

Student Handbook & Field Manual

Master of Social Work Program

California State University, Northridge

2022-2023

Department of Social Work

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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[MSW Website](#)

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I. PREFACE

This manual is intended to cover the academic year as noted on the front cover. Updates and/or changes to this manual will be communicated to students as necessary via email. Core requirements will remain consistent throughout your designated program; however, schedules, curriculum, and some policies and procedures may be adapted.

II. GENERAL INFORMATION

Welcome

Welcome to the Master of Social Work Program at California State University, Northridge in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. I am delighted that you chose to further your education here and encourage you to make the most out of your time in this program. You will be invited to learn and struggle with many new ideas and ethical dilemmas in your courses and field placements, and your faculty are here to support you throughout your journey.

The information provided in this Student Handbook and Field Manual will answer many of your questions regarding the program and its structure. Please use this document, along with the University Catalog, to guide you through your time in the program. The Student Handbook and Field Manual tells you more about faculty, instructors, and staff support people, and details policies and procedures related to curriculum, grades, professional expectations, and field placements. Helpful resources as you matriculate include this document, the [department website](#), the [Graduate Studies Student Handbook](#), your faculty, and peers who will soon become colleagues.

You will have many opportunities to learn and grow with consistent practice, accountability, and critical self-reflection as you prepare to become a professional social worker. You will get out of your program what you put into it, and we look forward to creating collaborative teaching and learning experiences with you.

Dr. Jodi L. Constantine Brown, Chair, Department of Social Work

Community Advisory Board

The Community Advisory Board serves as the official bridge between the Department of Social Work and the community. The Board advises the faculty on issues relevant to the Community/University relationship and serves to support the Department in a variety of ways. They discuss the nature of field instruction and the relationship between class and field. They participate in fundraising efforts and represent the Department at events at the University and in the community. The Chair of the Department and SWS President are the links between the Board, faculty, and student body.

Faculty and Staff

Full-Time Faculty & Grants/Contracts Staff (refer to the [MSW website for bios](#))

Wendy Ashley, Psy.D., LCSW

Eli Bartle, Ph.D., MSW (Emeritus Faculty)

Tiffani Brooks, MSW, LCSW

Jodi Constantine Brown, Ph.D., MSW

Luis O. Curiel, D.S.W., MSW, LCSW

Judith A DeBonis, Ph.D., MSW

Herman L. DeBose, Ph.D., MSW (Emeritus Faculty)

James T. Decker, Ph.D., LCSW (Emeritus Faculty)

Julie Gould, MSW, LCSW

Allen Lipscomb, Psy.D., MSW, LCSW

Susan M. Love, Ph.D., MA, MSW

David McCarty-Caplan, Ph.D., MSW

Katie Mortimer, MSW, LCSW

José Miguel Paez, Ed.D., LCSW

Hyun-Sun Park, Ph.D., MSW

Jose Ramos, Jr., MSW

Steven Sherry, MSW, LCSW

Robin Sims, MSW

Jolene Swain, ACBSW, MSW

Darlene Woo, MSW

- Part-time Lecturers and Field Liaisons: [Refer to the Social Work website for current list.](#)
- Administrative Staff: [Refer to our website for current list.](#)

III. OUR MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

Department of Social Work Mission Statement and Program Goals

The mission of the California State University, Department of Social Work is to prepare professional social workers to be anti-oppressive, socially just agents of change by promoting well-being in urban settings. As an advanced generalist program with a focus on urban communities, the Department will teach and create collaborative learning experiences with students.

Focus

Urban settings describe communities with densely populated areas and a vast array of subcultures. Utilizing a lens that espouses an anti-racist, intersectional, trauma-informed, collaborative perspective, the Department celebrates a strengths-based inclusive identity, emphasized by the shared experiences of community, culture, and location.

Goals

We will:

- Examine and apply an intersectionality, power, and privilege lens to address social, political, and systemic change.
- Empower and be relevant to the diverse needs of the multi-national, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural San Fernando Valley and its surrounding communities.
- Advocate for an equitable and socially just society.
- Enhance critical consciousness through research, practice, and trauma-informed knowledge, values, and skills.

Student Competencies

The purpose of the social work profession is to promote human and community well-being. Guided by a person-in-environment framework, a global perspective, respect for human diversity, and knowledge based on scientific inquiry, the purpose of social work is actualized through its quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the enhancement of the quality of life for all persons, locally and globally Source: [CSWE EPAS](#).

