

## **MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM**

# **SOCIAL WORK PRACTICUM MANUAL 2023-2024**

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMAN SERVICES

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Welcome to the practicum component of the Master of Social Work Program, at Ramapo College of New Jersey.

The social work profession deems practicum as its signature pedagogy. As such, practicum is the framework in which students are socialized into the profession of social work and learn to function as professionals. Practicum instruction is designed to enable students to apply and integrate theoretical concepts, knowledge and practical skills learned in the classroom.

This manual contains the outcome objectives, curriculum, policies, and procedures for the practicum component of the Master of Social Work Program. The Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) of the Council on Social Work Education are included. This manual is designed to help field instructors and students understand the social work program, its philosophies, policies and curriculum. It is meant to answer the most frequently asked questions, with the intention of making the practicum experience one that is exciting and productive for both the student and field instructor.

The Field Instructor is a vital person in the practicum experience who works as a team member with the field faculty. The field instructor is a participant in the educational process and is therefore called by the title of instructor, rather than supervisor.

This manual is the program's official reference and procedural guide for social work students, program faculty, agency field instructors, and agency task supervisors. It is subject to periodic revisions to reflect program improvements and growth. Your feedback on the program is welcome in the form of evaluations contained in this manual and as participants in the broader community of social workers.

The college faculty and administration recognize that the field instructor role requires an expenditure of time, patience, and commitment to furthering the social work profession. Yours is a highly valued contribution to the quality and excellence of the MSW program at Ramapo College of New Jersey.

Kindest Regards,

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*Note that the Social Work Program at Ramapo College is in the process of transitioning the term “field” to “practicum” when referring to the signature pedagogy of social work education.*

## **Ramapo College's Mission**

Ramapo College of New Jersey is a comprehensive institution of higher education dedicated to the promotion of teaching and learning within a strong liberal arts based curriculum, thus earning the designation "New Jersey's Public Liberal Arts College." Its curricular emphases include the liberal arts and sciences, social sciences, fine and performing arts, and the professional programs within a residential and sustainable living and learning environment.

Organized into thematic learning communities, Ramapo College provides academic excellence through its interdisciplinary curriculum, international education, intercultural understanding and experiential learning opportunities. These four emphases, supported by global partnerships established in Europe, Africa, Asia, South America, the Caribbean, and several Native American tribal communities, have become central themes in Ramapo College's excellence in the teaching and learning continuum.

Ramapo College is committed to maintaining strength and opportunity through diversity of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and economic background among faculty, staff, and students. Ramapo College is a selective institution committed to providing equal access to under-represented populations. Barrier-free, the College maintains a continuing commitment to persons with disabilities.

Ramapo College provides a rich living and learning environment through almost 100 student organizations, intramural sports, and intercollegiate athletics. The College maintains a strong positive and economic impact on the surrounding communities by partnering with area communities, corporations, schools, service organizations, and governmental entities, while sharing its intellectual and cultural resources and its facilities. Ramapo College of New Jersey is committed to providing service and ethical leadership through international understanding and the creation of 21st century partnerships.

### **The Mission of the Master of Social Work Program**

The mission of the Master of Social Work Program is to prepare competent, compassionate, and research informed social work professionals who advocate for social and economic justice and human well-being, while honoring diversity and within the context of the social environment. An emphasis on caring human relationships and freedom from all forms of oppression, while supporting strengths and enhancing quality of life will be the focus of practice. As advanced generalist practitioners, students will become effective leaders through planning and problem solving, multi-system and interdisciplinary collaboration, and excellence in service to individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations, all from a global perspective. Ramapo's small community is nestled in the greater New York City area providing an intimate experience where students, faculty and community agencies collaborate to serve those in need while drawing on this innovative and progressive culture.

### **The Goals of the Master of Social Work Program**

The goals of the MSW program are derived from the program's mission as follows:

1. To prepare competent social work professionals for advanced generalist practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities while honoring diversity in an ever-changing environmental context; To educate social workers effectively with the knowledge, values, and skills of the profession at the advanced practice level in collaboration with, and commitment to, the greater community using an interdisciplinary approach;
2. To advance social justice by preparing leaders to effectively advocate for the development of social policies and social service delivery systems that improve the well-being of client's lives from a global perspective embracing innovation; and
3. To prepare social workers to be life-long-learners who will advocate for the alleviation of social problems, the eradication of social injustice and promote social, economic, and environmental justice with a research-informed approach.

### **MSW Curriculum Design as it Relates to Practicum**

The MSW program accepts students who are prepared at the undergraduate level and ready for graduate education. The curriculum grows from the liberal arts base and assumes students entering the program bring the intellectual, social, psychological, ethical, and physical preparation from the undergraduate level that prepares them for graduate education and advanced professional development. Graduate students are expected to think critically and analytically about the world and have the capacity to synthesize information from multiple disciplines and areas of social work knowledge and skills. To succeed, they need knowledge about cultural, social, historical, and scientific aspects of life, and the ability to communicate effectively in academic and social contexts. The program recognizes the rich history of the social work profession in connection with social, political, and economic developments of the past, at once analyzing, celebrating, and/or disputing the developments for their roles in relation to present conditions. In addition, the classroom experience is enriched and students' professional development is deepened when courses intentionally draw from other disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, the arts, spirituality and religion, biological sciences, and literature. Finally, while preparation in the liberal arts might assume that students bring basic social skills conducive to working with people from all circumstances of life, the program endeavors to guide students' professional development in engagement with others and cultural competence in order to capably confront ethical dilemmas in diverse settings as a path to progress maximizing each client's potential and achieving social justice.

As the signature pedagogy of social work education, practicum education in the MSW program requires 600 hours in the foundation year and 600 hours in the concentration year. Practicum education is connected to the four Theory, Practice and Field courses, two in the foundation year and two in the concentration year. These 7-credit courses integrate course content with practicum experiences and learning. The Field Education Director maintains the relationship between the field instructor, the student and the instructor, who is the professional advisor. This integration of class and practicum fosters an open context for concrete skills development and problem solving, as it relates to practice in social work. All students in the MSW program follow a curriculum that prepares them for advanced generalist practice in social work. To qualify for the degree at Ramapo College requires 64 credit hours of study including 1200 hours of practicum. Students

must complete the foundation courses by demonstrating their competence in the classroom and practicum. Competence is measured according to the program's competencies and practice behaviors and is gained as students learn and appropriate the knowledge values and skills necessary for social work practice. Assessment of competence in practice behaviors is ongoing and continues throughout their MSW program.

### **MSW Competencies and Practice Behaviors**

In 2015 the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) competency-based education framework moved from a model of curriculum design focused on content and structure to one focused on student learning outcomes. The nine competencies are a subset of the overarching Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). Our curriculum, including our practicum program, is organized around the EPAS as mandated by CSWE. In doing so, Ramapo College maintains education standards in keeping with CSWE accreditation. The MSW program at Ramapo College has adopted CSWE's competencies, practice behaviors, and advanced generalist practice behaviors. These can be found on the program's [website](#).

