



## **FIELD INSTRUCTOR SUPERVISION REQUIREMENTS** **University of Pittsburgh - School of Social Work**

### **RESPONSIBILITIES AND SELECTION OF FIELD INSTRUCTORS**

Agency-based field instructors perform a vital role in the education of MSW students. As described in the MSW Field Education Handbook and in the Affiliation Agreement, <http://www.socialwork.pitt.edu/academics/field-education/field-organizations> the MSW Program has two primary criteria for the selection of field instructors: (1) a master's degree from an accredited school of social work, and (2) two years' post-masters experience. Equivalencies for the postmasters experience criterion includes: (1) demonstrated competence in social work practice for at least five years prior to entrance into graduate school, or (2) maturity and demonstrated leadership ability in related areas and at times, because of the educational needs of the student or in the absence of an available agency person who meets the above requirements, individuals with graduate degrees in a related field may be appointed to oversee the student's work in the agency. These instructors are required to attend a live orientation or at minimum complete an on-line orientation before accepting a student.

MSW field instructors are expected to meet with their field students at least one hour per week for structured supervision and instruction. The field instructor is responsible for working with the student to develop a Field Learning Plan during the first few weeks of each term. The Field Learning Plan is a collaborative effort that takes into account the educational assessment of the student, the educational goals of the MSW Program, the core and advanced competencies, the learning objectives, expected learning outcomes, timeframes and the opportunities available through the approved field site. It is a detailed plan for the student's learning while in field placement and serves as a guide for ongoing supervision and for final evaluation. The final evaluation of each competency area, the narrative summary referring back to specific learning tasks, the student's strengths and areas in need of improvement, and recommended grade are also the responsibility of the field instructor to prepare and to submit to field seminar instructor or faculty member in their role as field liaison.

As the preceding summary of responsibilities implies, the qualities sought from field instructors involve much more than mere expertise in their chosen field of social work practice. Field instructors are further expected to:

1. Have the capacity to conceptualize and transmit knowledge
2. Have the ability to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the core or advanced competencies
3. Be committed to the values and ethics of the social work profession and have the capacity to operationalize them in practice through field instruction

4. Identify appropriate learning opportunities within the agency which can be utilized to enhance the student's knowledge and practice skills
5. Perform and educational assessment
6. Have knowledge of and apply adult learning concepts
7. Select appropriate teaching material related to the core competencies
8. Assess student progress in relation to mutually agreed upon educational and learning goals
9. Use the supervisory relationship in a constructive manner
10. Work collaboratively with the School's liaison
11. Express commitment to professional education through safeguarding the field instruction process by preparing supervisory and instructional meetings, through communication with the liaison, and in participating in School of Social Work seminars specific to field instruction
12. Complete the Field Instructor Evaluation of Field Experience Survey

People generally become field instructors by virtue of being employed in an approved field instruction agency where the School of Social Work places students or by submitting an Application for Field Instructor Status to the Office of Field Education (<http://www.socialwork.pitt.edu/academic-programs/field-education>).

MSW students, whether full-time or part-time, are not eligible to serve as field instructors nor are students from other educational programs who are completing an internship at a field placement agency. Moreover, in the case of an employment-based field placement, a student's work-related supervisor is not to serve as the field instructor.

The application for Field Instructor Status form includes an academic and employment history. It also asks for information related more specifically to the role and process of field instruction, such as whether the individual has served as a field instructor for other schools of social work or whether she or he has had experience in staff training and/or supervision. It also asks for the applicant to inform the School as to whether or not they hold a CSWE accredited MSW degree. If not, the potential field instructor must agree to attend a live training or complete an on-line training before accepting a student. The forms also requests information from them to describe how familiar they are with the core competencies and related practice behaviors of the program.

Once the Application for Field Instructor Status has been completed, returned to the Office of Field Education, and is processed, field instructors receive an official appointment letter from the Dean of the School of Social Work acknowledging the field instructor's volunteer status and the benefits available to them by virtue of that status. Although field instructors are formally appointed as volunteers of the University, the Affiliation Agreement does not create and employer-employee relationship between the University and the field instructor or any other employee of the agency. A field instructor who does not possess a CSWE accredited MSW degree is registered for the next live training or the on-line training.