The Council on Social Work Education requires nine Competencies:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Competency 1. | Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior |
| Competency 2. | Engage Anti-racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Practice |
| Competency 3. | Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice |
| Competency 4. | Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice |
| Competency 5. | Engage in Policy Practice |
| Competency 6. | Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities |
| Competency 7. | Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities |
| Competency 8. | Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities |
| Competency 9. | Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities |

Strengths-Based Framework of the CSUN MSW Program

The MSW Program is committed to promoting the well-being of individuals, families, and communities in the urban setting. The Program's mission and goals are grounded in the strengths-based framework and incorporate seven theoretical perspectives and practices. The following seven knowledge bases provided the foundation for the development of our strengths-based framework:

- Social justice perspective
- Ecosystems perspective
- Social constructionism perspective
- Biological, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual theories of development
- Community development practice
- Empowerment-based practice
- Value and multicultural competent practice

Overview of Knowledge Bases

- **Social justice perspective:** Social justice is increasingly described as the organizing value of social work (Swenson, 1999). Van Soest (1995) noted three components of social justice: legal justice (what one owes society), commutative justice (what people owe each other), and distributive justice (what society owes the individual). A commitment to human rights and social justice provides the moral grounding for social work practice and research. These concepts reflect our belief that all people should fully participate in the "culture's construction of the good and the real" (Gergen, 1994, p. 180). They direct social work resources and activities toward people who are oppressed and marginalized. Since respect for basic human rights provides the necessary conditions for a just society, freedom and well-being are the starting points and ultimate criteria by which we judge the value of social work practice and research. Social workers contribute to a just society by helping to create the structural arrangements and social processes in which these fundamental rights are honored, and resources are obtained and distributed in an equitable manner. Theorists and practitioners have increasingly addressed the role of social justice and human rights in social work practice and social work education over the last two decades - such consideration is invigorating and imperative for a profession whose goal is to ensure that economic and social resources are available on an equal basis to all citizens. The valuing of social justice and human rights and the implications of that valuing for the profession underlies the MSW Program at California State University, Northridge and its efforts to enlighten and empower social workers to be active change agents on behalf of those who face adversity or are oppressed. Knowledge and skills related to social justice are fundamental to the curriculum, as is indicated in the course syllabi.
- **Ecosystems perspective:** The conceptual framework of ecosystems perspective "provides a way to comprehend human diversity and explicates the relationship between humans and their environment" (Miley, O'Melia & DeBois, 2010, p. 41). This perspective borrows from two bodies of work: Human Systems and Ecology. Human Systems argues that humans form groups that can be distinguished by their unique way of interacting with each other. Human systems are defined by shared meaning, characteristics and/ or structural arrangements e.g. boundaries

and hierarchy. Furthermore, all human systems are part of a larger system, the system's environment, and may have subsystems (e.g. siblings in a family system). Moreover, membership in social systems influences perceptions, interactions with others, and access to power and resources. Individuals act on and respond to their human systems. "The effects are mutual" (Miley et al., p. 31).

- **Social constructionism perspective:** Social constructionism argues "each of us selectively attends to, interprets and acts on our beliefs about ourselves and the world around us" (Miley et al., p. 28). Furthermore, practicing social workers do not help individuals, families or communities find answers to human problems, but construct solutions (DeJong & Berg, 2001). It shifts the focus from a pathology perspective to a strengths-based, arguing that all humans have the capacity for positive change; change is occurring all the time; small change is generative; cooperation is inevitable; people are resourceful; and that meaning and experience are interactionally constructed (Walter & Peller, 1992).
- **Biological, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual theories of development:** Integrating biological-social-cultural-psychological-spiritual theories of human development in the MSW curriculum, enhances students' insights and knowledge about the human condition. Cicchetti (2010) argues that the emotional/social and behavioral health of human beings are the outcomes of accumulative adaptations to risks and protective factors in a social context. Our program will educate students to identify risks and protective factors, resiliencies and vulnerabilities in human systems and their interactions in promoting or thwarting human development. The focus will not only include individuals and families living in an urban context, but the human systems they interact with (e.g. public policies on childcare). Students will get a foundation in human behavior in the social environment in the first year and a more in-depth understanding of how to apply this knowledge in the advanced year.
- **Community development practice:** A strengths-based perspective views communities as critical human associations. These associations are based on ties of kinship, relationship, and shared experiences in which individuals voluntarily attempt to provide meaning in their lives, meet individual needs, and accomplish personal goals (Brueggeman, 1996). Communities are social systems that may take on various forms, including religious institutions, ethnic and cultural organizations, neighborhoods, and kinship networks. Social workers grounded in a strengths-based approach are cognizant of the interrelatedness of clients' well-being and the conditions in and of the larger community. This theory base helps social workers understand behavior in context and illustrates how systems have an impact on individual social functioning. Strengths based practice stresses that social workers must be involved in strategies aimed at changing the social environments of clients. These strategies include advocacy, empowerment, policy development, and change implementation.
- **Empowerment-based practice:** The strengths perspective has become the principal orientation of much of social work practice over the last decade and provides a thematic direction for the development of our practice approach. Among its most articulate proponents, Dennis Saleebey (2006) states that:

Practicing from a strength's orientation means this – everything you do as a social worker will be predicated, in some way, on helping to discover and embellish, explore and exploit clients' strengths and resources in the service of assisting them to achieve their goals, realize their dreams, and shed the irons of their own inhibitions and misgivings, and society's domination (p. 1).

- **Value and multicultural competent practice:** Developing a strengths-based approach must include knowledge of culturally competent practice. Intercultural understanding has been a mainstay in social work in its efforts to address the needs of all client systems in sensitive and relevant ways. Recent literature has suggested difficulties the concept of cultural competence (Dean, 2001, Dyche & Zayas, 2001; Poole, 1998) and other language has been offered that may be more specific to our goals, such as culturally congruent or culturally relevant practice. Embracing the need to give voice to marginalized communities, the California State University, Northridge MSW curriculum addresses ways for students to learn and practice working with diverse groups of clients that best enable members of those communities to achieve their goals. Diversity may include the above philosophy defines the conceptual parameters and commitments of the program. It articulates the assumptions that grounds our curriculum and outlines our vision of professional social work.

IV. FOUNDATION CURRICULUM

Foundation Design

Course	Course Title	Units
SWRK 501	Human Behavior and Social Environment I	3
SWRK 502	Human Behavior and Social Environment II	3
SWRK 503	Psychosocial Assessment and Diagnostic Formulation	3
SWRK 510	Generalist Social Work Theory & Practice I	3
SWRK 520	Generalist Social Work Practice in Multicultural Settings	3
SWRK 521	Generalist Social Work Theory & Practice II	3
SWRK 522/522P	Foundations of Field Education I	3
SWRK 523/523P	Foundations of Field Education II (may be taken twice for credit)	3
SWRK 525	Social Welfare Policy and Services	3
SWRK 535	Research Methods for Social Work Knowledge & Practice	3

Foundation Courses

For course descriptions, please see the [MSW section in the CSUN Course Catalog \(website\)](#).

V. CONCENTRATION CURRICULUM

Concentration Design

Course	Course Title	Units
SWRK 601	Advanced Social Work Practice with Urban Families I	3
SWRK 602	Advanced Social Work Practice with Urban Families II	3
SWRK 621	Advanced Social Work Practice with Urban Communities	3

SWRK 622/622P	Advanced Field Practicum with Urban Families I	3
SWRK 623/623P	Advanced Field Practice with Urban Families II	3
SWRK 630	Family Crisis, Trauma & Grief	3
SWRK 635	Advanced Skills in Program Evaluation and Research with Urban Families	3
SWRK 645	Urban Social Policy and Advocacy	3
SWRK 650	Elective	3
SWRK 698	Graduate Project (Capstone)	3

Concentration Courses

For course descriptions, please see the [MSW section in the CSUN Course Catalog \(website\)](#).

VI. ETHICAL CONDUCT

Preamble of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW Code of Ethics):

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession's focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attending to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living.

Social workers promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients. "Clients" is used inclusively to refer to individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice. These activities may be in the form of direct practice, community organization, supervision, consultation, administration, advocacy, social and political action, policy development and implementation, education, and research and evaluation. Social workers seek to enhance the capacity of people to address their own needs. Social workers also seek to promote the responsiveness of organizations, communities, and other social institutions to individuals' needs and social problems.

The mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of core values. The core values, embraced by social workers throughout the profession's history, are the foundation of social work's unique purpose and perspective:

Service

Social justice

Dignity and worth of the person

Importance of human relationships

Integrity

Competence

This constellation of core values reflects what is unique to the social work profession. Core values, and the principles that flow from them, must be balanced within the context and complexity of the human experience.

[Read the full NASW Code of Ethics \(website\).](#)

Purpose of the NASW Code of Ethics

NASW Code of Ethics as applied to the MSW Program

It is the expectation of the CSUN MSW Department for students to uphold the NASW Code of Ethics in the classroom and during the field practicum experiences. Please refer to the MSW Field Education Application and the MSW Field Education Student Agreement. Student behavior that is contrary to the guidelines for professional conduct for social workers as specified in the NASW Code of Ethics will be addressed by course instructors and field faculty. Ethical concerns that are not resolved may be reviewed by the Associate Chair, the Department Chair, or a Professionalism & Academic Review Committee (PARC) and could result in dismissal of the student from the program.

VII. UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Department abides by all University policies and procedures.

Non-Discrimination Policy

CSUN is comprised of individuals from diverse backgrounds. The University takes pride in being a culturally pluralistic campus that promotes equal opportunity. It is essential that the entire University community recognize the need for an awareness of, sensitivity to and respect for the cultural heritage, gender and sexual orientation of others. Individual (or group) actions or activities that promote degrading or demeaning social stereotypes based on age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, gender identity, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation or veteran status will not be tolerated. Students who behave abusively toward members of the University community based on the aforementioned criteria will face serious consequences and will be subject to disciplinary action. Any student who commits acts of discrimination, harassment or retaliation manifested by acts or threats of physical abuse, verbal abuse and/or hazing activities may be subject to suspension or expulsion from the University.

[View CSUN's Nondiscrimination policy and Complaint Procedures \(website\).](#)

[View the Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation Complaint Form \(.pdf\).](#)

Sexual Harassment

All matters of harassment are referred to [Office of Equity and Diversity \(website\)](#).

Title IX requires the university to designate a Title IX Coordinator to monitor and oversee overall Title IX compliance. The campus Title IX Coordinator is available to explain and discuss your right to file a criminal complaint ([Read CSUN's Sexual Assault Policies and Procedures \(.pdf\)](#)); the university's complaint process, including the investigation process; how confidentiality is handled; available resources, both on and off campus; and other related matters. If you are in the midst of an emergency, please call the police immediately by dialing 9-1-1.

Any student believing to be harassed should report incident to the Department Chair, their field liaison, or other faculty member ([Title IX Complaint Form \(.pdf\)](#)). Title IX policies will be adhered to in terms of reporting structure. Substantiated charges of harassment by a student may result in dismissal from the program. In addition, the Chair or faculty member may assist the student with reporting the alleged misconduct/violation of the Student Conduct Code to the Office of Equity and Diversity and/or the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs.

In the event that you choose to write or speak about having survived sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking and specify that this violence occurred while you were a CSUN student, federal and state education laws require that your instructor notifies the Campus Title IX Coordinator. You will be contacted to let you know about your rights and options as a survivor and support services at CSUN, including

possibilities for holding accountable the person who harmed you.

If You Believe You Have Been Sexually Harassed And/or Harassed:

- Understand that it is not your fault
- Do not be intimidated by a threat of retaliation to you or a family member

[Read the CSU Chancellor's Office Title IX policies \(website\).](#)

[View the Title IX complaint form \(.pdf\).](#)

[Read CSUN's Sexual Assault Policies and Procedures \(.pdf\)](#)

Transfer Credit

Students may transfer up to nine (9) hours of foundation credits from other Council on Social Work Education accredited graduate programs in social work. Only "A" and "B" grades are granted credit at California State University, Northridge. The MSW Chair must approve all transfer credit. If the student is transferring elective credit, the MSW Chair must approve the elective.

Students with a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW)

Incoming MSW students that have a BSW from an accredited institution may pursue "testing out" of coursework upon request. This is a process to ensure that Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) students are not required to complete required generalist content they have already mastered (students may not challenge generalist field practicum/seminar).

