

## **A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE UNIVERSITY**

Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) is a fully accredited public university serving 11,000 graduate and undergraduate commuter students in the greater metropolitan area of Chicago. Students come from a variety of cultures and backgrounds and NEIU boasts the most culturally diverse campus in the State of Illinois. The 67-acre main campus (5500 N. St. Louis Avenue, Chicago 60625) consists of 18 modern buildings of more than 1,000,000 square feet. Satellite campuses El Centro de Recursos Educativos (3119 N. Pulaski Road, Chicago 60641) and The Center for Inner City Studies (CICS) (700 E. Oakwood, Chicago 60653) enhance the University's ability to serve the entire metropolitan area and its diverse student needs. In addition to offering traditional programs in the arts, sciences, business and education, NEIU has a strong commitment to innovative, non-traditional education and has been a leader in the development of special programs for adult learners.

NEIU is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, 30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400, Chicago, IL 60602, (312) 263-0456 or (800) 621-7440. NEIU employs approximately 346 full-time and 229 part-time faculty who are committed to excellence in teaching. Their varied academic backgrounds and professional accomplishments provide students with many learning opportunities.

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY AND SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM**

Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) traces its origin to the beginnings of teacher training in Illinois. Founded in September 1867 in Blue Island, Cook County Normal School became the first teacher training school. In 1938, it became Chicago Teachers College and two years later, it accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The present site at 5500 North St. Louis Avenue was opened in 1961 with a student enrollment of 1348 and by 1971 with an enrollment near 7000 students, the college officially became Northeastern Illinois University.

Housed in the College of Arts and Sciences, the Social Work Program was accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in Fall 1988 and is currently reaccredited through 2008. The Social Work Program offers a Bachelors of Arts Degree in Social Work (BASW). The curriculum is designed to prepare beginning level generalist social work practitioners who are committed to the values and ethics of the profession and the provision of quality services to diverse clients. Coursework and field practicum experience expose students to a variety of social work settings and clients from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds.



## MISSION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IN NEIU'S SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

The mission of NEIU's Social Work Program is to provide quality education to social work students, empowering them to become competent, beginning level, generalist practitioners. Our mission is consistent with the University's mission of providing accessible, quality education to students from a wide variety of ethnic, socio-economic and academic backgrounds.

We believe that the education of today's social worker extends beyond classroom training and implement the research and practicum requirements of CSWE throughout our program. By focusing on social work core competencies throughout our Social Work Program, our faculty engages each student through a variety of teaching styles to best develop critical thinking skills and enhance student abilities to analyze, evaluate and synthesize social work concepts and ideas. NEIU's Social Work Program faculty not only challenges students about the values and ethics of the profession, they mentor and guide students through the process of incorporating these values and ethical standards into their practice with diverse population groups.

The goals of NEIU's Social Work Program prepare beginning level social work practitioners to:

- Engage in generalist practice with diverse populations;
- Incorporate the values and ethics of the social work profession with a commitment to the development of a professional identity;
- Appropriately and effectively respond to and actively seek needed changes in social and economic injustices;
- Involve themselves in practice evaluation; and
- Participate on an on-going basis in professional development activities.

The Social Work Program objectives to meet these goals are:

### **Knowledge** of the:

1. interface between the biological, social and environmental contexts within which behavior is manifested over the life span;
2. provisions of major social welfare programs and an understanding of the interrelationship between political, economic and social factors in shaping these provisions;
3. institutional policies and practices that foster or suppress oppression and discrimination which impact upon the development and functioning of people of color, women, the elderly, the disabled and those vulnerable because of their sexual orientation;
4. scientific process of inquiry and of the interrelationship of research and practice,
5. roles and activities of social workers engaged in generalist practice.

### **Values** that reflect:

6. a respect for social and cultural diversity and the incorporation of this orientation into their perspective;
7. an identification with the values and ethics of the profession and a recognition of how professional values and ethics interface with personal values and ethics and with those of persons of diverse background;

**Professional Skills to:**

8. consume, critically assess and produce social work research;
9. apply research methods in the evaluation of one's own practice;
10. engage in activities that stimulate development of adequate social welfare services;
11. facilitate conversations of empowerment with individuals, families, groups and communities of diverse backgrounds;
12. use communication skills differentially;
13. use supervision appropriate to generalist practice;
14. function within the structure of organizations and service delivery systems;
15. seek necessary organizational change under appropriate supervision.

