



## QUESTIONS BASW STUDENTS ASK ABOUT FIELD PLACEMENT

**Q: Will I get the field placement that I want?**

A: Significant effort goes into the planning process to identify student interests, career plans, learning and supervision needs. Requests have to be considered with reference to the existing field resources of the school. Sometimes students get what they request and other times they do not; however, the major consideration that overrides all requests is *whether the agency can provide the necessary educational experiences appropriate for the student's program and regular, structured field instruction.*

Students should **not** request a field placement in a particular agency where they or family members have been or currently are in treatment.

**Q: How many hours of field placement do I have to do?**

A: BASW students do approximately 600 hours (12 credits) of field placement over two terms. This usually breaks down to 3 days per week.

**Q: Why can't I do two different field placements?**

A: It usually takes 4-6 weeks for students to begin to have familiarity with an agency, clients / consumers, staff, etc. That means that the engagement process between student and agency consumes almost 1/3 to 1/2 of the first term. Many agencies do not provide significant assignments / responsibilities with only half a term left.

**Q: How can I get a paid field placement?**

A: Paid field placements have not generally been available in the undergraduate program; the exception has been for the county child welfare and aging field placements (CYF and Area Agency on Aging, etc.) Students are also able to receive funding (tuition and a monthly stipend) through the CWEB (Child Welfare for Baccalaureate Education) program, which involves a contractual obligation on the part of the student. An informational meeting about these options is held in late January. Some agencies however, are able to offer a small stipend, but these vary from term to term and depend on availability of agency funds. Lack of a stipend is **NOT** an appropriate reason to decline an assigned field placement. Please discuss your particular concerns regarding a stipend during your interview with your field advisor.

**Q: What if I don't like where I am sent?**

A: The real issue is not "liking" but whether the field assignment can prepare you appropriately for the employment market or for graduate education. Sometimes you can prejudge an experience and fulfill your own worst fears. On the other hand, a valid reason not to consider a particular agency will be accepted. Valid reasons include distance or transportation getting to an agency and personal or previous personal issues that may be exacerbated by the nature of the services provided by an agency.

There are many students, now graduates, who will tell you that they had exceptional experiences in settings that they would have never chosen by themselves!

**Q: How will I know if it is a good field placement?**

A: The real question here is: *are you learning what you need to be learning?* Structured learning experiences that flow from the identified learning objectives are essential. Field instruction that is regular, formal as well as informal, and aims to help you prepare for your assignments, integrates theory and research into your tasks, develops and provides feedback about skills, and begins to help you to shape critical and reflective thinking are equally important. You are also a significant part of the field placement. An open attitude toward learning, responsible, professional and ethical behavior, consideration for others, preparation for assignments and supervision, and active participation are what you, as a student, need to bring to the field placement.

**Q: What if a problem comes up after I begin field placement?**

A: There are problem-solving guidelines in the Student Handbook and the Field Education Manual. Simply put, *talk to your field instructor*. If you don't quite know what word to use or how to shape up your problem focus, *talk with your practicum lab instructor or your field advisor*. Most problems in field are simple miscommunications that can be easily remedied by increasing and improving communication. Remember that a focus of your learning is to understand and apply problem-solving skills and that includes problems that you face as a student.

**Q: What can I expect once the field placement starts?**

A: Each field assignment is different. *It does take several weeks to be fully involved in the work of the agency*, but your field instructor should have an orientation plan for the first few weeks. In most settings that you will be assigned, it is *unrealistic* to expect that direct client/ consumer work will be assigned in the initial weeks unless you have had previous significant and relevant work experience. Most likely, you will learn how the agency operates, who the people working in the agency are, what policies, procedures, and forms you will need to follow, etc. Following or shadowing other staff, observing, sitting in on meetings, reading previous records and reports are all a part of an orientation process.

**Q: What can I expect of supervision once I am placed?**

A: Educational supervision or field instruction occurs in many different ways. It can be directed and provided almost completely by the field instructor, or it can be coordinated by the field instructor with many different individuals in the agency participating. Students need to be able to seek out and ask for guidance and help if it is not automatically provided. Students also need to prepare themselves for supervisory conferences. If you have questions about your supervision, you should discuss this with the field instructor and your practicum lab instructor.