of the manual. Key considerations include:

- **Practicum Schedule:** The practicum typically begins in the 1st or 2nd week of September and ends by early May. The duration is designed to allow professional growth over the academic year, aligning with concurrent practice courses and the **Integrative Practicum Seminar**.
- **Semester Breaks and Holidays:** Students should negotiate practicum hours during breaks directly with their practicum instructor, while also considering client needs and site policies. Students should consult their faculty liaison for guidance.
- **Acceptable Practicum Activities:** Activities that count towards practicum hours include:
 - Orientation
 - Direct client service
 - Supervision
 - Shadowing staff
 - Assigned tasks
 - Record-keeping, meetings, and training events
 - Attendance at site-sponsored seminars and workshops
 - Attendance at conferences or additional training (with supervisor approval)

- **Exclusions:** Time not required by the practicum site, such as school holidays, agency holidays, and commuting time, is **not** counted as practicum hours.
- **Weekly Integrative Practicum Seminar:** Participation in the seminar is a required part of the practicum experience. This time will not be counted towards a student's hours in placement.
- **Incomplete Hours:** If a student fails to complete the required hours due to illness or other delays, they may receive an **Incomplete** grade for that semester, with a plan in place for completing the remaining hours.
- **Timesheets:** Students must complete and submit **Internship Placement Hours Timesheets** electronically, signed by both the student and practicum instructor. These timesheets are reviewed by the faculty practicum liaison.

3. Confidentiality and Use of Practicum Site Materials

Confidentiality is of utmost importance in social work practice. Students are expected to:

- **Ensure Clarity About Use of Site Materials:** Before using any materials (such as agency forms or client records) for assignments or other course work, students must seek clarification and approval from their practicum instructor and/or faculty liaison.
- **Prohibit Removal of Client Records:** Students may **not** remove client information, including official documents or client charts, from the practicum site under any circumstances. This includes both physical and digital records.
- **Adhere to Confidentiality Standards:** Students are responsible for maintaining strict confidentiality regarding client information, both at the practicum site and when discussing cases. This includes:
 - Not discussing client details in the presence of anyone who is not directly involved with the case.
 - Never sharing identifying information in any non-professional setting (e.g., with family, friends, or partners).
 - Ensuring that any records or materials shared in class assignments or discussions do not contain client-identifying information.
- **Violation of Confidentiality:** Any breach of confidentiality can result in dismissal from the practicum and/or referral to the **Academic Review Committee (ARC)**.

4. Learning Agreement

The **Learning Agreement** is a foundational document for the practicum experience. Students must:

- **Collaborate with Practicum Instructor:** The student, in consultation with their practicum instructor, will draft a **Learning Agreement** that outlines:
 - The student's goals for the practicum.
 - The agency's expectations for the student.
 - The **Social Work Department's** practicum requirements.
- **Electronic Signature:** The completed Learning Agreement must be reviewed and signed by the student, practicum instructor, and faculty practicum liaison. Once signed, it will be used as the basis for evaluating the student's practicum performance.
- **Retention of Learning Agreement:** A copy of the **Learning Agreement** will be retained in the student's permanent record and used in future recommendations or reference letters.

5. Supervision

Supervision is a critical component of the practicum experience. Students are expected to:

- **Primary Practicum Instructor:** Every student is assigned a primary practicum instructor, who is responsible for overseeing their practicum experience. Students must meet with this supervisor at least once a week, face-to-face, for a minimum of one hour. Video conferencing may be used when approved.
 - **Preparedness for Supervision:** Students should come to each supervision session prepared to discuss specific issues, cases, or questions related to their practicum. In addition, students should share relevant course materials and classroom experiences with their practicum instructor.
 - **Task-Oriented and Group Supervision:** In addition to one-on-one supervision, students are required to participate in an additional hour of task-oriented or group supervision per week. This may be provided by the primary practicum instructor or another qualified staff member at the site.
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Summary of Student Responsibilities

In summary, students in the **MSW Practicum Program at Westfield State University** are expected to:

- Demonstrate professional behavior, including punctuality, ethical conduct, and appropriate dress.
- Maintain confidentiality and adhere to practicum site policies and NASW guidelines.
- Complete the required practicum hours, including participation in the **Integrative Practicum Seminar**.
- Develop and implement a **Learning Agreement** with their practicum instructor.
- Engage in weekly supervision, both individual and group, to ensure integration of practicum and classroom learning.