- Students with a BSW awarded within the past 5 years, an overall undergraduate GPA of at least 3.5, and a grade of at least 3.7 (A minus) for the course they are challenging, may petition the Department Chair to take a challenge examination for the course.
- This examination will be the final product of the course being challenged.
- The student will need to pass the final product/exam with a 90% or higher.
- The student still will need to replace these credits and will have to take additional credits of electives to have a total of 60 credits of coursework for the MSW degree.
- Only 9 units may be petitioned
 - For an explanation please visit the [Transfer Work for Graduate Programs section of the CSUN Catalog: Policies and Procedures \(website\)](#).
- SWRK 522/523 cannot be petitioned.

Student Conduct Code

[Title 5, California Code of Regulations, § 4130 Standards for Student Conduct \(website\)](#)

The University is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy living and learning environment for students, faculty, and staff. Each member of the campus community should choose behaviors that contribute toward this end. Students are expected to be good citizens and to engage in responsible behaviors that reflect well upon their university, to be civil to one another and to others in the campus community and contribute positively to student and university life.

Student behavior that is not consistent with the Student Conduct Code is addressed through an

educational process that is designed to promote safety and good citizenship and, when necessary, impose appropriate consequences.

[Please read the grounds for student discipline \(website\).](#)

Classroom Misconduct

Instructors are responsible for setting both the academic and behavioral standards for their courses. Students are expected to comply with established class standards as well as the Student Conduct Code. Students who display disruptive, threatening, or abusive behavior in class are subject to discipline and may be referred for a Departmental Professionalism & Academic Review Committee (PARC) and/or to the Office of Student Affairs. Faculty may eject a student from a single class session when necessary to end seriously disruptive or threatening behavior. Such actions will be reported to the appropriate campus officials.

Students with Disabilities

Students with documented disabilities may request reasonable accommodations for their classes and/or field placement through the Disability Resources and Education Center (DRES). The DRES office is located in Bayramian Hall, Room 11. The office can be contacted by phone at (818) 677-2684. Students with documented disabilities are advised to register with DRES upon entering the program so that they may take full advantage of the support and services offered by CSUN. These services include, but are not limited to, note taking/transcribing services, exam proctoring, and mobility assistance. Students who may need an accommodation for their field placement experience should identify this need on the MSW Field Education Application and with the Director of Field Education so that reasonable accommodations can be facilitated in a timely fashion. Students are encouraged to take charge of how they present their disability to the prospective placement agency, especially if reasonable accommodations are required.

[View CSUN's Disability Resources and Education Services website for more information.](#)

Hard-of-Hearing or Deaf Students

Students who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing are advised to contact and register with the National Center on Deafness (NCOD) to receive services such as interpreting, speech-to-text transcription, and note taking. The NCOD is located in Jeanne Chisholm Hall. The office can be reached by emailing ncod@csun.edu, phone (818) 677-2054, videophone (818) 671-4443, fax (818) 677-7192, or visit [CSUN's NCOD website](#).

Alcohol and Illicit Drug Policy Information

Consistent with its mission of enabling students to reach their educational goals, CSUN is committed to creating a campus environment that is free from both the illegal and harmful use of alcohol and drugs.

It is the policy of CSUN that the manufacture, possession, distribution, sale, or use of alcohol or illicit drugs on-campus, or off-campus while on University business or participating in university sponsored functions, is prohibited. Drugs may be possessed or used as legally prescribed or when lawfully permitted for the purpose of research or instruction.

The purpose of this policy is to delineate University regulations concerning alcohol and drugs, provide procedural guidelines, communicate the consequences of failing to adhere to established policies, and provide guidance as to available resources.

[View CSUN's Use of Alcohol and Illicit Drugs Policies and Procedures \(.pdf\)](#)

Smoke, and Tobacco-Free Campus Policy Information

It is the policy of California State University, Northridge, so as to promote the health, wellbeing, and safety of our employees, students, and visitors, to establish a smoke and tobacco-free environment and to encourage non-smoking and tobacco-free lifestyles.

CSUN is a smoke and tobacco-free campus, which means that smoking is prohibited on campus. CSUN implemented this policy because we are committed to providing a cleaner and healthier, smoke-free environment for the entire campus community. [Please visit the Clear the Air Website for more details.](#)

[View CSUN's Smoke- and Tobacco-Free Policies and Procedures \(.pdf\).](#)

Cancellation of Registration and/or Withdrawal from the Institution

Students who find it necessary to cancel their registration or to withdraw from all classes after enrolling for any academic term are required to follow the university's official withdrawal procedures. Failure to follow formal university procedures may result in an obligation to pay fees as well as the assignment of failing grades in all courses and the need to apply for readmission before being permitted to enroll in another academic term. For more information on cancelling, registration and withdrawal procedures visit the Admissions & Records website.