### **Practicum Program**

Ramapo College's MSW program strives to connect the theoretical and conceptual contributions of the classroom with the applied world of the practice setting. Together, they foster student integration of learning. Recognizing practicum education as the profession's signature pedagogy, the social work curriculum is organized around the nine core competencies and their associated practice behaviors. These are demonstrated in class and in practicum experiences. Theory and practice are not dichotomized, but rather are closely interwoven. Students complete four terms of practicum education. During these terms, classroom assignments from **Theory, Practice and Field I, II, III and IV** are intricately linked to the practicum experience, thereby fostering students' recognition of the integral relationship between classroom theories and practice. Classroom learning influences student work/performance in the field, where additional learning occurs. Learning in the field is subsequently brought back to the classroom to continue the looping process of student development. It is essential to understand the concrete role each course has in making the connection to the real-world setting.

### **Practicum Curriculum and Structure**

#### **Professional Foundation Courses (First year)**

Theory, Practice and Field I & II (TPF) are at the core of the professional foundation. One 7-credit course is offered each semester. Three (3) credits account for classroom learning, and 4 credits account for practicum education, which is the signature pedagogy of the profession. Each is equally essential for training students in the profession and measuring competency. Theory, Practice and Field I (TPF) trains students in the beginning skills of engagement, interviewing, assessing, setting goals and evaluating intervention strategies with diverse client populations. Students learn to establish a relationship based on collaboration and mutuality. Students will demonstrate beginning knowledge of direct intervention with individuals, families, social agencies, organizations and communities. The Code of Ethics is introduced as the benchmark against which ethical practice is sustained throughout the curriculum. The second semester of TPFII introduces a beginning knowledge of short-term, crisis, and extended intervention practice

models, including those originating from research evidence based practice studies, emphasizing self-evaluation. Knowledge of the effects of diversity on human development and social work practice are at the heart of both of these practice classes. Each semester, 300 hours of supervised practice occur in agency placements arranged through the resources of the Field Education Department. Each student remains in one placement during the entire foundation year and is expected to move to a competent level of performance as an advanced generalist social worker by the close of the foundation year, having completed 600 hours of practicum. The essential nature of the TPFI&II sequence cannot be overstated. Both TPFI&II focus on the beginning skills of the collection of data, history taking and the assessment of client's strengths and vulnerabilities, using a biological, psychological, family, social, cultural and community frame. The impact of diversity, including gender and its expression, sexual orientation, age, mental and physical disabilities, and spirituality are crucial to the curriculum. Critical thinking, the development of a professional social work identity and self-reflection are ongoing throughout. Students internalize the worth of the individual, their right to self-determination and confidentiality and the commitment to making social agencies more responsive to human needs and advancing social and economic justice.

### **Professional Concentration Courses (Second Year)**

**Theory, Practice and Field III & IV** are at the core of the professional concentration and build upon the content of the professional foundation year. The 7-credit course sequence has appeared throughout the curriculum, 3 credits for classroom learning and 4 credits account for field education, which is the signature pedagogy of the profession. Offered in the fall of the program's second year, **Theory, Practice and Field III** builds on the content provided in the professional foundation year and is based on social work values, ethics, practice models and person-in-environment perspectives. The goal of the course is to help students deepen and extend their assessment and intervention skills in work with individuals and families who face challenges with a range of problems commonly found in an urban environment, including poverty, mental illness, substance abuse, trauma, physical illness and disability. Major theories of practice with individuals and families deepen the knowledge base and skill set of the students. Content related to diversity and oppression is integrated with an understanding of the concepts of privilege and power. The course prepares students to apply theories and evidenced based practices to clients in their practicum experience. In the final semester of the professional concentration, **Theory, Practice and Field IV** incorporates all previous Theory and Practice classes with a social justice perspective. Students are instructed in applying advanced skills of ethical reasoning, making ethical decisions, and attending to professional roles and boundaries. Students will demonstrate the ability to use their skills for the good of client systems, securing needed services for clients and acting as a change agent with communities and organizations. The consolidation of a social work identity which includes personal reflection and self-evaluation to ensure continual professional evaluation and development is cultivated.

### **Practicum Policies**

1. Students should not be expected to miss class for practicum assignments.
2. Early in the placement the student and Field Instructor should negotiate the student's schedule during the college winter break (one month during December and January). Students should be allowed at least two weeks for vacation.



3. Students should be informed at the beginning of the year if the agency cannot allow the student to take off the whole winter break.
4. Special vacation schedules should be negotiated at the beginning of the semester, or as soon as the issue is identified.
5. Students should inform the Field Instructor and Field Liaison of an unexpected absence due to illness first thing in the morning on that day.
6. Students are placed in different agencies for each TPF sequence (2) in order to help them to gain a broad view of the social work discipline
7. It is possible for students to use their employment for one of their practicum placements only if the job functions are social work related, the student is able to perform a **new job** or a **change in work focus/department and client population** in the employment setting, and an acceptable Field Instructor, and not the supervisor, provides supervision (see **Employment Based Placement Proposal** for guidelines and application).
8. Some agencies may choose to offer a monetary stipend to students. Students are expected to abide by the regulations and stipulations set forth by the agency in these cases. Students are expected to notify the Director of Field Education when stipends are offered.
9. If a serious problem arises, practicum placements may be changed during the course of a semester, only after the Field Instructor, student and field liaison are involved in an attempt to remedy the situation.
10. Grades are assigned by the faculty member teaching the course attached to the student's practicum placement based on consultation from the Field Instructor and the practicum evaluation.
11. It is expected that students will participate in the end of semester/year assessment of the student's work via a discussion of the evaluation between the student and Field Instructor, before the evaluation is completed and submitted to the school.
12. Students are expected to follow the **NASW Code of Ethics** regarding professional agency behavior.
13. Students are expected to abide by the confidentiality requirements set forth by the program.
14. Students in Theory, Practice and Field I, II, III and IV are expected to complete ten Process Recordings per semester, with submission of at least two per month. Field instructors have the authority to increase the number of required process recordings at their discretion.
15. Students are expected to abide by the **Practicum Education Calendar** to the best of their ability. This includes ending placement hours by the approved earliest end date of that semester. Hours (including excess hours) are unable to be transferred from one agency to another.
16. **All pre-placement tasks and requirements must be completed by August 1st prior to the start of the Fall semester. Students who delay the placement process may be instructed to drop the T&P course.**
17. Students are to be mindful that agencies have the right to their own policies regarding the COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccination status may become a factor in determining student placements during individual placement interviews.

## **Field Work Process: Placement, Assignments, and Supervision**

**PLACEMENT** - Throughout the year, the Director of Field Education communicates with agencies that are potential practicum placement sites. Information about the agency is obtained via telephone contacts, visits or written material. Each agency is assessed for its appropriateness for each TPF sequence. Agencies better suited for internship programs in other College majors (Psychology, Women's Studies, Gerontology, Service Learning or Cooperative Education) are referred to the relevant faculty/staff.

The process for placement of the student begins once the student has been accepted into the Master of Social Work Program and has confirmed their intent to enroll (IE) in the TPF sequence that correlates with their academic standing. After the student has confirmed their IE status, they are enrolled in the Tevera platform where they will be prompted to complete the **MSW Field Placement Application**, submit an updated resume, and complete a COVID waiver and meeting acknowledgment task. The platform establishes a fee subject to change which is directly charged to the student's bill. Once the application is completed, the student is interviewed by the Director of Field Education or MSW Field Coordinator who is responsible for developing and coordinating the MSW practicum placements. **All pre-placement tasks and requirements must be completed by August 1st prior to the start of the Fall semester. Students who delay the placement process may be instructed to drop the T&P course.**

Student interests as well as special problems are identified during this meeting and potential placements are discussed. The Director of Field Education contacts specific agencies based on the student's needs. The student is assigned to an agency during the spring semester prior to their planned practicum placement. The student is expected to connect with the agency for an interview and then notify the field education department as to the results of the interview.