## **FIELD SEMINAR AND FIELD PRACTICUM CURRICULUM PERSPECTIVE**

The faculty believes that the Field Practicum is a key component of the educational experience of the undergraduate social work student. At NEIU, the field practicum runs concurrent with the student's academic course of study. The field practicum and seminar courses are the final stage of the professional curriculum and it is this experience that meets the primary goal of the undergraduate social work curriculum of preparing the student to become competent generalist social work professionals at the entry level. During the field practicum and field seminar, students are given an opportunity to test out and apply theory and knowledge gained from previous social work courses. It is the faculty's belief that in order to become an effective social worker, a student must be prepared to select and apply relevant knowledge, values and skills to real situations that they face in the field experience. The students in the field practicum are placed within the City of Chicago and surrounding suburbs serving as the context of practice.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE FIELD SEMINARS**

The Social Work Program Field Practicum is taken in the senior year of the student's educational experience. The Field Practicum consists of two **consecutive** field practica within the same agency for three credit hours each as well as two **consecutive** field seminar courses for three credit hours each. SWK-355: Field Practicum I and SWK-354: Field Seminar I are taken in the Fall term concurrently with SWK-310: Research Practicum I. SWK-356: Field Practicum II and SWK-354:

Field Seminar II are taken in the Spring term concurrently with SWK-311: Research Practicum II. *There are no exceptions to this sequence; no part-time student can take this sequence.*

SWK-355: Field Practicum I and SWK-356: Field Practicum II provide the student with **512 hours of supervised social work experience**. SWK-353: Field Seminar I and SWK-354: Field Seminar II provide the student with three hours per week of classroom instruction; facilitation of learning and experiential opportunities. The Social Work Program faculty maintains that both maturation and socialization into the profession are best achieved when the field experience extends over two terms (9 months). There are no provisions for block placements at any time.

## **FIELD SEMINAR CONTENT AND STUDENT OUTCOMES FOR PRACTICUM**

The focus of the field seminars is on providing the student with an arena for integrating knowledge, values and skills acquired from the foundation courses. This arena is supported by the student's ability to engage in the process of sharing with others about their field placement experiences and by their growing competency in integrating theory to practice experiences. The Field Seminar and Field Practicum courses create an atmosphere that encourages students to be curious about their learning. The students are presented with clear expectations, create learning goals and develop evaluation criteria. The field practicum skills build from semester to semester.

The student outcomes for SWK-353: Field Seminar I and SWK-355: Field Practicum I are:

### **Knowledge of:**

1. commonly occurring dynamics and issues confronting diverse populations as well as the ones confronting the student's field agency service population;
2. how the generalist perspective is implemented within the student's field agency and be able to modify one's approach given agency policy and goals;

### **Professional values that:**

3. are in line with the six values set forth by the Social Work Program;
4. strive for continual self-reflection of one's own value system and how that value system influences one's decision-making with client-systems, supervisors and colleagues;
5. reinforce adherence to the ethical standards of the field;

### **Skills in:**

6. critical analysis of the functioning and interrelationship between agency structure and its relationship to community;
7. implementing and differentially applying generalist practice across client-systems;
8. evaluating one's own practice;
9. forming partnerships with diverse client systems while utilizing the social work

- roles of enabler, broker, mediator, advocate and facilitator with these diverse client systems;
10. appropriately modifying one's approach and application of the generalist when advocating for oppressed and at risk people;
  11. directing one's own learning and professional development;
  12. resolving ethical dilemmas faced by practitioners;
  13. appropriate utilization of supervision to guide practice.

## FIELD SEMINAR ASSIGNMENTS AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learning outcomes for the fall field seminar are identical to the learning outcomes for the field practicum. By paralleling the student outcomes, a student is ensured a consistent educational-practice relationship throughout the Field Experience. The field seminar and field placement activities and assignments meeting the outcomes are paralleled with each other, designed to compliment each other and intended to produce self-critical, reflective practitioners.

