

# Virtual Academic Center Field Education Manual

## Concentration Curriculum

Cohorts Matriculated Summer 2016 and before

**ATTENTION:** The Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work fully adheres to the School's and the University's policies and protocols. All MSW Students are expected to review, understand, and comply with the policies and protocols included in [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), ["Current Student Website"](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Policies and Procedures](#) and [VAC Field Education Manual](#).

# VIRTUAL ACADEMIC CENTER FIELD EDUCATION MANUAL USC SUZANNE DWORAK-PECK SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

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## WELCOME

As Senior Vice Dean of Field Education and David Lawrence Stein/Violet Goldberg Sachs Professor of Mental Health, I welcome students and field instructors who are engaged in the interactive process of teaching and learning about the practice of professional social work in the real world. Field Education is committed to providing opportunities for our students to develop skills in the most current practices, particularly in evidence based interventions, and to receive supervision by the finest field instructors in the country.

This Field Education Manual is designed to provide general information and guidance about Field Education and the Field Practicum to students and field instructors at all of our Academic Centers (AC) - the University Park Campus (UPC), Orange County Academic Center (OCAC), and the Virtual Academic Center (VAC).

Individual and specific questions are encouraged and can be directed to those field faculty who are assigned to each student as field liaisons at each Academic Center. If there continues to be a concern, then the Assistant Deans of Field Education will be contacted by the advisor/liaison for further discussion. The roles of the Senior Vice Dean, the Assistant Deans, and the Faculty are to provide our students as much support as possible in the process of integrating theory with practice.

Field Education is the Heart of Social Work and we want to provide an experience for each student that represents the reality of professional social work practitioners and agencies today. The experiences in the Field Practicum can evoke a range of reactions and like the challenges in our communities, the process of learning in the Field is dynamic and complex. You may confront difficult situations and dilemmas in the first early months. With early and open communication and good collaborative problem solving, the learning during the academic year will be profound and life changing,

I extend my thanks and best regards to students and field instructors for beginning a life long journey of learning, self-discovery and transformation.

Marleen Wong, Ph.D., L.C.S.W.  
Senior Vice Dean of Field Education  
David Lawrence Stein/Violet Goldberg Sachs Professor of Mental Health  
Executive Director, Telehealth Clinic  
Clinical Advisor, Family Nurse Practitioner Program  
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## [MISSION STATEMENT OF THE USC SUZANNE DWORAK-PECK SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK](#)

The mission of the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work is to promote social justice and well-being at every social level through advanced education, community engagement, interdisciplinary scientific activity, advocacy, and professional leadership.

## I. FIELD EDUCATION

Field Education is an independent and integral sequence of the MSW curriculum. Students are exposed to selected and organized opportunities guided by the [Educational Policy and Educational Standards \(EPAS\)](#) and the [nine Core Competencies of the Council on Social Work Education \(CSWE\)](#). Field Education seeks to validate, apply, and integrate the knowledge, theories, and concepts of social work practice learned throughout the curriculum. Field agencies are expected to provide "in vivo" experiences relevant to the academic content. The student on the other hand is expected to apply academic knowledge, social work skills, critical thinking, professional behavior, ethics and values learned in the classroom to direct practice work.

It is imperative for the agency and the school to collaborate for integration of learning to occur concurrently in field sites and in the classrooms in the VAC. USC administrators, professors, and field liaisons partner with agency field instructors to foster comprehensive and high quality social work education and training. The collaboration teaches and guides students to practice with sensitivity to cultural and ethnic diversity and to abide by professional social work behaviors, values, and codes of ethics. This comprehensive approach helps prepare students to practice social work with adverse populations and to take on leadership roles within the profession.

### A. Objectives of Field Education

Field Education prepares students to enter the social work profession by meeting the following objectives:

- To integrate academic learning with all levels of field work (micro, mezzo, macro).
- To achieve proficiency in the required [competencies](#) for social work education as it relates to field work.

The [2015 CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) are as follows:

1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
  2. Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
  3. Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
  4. Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice
  5. Engage in Policy Practice
  6. Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
  7. Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
  8. Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
  9. Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
- To develop the ability to understand and utilize a broad range of modalities and interventions in micro, mezzo, and macro practice with diverse populations.
  - To focus on building the knowledge for generalist practice in the 1st semester to establish a broad foundation for direct practice work
  - To develop a deeper knowledge and depth of skills needed for beginning professional practice in a designated Department of Study in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> semesters.

## B. Program Overview

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work is a top ranked social work graduate program (U.S. News and World Report) in the country. It has the largest full-time Master of Social Work (MSW) program in the country and it is ranked as a level one research school. We offer opportunities for students to select from a four-semester, six-semester, eight-semester, or an advance standing program. The regular standing MSW degree requires the completion of a minimum of 60 semester units, including four semesters of Field Internship. Field Education in the part-time programs follows the same general design as the full-time program. Students are required to maintain a schedule that includes a minimum of one eight-hour day (a maximum of 10 hours with prior faculty approval) during regular business hours (Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm) to be available for field practicum activities at the agency site.

### Highlights of the Program:

- Four-semester, six-semester, eight-semester, as well as advanced standing, enabling students to finish on their timetable
- A choice of academic centers: UPC, OCAC, or VAC
- A choice, in the Concentration Year, of 8 concentrations and sub-concentrations, six dual-degree programs (not all choices available at all academic centers)
- A wide variety of electives allowing the students to gain insight into areas that interest them
- Field internship is assigned according to student's interests, educational goals and practice goals.

### Quick Facts:

#### Degree Programs within the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work

- Master of Social Work
- Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work
- Doctor of Social Work (DSW)
- MSW to PhD Direct
- Master of Science in Nursing/Family Nurse Practitioner (MSN/FNP)



#### MSW Concentrations

- Community Organization Planning and Administration (COPA)
- Families and Children
- Health
- Mental Health
- Social Work & Business in a Global Society





#### MSW Sub-concentrations


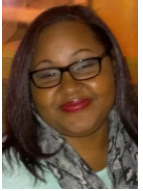



- Military Social Work and Veteran Services
- School Settings (Pupil Personnel Services)
- Older Adults


**C. Campus Locations**

	<p><b>University Park Campus (UPC)</b>                  Montgomery Ross Fisher Building                  669 W. 34<sup>th</sup> Street                  Los Angeles, CA 90089-0411                  213.740.2711</p>
	<p><b>Orange County Academic Center (OCAC)</b>                  2300 Michelson Drive                  Irvine, CA 92612-1351                  949.437.0043</p>
	<p><b>Virtual Academic Center (VAC)</b>  <a href="https://msw.usc.edu/about/">https://msw.usc.edu/about/</a>                  877.700.4MSW (4679)</p>







**D. VAC Field Administration / Field Faculty / Staff**

<p><b>Administration</b></p>	
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<b>Regional Field Faculty by Region</b>	
<b>Southern California (Red)</b>	
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<b>Regional Field Faculty by Region (continued)</b>	
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<b>Regional Field Faculty by Region (continued)</b>	
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## E. Field Agency Sites

The Field Practicum, also known as a student's placement or internship, takes place in USC Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) or contract approved agencies located throughout the country which represent a wide range of social work services and practice. These agencies are approved sites based on the quality of the professional practice, commitment to addressing social problems and an interest to participate in the professional education of MSW students.

The agency is responsible for providing the learning opportunities representative of social work practice within the student's region and/or community. They must subscribe to the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work educational objectives, the CSWE EPAS and the 9 Core Competencies.

**Note:** MSW Students are not allowed to identify their own field placement site but may suggest potential sites for pre-approval processing.

Field internship sites must treat the students as learners while providing the resources necessary to meet their learning objectives. Unless officially approved by the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Field Faculty and Administration, students may not work at home during the placement hours. Hours worked at home without the express consent of Field Faculty and Field Education Administration will not be counted as meeting the number of hours required for a passing grade.

**Note:** Students cannot sign any "contracts" nor enter into any agreements that refute or negate the provisions in the official agency/organization MOA with the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. This includes important policies regarding placement hours and educational calendar events such as finals week or All School Day.

There are instances when an agency may not possess the resources to provide all the required learning experiences. In such cases, a secondary placement site may be identified and used for the purpose of meeting the student's learning objectives and accumulation of Field Internship hours. A large multi-disciplinary placement agency site may also decide to broaden the student's experience by rotating to different departments to expand learning opportunities. In any of these options, the primary agency site carries the main responsibility for field instruction while the secondary site provides a Preceptor for supplemental supervision. All options must be expressly pre-approved by the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Field Faculty and Administration prior to the start of the field practicum or the hours will not be counted toward the number required for a passing grade.