Medical Withdrawals

A medical withdrawal usually constitutes complete withdrawal from the university for the academic period in question. Requests for complete medical withdrawals should be submitted as soon as possible after the medical condition impairs the student's ability to complete the coursework for which the student is registered.

To request a withdrawal for a medical reason, refer to information provided in the link below and complete the Petition for Withdrawal for Medical Reason form.

[View Graduate Policy regarding Withdrawal and Medical Withdrawal \(website\).](#)

Enrollment in Classes

Students must be enrolled in all required courses prior to the first day of the semester. Please adhere to all Admissions and Records tuition payment deadlines to avoid being dis-enrolled in classes. Students that do not enroll in their classes prior to the first day of the semester may not be able to attend classes and/or internship and may be terminated from the program.

Conditionally Classified Status

Students accepted as Conditionally Classified may be required to fulfill additional requirements prior to achieving Classified Status. Conditionally classified students should communicate with Graduate Studies during their first semester in the program.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

All students from countries in which the official language is not English are required to take the TOEFL exam. Those who do not possess a bachelor's degree from a postsecondary institution where English is the principal language of instruction must receive a minimum score on the internet (iBT) version of the TOEFL of 84. Please refer to the TOEFL website for testing information here.

Pre-Admissions Disclosure Regarding Licensure

Admission into programs leading to licensure and credentialing does not guarantee that students will obtain a license or credential. Licensure and credentialing requirements are set by agencies that are not controlled by or affiliated with the CSU and requirements can change at any time. For example, licensure or credentialing requirements can include evidence of the right to work in the United States (e.g., social security number or taxpayer identification number) or successfully passing a criminal background check. Students are responsible for determining whether they can meet licensure or credentialing requirements. The CSU will not refund tuition, fees, or any associated costs, to students who determine subsequent to admission that they cannot meet licensure or credentialing requirements. Information concerning licensure and credentialing requirements are available from the [California Board of Behavioral Sciences](#) (licensing board for social workers in California). If you are planning to get licensed outside of California, please check with that state's licensing requirements.

Read the full [Pre-Admission Disclosures and Limiting Admission Offers for Academic Programs Leading to Licensure or Credentialing Policy \(website\)](#).

Grade Appeals

The University considers all grades reported at the end of each semester to be final. Students are responsible for reviewing their grades for accuracy before the end of the subsequent semester. Students who believe they have received a grade in error should promptly ask the instructor to verify and, if appropriate, correct the grade. For more information, [please refer to the University Catalog Academic Grievance and Grade Appeal Policies and Procedures \(website\)](#).

Grades received for the semester of graduation will be considered sealed 60 days after the official date of graduation. However, the deadline to request a grade correction is the end of the semester following that in which the grade was assigned. If the instructor is absent from campus during the subsequent semester, students should promptly consult with the Department Chair about the grade in question. If the Department Chair is unable to contact the instructor, they will notify the Associate Dean of the College in writing that an extension of the grade correction deadline, up to one year, has been granted.

Grades of Incomplete

Students may be granted an incomplete grade “I” when a portion of required course work has not been completed and evaluated in the prescribed time period due to unforeseen but fully justified reasons, and that a substantial portion of the course requirement has been completed with a passing grade and that there is still a possibility of earning credit. The work that is incomplete normally should be of such a nature that it can be completed independently by the student for later evaluation by the instructor. An Incomplete shall not be assigned when a student would be required to attend a major portion of the class when it is next offered.

It is the responsibility of the student to bring pertinent information to the attention of the instructor and to determine from the instructor the remaining course requirements that must be satisfied to remove the Incomplete. A final grade is assigned when the agreed-upon work has been completed and evaluated. An “I” must normally be made up within 1 calendar year immediately following the end of the term during which it was assigned. This limitation prevails whether or not the student maintains continuous enrollment.

Students who believe they meet the necessary conditions to be assigned an Incomplete should contact their instructor and the Department to obtain a Request for a Grade of Incomplete form.