Copies of the field seminar syllabus for Social Work 353 and 354 (Field Seminar I & II) will be distributed to all students at the beginning of the semester and to their field supervisors during the first month of the practicum. Students are enrolled concurrently in Field Seminar I and II. Students will receive letter grades (A, B, C) for work completed as indicated on course syllabus.

Assignments in SWK-353: Field Seminar I generally include:

- Workbook assignments in the required text, *A PRACTICUM GUIDE*.
- Field Critical Log. Each student writes a field critical log based on the field experience. The time spent writing the log is in addition to the 516 hours in the field placement. Students submit their logs to the Field Seminar Faculty every two weeks or more frequently if requested. Requirements of the log will be specified by the Field Seminar Faculty for their students. Care must be taken by the students to maintain client confidentiality in the log and by the Field Seminar Instructor to maintain student confidentiality as appropriate.
- Agency procedures and policies
- Self-analysis paper
- Case Assessment paper
- Ethical analysis paper
- Experiential community exercise
- Each student is required to attend one administrative board meeting

Assignments in SWK-354: Field Seminar II:

- Create a program proposal for their field agency: demonstrating an understanding of the agency and the environment, program

- development, community assessment, evaluation design, administration and planning.
- Observe a self-help group meeting
- Attend two coalition/community meetings and one board meeting
- Present material to one social work class to test their presentation skills
- Facilitate a seminar meeting on a relevant topic in social work practice to demonstrate their understanding of the current trends and issues facing the profession as well as to introduce new information to their peers
- Continue to complete assignments from Practicum texts
- Field Critical Log. Each student writes a field critical log based on the field experience. The time spent writing the log is in addition to the 516 hours in the field placement. Students submit their logs to their Field Seminar Instructor every two weeks or more frequently if requested. Requirements of the log will be specified by the Field Seminar Faculty for their students. Care must be taken by the students to maintain client confidentiality in the log and by the Field Seminar Instructor to maintain student confidentiality as appropriate.

### **FIELD PRACTICUM OBJECTIVES**

The overall purpose of the Field Practicum is to provide the student with both practical and experiential learning experiences in which the student is given support and is encouraged to:

- develop competencies in generalist practice skills;
- incorporate values and ethics in the practice environment
- test out their practice style;
- develop a commitment to the social work profession.

The Field Practicum builds upon student's acquisition of knowledge from the liberal arts courses and from the Social Work foundation courses that provided knowledge, values, processes and skills. The linkage of the foundation areas to the field practicum and the field seminar are continually reinforced through assignments and activities. The Field Practicum requires students to demonstrate their knowledge of human behavior and development, generalist social work processes and skills, policy and program development and research principles.

### **FIELD PRACTICUM STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

The learning outcomes for the second semester field practicum are identical to the learning outcomes for the field seminars. By paralleling the outcomes, a student is ensured a consistent educational-practice relationship throughout the field experience. Field seminar and field practicum activities and assignments are designed to both

compliment and reinforce the learning experiences for each student, which encourages self-reflection and critical thinking.

The student outcomes for SWK-354: Field Seminar II and SWK-356: Field Practicum II are:

**Knowledge of:**

1. the factors which perpetuate oppression of populations at risk;
2. how a local community and the larger political context influences the delivery of services;
3. one's level of professional development and ability to communicate one's skills, values and abilities to others;

**Values that reflect:**

4. an appreciation for self-evaluation and continued growth and development;
5. a commitment to enhancing a society of economic and social justice;
6. an acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity;

**Skills in:**

7. forming and implementing actions that fight for economic and social justice multi-systemically;
8. making formal presentations in a variety of settings;
9. working with various kinds of groups;
10. analyzing the role of an agency -- its structure, function, mission, policies -- and their impact upon program development and service delivery;
11. identifying program need and designing a program to address these needs; and
12. resolving ethical dilemmas and interface issues when working with client systems from various backgrounds.

## **MATRICULATION THROUGH THE FIELD PRACTICUM**

If a student does not receive a grade of C or better in SWK-353: Field Seminar I or a passing grade (P) in SWK-355: Field Practicum I, the student will be unable to enter SWK-356: Field Practicum II or SWK-354: Field Seminar II. Because of the progressive and supportive nature of the two courses, it is imperative that students demonstrate a competency level in both courses at the same time. A student who receives less than a grade of C in the Field Seminar course will have to repeat the course. A student can not continue in the Field Practicum without passing the concurrent Field Seminar.