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work welcomes agencies interested in partnering as field placement sites. To qualify as a field placement site, an agency must meet the following criteria:

- Provide a sufficient number and variety of assignments to develop student knowledge and practice skills
- Provide an opportunity to work with individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations unless otherwise indicated by specific Concentration Coordinator
- Provide ample time for weekly field instruction to permit both individual and/or group conferences with students
- Provide adequate office space, office supplies, telephone availability, and clerical support for the student to perform assigned duties
- Provide opportunities for in-service training and access to agency consultants
- Have an interest in participating in the student's research
- Have an interest in aligning the agency's practice framework to theories taught in the classroom.

New agency sites must complete the [New Agency Information Packet](#) and a [Memorandum of Agreement](#), approved by USC Legal Counsel. An agency representative must also meet with a

USC Field representative to evaluate the appropriateness of the site and for approval. This process typically takes three to six months to complete.

## F. Field Education Requirements

### Course Work

All MSW students must complete one semester of Virtual Field Practicum (586a) and three semesters of agency-based Field Practicum (586b and 686a/b) as part of graduation requirements. Each Field Practicum is taken concurrently with the Integrative Seminar (Foundation Year) and the Practice course (Foundation and Concentration Years). Field Education courses are assigned a “Credit” or “No Credit” grade.

### Field Practicum

Students must earn between **1,000 to 1,050** Field Internship hours. All Field Practicum hours must be earned by completing the Virtual Field Practicum and interning at a specific agency location assigned through the formal placement process. The accumulated hours are typically divided into two years of study, the Foundation and the Concentration year. The Foundation year requires the completion of a minimum of 450 hours and the Concentration year requires a minimum of 550 hours. An exception is all PPSC students who must earn **600** hours while in community-based placement. The Learning Agreement indicates the number of hours required for each semester in Field Practicum. All MSW candidates must meet the minimum **1,000** Field Internship hours to earn their degree. Advanced Standing students complete only the Concentration year requirements.

The criteria and objectives vary from a generalist experience in the Foundation year to a more focused experience in the Concentration year. Field placement days vary depending on the student classes. The student will coordinate with the agency regarding internship schedule. Field placement days are determined through a discussion between the agency and the student, with the requirement that there is at least one 8-hour day during regular business hours. There is no exception to this policy. Evening and weekend hours are very limited if non-existent in most communities. MSW supervision must be available to the student during field practicum hours.

**Note: Students may not work over 8 hours per day without any prior USC faculty pre-approval nor can they work more than 30 hours per week. MSW students may not bank hours to end field internship early nor can they credit hours from the first year to the second year of field internship.** Field Instructors and students must adhere to the start and end dates of field internship as indicated in the Field Calendar regardless of any excess hours earned each semester. Some agencies also require students to continue during the winter and summer breaks. The agency, student, and the Field Liaison must have a discussion and pre-approve this schedule early in each field internship year. **Any changes in internship requirements must be noted in the Learning Agreement.**

Field Placement is assigned to all students by the Field Placement Team. Student’s refusal to participate in the field placement process and in Field Internship will delay satisfactory academic progress and may be the cause of a student’s inability to complete and graduate from the MSW program. MSW students are not allowed to identify their own field placement site but may suggest potential sites for pre-approval processing. This process takes 3-6 months to complete and does not guarantee the student will be placed at the suggested field agency site.

Students are responsible for pre-placement contact with their placement agency. Pre-placement processing may take place prior to the start of the semester but should not exceed 6 hours per day nor can it exceed **30** hours per week. Although field agency sites may schedule pre-placement processing before the community-based placement begins, they cannot be made mandatory due to students' travel plans or permanent home addresses. These students must be given an opportunity to make-up the pre-placement processing.

Students must make all efforts to complete agency required pre-placement processing, and any delays in making initial agency contact or beginning the Field Internship on time is also the student's responsibility. Students are also responsible for transportation to and from their placement site up to 30 miles in one direction from their place of residence (see *Transportation* on page 15 and Appendix K on page 32 for other transportation information).

**Note:** Students may experience a slow build-up of client caseload in the first semester of community-based placement.

#### Evaluation/Grading

The Field Practicum is a 3 unit course in the Foundation Year and a 4 unit course in the Concentration Year. It is a Credit/No Credit class. The grading is based on meeting all the requirements: (1) completion of required hours for each semester, (2) timely completion of the learning agreement, (3) timely completion of the required Reflective Learning Tools (10 per semester), and (4) achievement of the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) as evidenced in a satisfactory end of semester evaluation. The student may complete all the hours but fail to achieve the Competencies, in which case the grade is "No Credit." Conversely, the student may show promise in the Competencies but fail to complete the required hours. All four requirements must be met to pass the course and to earn a "Credit" grade.

**Note:** Any grade of "In-Progress" or "No Credit" requires a Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP).

A Learning Agreement is completed at the beginning of the Virtual Field Practicum and agency internship. Formal written evaluations are also submitted at the end of each semester. Field Instructors, students and Preceptors (if applicable) must collaborate when completing all required documents. Informal evaluation is conducted throughout the year. Field placements are monitored by Field Liaisons through periodic agency or virtual visits, student-field instructor meetings, telephone calls, and other contacts. Successful completion of the Field Practicum requires meeting all the expected hours, obtaining satisfactory formal evaluation by meeting expected growth in the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#), and completing 10 Reflective Learning Tools turned in weekly each semester while enrolled in each semester of Field Practicum.

#### Field Instruction

Field Instruction is taught by an individual who must possess an MSW and has at least two years of post-MSW agency experience. He/she must be approved by the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and certified to be a Field Instructor (see Section III.B on page 21). Field Instruction takes place between the student and the Field Instructor in designated agency settings which have been approved by the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck

School of Social Work and the University. An External Field Instructor (EFI) may be utilized if the agency does not employ an MSW but wants to host an MSW Intern. The same requirements apply to all EFIs.

There is a specific sequence of assignments, activities, and learning goals for Virtual Field Practicum and community-based practicum aligned with all other courses in the school. The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and the agency collaborate in assisting students to learn and increase their mastery of the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#). The Field Instruction process is intentional, active, organized, sequential, and individualized. It is conducted within the framework of a particular social work agency. Over the course of three semesters of field placement, field instruction is expected to include but not be limited to the following:

- Direct practice work with individuals, families, and related groups
- Direct practice work focusing on groups, communities, organizations, and/or institutional change
- A diversity of modalities, populations, and treatment delivered in the micro, mezzo, and macro practice settings
- A range of theoretical and teaching methodologies and models.

#### Evidence-Based Intervention Training

All MSW candidates are required to complete trainings in three Evidence-Based Interventions. Motivational Interviewing, Problem Solving Therapy, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy are completed either in the Virtual Field Practicum or in the bridge semester of the Advanced Standing program.

#### Integrative Learning Seminar (Foundation Year Only)

All Foundation year students enrolled in the Field Practicum must attend an Integrative Learning for Social Work Practice course. It is a two unit course that meets weekly throughout the academic year. It is assigned a Credit or No Credit grade.

### **G. Field Education Roles**

Field education is a collaborative effort to provide a real life social work learning experience to students placed in a designated agency. The collaboration consists of multiple professionals with distinct roles. The roles within field education are as follows:

- Senior Vice Dean of Field Education  
The Senior Vice Dean of Field Education is a University administrator responsible for the innovation, development, and continuity of the programs and policies of Field Education. She has overarching authority over all Field Education activities and functions. She is the direct supervisor of all Assistant Deans, Directors and full-time Faculty. She serves as the final arbiter for issues that cannot be resolved at the Assistant Dean level.
- Assistant Dean of Field Education  
The Assistant Dean of Field Education reports directly to the Senior Vice Dean of Field Education. He/she is responsible for the operational aspects of Field Education activities and the initial arbiter of any issues pertaining to Field Education. One Assistant Dean is assigned to UPC & OCAC, and one Assistant Dean is assigned to the VAC.