[View CSUN’s Policies and Procedures for Administrative Grading Symbols \(website\).](#)

CSUN Academic Dishonesty Policy

Department faculty members are obligated to refer all cases of dishonesty to the Vice President of Student Affairs as outlined in the [CSUN Faculty Policy on Academic Dishonesty \(website\)](#).

The maintenance of academic integrity and quality education is the responsibility of each student within this University and the CSU system. Cheating or plagiarism in connection with an academic program at a CSU campus is listed in Section 41301, Title 5, California Code of Regulations as an offense for which a student may be expelled, suspended or given a less severe disciplinary sanction. Academic dishonesty is an especially serious offense and diminishes the quality of scholarship and defrauds those who depend on the integrity of the University’s programs.

[View CSUN’s complete policy and procedural guidelines for Academic Dishonesty \(website\).](#)

VIII. DEPARTMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Enrollment in Classes

The CSUN MSW Program operates as a cohort model. This means students are accepted into a specific cohort and take all classes with others in their same cohort. Classes are only offered once per year and at specific times. One of the benefits of a cohort model is that every student is guaranteed a seat in the class(es) required for graduation. However, multiple sections of a course are offered simultaneously and may fill quickly. If you are not able to enroll in your first-choice section you may put yourself on the waitlist for that section, but it is highly recommended that

you enroll in your second (or third) choice of sections within your cohort meeting time since faculty do not admit off the waitlist. This is to maintain an optimal learning environment for students and faculty. Students who register for a class outside of their cohort (e.g., enrolling in an evening section when part of the day-time cohort) will be disenrolled.

Advising & Mentoring

Since the MSW program is a cohort model, with classes proscribed and seats guaranteed, there is no formal academic advisement. Students are encouraged to build relationships with faculty, staff, and peers, and may seek mentoring or advice from within or outside the department. In the event a student is experiencing academic difficulty, they should communicate with their professor. In the event a student is experiencing non-academic challenges, they are encouraged to seek appropriate assistance from University Counseling Services, the Klotz Student Health Center, faculty, staff, and/or engage with the MSW Restorative Justice Council, depending on the nature of the challenge.

Progress Evaluation

It is the responsibility of each student to keep up to date on his or her own progress in the classroom and field. In other words, the professor is not responsible for seeking out a student. Students may make appointments with professors. Please email your professors to make an appointment. The professor's obligation as a teacher is to be available on a regular, posted basis and to respond to messages in a timely manner. However, the student must initiate discussion about progress in courses and fieldwork.

Program Absences

Please refer to individual syllabi for specific information on attendance for each course.

The Department may request a medical release from a physician stating that the student is able to return to classes and/or internship following any illness or medical procedure.

In some circumstances a leave of absence for up to one academic year may be granted by the Chair of the Department. Students are required to consult with their Field Liaison prior to requesting a leave of absence and must submit a formal request by email to the Chair of the Department or the Director of Online & Offsite Programs. Due to our cohort model, it may not be possible for a student to take a leave of absence and return to a comparable schedule.

Students requesting a leave of absence may be required to reapply to the program.

Please note: the MSW program does not have any form of sick, maternal, paternal or family leave from academic and/or field courses. Please refer [to the Withdrawals for Medical reasons section of this manual for more information.](#)

Evaluation of Student Performance in the MSW Program

The expectations and standards for students of professional versus nonprofessional degree programs are different. In professional programs, the student is often thrust into course work concurrent with hands-on practice situations that have real impact on the lives of real people

with real problems and needs. The expectations and standards of professional programs must therefore interweave scholarship with codes of ethical conduct and scientific rigor with professional competency.

The Department of Social Work establishes chief among its goals in delivering a program of graduate education, the preparation of individuals committed to the knowledge, values, and skills of professional social work practice. The establishment of and adherence to a clearly articulated set of programmatic goals and performance standards for the Department's students begins with a recognition that becoming a competent and well-trained professional in social work is a gradual process. Functional standards of performance capitalize on strategies that uplift and do not focus on diminishing people. The Department believes that its program expectations and requirements promote redemptive not punitive interventions when success or progress toward success is not easily forthcoming. This means that not all criteria are expected to be met at all times.

Persons who teach and supervise students, along with program administrators, will assess student performance and apply their professional judgment to determine if standards are being met during a student's educational career. Professional judgment is the capacity to assess a situation by applying the values and knowledge of the social work profession, combined with a professional's own experience and practice wisdom.