A student's first placement coordinated by the field education department is associated with a student's foundation year which includes the first sequence of Theory, Practice, and Field courses. Students are assigned to one placement for the academic year, and expected to maintain the position with the agency for the duration of two semesters. The second practicum placement during the advanced year is associated with the second sequence of TPF. Once again, students are expected to maintain their position throughout the academic year. If a third placement is granted for special circumstances, hours are unable to be transferred due to the inability to perform effective evaluation. The field education department is not responsible for facilitating more than three placements for each individual student.

**ASSIGNMENTS** - Student assignments will differ depending on the level/focus of the TPF sequence (as described above), the agency, and according to specific student learning needs. Both TPF sequences provide the pinnacle learning experience for students to develop micro practice skills. They are expected to function as a practitioner and not an observer. This does not mean that we expect them to be using advanced skills in sophisticated counseling, but they should get the opportunity to work with individuals, families and small groups.

The student is viewed as a part of the agency and attendance at staff meetings, in-service training programs, and clinical team meetings should be expected of the student if these meetings are held on the days the student is in practicum.

The TPF sequences, which run concurrently with the practicum placements, focus on the problem-solving model of the helping process. Students are expected to apply the following concepts to their work with client systems in their placements, both in their foundation year and in a more in-depth manner for their concentration year:

- Engaging with client system(s);
- Identifying the problem(s);
- Data gathering - bio, psycho, social, spiritual history;
- Completing an assessment - summarizing and understanding causation while also considering alternate intervention plans;
- Developing an action or intervention plan;
- Contracting with the client system(s);
- Intervening - in an array of social work roles including: educator, enabler, advocate, broker, counselor, and case manager;
- Evaluating the interventions;
- Identifying literature and research studies which justify the intervention method chosen; and
- Terminating with the client system.

In order for students to experience the "helping process" with a client system, it is necessary for part of their assignment to be working with an "ongoing" client, an individual, family, or group experience which extends for several months. It should be understood that at the beginning of the practicum placement experience, the student may not have the skill set necessary to intervene with many clients.

By the end of the first month the student should have assignments that they can recognize as "theirs" and not just observing someone else's work. In order for the student to complete the Case Study assignment in TPF I and TPF III he/she should be assigned an individual case as early in the semester as possible. In this course, also, if the agency practice is such that the needs of the clients necessitate more advanced skills than are held by the students, we encourage the use of teaming with an experienced worker and a student. In this case the student works on a part of a case or assists in a group or family intervention.

**SUPERVISION** – There are two types of supervisory sessions: task or educationally oriented supervision. The student and Field Instructor may meet together several times during the week. One form of supervisory session is related to task completion. Someone should be available to the student, at most times, as problems and/or emergencies arise. These sessions can be with the Field Instructor or another staff person.

The supervisory session, which is educationally oriented, is between the student and the Field Instructor. It should be at a regularly scheduled time specifically set aside without planned interruptions. The Field Instructor and student should agree on the format of the conference and come prepared to discuss relevant issues. These conferences should not only focus on task

matters but should address student growth. A total of 10 **Process Recordings** per semester are mandatory for students in placement.

If the Field Instructor feels that the student is having difficulty in the supervisory conference and/or is showing evidence of poor quality of work, the appropriate field liaison should be contacted.

It is expected that the field instructor has an MSW from a CSWE accredited school of social work, is a licensed LSW with at least two years of social work experience post MSW, has at least one year of work experience within the agency they are currently supervising a Ramapo MSW student, and is certified in Seminar in Field Instruction (SIFI). Where necessary, supervision may be shared between an educational supervisor who is the LSW Field Instructor and a Task Supervisor. Supervisor and/or Field Instructor should be available for questions and/or problems. Formal supervisory conferences should be held weekly for approximately one hour. The student and field instructor should come to that conference prepared to discuss the student's work. The development of an agenda at the beginning of each session can be helpful in accomplishing the goals of the student and Field Instructor.

We believe it is important for students to prepare and submit written documentation prior to and in preparation for the supervisory conference. Therefore, at least two monthly **Process Recordings** are required, totaling 10 per semester. Field instructors are expected to review this material prior to the supervisory conference. In class, students may discuss process recordings. The field instructor will be asked to comment on the process recordings that the student writes and turns in as classroom assignments. Process recordings should be used to help students assess their own practice.

In addition to focusing on student adjustment to the agency, development of work habits, and task accomplishment, supervisory sessions should include:

- The value and ethical issues presented in the course of practice,
- The student's feeling, reactions and countertransference to the client problems,
- The integration of theory and practice,
- The development of interviewing, assessment, intervention and evaluation skills,
- Role playing of complicated situations,
- On-going assessment of the quality of the student's work, and
- Critique and suggestions on the student's intervention(s).

### **Responsibilities in Field Education**

The Ramapo College Social Work Program, the agency, and the student each have responsibilities in carrying out the objectives of the practicum component of the curriculum.

### **Responsibilities of the College MSW Program**

1. Selection of the student to be placed at the agency is based on the student's educational needs and interests as determined by the social work field team in consultation with the student.
2. Coordinate placements for students not to exceed three individual placements (for special

circumstances). Students are entitled to two unique placements for each of the academic years of the program. One placement will be associated with each of the two TPF sequences. If a third placement is granted for special circumstances, hours are unable to be transferred due to the inability to perform effective evaluation.

3. Provide whatever relevant student background is required by the agency (background, educational needs, interests and aptitudes).
4. Inform the agency of the MSW academic **schedule**.
5. Conduct a class session to teach basic human behavior and social work practice knowledge and values necessary as a base for the practicum placement.
6. Provide a Field Liaison to monitor student progress at the agency. Annual virtual practicum site visits will be conducted. If there are concerns that warrant in-person practicum visits, the field department will conduct these as necessary. Field Liaisons will perform check-in phone call once per semester. Otherwise, contact will be maintained via email, phone calls or through Webex.
7. The field liaison is available to consult with the Field Instructor when the student is having problems in the placement.
8. The Director of Field Education is available for help in problem solving when the Field Liaison is not.
9. Provide the field instructor with appropriate course syllabi.
10. Provide the MSW practicum evaluation form to be completed by the field instructor and the student.
11. Meet with the student periodically on campus to assess student progress and/or problems.
12. Provide meetings/seminars annually for Field Instructors for the purpose of program orientation, teaching supervisory skills, and encouraging agency and field instructor input into the social work curriculum.
13. Make the MSW Practicum Manual available to field instructors and students on the program's website and Tevera, stating the objectives, policies, procedures, and content of the curriculum and practicum.
14. Determine and assign the final grade for each semester of the practicum. The grade is based on the student's performance in meeting the course's expected educational outcomes and the individual learning goals as reflected in the field instructor's written evaluation.
15. Provide Professional Liability Insurance for students while in field placement courses.
16. Provide the Seminar in Field Instruction (SIFI) course every Fall for field instructors who are not yet SIFI certified and who agree to provide field instruction to a student. Further details about the course can be found **here**.