- Program Director  
The Program Director reports directly to the Vice Dean of Field Education. He/she is responsible for the operational aspects of the program and the initial arbiter of any issues pertaining to it.
- VAC Regional Field Director  
The Regional Field Directors provide administrative oversight for operational and programmatic initiatives of Field Education in their respective regions. Their responsibilities include providing comprehensive support to VAC students and field faculty, implementing Field procedures and protocol, overseeing student review meetings, and serving as the initial contact for student concerns, field instructor or agency issues. As direct reports to the Senior Vice Dean of Field Education, they will represent Field Education at school events and ceremonies when conflicting demands prevent the Senior Vice Dean and/or Assistant Dean from attendance.
- Regional Field Faculty  
These individuals are field faculty members who are part of the Regional Field Faculty Teams that oversee the successful matriculation of students at their field practicum sites. They report directly to the Senior Vice Dean of Field Education and are expected to teach field courses, including the Virtual Field Practicum, lead faculty and field instructor consultation groups, support liaisons and field instructors in community-based placements, and complete administrative assignments, as needed.
- Field Placement Coordinator  
These individuals are staff members who are part of the Regional Field Placement Teams who oversee the placement of students in their field practicum sites.
- Field Liaison  
This individual is a field faculty member who coordinates, monitors, evaluates, and documents the student's field experience to insure optimal learning and professional development. He/she also provides consultation, assistance and evaluation to the student/intern and Field Instructor. They report directly to the Assistant Dean of Field Education.
- Seminar Instructor/Professor  
This individual is a clinical field faculty member or adjunct who facilitates the Integrative Learning Seminar course for Foundation year students. He/she is also the student's Field Liaison. They report directly to the Assistant Dean of Field Education.
- MSW Student/Intern  
The designation of "intern" is often used to refer to the MSW student when they are placed in an agency and enrolled in the Field Internship while completing courses to earn a Master in Social Work degree.
- Field Instructor  
This individual is a professional social worker and an agency representative assigned to provide weekly supervision and instruction to MSW interns in a placement site. The Field Instructor may work collaboratively with a Preceptor or daily task supervisor in an agency,

but he/she has the primary and overall responsibility for the student's learning, evaluation and linkage with the University.

- External Field Instructor

This individual is contracted to supervise MSW Interns and perform all the tasks of a traditional Field Instructor. The EFI may be hired by the agency or the University. An EFI is utilized when an agency does not traditionally employ MSWs. They are to collaborate with the Preceptor in supervising and evaluating the performance of the MSW Intern.

- Preceptor

An individual affiliated with the agency who is responsible for a piece of the student's learning. He/she is a supplementary instructional figure who may or may not be a social worker by training. However the Preceptor must work closely with the Field Instructor of record.

## H. Field Placement Process

The community-based field placement spans three consecutive semesters, except for Advanced Standing students for whom it spans two semesters. Students who relocate or change placements during those semesters may experience significant delays which could affect their ability to progress through the program with their original cohort. Students are required to inform the Regional Field Placement Team a minimum of 90 days before moving or returning from a Leave of Absence. Students who anticipate an international relocation should consult with the Regional Field Placement Team as soon as they have knowledge of their relocation.

Foundation year students are assigned to a section of 586a (VFP) followed by a placement for three semesters by the Regional Field Placement Team. Assignment is based on a number of factors: the student's learning goals, work and volunteer experience, educational background, and career aspirations. Other factors taken into account are available learning opportunities at each agency, geographic location, region or community, and other special need or circumstance. The placement process takes place while the student is completing the 586a Virtual Field Practicum. Students are notified of their assigned placement via e-mail and must promptly reach out to the agency to schedule a preliminary meeting and to complete any agency-specific Human Resources processing and/or placement orientation prior to the start of the internship.

**Note:** There may be additional costs incurred by the student to meet the HR requirements of the agency. These may include special training, security and health clearances (See Appendix L).

Failure to contact the agency, failure to engage in the agency clearance process, or failure to respond to such requests will delay the placement start and the student's ability to progress in the overall MSW program. The Field Placement Team may initiate a Student Performance Review Plan (SPIP) as needed when MSW students are meeting challenges during the placement matching process or refusing a final placement match. Students who are successfully matched are notified of their assignment to a field placement via e-mail. The start date for field internship varies by cohort; please refer to the Field Calendar of the respective cohort.

The Foundation semester field internship seamlessly transitions into the Concentration year field placement in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semester. The goal is to build on the Foundation year internship experience to help students develop advanced and more focused social work skills in a specific area of practice. In the Concentration year, the academic courses and the field experience are organized around a particular field of practice or method.

### Malpractice Insurance

Each student must pay a required malpractice insurance fee prior to placement in a field agency (included as part of the commitment deposit).

## **I. Field Calendar**

To the fullest extent possible, students are expected to observe the agency attendance and time schedule policies. Field Practicum (586a/b & 686a/b) is a class and students must adhere to the field calendar which identifies the beginning and ending dates of the internship as well as important Field Education activities and events. Each cohort has its own Field Calendar for each semester that students must refer to and adhere to. It is found in the Field Practicum course on the [VAC learning platform](#).

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work schedules specific events that require **MANDATORY ATTENDANCE**. Student attendance and participation is required at the following events:

- Community Immersion
- Field Placement Support Modules
- All School Day (held during the Spring semester each year)
- Any other events mandated by the University President or the Dean of the School (e.g., Homeless Count, etc.)

Students may participate in the following optional activities and receive field hour credits with the permission of their Field Instructors:

- State Legislative Days (if the student's home state participates in this process)
- USC Social Work Job Fair (if located in SoCal)

All [University Holidays](#) are sanctioned time off. If a University holiday falls on one of the student's regularly scheduled days at the agency, the student gets credit for the number of field hours he/she was scheduled to work that day. Students are required to make up any field hours missed due to agency holidays that fall on their scheduled placement day and are not USC university holidays. Students should consult with their Field Instructors/Preceptors to ensure their absence would not adversely affect the agency and/or clients.

Students are allowed eight hours each semester to take time off for religious holidays or illness which must be discussed in advance and arranged with the Field Instructor/Preceptor. This time counts in the Field Practicum hours and the student does not have to make up this time. Make-up hours for additional time missed must also be discussed with and approved by the Field Instructor/Preceptor.

Students should approach their work at the agency as they would a place of employment, discussing any changes in schedule or promptly informing the Field Instructor/Preceptor of illness or absence. One such discussion is the University policy which prohibits students from



working during Study Week. This typically falls on the week after the last day of field placement each semester. Please note that client care and continuity of agency operations must be strongly considered.

Record keeping of required field hours including time spent in placement, optional activities noted above, and make-up hours is a joint responsibility of the student and the Field Instructor. This record is kept on a Field Practicum Log, which is found in the Field Internship course on the [VAC learning platform](#).

Should a problem arise due to conflicting commitments, the issues should be addressed and communicated by the student and the Field Instructor/Preceptor with the student's USC Field Liaison.

#### **J. Transportation**

MSW candidates are responsible for transportation to and from the field placement site (up to 30 miles in one direction).

Students should not transport client(s) in their personal vehicle or company vehicle unless the agency has given the student proper authorization to do so as part of the essential duty of the social work internship. The agency is responsible to provide authorization and orientation for interns to transport clients as well as sufficient information prior to transporting clients at all times. **The University is not responsible for managing any requirements for transportation or driving as part of the Social Work Field Internship and does not maintain insurance for interns driving as part of the essential duties of the social work internship.**

## **II. STUDENT / MSW CANDIDATE: INFORMATION ON STUDENT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN FIELD EDUCATION**

### **A. Introduction**

The MSW student/candidate has a unique challenge of acquiring knowledge and skills in learning the principles of the Social Work profession and Code of Ethics in the classroom and in field placement. Students are required to learn and simultaneously apply the knowledge in their field practicum work. Field Education provides the student this opportunity and helps increase his/her competency as a future Social Work professional. This requires strong commitment, dedication, and active participation from the MSW student/candidate. The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and the agency are both committed in guiding the student through this process.

### **B. Field Placement**

Field Faculty assigns MSW students to a community-based placement for a duration of three semesters. The matching is based on the student's objectives, background, and circumstance.

- Complete and submit the Field Education Contract & Background Clearance form and select a Concentration when submitting Intent to Enroll.

- Notify the Regional Field Placement Team of any special circumstances that may impact the selection of the field placement. Examples include lack of transportation, limited hours of availability for the field practicum, felony convictions, etc. The nature of the special circumstance may impede or significantly reduce placement options available in your community, which could affect the student's ability to complete the program and graduate.