These responsibilities are key to ensuring a successful practicum experience and to developing the knowledge, skills, and ethical grounding necessary for professional social work practice.

VI. EVALUATION OF PRACTICUM EDUCATION

The **evaluation process** in the **BSW/MSW Practicum** program is a **semester-long** procedure that actively involves multiple parties: the student, the **practicum instructor**, and the **faculty practicum liaison**. The evaluation aims to ensure that students are progressing in their professional and academic development, meeting the **Learning Agreement** goals, and adhering to the standards of the social work profession.

1. Role of Faculty Practicum Liaison

- **Ongoing Monitoring:** The **faculty practicum liaison** actively monitors the student's placement through regular communication with the student, the practicum instructor, and a review of the student's **practicum timesheets, process recordings**, and other written work.
- **Collaborative Communication:** The faculty liaison will establish several means of contact with the practicum instructor and encourage consistent collaboration throughout the internship to address concerns and evaluate progress.

2. Identification and Resolution of Difficulties

Difficulties or issues in the internship placement can be identified by the student, practicum instructor, or faculty practicum liaison. The goal is for all parties to work together to resolve any concerns and improve the student's overall performance.

PROCESS FOR ADDRESSING ISSUES: If difficulties arise, the following steps should be taken:

- 1. Initial Attempt to Resolve with Practicum Instructor:**
 - If the student faces challenges, they should first try to resolve the issue directly with their practicum instructor. The practicum instructor may offer coaching and guidance on how to handle the issue.
 - If the student cannot address the issue independently or feels uncomfortable discussing it with the instructor, they should move to the next step.
- 2. Request Assistance from Faculty Practicum Liaison:**
 - If the issue persists, the student should contact the **faculty practicum liaison** for assistance. In most cases, the liaison will collaborate with the student and practicum instructor to resolve the problem.
 - If the issue is ongoing or serious, the faculty liaison will create a **written plan** that outlines the concerns, identifies a resolution strategy, sets a timeline, and specifies consequences if the issues are not resolved.
- 3. Involvement of the Practicum Education Director:**
 - If the issue remains unresolved or is deemed serious, the **Practicum Education Director** may intervene. This could involve adjustments to the student's placement, probation status, or, in extreme cases, removal from the placement.
 - If the student is removed from the field site, the **Practicum Education Director** will seek review by the **BSW/MSW Program Committee**, which may refer the matter to the **Academic Review Committee (ARC)** if needed.
- 4. Academic Appeals Process:**
 - If the student feels they have been unfairly treated during this process, they have the right to have their situation reviewed through the **University's academic appeals process**.

3. Probation and Dismissal Policies

Students' behaviors during the practicum placement can result in probationary status or dismissal from the program, depending on the severity of the issues identified.

PROBATIONARY BEHAVIOR EXAMPLES: Students may be placed on **probation** for the following reasons:

- **Resistance to Site Assignments:** A pattern of non-compliance with internship site assignments and policies (unless they conflict with ethical standards).
- **Failure to Follow Schedule:** Missing hours without proper notification or repeated tardiness.
- **Failure to Attend Supervision:** Missing supervision sessions or not engaging in the supervision process appropriately.
- **Non-Practicum-Related Activities:** Using practicum time for activities unrelated to the practicum or not agreed upon with the practicum instructor.

- **Lack of Engagement:** Not actively participating in the learning process or showing resistance to the learning experience.

DISMISSAL BEHAVIOR EXAMPLES: Serious or repeated behavior that can lead to **dismissal** includes:

- **Ethical Violations:** Serious breaches of social work ethics, such as violations of the **NASW Code of Ethics**.
- **Criminal Activity:** Committing a felony or a law violation related to the practicum.
- **Substance Abuse:** Evidence of chemical dependence or substance abuse during the practicum year.
- **Falsification of Records:** Falsifying timesheets, client records, or other practicum documents.
- **Dangerous Behavior:** Behavior that endangers clients, staff, or other students (physically or emotionally).
- **Failure to Pass Practicum:** A failure to achieve a passing grade in the practicum course.