### **Responsibilities of the Agency**

1. Provide assignment and learning experiences which will enable the student to achieve practice competencies.
2. Accept students for placement on a non-discriminatory basis. The agency retains the right to reject individual students who cannot function in the agency's program.
3. Provide resources and facilities for carrying out assignments, office and desk space, a telephone, supplies, and agency vehicles for home visits (if deemed appropriate by the

Director of Field Education).

4. Reimburse student for expenses incurred while on agency business, such as home and agency visits, group activity supplies, etc.
5. Provide student with a Field Instructor with an MSW degree from an accredited school of social work, as well as a LSW and SIFI certification.
6. Provide an alternate supervisor if the Field Instructor is to be absent from the agency on a practicum placement day.
7. Provide approximately 45 minutes to one hour, weekly, of individual, supervision focusing on the professional growth and development of the student as well as on agency assignments.
8. Student should be oriented to the agency's structure, function, services, and personnel.
9. Coordinate practicum placement hours so they do not interfere with class times.
10. Facilitate the student's integration of classroom knowledge with practicum .
11. Notify the Field Liaison, as soon as possible, of any problems in student performance or in meeting expectations, and working collaboratively on their resolution.
12. Provide ongoing feedback and evaluation to the student, and guide the student in development of her/his capacity for self-evaluation.
13. The student and Field Instructor should negotiate the student's vacation schedule for the college's winter and spring breaks. During the winter break (one month during December and January) students should be allowed at least two weeks for vacation.
14. The field instructor must complete the **MSW Learning Contract** with the student during the first few weeks of practicum placement and submit it to the school by the designated date of the **Practicum Education Calendar**.
15. Engage the student in a formal evaluation conference at the end of each semester assessing the student's performance, strengths and weaknesses, and provide a direction for future professional growth and development.
16. Complete a written evaluation of the student's performance at the end of each semester. Share the final evaluation for signature with the student.
17. Participate in workshops, seminar/meetings held on the college campus for orientation and training of field instructors.
18. If the agency's needs or expectations require the student to extend their practicum hours beyond the MSW academic calendar, this must be communicated to the Director of Field Education in the development/coordination phase of the practicum placement process and must be reiterated to the student upon initial interview with the agency.

### **Responsibilities of the Student**

1. Use the practicum experience as a positive opportunity for professional growth and development.
2. Respect the confidential nature of the case materials they are working on. Clients are not to be discussed with friends, family, or in the dormitories. Cases, appropriately disguised, may be discussed in social work classes, where all students will treat, as confidential, all information presented by others.
3. Know and utilize the social work **Code of Ethics** as a base for interactions with client systems, agency personnel, and the community. Sexual harassment of students by agency

personnel, and of clients by students is a violation of the Code of Ethics and the law.

4. Act in a responsible and professional manner.
5. Dress appropriately according to the nature of the practicum setting and per guidelines from the field instructor or agency policy.
6. Follow assigned practicum placement hours. Call the agency immediately if you will be delayed.
7. Call the agency if you are unable to report to practicum. If the field instructor is not available at the time of the call, leave a message and follow it up with an email to both field instructor and task supervisor (if applicable).
8. Assume responsibility for self-direction of learning.
9. Assess your knowledge and skills in the field of social work, and identify with your field instructors the assignments and tasks which will help you develop the necessary competencies.
10. Prepare written material to complete the **Learning Contract** (on Tevera) with your field instructor the first few weeks in placement.
11. Accept responsibility for management of workload and completion of assignments.
12. Read and abide by agency procedures and practices for service provision, working hours, lunch, and breaks.
13. Do not schedule placement hours which interfere with classes at school. Make appropriate accommodations to attend mandatory **seminar sessions** held once per month.
14. Negotiate vacation time with your field instructor the first week of placement.
15. Be available and prepared for regular individual and group supervision by reviewing the previous week's work, writing recordings when assigned, and prepare questions and issues for discussion in session.
16. Participate fully in activities planned for students including conferences, visits with other agency personnel, seminars, etc.
17. Keep standard agency recordings. Student's whose writing skills do not meet the standards needed by the agency are expected to get tutoring. Faculty will help the student to arrange this.
18. Participate in the completion of the **End of Semester Evaluation** (on Tevera) of your progress by preparing input for the evaluation conference that includes a self-assessment of your work.
19. Students have a responsibility to the clients served by the agency. This includes the responsibility to treat the information received in a confidential and respectful manner and to be sensitive about personal feelings.
20. IMPORTANT – Once students enter into their placements, a full-time job, with day-time hours, cannot be maintained.\*
21. Students are expected to abide by the **Practicum Education Calendar** to the best of their ability. This includes ending field placement hours and completing all assignments by the approved earliest end date of that semester. Hours (including excess hours) are unable to be transferred from one agency to another.

## Criteria for Selecting Agencies

A wide range of agencies is utilized for placements taking into consideration student interest, level of skill required, and geographic location. Agencies are selected based on their ability to provide students with breadth, range, and a variety of learning experiences; generalist or advanced social work practice; willingness to provide staff resources for appropriate supervision; and commitment to cooperative efforts with the program's standards for selecting practicum agencies as articulated in the [MSW Student Handbook](#) and this MSW Practicum Education Manual. Selected agencies must:

- Be willing to execute a written agreement with the social work program;
- Be committed to supporting graduate social work education;
- Be committed to social work values and support the NASW *Code of Ethics*;
- Be willing to involve student interns as an integral part of their staff;
- Be willing to permit their field instructors to attend joint meetings/seminars with the Ramapo College social work faculty;
- Be willing to provide the student with a field instructor who holds the MSW degree, LSW, Seminar in Field Instruction (SIFI) certification and two years post-MSW degree experience, at least one year at the placement agency;
- Allow the field instructor enough time to meet with each student for approximately 45 minutes to one hour a week in individual supervision;
- Allow the field instructor enough time to prepare for supervision and to complete written evaluations of student growth and performance;
- Provide space for the student to hold interviews/meetings with clients, and a desk and telephone space for materials and collateral work;
- Be willing to accept students for practicum placement without discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, age, creed, religion ethnic or national origin, physical challenges, or sexual orientation;
- Provide programs and services appropriate for beginning level, generalist, professional and/or advanced social work practice, that provide students with service delivery assignments appropriate to the specific practicum course;
- Provide students with an opportunity to work with clients from diverse backgrounds;
- Understand that continuation of the placement is based on positive evaluations from students and field liaisons in previous years.

Agencies not already in partnership with Ramapo's Social Work Program may be interested in taking on interns. These agencies have access to an [Agency Interest Form](#) through the Field Education [website](#) which notifies the Field Education Department of their interest.