**Note:** *Lack of timely disclosure of special circumstances will not only create significant delays in placement, but may require you to take a Leave of Absence and/or delay your anticipated graduation. This information will not be provided to the agency as part of the field forms; however, students are encouraged to share with the agency during the pre-placement meeting if any special circumstance may impact the student's performance as an intern.*

- Complete the Field Placement Support Modules found on the [VAC learning platform](#).
- Once notified by the Regional Field Placement Team of the assigned placement via e-mail, contact the agency as soon as possible to schedule a pre-placement visit. Declining to interview any placement offered by the Regional Placement Team may require for you to defer your field practicum to a later term and delay your graduation date.
- Students who interview at and are denied placement because of inappropriate behaviors will be referred for additional support to the [Office of Career and Professional Development](#). Students who interview at and are denied placement at three agencies because of inappropriate behaviors will be placed on a Student Performance Improvement Plan and asked to attend a Student Review Meeting. If a fourth agency is being sought for the student, the student should realize that significant delays to the student's progress and graduation from the MSW program should be expected.
- Complete all pre-placement requirements as specified by the agency.

**Note: Students may incur non-refundable costs for additional health/security clearances, specialized training, and/or other human resources processing specifically required by the agency. The School is not responsible for delays caused by a student's lack of prompt attention to these tasks.**

#### Field Education and Employment

- Field placement at current place of employment (POE) is discouraged. The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social adheres to the guidelines and standards of the [Council on Social Work Education](#) (Accreditation Standard 2.2.11 page 13) regarding employment and MSW internship. A formal process and protocol is in place regarding this arrangement. Students must meet with a Field Faculty/Field Liaison for clarification and assistance. Field Faculty and the Assistant Deans will determine the merit of any inquiries and requests.
- CSWE standards require that field education assignments and supervision are completely different and separate from employment assignments and supervision (Accreditation Standard 2.2.11 page 13). This standard will be applied to all POE related requests.
- **Note: Any POE request or placement comes with inherent risks. Students must be aware that any employment related disciplinary actions and/or termination at**

**any point in time at current field placement may also lead to termination of field internship. Hours accrued at the time of termination may not count toward the required hours of the Field Practicum.**

### **C. Student Tasks & Responsibilities**

MSW students are responsible for the following tasks to meet the course objectives for the Field Practicum class:

- Contact and meet with the Field Instructor as soon as you are notified of your placement for a pre-placement meeting, Human Resources processing, and/or agency orientation
- Complete Assignment #3 for the 587a class using the pre-placement meeting (Foundation year students only)
- Participate in the agency orientation at the start of internship. If no orientation information is provided, please inquire
- Learn the different roles, tasks, responsibilities, and scope of practice of the agency
- Be open to feedback and support
- Meet with your Field Instructor for mandatory weekly supervision. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in a No Credit grade in this course
- Discuss field internship issues in the Foundation year seminar class for added feedback and support
- Maintain a diverse caseload
- Seek meaningful opportunities to learn professional, direct and/or macro practice skills
- Maintain regular contact with your Field Liaison throughout the internship and discuss any and all questions/issues as soon as they arise

**Note:** All forms referenced in the section below can be located in the Field Practicum course on the [VAC learning platform](#).

- Complete the **Learning Agreement** with the Field Instructor in the first five weeks of the first semester of community-based placement
  - Use the [digital/online Learning Agreement/Evaluation form](#). Refer to the OLAFE Manual found in the Tool box of your Field Internship course on the [VAC learning platform](#) and follow the delineated steps for the Learning Agreement
- Complete and have your Field Instructor and/or Preceptor review and sign the **Field Practicum Log** weekly (internship and supervision hours and the number of Reflective Learning Tools completed during the week)
- Come prepared and actively participate in field supervision
  - A minimum of 1 hour weekly supervision
  - Depending on the student's needs, weekly supervision could include some group supervision as long as the student has individual supervision at least twice monthly
  - Group supervision may be facilitated by non-social work professionals

- Submit a completed **Reflective Learning Tool** (RLT) weekly (a minimum of 10 per semester) to your Field Instructor. The student is responsible for timely weekly submission to the Field instructor (FI) and making sure the **Field Practicum Log** is signed by the student and the Field Instructor

**Note:** Students have different options in Reflective Learning Tools. The Field Instructor and/or Field Liaison will discuss and determine which type the student will use. Multiple types can be used throughout the academic year

- Submit a signed **Field Practicum Log** each month to your Liaison
  - Continuously review and evaluate your performance
  - Communicate, consult, and problem solve with the Field Instructor, Field Liaison, and/or Preceptor for support, concerns/issues, and as needed
  - Participate in Field Liaison contacts/meetings
    - Contacts/meetings may vary: in person visit, virtual, e-mail or phone
    - Minimum contact is one time a semester
    - The meeting in the first semester must be virtual
    - The meetings in the second and third semesters may vary in format as mentioned above
    - More meetings may be scheduled as needed or as requested by the MSW student, Field Instructor, or Field Liaison
  - Foundation students: complete a macro project by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of their agency placement to meet the requirements for the 587b class
  - Participate in completing the **Field Evaluation** ([digital/online form](#)) with the Field Instructor at the end of each semester of community-based practicum (586b, 686a, and 686b)
    - Use the [digital/online Learning Agreement/Evaluation form](#). Refer to the OLAFE Manual found in the Tool box of your Field Internship course on the [VAC learning platform](#) and follow the delineated steps for the Field Evaluation
  - Complete all additional required evaluations. Consult with the Field Liaison for the appropriate form(s)
  - All paperwork must be completed and turned in before a grade is given for each semester
- Note:** Students cannot sign any agency “contracts” nor enter any agreements that refute or negate the provisions in the official agency/organization MOA with the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. This includes important polices regarding placement hours and educational calendar events such as finals week or All School Day
- Alert the Field Liaison as soon as possible if there are any difficulties or challenges faced by the MSW student. Issues that mandate Field Liaison notification include but are not limited to the following:
    - Delays in the submission of the Reflective Learning Tools
    - Issues or difficulty in progressing in the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#)
    - Any violation of the [NASW Code of Ethics](#)
    - Excessive absences or non-approved schedule changes

- Non-compliance with agency policies and procedures
- Documentation issues and delays

**Note:** The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work is committed to providing all possible help and support to students and early intervention is essential (See Section F below for further details.)

#### **D. Supervision**

MSW candidates are expected to integrate the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom with their field practicum experience. The student gradually develops his/her identity as a Social Worker and learns the core competencies, values, and ethics of the profession. This is an individualized process and develops over a period of time. This growth is significantly facilitated by the Field Instructor through the process of supervision. The following are some guidelines to help students take full advantage of the field practicum experience and supervision:

- Follow the school guidelines for placement
- Be on time for placement, field instruction, and field seminars
- Behave and dress in a professional manner
- Abide by the [NASW Code of Ethics](#). Note that any violation of these standards may lead to dismissal from the MSW program
- Learn and work to achieve the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) (grades are based on achieving these competencies)
- Maintain agency standards and practice guidelines
- Come prepared to supervision and complete all assignments on time
- Be open to constructive feedback and make the effort to try or implement the feedback
- Be pro-active in your role as a learner, articulate learning needs, and seek to meet them
- Complete and submit Reflective Learning Tool assignments on time to your Field Instructor (1 RLT per week for a total of 10 RLTs per semester)
- Share concerns/issues/questions promptly with your Field Instructor and/or Field Liaison
- Be self-aware; take time to reflect upon and process feelings, thoughts, actions, and reactions

**Note:** Students should approach their work at the agency as they would a place of employment, including discussing any changes and issues promptly and informing the Field Instructor and/or Preceptor of illness or absence.

#### **E. Safety and Risk Management**

It is the student's responsibility to review, understand, and comply with all the policies and protocols included in [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), ["Current Student Website"](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Policies and Procedures](#) and [VAC Field Education Manual](#). In addition, it is also the student's responsibility to learn and adhere to the field placement agency/organization policies and protocols.

