

Memorial University School of Social Work
MSW Field Education Manual
Field Settings & Agency Coordinators

Field Settings

Field settings are agencies or organizations in which students complete their field practica, under the direct supervision of qualified field instructors, who provide students with ongoing educational supervision and performance evaluation. The selection of field settings is guided by the support of agencies/organizations for the goals of field education and the ability of agencies/organizations to offer students the variety, range, and intensity of experiences required to achieve their learning goals.

The MSW Field Education Coordinator facilitates appropriate matches between students, field instructors (and agency mentors), and field settings. The MSW Field Education Coordinator also is responsible for negotiating with field settings the number of students participating in field practica, and the expected dates for commencing and completing MSW field practica.

Field settings have the sole authority and discretion to determine the number of students accepted for field practica and which students they accept.

Roles and Responsibilities of Field Settings

The following is a list of field settings roles and responsibilities:

- designate an agency coordinator;
- sign and submit the *Agency-School Affiliation Agreement* and the *Agency-School Information Sharing Agreement*;
- provide support to students and field instructors (and agency mentors) in accordance with the *MSW Field Education Manual* and the *CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation*;
- make reasonable accommodations when students disclose, prior to confirming an MSW field practicum, any particular mental health, physical, or environmental disabilities,
 - challenges, or conditions, or personal circumstances requiring accommodation during
 - field practica; and
- negotiate reasonable accommodations when students disclose, during an MSW field practicum, any unforeseen mental health, physical, or environmental disabilities, challenges, or conditions, or personal circumstances that arise during MSW field.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Students, the School of Social Work (i.e., Field Education Coordinators, offsite field instructors, field secretary, Associate Deans), and field settings (i.e., field instructors, agency mentors, agency coordinators) agree to maintain confidentiality of information in accordance with social work values and the *CASW-ACTS Code of Ethics*, the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIPPA)*, and other applicable privacy legislation. The *Agency-School Affiliation Agreement*, the *Agency-School Information Sharing Agreement*, and the *Student-School MSW Field Practicum Agreement* outline which information is to be kept confidential and which information can be shared between students, the School of Social Work, and field settings.

Agency Coordinators

Field settings are required to designate an employee, who may or may not be a social worker, as agency coordinator. In larger organizations, agency coordinators normally are social work professional practice coordinators, educational coordinators, senior managers or directors, or senior social workers. In smaller agencies, agency coordinators normally are agency directors, program coordinators, or senior social workers. Responsibility for the assignment of an agency coordinators rests entirely with agencies/organizations.

Agency coordinators are strongly encouraged to read all of the components of the *MSW Field Education Manual and the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation (Guiding Principles; Core Learning Objectives; Field Education)*; plus review the *Agency-School Affiliation Agreement and Information Sharing Agreement*.

This information is available on the MSW Field Education website:

<https://www.mun.ca/socialwork/field/MSWFieldEducation.php>

Agency coordinators are the primary contact persons for agencies/organizations with the School of Social Work (normally the Field Education Coordinator) for matters pertaining to field education. As such, agency coordinators receive all general correspondence from the School of Social Work concerning field education, and normally complete any field setting agreements with the School of Social Work. If challenges arise during MSW field practica or with field education in general, agency coordinators or their designates may participate, on behalf of their field setting, in any discussions or meetings.

Normally, agency coordinators are not expected to be involved directly in the day to day supervision of individual MSW field practica. All correspondence concerning any particular MSW field practicum is directed to the designated field instructor (and agency mentor).

Field Practica in Field Settings Lacking Access to Qualified MSW Field Instructors

When the decision is made by the MSW Field Education Coordinator to place students in a field setting where there are no available qualified MSW field instructors, the MSW Field Education Coordinator designates a qualified social worker from the School of Social Work or from the community to provide offsite field instruction. Offsite field instructors are responsible for providing 30 hours of field instruction, including assignment of learning opportunities, integration of theory and practice, supervision of students, and evaluation of student learning.

Where there are no qualified MSW field instructors available and an offsite field instructor has been assigned, the field setting designates a staff member (where possible, a social worker) to act as the agency mentor. Agency mentors are responsible for the mentoring and day to day supervision of students. They also are responsible for collaborating with offsite field instructors in assigning learning opportunities and evaluating student learning.

MSW Field Practicum Hours

The MSW field practicum is designed to be completed on a full-time or part-time basis. On a full-time basis, the 500 hours normally are completed over one semester in 13 to 15 weeks (35 to 40 hours per week). On a part-time basis, the 500 hours normally are completed over two semesters in 20 to 32 weeks (minimum 16 hours per week). **The 500 hours do not include:**

- lunch, coffee, and other breaks;
- sick days, family days, bereavement leave, or other leaves of absence;
- snow days;
- statutory holidays or annual leave;
- any other absences from the field practicum/field setting;
- work on other social work courses (including pathway, pathway scholarship, theses).

Students are required to inform their field instructor (and agency mentor) if they will be absent at any time from the field setting. If students are absent from the field setting for four or more days, it is the students' responsibility to inform the MSW Field Education Coordinator.

MSW Field Practicum Learning Opportunities

Field instructors (and agency mentors) are responsible for assigning learning opportunities and activities to students. Typically, this occurs in collaboration with students. The assignment of learning opportunities and activities is expected to be grounded in the *MSW Field Learning Contract* and the *CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation*.

Students are assigned social work responsibilities only to the degree commensurate with the assessment, by the field instructors (and agency mentors), of the student's level of skill and ability. While students and field instructors (and agency mentors) may agree upon the assignment of responsibilities, the wishes of clients/participants/patients/service recipients are primary. **People have the right to choose whether or not they receive social work services from students.**

Depending on the field setting and the particular MSW field practicum, learning activities may include a variety of components of social work practice:

- administration/supervision;
- collection and review of literature and other resources;
- community development and capacity-building;
- design, delivery, and evaluation of professional and public education and training;
- design and development of tools, resources, and program materials;
- direct/clinical practice;
- health and wellness promotion;
- interprofessional and interagency collaboration;
- needs assessment;
- organizational development;
- policy analysis, development, implementation, and evaluation;
- prevention/intervention; and
- program development, delivery, and evaluation.

Research is a key component of Pathways/Pathways Scholarship/Theses and, as such, is not an acceptable learning activity of MSW field practica.