## Criteria for Selecting Field Instructors

Field instructors are selected on the basis of having the following qualifications:

- An earned MSW degree from an accredited School of Social Work for supervision of students ;
- A valid/active LSW in the state of New Jersey or LMSW in the state of New York;



- A minimum of two years of post-MSW social work employment and demonstrated competence in social work;
- A minimum of one year's work experience in the placement agency;
- An interest in teaching and providing regular supervision to a student;
- A commitment to MSW education;
- An ability to serve as a field instructor for the full length of the practicum (two concurrent semesters);
- Formal training in supervision techniques (*Seminar in Field Instruction Course*) and prior supervisory experience;
- Willingness to participate in field instructor supervisory training offered by RCNJ at no cost;
- Willingness to allocate a minimum of 45 minutes to one hour weekly for face to face or virtual supervision with the student, time to prepare for supervisory sessions, time to work with the student to prepare the educational contract, and time to complete the evaluation; and
- Understanding that continuation is based on positive evaluations from students and field liaisons in previous years.

### **Placing and Monitoring of Student Placements**

The process for placing students in the practicum locations begins as students are notified of their acceptance into the MSW program which usually occurs in January or February of the Spring semester. The acceptance letter contains instructions to enroll in **Tevera**, the Field Education Department's online field placement monitoring platform. Students are enrolled in Tevera, where they will be prompted to complete the **MSW Field Placement Application**. The platform establishes a fee subject to change which is directly charged to the student's bill. Students are also encouraged to visit the Fieldwork Program's page on the Social Work Website. This website explains the process of obtaining a practicum placement. Students find a list of practicum sites which have been used by the Social Work Program for the past few years. The practicum list includes the web sites of any agency if available. In the procedures outline, students are introduced to the purpose of the placement, required hours, supervision and task expectations, and the placement procedures.

Once the students have completed the field application, they schedule an interview with the Director of Field Education or MSW Field Coordinator. The field education department is available to assist students who may require guidance in completing the application. During the interview, students are asked to describe previous social service internship and employment experiences. Their interests for client populations for practicum placement are elicited. Students are asked to re-read the **NASW Code of Ethics** and attest with their signature an agreement to practice within the guidelines of the code. They are informed that many agencies require criminal background or fingerprint tests. In addition they sign a statement allowing the field education faculty to talk with potential field instructors about them. Students are also required to review the *Acknowledgement Assumption Of Risk, Release And Waiver Related To Covid-19 Pandemic*. After a careful review of the student's application, the field education department, taking into consideration areas of practice or client populations that interest the student and geographic or other personal issues which might influence the choice of placement, an internship

is assigned. Students are not promised a specific agency, and they are informed that the placement will be finalized prior to the beginning of the fall semester.

The field education department determines the most appropriate placement for each student. The Field Practicum Database enables the field department to identify appropriate agencies by course, areas of practice, and location. Agencies which have been used in the past are contacted first. When new agencies are needed either because of student request for a specific population or for geographic reasons, wherever possible, agencies are visited to assess its ability to provide the appropriate experience and practicum instruction. If students have a specific agency in mind, students are required to complete an **Agency Information Form** to provide the Field Department with appropriate contact information prior to or during the practicum placement interview. After contact has been made, the agency is provided information about the internship programs. New agencies will be prompted to sign an **Agency Affiliation Agreement** with the Social Work Program. New agencies with an assigned student are invited to attend Field Instructor Orientation held every Fall semester.

Once an agency is identified for a student, the student is contacted via Tevera, through a formal letter informing him/her of the assignment and the requirement to interview at the agency. The agency simultaneously informed of the assignment through a formal letter also sent on Tevera. The student and field instructor are given a time frame within which to hold the interview and to report back to the placement coordinator. It is expected that unless there is a major problem the placement will be finalized. If the student is unsuccessful during the interview process with the agency, the field education department will attempt to coordinate a second interview with a different agency. The field education department has the right to deny a third interview considering the inability of the student to secure a placement. No further placement coordination will occur beyond three attempts for each student.

The prime responsibility for monitoring student placements is that of the field liaison who maintains contact with agency field instructors and/or task supervisors. Throughout both semesters of **TPFI-II** and **TPFIII-IV**, students present their field placements in various formats. Students are encouraged to use their practicum experiences as examples of the topics discussed in class. Written assignments in the TPF sequences, such as the Case Study, assess students' work with clients. Monitoring also takes place via the individual contacts the field liaison has with students at the college and agency visits with the student and field instructor. The **Learning Contract**, completed early in the semester is discussed at the agency visit to determine if the student and field instructor are utilizing the planned assignments and working on the identified objectives. Field liaisons conduct at least one site visit per academic year. **Check-in** phone calls are performed once per semester in order to complete the check-in form to evaluate progress and professional performance. Throughout the academic year the Director of Field Education requests updates from the field liaisons regarding potential problems at the agencies. The Director of Field Education has the opportunity via contacts at the field instructor orientation and site visits.

### **Maintaining Field Liaison Contacts with Agencies**

Student placements at agencies are monitored by the field liaison which is carried out by either professional field staff, the MSW Field Coordinator, or the Director of Field Education. Each fall

the field liaisons are reminded in writing of the policies related to field contacts. One site visit will be conducted over the course of the academic year, or more, if there are concerns that warrant additional field visits. Field Liaisons will evaluate the student's progress of completing field education requirements and overall professional performance by means of a check-in phone call once per semester. Otherwise, contact will be maintained via email, phone calls or through Webex. Contact between the field liaison and the field instructor is to enable the field instructor to ask questions about the school, the course, or their role as a supervisor which might not be appropriate for discussion in front of the student. The field liaison is responsible for:

- Interpreting the MSW curriculum for the individual field instructor;
- Consulting with the field instructor in supervisory techniques as needed;
- Assuring that the educational focus of the placement is maintained;
- Assuring that time expectations and practice assignments are appropriate and, when not appropriate assisting the field instructor in developing other assignments;
- Participating in the development of the student's practice goals and objectives, and the **MSW Student Learning Contract**;
- Reviewing the student's **process recordings** during site visits or supervision (if provided);
- Evaluating student progress and professional performance through **Check-Ins** at least once per semester.
- Assessing the communication between the student and field instructor and, where problematic, facilitating problem solving;
- Responding to problems raised by the student, field instructor, or as identified by the liaison;
- Assessing the experience provided by the agency and transmitting that information to the Director of Field Education via formal or informal mechanisms;
- Asking for consultation from the Director of Field Education if problems remain unresolved between the student, field instructor, and liaison;
- Informing the Director of Field Education of problematic agencies and/or field instructors; and
- Bringing student practicum problems to the Field Department meetings.

### **Field Instructor Orientation and Training**

Orientation begins with the agency or program director at the time the Director of Field Education makes initial contact with the agency. Further discussion occurs either via telephone, Webex, or visits that the Director of Field Education makes to the agency. Approximately two programs for field instructors are held on campus annually. The purposes of these sessions include:

- Orientation for new field instructors or experienced instructors who are new to Ramapo College,
- Ongoing training in supervisory issues, and
- General social worker in-service training

The first orientation is held during the beginning of the semester. Field instructors are introduced to faculty and provided with an overview of the Social Work Program where practicum

expectations and policies are described. Information about courses, class assignments, and reading materials are presented and methods for orienting the student to the agency are discussed. Field instructors are given guidance in helping students to identify learning goals and objectives, and in completing the **MSW Learning Contract**. Instruction is provided to field instructors outlining specific content from the TPF curricula; for example, Evidence Based Practices and Family Psycho-Education are reviewed. Time is provided to allow field instructors to share their ideas for student assignments. This serves two purposes. First, it helps field instructors to understand the range of possible practicum experiences for students. Second, it enables field liaisons to identify agencies where there may be potential problems with assignments. The SIFI course is taught through an online/hybrid model every fall semester. It is a 14 week course that provides new field instructors with the knowledge and support to provide quality practicum instruction to their students. Participants in the SIFI are provided with a substantial amount of continuing education credits and are SIFI certified for the remainder of their professional careers. Every spring there is a *Field Instructor Appreciation Day*, where relevant social work topics are presented for further professional development. Field instructors are also notified about wide range of presentations, teleconferences, and workshops held at the college serving their continuing education needs.