## **STUDENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE FIELD PRACTICUM**

Students are eligible for the field practicum experience when they have met the following



requirements:

- Admission into the Social Work Program as a major
- Senior status (completion of 90 credit hours)
- Minimum GPA of 2.5 out of 4.0 in the major
- Completion of a letter "C" grade or better in the following courses:
  - SWK-200: Introduction to Social Work
  - SWK-303: Human Behavior and the Social Environment I
  - SWK-207: Social Welfare Policy I
  - SWK-304: Social Work Practice I
  - SWK-305: Social Work Practice II
  - SWK-306: Human Behavior and the Social Environment II
  - SWK-309: Research Methods & Quantitative Applications in Social Work
  - SWK 357: Social Welfare Policy II
- Passed the University English Competency Exam
- Consent of Field Instruction Committee after review of application

### THE SCREENING PROCESS

The screening and selection process is designed to assess the student's motivation, commitment, capacity and limitations for social work practice. Specifically, this assessment addresses four criteria that are measured objectively according to academic and professional standards.

#### The student must have:

1. effective communication skills -- clear, accurate and articulate both verbally and in writing -- for the purpose of establishing and sustaining helping relationships. **For assessment purposes**, writing samples can be formally submitted to a panel.
2. personality qualifications appropriate for professional social work practice. These would include: commitment to social work professional values; ability to establish and sustain a relationship; understanding and concern about social problems and public/social policy; and an understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. **For assessment purposes**, every effort is made to ensure fairness to the student. The faculty reserves the right to make such judgments and may take into consideration evaluations from social agencies where the student has served as a volunteer.
3. a value system consistent with the humanistic objectives of the social work profession and with the scientific knowledge base upon which it rests. **For assessment purposes**, the criteria are measured by the professional judgment of the faculty.
4. both the desire and intellectual capacity to acquire and integrate the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary for competent practice. **For assessment purposes**, the student must maintain an overall average of "C" and a grade no lower than "C" in required social work courses.

**NOTE:** In cases where the student's life circumstances may inhibit successful completion of the field placement, the Field Coordinator, along with the faculty, will advise the student of community resources to resolve these circumstances. In some circumstances, a student might be advised to delay entering the field until the next academic year. Whereas NEIU policy does not allow restricting admission to courses for non-academic issues, the Program reserves the right to make recommendations because of the unusual demands for maturity to complete the fieldwork.

## THE ROLE OF THE FIELD COORDINATOR

The **Field Coordinator** is responsible for developing potential field placements and to ensure their eligibility as outlined in the criteria for selection of agency and supervisor. The Field Coordinator meets with each potential field supervisor to evaluate the agency and the field supervisor and inform them of the requirements, objectives and assignments of the field practicum. This meeting takes place preferably in person but may be developed over the phone and through on-going correspondence and discussions. The Field Coordinator arranges the required annual field supervisor meeting in late summer or early fall to address concerns, discuss the initial progress of the students and to plan for any changes in the forthcoming academic year. The Field Coordinator maintains working contact with all field supervisors and students throughout the placement experience to ensure on-going compatibility and adherence to NEIU Social Work Program and CSWE practicum standards. In addition to providing field practicum placements and administering the field practicum, the Field Coordinator is responsible for ensuring integration of the field practicum through classroom teaching of the field seminar. At NEIU, the Field Coordinator also serves as Field Seminar Instructor.

## THE PLACEMENT PROCESS

Students who meet the eligibility requirements are advised to complete the Application for Field Placement and Pre-Field Assessment within the first two weeks of March prior to Fall semester placement. The application is reviewed for completion of requirements and an individual assessment meeting is conducted between the Student and the Field Coordinator generally in March/April. Prior to this meeting, the Social Work Faculty conducts a formal assessment of each eligible field student. The Field Coordinator then provides the student with the faculty assessment and assesses the student's individualized needs in order to make an appropriate placement.