## F. Challenges and Support

The MSW student/candidate is expected to be an active learner in Field Education and accept the guidance, support, and the evaluation of the Field Instructor. When there is a mismatch between the student's needs and the available learning opportunities and supports, challenges and issues may occur. Students are encouraged to follow these protocols to resolve any concern for immediate resolution to avoid delays in Field Practicum:

- Articulate the problem. Discuss and resolve issues directly with the Field Instructor if appropriate
- Involve and communicate the issue with the Field Liaison as early as possible in the process
- If the issue persists, request the involvement of the Field Liaison for mediation/resolution

The MSW student/candidate must always be cognizant that Field Education/Internship is a class (SOWK 586 a/b & 686 a/b). Students must meet the standards for satisfactory academic progress and performance in order to pass or move forward in the program. Students who abandon class (SOWK 586 a/b & 686 a/b) or fail to report regularly to a field placement site do so at the risk of a grade of "No Credit" thus placing themselves in academic jeopardy, possible loss of federal financial aid, and/or risk of dismissal from the MSW program.

**Note:** It is the philosophy of the school to exert all efforts to resolve issues and try to prevent a re-placement. It is disruptive to the student's academic programming and to the agency.

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work adheres to all University policies and protocols in regards to registration, withdrawal, attendance, grading, grades of in-progress or incomplete, grade appeal, leave of absence, academic probation, equity & diversity, FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) and ADA Accommodations for Students with Disabilities). It also adheres to the University policies and protocols in developing student support plans.

The MSW student/candidate must involve the Field Liaison immediately regarding any problems related to Field Education. This is especially true of any USC policy violation (i.e. Equity & Diversity issues) and ADA accommodations. Review [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), ["Current Student Website"](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Policies and Procedures](#) and the [VAC Field Education Manual](#) for complete information.

**Note:** American Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations are provided when an official letter of accommodation from the [USC Disability and Services Program](#) office is presented by the student to each course instructor of record. The USC Disability and Services Program will assess, identify, and specify any Field Internship related accommodation(s) needed. The accommodation is not retroactive. It is valid the day the MSW student submits the letter to each Faculty member.

## G. Professional Expectations

All students are expected to adhere to and follow all ethical, legal, and policy standards and mandates of the Social Work profession and the University. Any form of violation to the Social Work profession guidelines may lead to a dismissal from the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work program. It is the student's responsibility to learn and adhere to [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), [Disruptive and Threatening Student Behavior Guidelines](#), ["Violence-](#)

[Free Campus](#)”, [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Policies and Procedures](#) and the [VAC Field Education Manual](#).

## H. Threats Policy

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work adheres to the University’s [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), [Disruptive and Threatening Student Behavior Guidelines](#), [“Violence-Free Campus”](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Policies and Procedures](#) and the [VAC Field Education Manual](#) policies to ensure the safety of students, faculty, staff, and guests. It is the student’s responsibility to review, understand and comply with all of USC’s policies and protocols ([SCampus](#); [USC Policies](#); [Disruptive and Threatening Student Behavior Guidelines](#); [“Violence-Free Campus”](#); [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Policies and Procedures](#); [VAC Field Education Manual](#)).

## I. Social Media Use

The information shared on social media does not represent and cannot substitute for the information or guidance provided by faculty, staff or official program documents and communications, regarding Field Education. Official documents, policies, protocols and communications may be retrieved from [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), [Disruptive and Threatening Student Behavior Guidelines](#), [“Violence-Free Campus”](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Policies and Procedures](#), [VAC Field Education Manual](#), course syllabi and written and verbal communications from Field Education Faculty and Administration. Any Field Education related issues, disputes, complaints or requests should be redirected to the student’s Field Liaison or to the Assistant Deans of Field Education.

Students should use extreme caution when participating in social media forums. Be mindful of any references to the field agency and client related information or interactions. Students are expected to adhere to all legal and ethical responsibilities of the Social Work profession. Keep in mind the public nature of any social media forums despite all security and privacy settings. The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work has provided a social media guideline for students to use ([USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Policies and Procedures-Social Media Section](#)). The MSW student assumes responsibility for any social media output that is not pre-approved by the current field placement site and/or the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work.

While enrolled in the MSW program at USC, students are expected to adhere to the provisions of [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), [USC Disruptive and Threatening Student Behavior Guidelines](#), [“Violence-Free Campus](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Policies and Procedures](#), [VAC Field Education Manual](#), [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and the guiding principle of “Do No Harm” in relation to the well-being of fellow students, agency personnel, clients and the communities in which they work and serve in internships. As in any situation, the placement agency has the right to dismiss a student for unprofessional and unethical behaviors, which will prompt an academic review process in the form of a Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP).

### III. FIELD INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

#### A. Introduction

Field Instructors play a crucial role in the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Field Education experience. They provide the students the opportunity to merge previous life and work knowledge with the development of new professional competence. Field Instructors must follow the learning objectives that are specific to the Foundation and Concentration year curricula. The overarching objective of Field Instructors throughout both years and across all concentrations is to prepare students to enter the Social Work profession.

Field Instructors are engaged in three basic Field Education components. *First*, they must orient the students to the professional system of the agency, including but not limited to the purpose of the agency, the community it serves, its policies and protocols (particularly risk management and safety), and expectations for professional dress and comportment. The agency/organization orientation and the Field Internship should be geared towards introducing and familiarizing the MSW student to the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#).

The *second* crucial component is the development of the teacher-learner relationship between the MSW student and the Field Instructor. This starts at the first contact wherein the Field Instructor clarifies and establishes roles, expectations, and the framework for the relationship.

The last and *third* component is the development of broad and rich case assignments and field experiences. The MSW student is expected to engage in a wide variety of Social Work activities from the beginning to the end of field placement. Field Instructors are responsible in providing direct practice experiences consisting of but not limited to the following:

- Multi-level practice work: individual, group, and systemic interventions
- Multiple treatment modalities
- Assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, and intervention
- Multi-cultural population
- Advocacy, resource referral, community needs assessment, evaluation, and documentation
- Termination
- Macro skill development such as advocacy, evaluation, fundraising and development, grant writing, program development, and others as indicated in the specific concentration.

Field Internship is a time-bound experience, and the Field Instructor carries the responsibility for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the student's educational experience based on the student's progress in meeting the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#).

#### B. Field Instructor Qualifications

MSW Interns are supervised by Field Instructors designated by the agency and the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. These Field Instructors are committed to teaching and upholding the values and ethics which have been developed over the long history of the Social Work profession. The Field Instructor must be identified and complete the application process at the same time an agency site is approved. New or replacement Field



Instructors may complete the application process at any time. Field Instructors must have the following to qualify:

- An MSW degree from an accredited school of social work
- At least two years of post-master's social work experience
- A plan to attend a 12-15 hour long training for new Field Instructors at USC. The VAC offers an on-line course with synchronous and asynchronous sessions
- A completion certificate for new Field Instruction class from USC or any CSWE accredited School of Social Work

In addition, Field Instructors must meet the criteria required to teach and support MSW interns in field placement. They must also be committed to meet all documentation, supervision, and evaluation requirements of the program, particularly the ability to assess student progress based on the most current [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) identified in the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS).

### C. Field Instructor Tasks & Responsibilities

Field Instructors are responsible for the following tasks to meet the Field Practicum course objectives:

- Meet student(s) prior to the start of the internship for a pre-placement meeting
- Facilitate and assist students with any Human Resources process and/or requirements
- Provide an agency orientation at the start of internship
- Clearly define the student's role, tasks, responsibilities and scope of practice
- Provide training, consistent communication, feedback and support to students
- Assign and maintain a diverse caseload/workload
- Provide meaningful opportunities to learn professional, direct, and/or macro practice skills related to the student's year of study, Concentration, and/or sub-concentration.

Field Internship is a time-bound experience, and the field instructor carries the responsibility for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the MSW student's educational experience based on the student's progress in meeting the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#).

**Note:** All forms referenced in the section below can be located in the Field Practicum course on the [VAC learning platform](#).

- Complete the **Learning Agreement** with the MSW student in the first five weeks of the first semester of community-based placement
  - Use the [digital/online Learning Agreement/Evaluation form](#). Refer to the OLAFE Manual and follow the delineated steps for the Learning Agreement
- Identify and assign a Preceptor as needed (include Preceptor feedback in the Learning Agreement/Evaluation)
- Provide Field Instruction
  - A minimum of **1-hour** individual/group weekly supervision
  - Depending on the student's needs, weekly supervision could include some group supervision as long as the student has individual supervision at least twice monthly
  - Group supervision may be facilitated by non-social work professionals

- Review and sign the **Field Practicum Log** weekly (internship and supervision hours and the number of Reflective Learning Tools completed during the week)
- Review and discuss the **Reflective Learning Tool** weekly (a minimum of 10 per semester). The Field Instructor (FI) must verify the **Field Practicum Log** weekly each semester. **Alert the Field Liaison if the student has missed submitting 2 or more RLTs.**

**Note:** Students have different options in Reflective Learning Tools. The Field Instructor and/or Field Liaison will discuss and determine which type the student will use. Multiple types can be used throughout the academic year.