### **Field Instructor Input into the Program**

There are several mechanisms for ensuring Field Instructor input into the program. At the end of each academic year, the Director of Field Education sends Field Instructors the **Field Instructor Evaluation of the Program** survey. This evaluation is further discussed in the evaluation section of the practicum manual.

At each on-campus orientation and training session, Field Instructors are asked for feedback regarding students, the field office, and field liaisons. Time is allotted to discuss field instructors' concerns about the program. The program also receives feedback from field instructors through the field liaison process and frequent interchange between field instructors and the Director of Field Education.

### **Student Orientation to Field Placement**

#### **ON CAMPUS**

Before practicum placements begin, the students attend MSW Student Orientation which is conducted by the MSW Director, the Director of Field Education and MSW Social Work faculty. Along with academic and programmatic presentation, the students are oriented to field education. In this orientation the purpose of practicum placement, behavioral expectations, and social work supervision are described. Students have a chance to discuss all aspects of entering the social work discipline. Expectations for the first few days in placement are discussed.

#### **IN THE FIELD**

Students arrive at placement both eager and anxious about this new experience. The experience the student has during the first few days of placement sets an important tone for the year. As social workers, we are familiar with expectations of agency based practice, but students have had

little experience with this type of work. It is important that students are oriented to the agency as soon as they begin their practicum placement.

Orientation and preparation for orientation takes place prior to the student beginning at the agency, during the first week and throughout the semester. Some of the issues that should be addressed in the orientation process are:

### **PRIOR TO STUDENT COMING TO AGENCY**

- Determine which office, desk space and telephone student will use;
- Stock desk space with supplies;
- Make list of agency staff and relevant phone numbers available;
- Determine the first day the student will begin;
- Assure that field instructor will be present and very available in agency on the day the student begins;
- Circulate memo to staff informing them of student's arrival;
- Develop a written schedule for the formal orientation sessions;
- Collect agency related reading material to make available to the student during the first few weeks of placement. Appropriate material should include agency brochures, annual reports, procedural and personnel manuals, professional articles written about your type of agency and the client population;
- Make sure the student has directions to the agency and knows where to park for the day.

### **THE FIRST FEW DAYS**

- Meet student as s(he) arrives at agency;
- Introduce student to clerical and receptionist staff;
- Arrange for key supervisory staff or administrators to meet with the student;
- Introduce student to staff - This could be an ongoing process. Meeting too many people the first day could be overwhelming;
- Tour agency - During the first week tour the key parts to which the student will be relating. Later on in semester the student should tour the whole agency;
- Develop a list of abbreviations, symbols, acronyms and technical terminology specific to your setting;
- Give student a listing of agency holiday schedule;
- Provide map of agency, city and county (especially if student is expected to make home visits);
- Discuss dress code and other agency rules of behavior;
- Show students how to obtain supplies and how to use the phone, copy machine etc.;
- Establish a schedule of tasks, meetings, and expectations of student and field instructor for the first two weeks;
- Provide instructions for completing agency statistical reports, sample forms, outlines for recordings and dictating equipment;

- Meet with student several times during the first week or two. Inform the student of the person that s(he) can go to for questions in your absence. If you will be out of the office during the student's day at the agency assign a person to look out for the student;
- Arrange for student to observe each step that the client goes through with the agency. Observe what each staff person does and how each relate to the other;
- Meet with student to discuss potential assignments, process of supervision and expected student preparation for supervision (recordings).

### **ONGOING ORIENTATION**

- Provide student, via reading material or interviews with administrators, with information on history of agency, organizational structure, funding sources, budget, policies and programs, and organizational chart;
- Have student visit community agencies which are utilized by your program;
- Share references of programmatically relevant readings;
- Allow student to participate in staff or clinical team meetings; and
- Allow students to observe an agency board of directors or advisory board meeting.

### **Developing Practicum Tasks and Assignments with Students and the Learning Contract**

In order to help the student and Field Instructor focus on the educational purpose of the practicum experience, all MSW students in an internship are expected to execute a learning contract between the student and Field Instructor. The student's and Field Instructor's responsibilities to each other and the student's learning goals and experiences are spelled out and signed by both. An additional purpose of the student-Field Instructor contract is to provide a model for student-client practice contracts. There are unique Learning Contracts for first year students (Foundation Practice Behaviors) and second year students (Advanced Practice Behaviors)

The **Learning Contract** has several components. The first includes the names of the student, agency, and field instructor. The expectations of the student in terms of work days and time are then defined. The general programs of the agency in which the student will work and types of clients are listed. Day and time of supervision and expectations for preparation for the supervisory session are detailed. Tasks and assignments, which should be accomplished during the internship, the learning opportunities the student will have to reach this goal, and the evidence of accomplishment are spelled out. Tasks and assignments are geared towards the practice behaviors (and advanced practice behaviors for second year students) that pertain to one of nine EPAS competencies.

The MSW program at Ramapo College is aligned with EPAS competencies and practice behaviors which all students in our program are expected to master by the end of their specific placement. But to treat all students the same is to overlook individual student needs. Therefore, the learning contract developed for the student needs to consider both the general expectations and their skill level. As in social work practice, we start where the student is.

During the student's first few weeks at the agency, both the student and the field instructor should be developing an assessment of the knowledge and skills of the student. At this time the student has limited ideas about their learning goals or about professional expectations. They have thoughts about the kinds of clients they might like to work with, and many have some exalted images of what they will be able to do with clients.

### **Evaluation — Assessment of Field Outcomes**

Evaluation of student strengths, limitations and progress is a significant component of the role of the field instructor. It is one that is frequently troublesome for social workers. Where the social worker is encouraged to be non-judgmental, the teacher must be able to specify quality through grades. The Field Instructor must attempt to be both at the same time. Even though the field instructor is not the person who assigns the letter grade, the assessment material provides the support for the grade assigned by the faculty member. The student, as well as the field instructor feels anxious about the evaluation process which is why we frequently put it off until the last minute. Evaluation at the last minute defeats an educational purpose.

### **Ongoing Evaluation**

The purpose of evaluation is to give direction to learning. Through evaluation, the student learns how to complete a task correctly and works towards achieving learning objectives. In order for evaluation to serve this learning purpose, it cannot be done in a once a semester conference focused only on assessment. Evaluation should be an ongoing process. It begins the first day of placement and ends with the end-of-the-year documentation of the student's achievements and need for future growth.

In order to evaluate the student's growth or lack of growth it is necessary to have a baseline of data about the student's skills at the beginning of placement. The Learning Contract is therefore an important tool to utilize early on. It can serve as part of the base for the ongoing and end of semester discussions regarding growth. Student self-awareness is necessary to enable him/her to participate in the evaluation process. Field Instructors must be aware of the practicum course objectives in addition to the individual student's objectives. Student progress and professionalism are also evaluated once per semester through field liaison check-in phone calls for the completion of the **check-in form**.