The Field Coordinator assesses the student in the areas of:

1. academic performance for competencies and weaknesses;
2. maturity level;
3. specialized interests in social work issues;
4. personality related to potential supervisor style of supervision;
5. exposure to cross cultural experiences and/or different socio-economic

- groups;
- 6. past social work experiences.

**Preparation for the Field Practicum Experience** for potential field students requires attendance at a Field Practicum Experience group meeting towards the end of the Spring semester prior to the Fall practicum. At that time the student is given a list of no more than three supervisors and agencies to contact for an initial interview. This individualized list of agencies is based upon the student's preference after being interviewed by the Field

Coordinator, reviewing the Field Placement Book as well as the Field Placement Listing on the Social Work Web Site. During the meeting with the Field Coordinator, students are given directives on completing the required field placement forms, the objectives of the field placements and appropriate procedures for interviewing potential supervisors.

Simultaneously, each field supervisor also receives a letter explaining the field requirements as well as a brief biographical sketch for each potential student entering the field experience.

### **THE FIELD PRACTICUM AGENCIES**

Students are provided with field practicum experiences in a broad range of agency settings. Agencies are chosen on the basis of their ability to offer students a variety of learning opportunities in the areas of individual, family, group and community involvement **with proper supervision**. The Social Work Program has developed a **Field Agency Practicum List** with qualified agencies for placement. This list consists of a wide range of primary and secondary agencies of interest to students. While field supervisors and agencies may be recruited throughout the entire academic year, they are not interviewed for eligibility until March of the year prior to placements.

A student may request to use an agency not on the list, but prior to placement, the Field Coordinator must arrange for a site visit at the time the student interviews to determine if the agency meets the qualifications for field practicum agency selection.

### **SELECTION CRITERIA AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FIELD AGENCIES**

Field practicum agencies are brought to the attention of Social Work Program personnel through direct inquiry and application, student and faculty suggestion, alumni and other social workers, and/or through other information channels. The practicum agency does the initial selection and screening of an agency field supervisor. The field supervisor submits a Vita (**Appendix D**) describing their qualifications to the Social Work Program. The Field Coordinator, in consultation with other faculty, is responsible for assessing whether or not a field setting and/or field supervisor meet the necessary criteria. ***There is a required meeting at NEIU for all active field supervisors in late summer or early fall to discuss the initial progress of the students and to plan for any***

**changes in the forthcoming academic year.** The field supervisors meeting provides the opportunity to coordinate the educational-practice learning experience by meeting the Social Work Program faculty, reviewing the seminar syllabus, the requirements for student research and addressing any early concerns of the field supervisor.

**The basis for agency selection is upon the agency's ability to provide:**

- experience in direct face to face service to clients
- quality MSW/AM supervision requiring at minimum an MSW/AM degree or if no one available at the agency, a BSW/BASW/BA in social work with 5+ years in the social work field (CSWE requires that social work students **MUST** be supervised by a social worker.) **Note:** an AM is the master's degree presented to social workers from the University of Chicago, School of Service Administration following two-year study in either a clinical or administrative tract.
- completion of the Cooperative Agreement for Field Experience experiences as outlined in Field Manual
- adequate space, supplies and equipment for a student role
- information on personal safety
- adherence to NASW Code of Ethics and professional practice standards
  - respect for and understanding of student learning needs with the ability to designate appropriate assignments
- demonstrated professional competence
- expertise in the particular area of service in which the organization is engaged
- background in training, supervision and teaching
- ability to help a student translate theoretical knowledge into practice
- cooperative relationship with NEIU, complete all required forms, attend orientation meetings and participate in site visits
- commitment and availability of time to supervise

**NOTE:** Although ***supervisors with MSW degrees with licenses are preferred***, supervisors with BSW/BASW/BA in social work degrees from accredited social work schools with 5+ years of experience in the field are acceptable field supervisor candidates. ***Exceptions can be made when the agency field supervisor does not have an MSW or BSW but provides additional resources within the agency such as an MSW/AM Consultant for supervision purposes.***

### **ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS FOR WORK SITE PLACEMENTS**

NEIU neither seeks nor prefers field practicum sites that are also work sites for students at other times during the week. The Social Work Program believes a student may either assume too much overlap of responsibility during their internship or the agency employees will not recognize the student's educational responsibilities during the internship role. However, exceptions have been made and need to be addressed with the Field Coordinator prior to committing to the practicum.