- Continuously monitor and evaluate the student's performance
- Communicate, consult, and problem solve with the Field Liaison for support, challenges, and as needed
- Maintain regular contact with the Field Liaison throughout the internship to discuss any and all questions/issues as soon as they arise
- Participate in Field Liaison contacts/meetings
  - Contacts/meetings may vary: in person visit, virtual, e-mail or phone
  - Minimum contact is one time a semester
  - The meeting in the first semester must be in person or virtual
  - The meetings in the second and third may vary in format as mentioned above
  - More meetings may be scheduled as needed or as requested by the MSW student, Field Instructor, or Field Liaison
- Provide opportunity for and support of a macro project (Foundation Year Students)
- Complete the **Field Evaluation** ([digital/online form](#)) with the student at the end of each semester of the 586b and 686a/b courses:
  - Use the [digital/online Learning Agreement/Evaluation form](#). Refer to the OLAFE Manual and follow the delineated steps for the Field Evaluation
- Provide a grade recommendation on the **Field Evaluation** ([digital/online form](#)):
  - Recommend a grade of "Credit", "No Credit", or "In-Progress"
  - Please note that an "In-Progress" grade may negatively affect the student's progress and/or cause a delay in graduation. Notify the Field Liaison as soon as possible if the student appears to be at-risk of failing to complete any of the requirements for Field Internship to develop a Student Performance Improvement Plan – SPIP (see *Evaluation/Grading* on page 11)
  - A "No Credit" recommendation should always be made in consultation with the Field Liaison (as early as possible in the semester), documented, and accompanied by a SPIP (copies will be retained by the student, Field Instructor, Field Liaison, and Office of Student Affairs)
  - The Field Liaison will approve and assign the final grade

**Note:** Students cannot sign any agency "contracts" nor enter any agreements that refute or negate the provisions in the official agency/organization MOU with the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. This includes important policies regarding placement hours and educational calendar events such as finals week or All School Day.

- Complete any additionally required Concentration year evaluation. Please consult with the Field Liaison for the appropriate form(s)
- Facilitate the scheduled and/or unscheduled termination from the agency
- Alert the Field Liaison as soon as possible if there are any difficulties or challenges faced by the student. Issues that mandate Field Liaison notification include but are not limited to the following:
  - Delays in the submission of the Reflective Learning Tools
  - Issues or difficulty in progressing in the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#)
  - Any violation of the [NASW Code of Ethics](#)
  - Excessive absences or non-approved schedule changes
  - Non-compliance with agency policies and procedures
  - Documentation issues and delays

**Note:** The USC School of Social work is committed to providing all possible help and support to students and early intervention is essential (Please see Section E below for further details).

#### **D. Field Instruction**

Field instruction takes many forms and methodologies. It ranges from the didactic method to experiential. It also varies in structure and technique. It is influenced by multiple factors such as the agency's focus, resources available, and the skills, interest, and the personality of both the instructor and the student. Although field instruction is a highly individualized process, the required components mentioned in the previous section are essential and non-negotiable.

The following are some general Field Instructor guidelines for teaching and supervising MSW students and are meant to help establish a supportive learning and working environment:

- Adhere to regularly scheduled field instruction conferences with your student.
- Create a supportive environment and a positive teaching relationship taking into account your teaching style and the student's learning style.
- Be aware that you are the role model for client and peer relationships and interactions.
- Acknowledge authority-dependency conflicts and use as teaching opportunities.
- Establish your role as both supervisor and teacher early in the relationship.
- Make assignments meaningful and utilize the Reflective Learning Tool early in the relationship.
- Focus on the process and not just the content.
- Balance performance monitoring with positive supportive feedback and genuine praise. Feedback needs to be relevant, clear, balanced, and timely. Encourage the student to reciprocate.
- Use case and project analysis in helping students examine their work, meet their learning objectives, process their reactions, and foster self-awareness.
- Assist the student to identify feelings, attitudes, biases, and reactions that affect their work.
- Discuss with the Field Liaison if personal therapy seems indicated.
- Introduce the use of audio taped, video recordings, and/or role-playing as a way to enrich the student's learning.
- Guide students in navigating the Developmental Stages of Internship based on the work of Sweitzer & King, 2004 (see Appendix E).

## E. Challenges and Support

Field Education is inherently filled with positive and negative experiences and challenges. It is the job of the Field Instructor to create a stable learning environment in order to address these experiences and challenges as learning opportunities and to facilitate the student's educational progress. It is the responsibility of the Field Liaison as the University representative to provide support and guidance in order for the Field Instructor and the student to succeed in this endeavor. As part of the process, Field Instructors are asked to balance opposing and/or complimentary forces such as the following in order to foster learning:

- Challenge vs. Support
- Autonomy vs. Dependence
- Learning Objectives vs. Agency Objectives
- Authority vs. Mutuality
- Education vs. Training

In most instances, a balanced approach is enough to prevent any major problems in the field experience. Sometimes it is not sufficient and challenges in the learning process may occur. Some examples are:

- Persistent unprofessional and/or unethical conduct including disruptive behavior
- Conflicts in teaching and learning styles
- Not meeting agency and field requirements (charting, documentation, inconsistent or insufficient hours, etc.)
- Insufficient skill or inability to meet learning objectives

When this arises, Field Instructors are required to provide an early warning to students of the areas that need improvement, based on the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#):

- Identify and attempt to discuss and resolve the issue(s) directly with the student
- Document the issue and efforts to resolve it
- Notify and consult the assigned Field Liaison of the issue as soon as possible  
*If you are not certain who the Field Liaison is, you may email [vacfield@usc.edu](mailto:vacfield@usc.edu) to identify the student's Field Liaison*
- Invite the Field Liaison to mediate if unable to resolve it
- If it persists, collaborate with the Field Liaison in formulating a Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) to identify the issue(s) and step(s) to redress the situation
- If the issue persists, the Field Liaison may remove/re-place the student. If replacement is indicated, you will be asked to complete an evaluation of the student's progress based on the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) as of the date of the student's departure from the agency

It is the philosophy of the school to make all efforts to prevent a re-placement. It is disruptive to the agency and to the learning process of the student.

## F. Safety and Risk Management

The school recognizes that students cannot be insulated from the risks in providing services to people, institutions, and communities in crisis. Students frequently lack the experience and skills to assess risk and take appropriate precautions. Basic safety measures are thoroughly discussed in the seminar class to help prevent any problems but it is still not enough. Field Instructors must also review agency safety and risk management policies and protocols with

students. Completion of this orientation must be indicated in the Orientation Checklist portion of the Learning Agreement in the first semester of community-based placement. It should include but not be limited to the following:

- Building/office security policy
- Fire, earthquake, and other emergency protocols
- Transportation policies and insurance requirements
- Equity and diversity issues
- Home / school / community visit safety policy and protocols
- Crisis intervention and disaster protocols
- Emergency and support contacts
- Federal, state, local, and agency/organization specific safety and risk management policies and protocols (i.e. weapon related policies and others)

Periodic review of these safety measures is strongly recommended. **Field Instructors are required to contact the University Field Liaison to inform of any policy, safety or human resources incidents, concerns and/or violations.**

All MSW students are required to learn and understand all Social Work profession expectations and all University and agency policies and protocols. Field Instructors are encouraged to do the same ([NASW Code of Ethics](#); [CSWE Educational Policy and Accreditation](#); [SCampus](#); [USC Policies](#); [Disruptive and Threatening Student Behavior Guidelines](#); ["Violence-Free Campus"](#); [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Policies and Procedures](#); [VAC Field Education Manual](#)) to be able to guide and support MSW students in their new role as Social Work Interns.

#### **G. Strike Policy**

Field Education's policy regarding agency strikes/work actions is based on the principles of educational integrity. It focuses on how educational expectations, goals and objectives can be met and maintained. The primary consideration is the student's educational experience rather than the merits of any given strike or work action. It is the School's belief that a strike bound agency is not able to provide a climate conducive to a sound educational experience. Field Education will make the assessment and decide on a course of action depending on the situation. The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work encourages the Field Liaison and Field Instructor to organize opportunities for students to learn from all parties and engage discussions regarding the issues at hand. See *Appendix I* for possible courses of action.