It is important for the Field Instructor to share their perceptions about the student's practice in weekly supervision. Students should not be surprised at the end of a semester with a comment about poor quality of work, which has not been previously discussed. Students need to have support for the things they are doing well, in addition to specific problematic areas. The feedback to the student should be specific. During the beginning stages of practicum placement, the Field Instructor and student should discuss how on-going and end of semester evaluation would take place. Expectations for performance and for supervisory conferences should be spelled out verbally and also put in writing in the Learning Contract. For example: will the Field Instructor expect the student to write process recordings or make audio tapes of client sessions as the way the Field Instructor will assess student's interviewing skills?

## Practicum Site and Placement Evaluation

Practicum sites are evaluated by the student, the field liaison, and the Director of Field Education. Each assesses the agency and field instructor based on its consistency with program objectives. The student and field liaison evaluations of agencies are completed early enough to allow planning for the next year and making adjustments as needed. The **Student Evaluation of Agency** includes questions related to program objectives such as the knowledge base of the field instructor, and his/her ability to help the student integrate theory and practice, the ability of the agency to offer experiences with clients from a variety of cultures, agency practice consistent with the *NASW Code of Ethics*, and the compatibility of the placement with the course objectives. The field liaison is able to evaluate the site through standard site visits. Students are also asked to complete the **Student Evaluation of Field Department**, evaluating their experiences with the field education department, including the practicum placement process and ongoing support throughout the academic year.

Field Instructors are asked to evaluate the practicum placement process, quality of practicum materials produced by the program, quality and usefulness of Field Instructor orientation sessions, performance of the Faculty Field Liaison, and effectiveness of the practicum evaluations in assessing students' work. A second area of evaluation asks questions about the program's preparation of students for placement in terms of appropriate knowledge, social work values and ethics, and communication skills. A third section of the survey asks Field Instructors to assess how well they feel our students are meeting program objectives. In addition, field instructors are encouraged to raise issues of concern and make suggestions for change.

## End of Semester Evaluation

The end of semester formal evaluation, or the **Assessment of Foundation/Advanced Practice Behaviors**, is not the role of the Field Instructor alone. This is a shared process. If more than one staff member is involved with the student, then those people should participate in the evaluation process. Students should play a significant role in this evaluation process. The end of semester evaluation assesses on the abilities and expectations outlined in CSWE's nine competencies pertaining to student learning outcome and practice behaviors. This evaluation tool is delivered to field instructors electronically via Tevera and follows the structure of the end of semester evaluation listed below. There are unique evaluations for first year students (Foundation Practice Behaviors) and second year students (Advanced Practice Behaviors)

1. All practicum documents will be submitted and stored online, with our Field Education Management software, Tevera. Field instructors will be able to access the evaluation form on Tevera at least one month before the end of the semester, giving the Field Instructor, other staff and the student time to review and prepare.
2. The Field Instructor and student should prepare their thoughts and comments separately. Both should think of examples of the student's practice to support the assessment of their strengths and weaknesses. **THE FIELD INSTRUCTOR SHOULD NOT FORMALLY COMPLETE THE FINAL COPY BEFORE THE CONFERENCE WITH THE STUDENT.**



3. Field Instructor and students should schedule a conference to discuss the evaluation at a time separate from the usual supervisory session. A minimum of an hour and a half will be necessary to complete the discussion. Do not allow interruptions during this meeting.
4. Field Instructors and students should contribute to each point on the evaluation. WHILE IT IS THE FIELD INSTRUCTOR WHO COMPLETES THE FINAL EVALUATION, THE STUDENT'S SELF-ASSESSMENT AND COMMENTS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED. Be open to making changes in the evaluation where there is evidence to do so.
5. During this conference, implications for future growth and learning objectives should be discussed. If this evaluation is conducted during the middle of a TPF sequence, then the evaluation could be used as the basis for a new or revised learning contract. If this evaluation were at the end of the year it could be the time to discuss the type of reference the field instructor would write.
6. The field instructor should have the final evaluation completed online and electronically "signed". It should then be shown to the student, who will counter-sign the evaluation in Tevera. Once the student co-signs the evaluation, this will serve as proof that the student has reviewed and accepts the formal evaluation.
7. The evaluation should be submitted through Tevera as outlined in the directive email sent to the field instructor ahead of time.
8. If the student disagrees strongly enough with points made on the evaluation the student has the right to add a written statement.

## **Endings**

### **The Student with the Agency**

Ending the practicum experience is as important an issue to consider as is the beginning of the placement. The manner in which ending of the placement is handled is important for the student personally, and also serves as a model for how the student could handle termination with client systems. The student will be dealing with feelings about terminating with their clients, the agency, and the Field Instructor. Second year students will also be facing the loss of their role as students and will be confronting graduation, seeking employment or assuming other roles. During the last two to three months of the semester student reactions to these endings should be discussed in supervisory conferences.

The themes involved in worker (student) - client endings are similar to those involved in student-field instructor endings. Field Instructors often have as difficult time (if not more) with endings as do students. Lack of attention to discussion of student-agency-field instructor ending issues because of field instructor's time problems or anxiety provides a negative role model for student endings with client systems.

The process of ending with client systems involves the assessment of the client's growth and changes made. So too with students, the ending of the field placement should involve a mutual discussion of the experience. Identifying the types of assignments, and supporting the areas of positive change will help to maintain the student's growth.

Formal recognition that the student is leaving the agency is meaningful. During the last week or day of placement the field instructor, and/or agency staff with whom the student has been involved, should in some way show signs of gratitude for the student's efforts during the year. This does not need to be a major expression, but the student does appreciate this.

### **Student Performance Issues**

Performance issues will be addressed in the following manner:

- Student performance will be reviewed in supervision. Performance problems will be clearly identified (orally or in writing) by the agency field instructor and/or field liaison. Specific examples of problem area and recommendations for improvement will be made (if applicable), and consequences of failure to meet expectations will be communicated to the student in a timely manner.
- At any time during the internship, a single event or if problem behaviors persist and/or are serious, the field instructor will contact the field liaison for a consultation. The student also must advise the field liaison if he/she has concerns about the internship and/or the field instructor. The student will also advise the field liaison if there are concerns about performance issues raised from feedback received from the agency field instructor.
- The field liaison will offer guidance to the student and/or agency field instructor by telephone or in person. If a visit to the agency is needed in addition to the annual site visit, this meeting may include separate time with the student and with the agency field instructor. The field liaison will also conduct check-in phone calls once per semester.
- Based on the discussion with the field liaison, a written **Success Plan** to outline performance improvement, will be developed jointly by the student, field liaison and agency field instructor and signed by all parties, with copies distributed. Consequences for the noncompliance will be included. will be developed jointly by the student, field liaison and agency field instructor and signed by all parties, with copies distributed. Consequences for the noncompliance will be included.
- Midyear and final evaluations must demonstrate improved performance to pass the course.
- Poor performance or a single event, which may place clients at risk, is unprofessional or unethical may result in a termination, at any time from the internship. The agency supervisor and the field director make this decision jointly. As agencies supervise students voluntarily, it is the right of any agency to terminate an internship with no prior notice if they feel they can no longer work with the student.
- If the student's performance does not meet minimum expectations by the due date of the final evaluation, the agency field instructor will complete the narrative portion of the evaluation specifying the reasons for the students' failure to meet expectations, and the quantitative portion would clearly indicate the inadequate or unsatisfactory areas of performance.
- The agency field educator has the option of recommending a grade of "I", Incomplete to the Office of Field Education on the evaluation form.
- The College will determine what grade to assign for the students' final grade
- If the grade of "Incomplete", is assigned the following will occur:

- If the student is demonstrating significant progress in the identified problem areas of performance, but has yet to obtain the goals set, an “I” grade may be assigned and the student would remain in that internship for a period of time specified by the agency field instructor and the field liaison. If the student consistently completes satisfactory work at the end of the specified time, a grade change will be submitted, changing the “I” to a letter grade. Students may also receive an “I” if they have not completed the necessary hours for their Field Education course due to absences. In these cases the student, agency field instructor and field liaison reach an agreement about how the hours will be completed before the grade is changed to a letter grade.
- In some cases, it may not be appropriate for the student to remain in the same internship. The student would complete the internship at a different agency to be determined by the Office of Field Education. A second internship would be contingent on disclosure of the student's performance problems and a copy of the last field evaluation form will be provided to the new potential field instructor. The Office of Field Education reserves the right to not offer a second internship based on student performance issues and/or the student's refusal to allow the College representatives to share information about the termination with the new internship agency.
- If the student is assigned to a new internship after earning an “Incomplete” in the first internship, the student will be required to complete the full number of hours required for the course. There are exceptional cases of illness where a physician has documented a reason for hours missed or in cases where there were extenuating circumstances at the internship, and the Office of Field Education will negotiate with the student “credited hours” from the first internship. The student may need to re-register for the related course. The Office of Field Education in consultation with the professor of the related course, may assign a failing grade, based upon the recommendation and documentation of the agency field instructor. This grade and the subsequent termination from the internship are based on the student's performance, which has violated policies of the agency, Ramapo College's Social Work Program, and/or any standards set by the NASW Code of Ethics. In these situations a student must:
  - Complete a typed written request for another internship stating their reasons and responsibility for failure in the prior internship, along with how they plan to resolve problem area. (ex: attend a seminar on ethical dilemmas, boundary setting, etc.). This request is submitted to the Director of Field Education within 60 days from the date of the termination. The Director of Field Education reviews the letter and all pertinent information jointly with the Assistant Dean/MSW Director for MSW students or the BSW Convener for BSW students. If it is decided that the student will be offered another internship, there would NOT be a grade change of the original "Incomplete" and the entire internship MUST be retaken, with no credit given for previous hours in an internship. The student must re-register for the full credit hours of the course and be responsible for the identified tuition.

At times the College may determine that it is in the best interest of the student not to immediately re-enter another internship. In these cases it may be recommended by the Director of Field Education and the MSW Director or BSW Convener that the student complete certain tasks in order to document the appropriate resolution of difficulties which may have inhibited their performance in the internship. Examples of such actions are taking a course in ethics, engaging

in individual or group therapy for a specified period of time, etc. Any recommendation made will be in writing to the student with specified completion dates.

The Social Work Program reserves the right to deny a student a second or third internship based on student performance issues and other pertinent information.

The student has the right to appeal this grade. The grade appeal will be in accordance with College regulations and Social Work Program policy. Students will not be permitted to register for any social work courses until the grade appeal process for a field education course is complete.

At any point during the above mentioned interventions being executed, it may be deemed necessary by the Director of Field Education and the MSW Director, for the student to be reviewed by the *Academic and Field Review Committee (AFRC)*.

The purpose of the *Academic and Field Review Committee (AFRC)* process is to review and provide a nature of problems or issues concerning students enrolled in the BSW or MSW programs at Ramapo College. The problems or issues include matters related to academic and field education performance, and professional practice ethics and behavior.

If during the coordinating of field placements, a student attends two interviews with two different agencies and does not get accepted by either agency, the *Academic and Field Review Committee (AFRC)* must explore the cause(s) for said student not being accepted, before the field department considers coordinating a third possible field placement for the student.

### **Procedures for AFRC**

1. Referrals of concerns that come to the attention of the AFRC are to be made to the student's Field Liaison or Faculty Advisor who, in turn, notifies and consults with the appropriate program and site directors and the referring faculty member about the referral.
2. The result of the consultation will be a determination as to whether to initiate the AFRC process. The individual making the original referral will be notified of that decision.
3. When the decision is to initiate the AFRC process, the Faculty Advisor contacts the AFRC Chair and the student to inform them that an AFRC hearing will be convened.
4. The AFRC Chair will meet with the student and provide information regarding the AFRC process, what to expect from a hearing, and who will attend. The Chair will inform the student that he or she has the right to exclude the student member from the hearing and that the exercise of that right must be made in writing to the Chair.
5. The hearing will be convened by the Chair as soon as it can be arranged. The Hearing Panel will consist of the Chair, two faculty panelists, and one student panelist (unless the student undergoing review requests that a student panelist not be included).

If any student receives a failing grade on their practicum evaluation, or is released from their placement after all of the above mentioned interventions and procedures have been executed, the final grade for that correlated practicum course cannot be higher than a "D."

## Termination

If a student's academic or non-academic performance is deemed unsuitable for continuation in the program, the Program Director will convene a meeting of the social work faculty to review the student's academic record and other relevant materials. If the faculty votes to move forward with terminating the student from the program the following procedures are followed:

1. The Program Director, after consulting with social work faculty, informs the student verbally and in writing that he/she is being terminated from the Social Work Program. The letter to the student will include reasons supporting this action and make the student aware that he/she has the right to appeal this decision.
2. If the student chooses to appeal, he/she must make this request in writing to the Program Director within two weeks of receiving the Program Director's letter.
3. Following the student's request for an appeal, the Program Director will arrange a hearing before the social work faculty where the student may present whatever pertinent materials and arguments are deemed necessary for his/her defense.
4. After hearing the student's appeal and re-examining pertinent information such as the student's academic work, fieldwork performance, and/or behavior, the faculty will vote to sustain or reverse its original recommendation.
5. The Program Director will inform the student in writing of the social work faculty's decision. In the event that the decision remains negative, the student is informed of his/her right to appeal this decision in writing to the School's Dean.
6. In the event of an appeal, the School's Dean will confer with the student and the Program Director, jointly or independently as he or she sees fit, to review all evidence relating to the case, and render a decision either affirming or overruling the decision to terminate. If the Dean renders a decision that affirms the faculty's decision to terminate the student from the program, the student is so notified in writing and informed that he/she has the right to appeal the Dean's decision to the Provost. Conversely, the Program Director has the right to appeal the Dean's decision if it overrules the social work faculty's decision to terminate the student from the program. In either case, a request for an appeal to the Provost must be made in writing.
7. The Provost or his/her designated officer will confer with the student and the Program Director, review pertinent information, and render a final decision.

Students are made aware of the Social Work Program's probation, termination, and appeal procedures through the program's advisement process and the *MSW Student Handbook*.

## **Appendix A**

### **Ramapo College Anti-Discrimination Policy**

<https://www.ramapo.edu/affirmation/complaint-processing-forms/>