Occasionally, a field practicum site has provisions for payment of services to students.

Each of those agencies is contracted for payment on an individual basis.

A student may apply for and receive a Minority Internship Grant (MIP) through the Board of Governors. In order to receive an MIP, a student must be a member of a minority group and

have at least a 2.7 GPA. Upon approval by the MIP University Committee, a student is expected to be at the internship site for 40 hours per week for one term in an agency of the student's choice. A social work field student must contract with the field placement for 40 hours

per week for one of the two terms in the field. Sixteen hours of the 40 hours are considered to be part of the social work field practicum for one of the two terms in the field. The field seminar courses and the research practicum courses are considered by the Minority Internship Grant Program to be in the category of skill development and are therefore counted as hours in the internship. A student with an MIP receives \$1000 per month for one trimester for an additional 15 hours per week in the field agency setting.

### **TERMINATION OF FIELD AGENCIES**

Field agencies including the Field Supervisor or the agency policies can be used for grounds for termination of a field agency based upon non-compliance with the requirements as outlined in the BASW Program Field Practicum Manual. In the case of a complaint, the Field Coordinator will investigate the facts and present the situation to the Field Committee for review and a decision about disallowing a field agency from on-going participation in NEIU's Social Work Program Field Practicum Experience.

### **HONORARIA FOR FIELD SUPERVISORS**

NEIU's Social Work Program recognizes the dedication and demands required of our Field Supervisor partners. The Field Supervisor is eligible to receive a tuition waiver for one course for each student that they supervise during each academic year. Any questions about this policy should be directed to the Field Coordinator.

### **SELECTING AN AGENCY AND INTERVIEWING THE FIELD PRACTICUM SUPERVISOR**

Following the Spring semester group meeting with the Field Coordinator and the student's receipt of up to three agency contacts, ***it is the student's responsibility*** to initiate contact with the agency supervisor on the list to arrange an interview. The interview may include meeting other members of the field practicum team, including the person who may work on a day-to-day basis with the student but who may not be the field supervisor. **Deadline for completion of all field practicum interviews is July 1.** After completing all interviews, the student chooses one placement for the following fall. The Field Coordinator gives final approval on all placements.

Factors such as availability of agencies, qualified MSW supervisors and geographic locations may limit the student's options. In cases where agreement cannot be reached



on the placement and/or there is dissatisfaction, the Field Coordinator may agree to contact additional agencies for the student's consideration.

## **THE NEXT STEP: FIELD PRACTICUM INITIAL PAPERWORK AND SIGNED CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS**

Once there is an agency, field supervisor and student "fit," there are several forms that the field supervisor, faculty field liaison, field coordinator, student and other agency or NEIU faculty must sign to begin the field practicum experience. During the summer, the student makes

arrangements with the supervisor to complete the required paperwork, among them **Learning Objectives Form, Cooperative Agreement For Field Experience and Risk Letters** by

**August 1st.** The initial paperwork completion facilitates student field practicum placement to begin immediately in the Fall term with a clear understanding of the objectives and expectations.

The first form is the **Cooperative Agreement Form. (Appendix G)** The purpose of this form is to clarify the reciprocal roles and responsibilities among the NEIU Social Work Program, the field agency and the student in order to facilitate the educational experience. The signed original contract is retained by the Field Coordinator with copies kept by the agency field supervisor and student. A copy of the malpractice insurance policy (**Appendix H**) is also reviewed.

The second form is the **Notice of Risks to Field Students. (Appendix H)** The purpose of this form is to help the student and field supervisor understand the inherent risks and dangers that may occur during their field practicum experience. The form also indicates the necessary precautions to protect themselves from harm.

The third form is the **Field Supervisor Acknowledgment Form. (Appendix H-1)** The purpose of this form is that by their signature, the Field Supervisor understands their responsibility for educating, training and informing students about the safety and risks that may occur in the field practicum.