4. Evaluation of the Student by the Practicum Instructor

The **practicum instructor** will assess the student's progress through multiple evaluation methods:

- **Formal Evaluation:** At the end of each semester, the practicum instructor will complete a **formal written evaluation**. This assessment will be based on the student's progress in relation to the **Learning Agreement** goals.
- **Discussion of Evaluation:** The student should have the opportunity to read and discuss the evaluation with the practicum instructor before it is submitted to the **faculty liaison**. The student will be required to sign the evaluation to acknowledge they have had the chance to review it, although the signature does not imply agreement with its content.
- **Addendum or Rebuttal:** If there are unresolved disagreements between the student and practicum instructor, the student can submit an **addendum or rebuttal** to the evaluation, which will be visible to both the instructor and faculty liaison.
- **Submission Deadline:** All evaluations must be submitted by the deadline specified in the **Practicum Education Calendar** and will be kept in the student's permanent record.

5. Evaluation of the Practicum Experience by the Student

The student will have opportunities to reflect on and evaluate the practicum experience:

- **Self-Evaluation:** At the end of the semester, the student will complete a **self-evaluation** that reflects on their performance, learning, and experiences.
- **Informal Feedback:** Throughout the placement, the student can provide informal feedback on the practicum experience, especially during liaison visits or check-ins.
- **Formal Written Feedback:** At or before the end of the second semester, students will be asked to provide **formal written feedback** about the placement. This feedback will be kept confidential by the practicum office.

6. Evaluation of the Practicum Experience by the Practicum Instructor

Practicum instructors will also have opportunities to evaluate the practicum experience:

- **Informal Feedback:** The practicum instructor can provide informal feedback to the **faculty practicum liaison** throughout the internship.
- **Formal Evaluation:** At the end of the placement, the instructor will be asked to provide **formal written feedback** about the placement, which will be kept confidential by the practicum office.
- **Collaboration:** Practicum instructors are encouraged to maintain communication with the **faculty practicum liaison** to discuss any concerns or improvements for future placements.

7. Practicum Course Grade Assignment

The final grade for the **practicum course** will be assigned by the **faculty practicum liaison**, who considers the following factors:

- **Practicum Instructor's Evaluation**
- **Student's Self-Evaluation**
- **Performance in the Integrative Practicum Seminar**
- **Completion of Required Placement Hours**

All assessments and evaluations from both the student and practicum instructor contribute to the determination of the final practicum grade.

Summary

The **evaluation process** for the practicum is designed to ensure that students are achieving their professional development goals and adhering to the **NASW Code of Ethics**. It includes continuous monitoring, opportunities for feedback, and structured evaluations at the end of each semester. In cases where difficulties arise, there is a clear process for addressing and resolving concerns. Failure to meet expectations can lead to probation or dismissal from the program, but students have the right to appeal decisions and engage in constructive resolution efforts.

VII. ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This section of the **Practicum Education Manual** outlines essential policies and procedures to ensure the safety, professionalism, and ethical conduct of students in their practicum placements. These policies address key areas such as malpractice and liability, travel requirements, student membership in the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), and more. Below is a summary of these important guidelines.

1. Malpractice and Liability

- **Liability Coverage:**
Westfield State University (WSU) maintains **professional liability insurance** for each student and designated faculty member. This coverage provides protection with a minimum of **\$1,000,000 per person** and **\$3,000,000 in the aggregate** for any claims arising from student involvement in their practicum. Evidence of this coverage is available upon request.

- **Student Responsibility for Malpractice Insurance:**

Students are **strongly encouraged** to purchase their own **private malpractice insurance**. This is particularly important for those who may face individual or collective legal actions involving them, the agency, or the program.

- **NASW Membership:** Students who are members of the **National Association of Social Workers (NASW)** can access **low-cost malpractice insurance**.
- For more information about student malpractice insurance options, students may consult the **Practicum Education Director** or explore NASW resources.

- **Reducing Liability Risk:**

To minimize personal and professional liability, students should:

- Fully understand and adhere to the **NASW Code of Ethics**.
- Follow the **policies and expectations** of WSU, the **Social Work Program**, and the **practicum site**.

- **Addressing Ethical Concerns or Harassment:**

If students encounter ethical dilemmas, experience discrimination, or face **sexual harassment** or other misconduct by any party (supervisors, agency staff, clients, fellow students, or faculty), they are encouraged to immediately report these concerns to their **Practicum Instructor** or **Practicum Education Director**.