### **IV. FAILURE TO MAKE SATISFACTORY PROGRESS IN FIELD EDUCATION – ACADEMIC WARNINGS**

All USC students are entitled to fair warning and non-arbitrary dismissal procedures. The University of Southern California Catalogue describes these procedures in the section ["Academic Warning and Dismissal" of Graduate Students](#). This section of the Field Manual provides specific policies and protocols for Academic Warning and Dismissal of Graduate Students as they relate to the Field Practicum.

**A. Level I: The First Academic Warning – Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) – Field Education Student Review Meeting with the Field Instructor and as needed with the Regional Field Faculty Member**

Students who fail to make satisfactory progress in the Field Practicum will be so informed by the Field Instructor and Faculty Field Liaison. Satisfactory progress is measured by the student's timely completion of the required number of hours and assignments in placement each semester (450 hours in 586a/b and 550-600 hours 686a/b), as well as developing and building proficiency in the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#).

A **Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP)** is considered the first written academic warning and is required as early as possible in the first semester as well as all the subsequent semesters if a student shows signs of:

- Failure to complete the required number of hours in placement and/or
- Failure to submit Reflective Learning Tools in a timely fashion and/or
- Failure to develop proficiency in any of the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) and/or
- Failure to adhere to the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and/or
- Failure to meet any other professional expectations as identified by the Field Instructor and/or Field Liaison.

The Field Liaison will contact the student and will schedule a Field Education Review Meeting with the student and Field Instructor. The Regional Field Faculty member may also be invited as needed. During the meeting, the Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) will be reviewed and finalized by the Field Liaison. The intent is to identify the specific areas in which the student must improve to successfully complete the program. The document should include the following information:

- Specific actions, behaviors, or events that would constitute unsatisfactory progress, such as but not limited to the following:
  - Failure to complete number of required Field hours within the semester
  - Excessive absences from the placement agency
  - Failure to meet with Field Instructor and/or Preceptor on a weekly basis
  - Failure to comply with agency policy and procedure
  - Failure to respond to requests made by Field Liaison, Advisor and Regional Director
  - Failure to present oneself in a professional manner when interacting with clients, peers, faculty and agency personnel
  - Failure to complete the weekly Reflective Learning Tools
  - Excessive self-disclosure of personal information which has a deleterious effect on clients
  - Abandonment of Field Placement
  - Students are not allowed to make any changes in their Field Internship placement without the approval of a USC Field Faculty. Students may not render a "resignation" or abandon their placement
  - Refusal to work with any Field Education Administration and Faculty including Field Liaisons and External Field Instructors. Consequences of failing to respond to any communication attempts (phone, e-mail, and/or letter) include the risk of dismissal from the program.
  - Refusal to work with the assigned Field Instructor

- Specific actions, behaviors or events that would constitute satisfactory academic progress, such as but not limited to the following:
  - Submit a completion plan with a specific timetable and deadlines
  - Submit all missing RLTs by a specific date and submit all future RLTs on a weekly basis as required
  - Desist from self-disclosure during individual and/or group therapy
- Specific dates within which these actions, behaviors or events must take place
- Consequences of failing to meet deadlines, including risk of dismissal from the program
- Space for the student to sign and date the letter as an indication of receipt and understanding

**Note:** Some actions, behaviors, and/or events may require a higher level of academic action. The Field Liaison and the Regional Field Faculty member will make this determination.

**B. Level II: The Second Academic Warning – Failure to Improve – Field Education Student Review Meeting with the Regional Director and Field Liaison**

If the student does not meet the deadlines and expectations set forth in the Student Performance Improvement Plan, an Academic Review Meeting will be conducted with the Regional Director and Field Liaison, and as needed the Assistant Dean of Field Education, a representative from Student Life, a representative from Student Services, and the Student Support Advisor. A written summary letter of the meeting will be provided to the student. The letter is the second level of written warning that the student is at serious risk of dismissal from the MSW program.

**C. Level III: Dismissal and Appeal Procedure**

A student who continues to fail the Field Education courses, fails to meet the Core Competencies, and/or who engages in unethical/illegal behavior will be dismissed from the MSW program. The Assistant Dean in collaboration with the Senior Vice Dean of Field Education will make the final determination for dismissal if and when a student continues to fail to meet the expectations of the MSW program despite Level I and Level II early interventions and academic warnings.

The student will receive a formal letter of dismissal from the Office of the Senior Vice Dean of Field Education. Students who wish to appeal the dismissal must contact the Office of Student Services by the specific date indicated in the formal letter. The student must engage in a formal appeals process as outlined in the [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Policies & Procedure](#):

***“...In compliance with the academic policies outlined in [SCampus](#) under University Governance and Academic Policies, the school has two levels of appeal for disputed evaluation after the instructor: 1) dean and 2) Office of the Provost. In the school, appeals to the dean will be handled by the MSW Chair.***

***...Students wishing to appeal to the MSW Chair must submit to the director of student services a detailed narrative explaining the reason(s) for the appeal. The student should also outline the outcome/resolution that he or she is seeking. A written decision will be***

*sent to the student after the MSW Chair. Normally the decision should be sent to the student within approximately 15 days after the review. This time may be extended if necessary. The student should be informed in writing if the decision will be delayed.*

**Student Appeal to the Graduate School SCampus specifies the student may appeal to the Office of the Provost. That appeal should be sent to the associate dean for graduate academic affairs in the Graduate School.”**

**Note:** Students are responsible to review, understand and comply with the policies and protocols contained in the [SCampus](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Policies & Procedure](#), and [VAC Field Education Manual](#).

#### **D. Students Terminated or Dismissed from the Placement Agency or Organization**

Placement agencies have the right to terminate or dismiss students at any time due to behaviors which the Field Instructor, agency director and/or administrator deem inappropriate or unethical. These are infrequent but problematic occurrences which represent a serious setback to and a disruption of the student’s academic progress and the student’s ability to successfully complete the MSW degree. Once terminated or dismissed, the student loses all hours accumulated for that semester. A Student Performance Improvement Plan will automatically be generated and a review meeting will be convened.

Based on the deliberations of the Field Liaison, Advisor, and Field Education administrators, the student may be allowed a second placement. However, no hours from the previous placement will be “rolled over” into the second placement or credited to the student.

Should the student be asked to leave the second placement, no further placements will be assigned. The student will receive a written notice of a “No Credit” grade for the Applied Learning in Field Education class and the student will be considered for dismissal from the MSW program.

Meeting the requirements for overall grade point average is not sufficient to successfully complete the requirements of the MSW program. If a student maintains a high grade point average but fails to adhere to the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and to achieve proficiency in the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#), then the student by definition is at high risk for dismissal.

#### **E. Grounds for Dismissal from the MSW Program – Based on NASW Code of Ethics and State Behavioral Health Licensure Standards**

The Social Work profession is solidly grounded in the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) which defines the professional standard of behavior that practitioners and graduate students must maintain in their work with and behavior toward clients and peers. State behavioral health and professions laws further define behaviors considered so egregious that licensure of a practitioner is denied or revoked.

Consequently, immediate dismissal from the MSW program is based upon these two professional benchmarks: Ethical principles as elucidated in the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and state behavioral health licensure standards. Grounds for immediate dismissal from the MSW program therefore include but are not limited to the following:



- Sexual and/or other inappropriate relationship with clients including interactions within the agency and outside the agency involving exchange of money, co-habitation, or harassment
- Fraudulent documentation of patient contact, particularly false documentation which may trigger government or private insurance payments and reimbursement for services that were not provided
- Behavior which demonstrates callous disregard of the health, safety or wellbeing of clients, peers or agency staff
- Actions which breach patient/client confidentiality including unauthorized access to patient records or misuse and unethical reporting of confidential information to others, thereby violating patient/client rights to privacy
- Falsification of student field hours or any misrepresentation of student participation in the Field Practicum or required Field Practicum activities or assignments
- Falsification of client or agency records or any documentation and in particular fraudulent billing
- Student behaviors which cause agency disruptions and create a hostile work environment
- Class abandonment – leaving the field placement without notification to or approval from all of the following individuals: the Field Instructor, the Agency Director, the USC Field Liaison and the Assistant Dean for Field Education. In the Field Practicum, class abandonment is made more egregious and deemed unethical because agency clients, who may be fragile and are seeking help, are abandoned by the student's abrupt departure

**Note:** It is the responsibility of the student to read and understand the criteria by which academic progress is defined in the course syllabi, the information provided by [USC Student Affairs](#), and the information provided in the [VAC Field Education Manual](#).