The fourth form is the **Field Practicum Learning Goals. (Appendix I)** The purpose of this form is to develop preliminary learning goals about the field practicum. This form is to be completed by the student and signed by the field supervisor and faculty liaison. These early learning goals will provide the student initial guidance during the early weeks of the placement prior to developing the **Student Learning Contract for Field.**

There is a fifth item, the **Student Learning Contract for Field. (Appendix J)** The intention of the form is to set up individualized student learning objectives for fieldwork that are feasible within the agency and attainable within the scheduled field placement time frame. Guided by the Field Supervisor and the Field Seminar Faculty, the student is responsible for its preparation and completion. ***The particulars of the learning contract will be addressed during the early weeks of SWK 353 Field Seminar I in the Fall.*** As the field practicum begins, the student refers to their Field Practicum Learning Goals developed in the summer and initiates the establishment of more concrete goals, tasks and assignments with the field instructor and/or field supervisor. The completed Student Learning Contract for Field must be signed by the Student, the

Field Supervisor and the Field Coordinator or Field Liaison. **Copies of the Student Learning Contract for Field are not to be distributed at the field practicum until all NEIU signatures are secured.** Deadline for completion of this signed contract is the last class of the second week in October of the Fall semester.

## **THE ROLE OF THE FIELD LIAISON and FALL-SPRING PROCESS CONFERENCES**

A Faculty **Field Liaison** will be assigned to each agency and student for the field practicum experience. The Field Liaison is responsible for determining and reporting field instruction/field supervision grades (Pass/Fail). The grade will be determined by the field supervisor's evaluation of the student's field performance, the student's field instruction time sheet, information from agency visits, observations of student, and group and individual student conferences. In situations where the field instructor may be different than the field supervisor, the Field Liaison will consult with both individuals as necessary to gather as much information about student performance as possible. In many cases, the field instructor and the field supervisor are the same person.

The Field Liaison oversees the field practicum for an individual student or a group of students at the same setting. The Field Liaison schedules an on-site meeting with each student and contacts each field supervisor by phone and/or in person to assess the progress of the placement ***twice during the academic year, generally once each academic semester, in the fall and in the spring.*** Changes in the student's role and planning for future changes to ensure attainment of the student learning objectives can be made at that time. Whenever there are questions, concerns, or difficulties, the Field Liaison speaks with the field supervisor and/or student, or makes an additional site visit. The Field Liaison updates the Field Coordinator if problems in the practicum require a change in setting.

***During the fall site visit,*** the following interactions may occur between the Field Liaison, the field supervisor and the student:

- Evaluate the agency-student match;
- Review the progress of outcomes and assignments in the Student Learning Contract;
- Verbally assess the student's willingness to engage in learning outcomes, including adherence to ethical behavior;
- Observe agency site and its adherence to criteria for agency and supervisor responsibilities;
- Mediate differences and/or difficulties; and
- Coordinate agency field seminars and other workshops with NEIU programs.

## **FIELD PRACTICUM INTEGRATION WITH FIELD SUPERVISION**

The field experience offers unique opportunities to help students integrate all the learning that is occurring in the professional social work curriculum. It gives the student an opportunity to integrate theory into practice. The opportunity for a student to learn under the direction of an experienced field supervisor provides the student with hands on, realistic and timely understanding of what they are currently learning about themselves and client systems.

Field supervisors are informed about the content of the Social Work Program through field instruction meetings, written materials, site visits and discussions with field students. Some suggested strategies include:

1. Ask the student what social work courses they have completed or are taking;
2. Discuss the course content with the student. Ask the student to provide information about classroom learning;
3. Make a point of asking the student in supervisory conferences what ideas covered in the classroom have relevance to the practice experience. Discuss how the Student might try out some of the ideas in their Fieldwork;
4. When the student is discussing a practice situation, ask what ideas, concepts or theories from the classroom are being raised in the situation.
5. Refer periodically to the list of Key Social Work Tasks in this manual which students are expected to integrate during field experience;
6. When the student is working with an individual, ask them to assess the environmental and societal issues and possible interventions that should be addressed.
7. Review the educational objectives in this manual to determine if students are progressing and addressing learning in all four areas.
8. Review student's Field Practicum text.

(Adapted from Social Work Field Manual, Program of Social Work, Millersville University, Millersville, Pa., 1996)

## FIELD SUPERVISOR GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT PRACTICUM

The following guidelines are provided to assist the field supervisor in conducting the weekly supervisory conferences at different stages of the field practicum experience.