2. Travel

- **Student Responsibility for Travel Costs:**

Students are responsible for their own **travel expenses** related to their practicum placement, including parking costs. This includes **commuting** to and from the practicum site and **any travel** required for practicum-related activities (e.g., outreach to client homes).

- **Travel Agreements:**

If the student is required to travel during practicum hours (e.g., for client visits), this must be **discussed and agreed upon** during the initial **interview process**. Specific travel arrangements, including reimbursement (if applicable), should be included in the **Learning Agreement**.

Note: The WSU Social Work Program is **not responsible** for student travel costs.

3. Transportation of Clients

- **Liability for Client Transportation:**

Students are **not covered** under WSU's **self-insurance policy** for transporting clients, either in their personal vehicle or in an agency vehicle.

- **Prohibited Practices:**

- Students should **not transport clients in their own vehicles** nor be asked to do so by the practicum site.
- **Agency Vehicles:** Students should not drive agency vehicles unless accompanied by another agency employee, who is the responsible party.

- **Exceptions:**

Students may accompany clients in an agency vehicle, but the **driver** must be an **agency employee**, and another staff member should also be present in the vehicle.

4. Student Membership in NASW

- **Encouraged Membership:**

All students are **encouraged to join the National Association of Social Workers (NASW)**.

Membership provides various benefits:

- Access to **NASW publications** on social work events and issues.
- Eligibility for **student malpractice insurance** through NASW.
- Access to a variety of social work resources, including job listings and information about professional development.

- **NASW Membership Benefits:**

NASW members can access the **members-only** section of the NASW website, gain insight into **state and national social work issues**, and receive **email or mail updates** on social work events. To apply for NASW membership and malpractice insurance, students can visit the **NASW website**

(www.socialworkers.org).

5. Practicum Advisory Board (PAB)

The **Practicum Advisory Board (PAB)** is a group that provides consultation and recommendations related to the practicum education process.

- **Composition of PAB:**

The board is chaired by the **Practicum Education Director** and includes:

- **Assistant Practicum Education Director**
- A faculty member
- Community stakeholders

- **Purpose:**

The PAB meets regularly to:

- Discuss issues affecting practicum placements and student needs.
- Advise on the integration of **curriculum** and **practicum experiences**.
- Recommend improvements to **practicum policies** and procedures.
- Address concerns related to **agency needs, community needs**, and the **current practice environment**.

- **Specific Projects:**

The PAB may develop or complete specific projects to support and make recommendations to the practicum program and the **Department of Social Work**.

6. Other Policies and Procedures

In addition to the above policies, students are expected to familiarize themselves with other critical policies, which are detailed in the **Westfield State University BSW/MSW Program Manual**. Key topics include:

- **Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action**
- **Sexual Harassment Policies**
- **Hazing**
- **Religious Holidays**
- **Grading Policies**
- **Infectious Disease Standards**
- **Leaves of Absence**

Students are encouraged to review the **BSW/MSW Program Manual** regularly, as it contains essential policies and procedures that govern both the **academic and practicum aspects** of the BSW/MSW program. A copy of the manual is available on the **WSU Social Work website** at www.westfield.ma.edu/socialwork.

Summary

The **Additional Policies and Procedures** section highlights the importance of managing legal, ethical, and logistical aspects of the practicum experience. Key areas include:

- **Malpractice and Liability Insurance:** Students should obtain **private malpractice insurance** and be aware of the **University's coverage**.
- **Travel Responsibilities:** Students are responsible for their **own travel expenses**, and any travel during practicum hours must be agreed upon in the **Learning Agreement**.
- **Transportation of Clients:** Students should **not transport clients** in their vehicles or be asked to do so in agency vehicles without proper arrangements.
- **NASW Membership:** Joining NASW provides essential professional support and insurance opportunities.
- **Practicum Advisory Board (PAB):** The board ensures that practicum education remains aligned with the needs of students, agencies, and the community.
- **Other Policies:** Students are advised to familiarize themselves with policies outlined in the **BSW/MSW Program Manual**.

These guidelines and policies aim to support students in navigating their practicum placements safely, ethically, and professionally.