## V. APPENDIX

### A. **MSW@USC Field Education Website**

<https://msw.usc.edu/academic/field-experience/overview/>

### B. **MSW@USC Field Education Forms**

<https://msw.usc.edu/academic/field-experience/field-forms/>

Additional Field Education forms can be located in the appropriate Field Practicum course on the [VAC learning platform](#).

### C. **Curriculum Snapshot**

Please contact your Student Support Advisor or VAC Student Services ([vacssvcs@usc.edu](mailto:vacssvcs@usc.edu)).

### D. **Current Student Website: Class Schedule, OASIS, Student Handbook, etc.**

<http://sowkweb.usc.edu/student-resources/current-students>

### E. **Developmental Stages of Internship based on the work of Sweitzer & King (2004)**

1. Anticipation
  - Characterized by having mixed feelings of excitement, fear, doubts, and anxiety.
  - Tasks: provide orientation, clear expectation, and help the student adjust
2. Disillusionment and Confrontation
  - Characterized by the conflict between the student's unrealistic expectation vs. the reality of the work
  - Task: be available, guide and support in reaching a compromise between expectation and reality
3. Competence
  - Characterized by the increase in sense of confidence, proficiency, and a better understanding of the link between theory and practice
  - Tasks: encourage more sophisticated discussion of value dilemmas, support independence and initiatives, and promote self-care
4. Culmination
  - Characterized by re-appearance of self doubt, sadness, relief, withdrawal, and/or detachment
  - Tasks: Model termination, encourage to start early, encourage students to open up and be vulnerable in supervision to process termination appropriately

### F. **Foundation Year Objectives and Outline**

1. Socialize to the role of social work in the agency setting, including the professional role with clients, agency staff and other professionals;
2. Demonstrate professional competence and identity, including understanding, accepting and applying professional ethics, values, dress, and behavior;
3. Demonstrate an active and self-evaluative learning role;

4. Develop and sustain relationships and communication with clients;
5. Obtain, organize and communicate accurate information;
6. Begin to apply theory to practice and to engage in orderly thinking, utilizing at least one theoretical framework;
7. Demonstrate assessment skills understanding and conducting a bio-psycho-social history;
8. Demonstrate treatment planning skills based on information, assessment, and resources;
9. Demonstrate a variety of interventions utilizing basic interviewing skills (such as clarifying, interpreting, problem solving, resource linkage, advocacy, etc.);
10. Perform accurate and concise case presentations from a theoretical perspective;
11. Demonstrate and understand professional use of self;
12. Demonstrate knowledge of field placement agency and utilization of community resources;
13. Begin to develop leadership skills in identifying problems/issues and suggest appropriate strategies for change in both practice and policy arenas.

**G. Concentration Year Objectives and Outlines**

Please contact your Student Support Advisor or VAC Student Services ([vacssvcs@usc.edu](mailto:vacssvcs@usc.edu)).

**H. NASW Code of Ethics**

<https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>

**I. Strike Policy Course of Action**

If an agency is in a bona fide strike situation prior to the beginning of the field work placement period, no students will be placed for field work in that agency for that academic year. If the agency reaches resolution of the strike situation at some point during the academic year, the agency may be used for a mid-year placement depending on re-assessment of the agency and its ability to meet the learning and educational expectations of the department. This assessment will be completed by one of the field faculty.

If a strike or work action situation occurs in an agency where students are in placement during the course of the academic year. These options may be considered:

1. The student may request not to remain in the placement agency during the period of the strike or work action. The student will be supported in this decision by the department, and will not suffer any academic consequences. The field hours missed during the strike period will need to be made up by the student during the regular semester, break periods, and/or in an extended placement through May/June of the academic year. A plan for missed hours make up will be developed by the student's field faculty liaison in consultation with the Senior Associate Dean for Field Education, the student and the field instructor.
2. The student may request to remain in the placement setting during the period of strike or work action. This option will be available only when the Department can be sure that the educational integrity of the field work placement can be

maintained. This means that the supervisory requirements, caseload requirements and other expectations of field work can be consistently met by the agency during the strike or work action period and that there is no danger to the student. Students wishing to remain in the agency must discuss this plan with the Field Faculty Liaison who will verify the agency's ability to provide appropriate supervision and educational experiences. The student will be supported in this decision, and will not suffer any academic consequences.

If a strike or work action continues beyond a three week period, a reassessment of the ability of the agency to provide the appropriate supervision and educational experiences will be made by the Field Faculty Liaison. If the agency is found not able to meet the educational requirements of the field department, the student may be relocated to another agency site until the strike or work action have been resolved, and/or until the agency is able to provide the appropriate educational activities; or the student may be replaced.

It is expected that field seminars will devote some time and attention to issues around strikes, work actions, and the subsequent professional dilemmas surrounding these situations in order to assist the student in developing a clear understanding of the relevant issues in regard to the strike, and an understanding of the implications of the strike for the student's field education experience. Issues around responsibility to clients during strike situations may be discussed in field seminars or in special Field Liaison meetings with students.

#### **J. Malpractice Insurance**

Each student must pay a required malpractice insurance fee prior to placement in a field agency (included as part of the commitment deposit). Once the fee is paid, the student will be enrolled in and covered by the School's malpractice liability insurance policy. Agencies needing a copy of the Malpractice Certificate should contact the appropriate Regional Field Placement Team.

#### **K. Transportation**

MSW candidates are responsible for transportation to and from the field placement site (up to 30 miles in one direction).

Students should not transport client(s) in their personal vehicle or company vehicle unless the agency has given the student proper authorization to do so as part of the essential duty of the social work internship. The agency is responsible in providing authorization and orientation for interns to transport clients as well as sufficient information on insurance coverage. Student(s) must always consult with the Field Instructor regarding authorization, insurance coverage and necessary clearance needed prior to transporting clients at all times. The University is not responsible for managing any requirements for transportation or driving as part of the Social Work Field Internship and does not maintain insurance for interns driving as part of the essential duties of the social work internship.

## L. Notice of Possible Background Checks, Drugs Testing and/or Finger Printing

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work does not require background checks, drug testing or finger printing for admission into the social work program. However, there is a national trend that an increasing number of facilities require social work students to provide, or submit to, a security clearance, background check and/or other additional information in order to participate in internships at their sites. The successful completion of internships is a prerequisite for earning a social work degree from USC.

The following are the areas of inquiry typically covered in a background check, although some clinical sites may require a more comprehensive background check:

- A sex offender database search;
- A seven-year review of a student's criminal court history, including arrest records and records of misdemeanor and felony convictions;
- Address verification;
- Two name verifications (e.g., current legal name and one other name [AKA]);
- Three county check of records;
- Search of the Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General database of excluded persons;
- Social Security number verification; and
- Division of Motor Vehicle record or abstract.

Students are solely responsible for obtaining the documentation needed to satisfy the background check and additional testing requirements of a clinical site. Occasionally an agency may subsidize the fees required to obtain background checks and any additional tests; however, the cost is usually the sole responsibility of the student.

Refusal to satisfy the background check and additional testing requirements for clinical placement, or failure to pass these checks and tests, may severely limit placement options and may cause a delay in advancing in the MSW program or prevent graduation due to the student's inability to complete Field Practicum requirements. In such an event, while USC will attempt to place the student at an alternative agency, USC cannot guarantee the availability of placement sites or the student's acceptance into those sites. In such cases, the student may not be able to earn the degree he or she is seeking at USC.

The results of the background checks and any additional testing should be reported directly to the agency site. USC does not require a copy of the results, but may request confirmation from the student or agency that all requirements for placement have been satisfied.

USC, and its trustees, agents and employees, are not responsible for any claims and liabilities arising out of or in any way related to the background check or additional testing requests or disclosures made to the internship sites.

It is required for students to apprise the Field Placement Team of any special circumstances that may impact the selection of the field placement, such as arrests or

convictions, including a record which they believe has been expunged. The nature of the special circumstance may impede or significantly reduce placement options available which could affect the student's ability to complete the program and graduate. The Field Faculty member of the Regional Field Placement Team will discuss potential placement options which may be available depending upon the unique circumstances of each situation.