As stated above, the educational background, employment history of those interested in becoming field instructors are obtained by the Application for Field Instructor Status, which must be submitted prior to official appointment by the School. As needed, the School of Social Work permits the use of field instructors who have a master's degree in a related discipline and who have appropriate experience. In some organizations, there is not an MSW available. In other instances, an experienced MSW is the program administrator or clinical program director; she or he supervises other master's level professionals who have direct service delivery and/or project implementation responsibilities. These master's-level professionals, who have ongoing student contact and who provide day-to-day supervision, are referred to as the task supervisor. The agency-based person is designated as the field instructor. The field instructor is expected to work with the task supervisor in developing the field learning plan, monitoring the student's performance, and evaluating the student's attainment of field education goals and mastery of the core competencies. Most importantly, the field instructor is expected to ensure that a social work perspective grounds the student's field learning experience.

If an MSW student is supervised by an individual who does not possess an MSW and there is not an MSW at the agency capable of participating in field instruction, the field liaison may assume the role of field instructor. To assure reinforcement of a social work perspective, the field liaison is expected to provide supportive information and discussion about the systems and person in the environment perspectives, generalist practice, ethics and values, diversity, populations-at-risk, and social and economic justice, as they related to the particular field setting and the student's learning opportunities to demonstrate the core or advanced competencies. More frequent liaison contact is also expected in such situations. All Field instructors and task supervisors who have an MSW are invited to attend the Field Instructor Orientation and the Seminar Series in Field Instruction. New field instructors with a CSWE accredited degree are strongly encouraged to attend field instructor orientation and training before supervising a student or during the first term of field instruction. New field instructors or agency task supervisors from related disciplines are required to attend field instructor orientation and training or at a minimum successfully complete the Seminar in Field Instruction available on-line via Courseweb.

The School has responsibility for reinforcing a social work perspective when there is not an MSW field instructor. This is accomplished in various ways. (1) The field learning plan has articulated goals, practice behaviors and program competencies which identify what social work students are expected to learn. (2) The school offers orientation and training for field instructors; new field instructors with a CSWE accredited degree are strongly urged to attend, field instructors or agency task supervisor from related disciplines are required to attend field instructor orientation and training or at a minimum successfully complete the Seminar in Field Instruction available on-line via Courseweb. (3) Field liaisons may choose to have more frequent communication or develop a plan that is tailored to the need of the particular field instructor or task supervisor. All field instructors and task supervisors learn quickly what the expectations are for a MSW student in field because the field objectives and learning tasks and objectives are clearly explicated in the Field Learning Plan and Evaluations.

## **ABOUT FIELD INSTRUCTORS AND FIELD INSTRUCTION**

Field Instructor qualifications are described in the "Definition of Field Instructor" incorporated in the University Affiliation Agreement.

Field instructors should have an MSW from an accredited social work program with at least two years professional experience. In unusual situations the School of Social Work may approve an individual with related credentials such as a Master's or Ph.D. in Psychology or Education or Public Health. In those cases, the school assures a social work perspective and demonstrates how this is accomplished through its articulated field learning plan, complete with educational goals, practice behaviors and core competencies, the field instructor orientation, the seminars in field education, and through faculty and field liaisons who assure that social work professional practice issues and values are embodied within the scope and instruction of the field placement experience through contacts with the student and field instructor. The social work perspective is also reinforced through the information available on the School's website and new field instructors who do not hold a CSWE accredited BASW or MSW degree are required to attend the Field Instructor Orientation or at a minimum complete the on-line training available via Courseweb.

Field instruction models vary according to how an organization is staffed. The designated field instructor may not be the person providing day-to-day supervision; however, the designated field instructor should meet with the student formally, at least weekly for a minimum of an hour, and be instrumental in the development of the Field Learning Plan/Time Sheet and end of term Evaluation/Time Sheet. Likewise, the students are expected to actively participate in each of these three functions.