**Beginning Stage:** At the beginning of the Fall field practicum, supervisory conferences should be structured to deal with orientation of the student. The first couple of conferences should be devoted to discussions of the agency, plans for orienting the student, questions the student has about the agency and discussion of role and responsibilities. It is appropriate at this stage for the field supervisor to address the anxieties of a new student and respond to indirect cues that the student may provide that indicate concerns.

The beginning conferences are a time for the student to learn about the field supervisor in a variety of ways. It is the relationship development stage of building trust. The modeling of empathy and understanding, as well as clarification of roles and expectations on the part of the field supervisor and the field instructor if they are two different people, are very important at this stage. The student should begin to differentiate between professional supervision and accountability and the daily monitoring of a student's school or work situations.

To treat all students the same and to use a universal set of expectations is to overlook individual student needs. Just as professional assessments are made of clients, the field supervisor should be formulating a beginning assessment of the student during the Orientation period. This should include observations of strengths and weaknesses, energy level, motivation, intelligence, interest areas, ability to relate to others, etc. This assessment is important in helping the field supervisor assign a suitable and

manageable workload for the student. It gives a beginning idea of student proficiency and capability.

Students entering an initial field placement with no prior social work experience usually have limited ideas about their learning goals and the types of experiences they wish to have or that are available to them. They may expect the field supervisor to tell them what they need to learn since they have no other information to guide them. Thus, the field supervisor will need to work closely with them in providing information on what the agency and supervisor have to offer, what are appropriate boundaries, etc. It may be necessary to make suggestions for learning goals, soliciting student input and reactions.

In contrast, students with work experience in a social service agency are generally able to actively participate in the development of the learning contract. They have ideas about their educational needs, some awareness of their professional strengths and weaknesses and areas they would like to work on, and often some understanding of the skills needed to facilitate their stated career goals. If the process is to have real meaning, the field supervisor's input remains crucial when working with this level of student.

**Goal-Setting Stage:** After the student has become sufficiently oriented to the agency and procedures, some supervisory conferences should be devoted to clarifying and specifying what the student wants to learn and how. A part of this discussion should address the important issue of evaluation and assessment. (**Appendix O**). The student is responsible for completing a **Skills Self-Report form (Appendix J)** during the Fall semester to assist in this process. The student is expected to initiate the preparation of the learning goals with the field supervisor.

Student learning styles will vary. It is often useful to engage the student in a discussion about how s/he prefers to go about learning something new in the development of strategies and tasks to meet the learning goals. Some students prefer to observe and reflect on what they saw before trying out a new task themselves. Others prefer to "plunge in" and learn by doing. Some prefer to read the principles and concepts first and then experiment with doing the task. It is often advisable to incorporate a variety of learning approaches into the learning contract, while beginning with the student's preferred style in order to reduce anxiety.

The following guide is intended to suggest a process that can facilitate the development of meaningful goals:

- Suggest an initial conference to broadly discuss the student's goals for the placement and what the field supervisor hopes the student will gain. This conference will also clarify what the agency and field supervisor have to offer.
- Encourage the student write a draft of his/her learning goals based on the discussion and bring them to the next conference.
- At the second supervisory conference, review the student's draft of the learning goals for further discussion, clarification, additions and revisions. Part of the discussion should also include how accomplishment of the goals will be evaluated. This provides an opportunity to discuss the evaluation process with the student. Once the student knows what s/he will be evaluated for and how, anxiety regarding that process often decreases.

- After the second supervisory conference, the student should be ready to complete the Student Learning Contract in preparation for the three-way conference.
- It is suggested that the Field Supervisor address the integration of theory and practice with the student during the learning contract phase so that the student integrates this as one of the goals.

The **Student Learning Contract for Field** is composed of several sections intended to offer broad categories of coverage. Under the headings -- Objectives, Assignments, Time Frame, Supervision, Conference Content, Paperwork Requirements and Additional Comments -- the Student includes the role and responsibility that each person plays in meeting the objectives and the anticipated time frame it will take to achieve the goals. Attention should be placed on orientation to the agency, understanding agency policy and procedures, understanding the client population, understanding theoretical orientation of agency, understanding agency practice and understanding agency decision-making processes.