The Department of Social Work employs the following evaluative framework to guide program faculty and administrators in their responsibility for carefully assessing and regularly monitoring students in the Department's programs regarding the student's ability to function effectively across a variety of professional situations including but not limited to the classroom, field placement, and other settings where the individual is operating as a social work student.

Evaluative Framework

There are currently three areas of student capacity, performance, and functioning, which are viewed as inexorably linked in determining if program standards are being achieved. As an example, scholastic ability is not sufficient in determining or justifying continued enrollment in the program. That is, all three areas, taken together and/or separately are subject to assessment at regular intervals to determine the appropriateness of a student's continued enrollment in the program. A Professionalism and Academic Review (PARC) process will take place if the department leadership deems the student as having difficulty in one or more of the following student academic performance areas, ethical decision making, or professional use of self.

The three areas of student academic performance are:

1. Ability to acquire professional skills
 - a. Communication Skills
 - i. Demonstrates sufficient written and oral skills to comprehend information and communicate ideas and feelings.
 - b. Written Communication
 - i. Writes clearly, uses correct grammar and spelling, and applies

- appropriate writing style, including American Psychological Association (APA) referencing, appropriate source citation, and documentation.
 - ii. Demonstrates sufficient skills in written English to understand content presented in the program and complete adequately all written assignments as specified by faculty.
 - iii. Written work must be mechanically and stylistically acceptable. Serious deficiencies in areas such as spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and coherent organization will result in lower grades.
 - iv. Students are encouraged to seek resources to improve academic skills such as writing and study.
 - v. Effective use of knowledge: the integration of concepts, theories, and information from readings, lectures, and seminar discussions.
 - vi. The inclusion of personal points of view along with rationale, logic, and examples.
 - vii. Organization: thesis as part of the introduction, smooth relationship between ideas and between paragraphs, and overall structure, integrative concluding section.
 - viii. Clarity: understandability, good style and form
 - ix. Syntax, grammar, and spelling
 - x. Timely completion and submission of all written assignments
- c. Oral Communication
- i. Communicates effectively and sensitively with other students, faculty, staff, clients, and professionals. Expresses ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrates a willingness and an ability to listen to others. Demonstrates sufficient skills in spoken English to understand content presented in the program, to complete adequately all oral assignments, and to meet the objectives of field placement experiences, as specified by faculty and field placement agency.
- d. Interpersonal Skills
- i. Demonstrates the interpersonal skills needed to relate effectively to other students, faculty, staff, clients, and professionals and to meet or exceed the ethical obligations of the profession. These skills include compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, and demonstration of respect for and consideration of others. The student takes appropriate responsibility for own actions and considers the impact of their actions on others. Effective learning demands active participation. In order to enhance feelings of safety, and to create a positive learning environment, the following must apply:
 - ii. Attends classes and field placement and is prompt, timely, and engaged in the learning process.
 - iii. Reads assigned course material.
 - iv. Get their needs met by interacting with others and by raising their

- concerns and criticisms with the instructor. Completes all of one's work. Takes personal ownership of expressions of bigotry. In other words, rather than attribute a negative characteristic to a social group or to a member of that group, one begins with, "this is how I have been taught to believe," or "I don't like to admit it but I do have the belief that..."
- v. Commits to personal/professional growth and self-exploration and behaves in a nonviolent manner.
- e. Cognitive Skills
 - i. Exhibits sufficient knowledge of social work and clarity of thinking to process information and applies it to appropriate situations in classroom and field placement settings. Demonstrate a clear grounded-ness in relevant social, behavioral and biological science knowledge and research - including knowledge and skills in relationship building, data gathering, assessment, intervention, and evaluation of practice and self as practitioner. Exhibits ability to conceptualize and integrate knowledge and apply that knowledge across various settings the student must function in, including but not limited to settings and transactions in the classroom, field placement, with clients, supervisors, faculty, and other classmates.
 - f. Physical Skills
 - i. Exhibits sufficient motor and sensory abilities to regularly attend and actively participate in class and field placement with or without accommodations. All accommodations recommended through the DRES office or National Center on Deafness will be provided.
2. Emotional and Mental Abilities Necessary for Performance in the Program and Professional Practice
- a. Stress Management
 - i. Demonstrates ability to recognize and deal with current life stressors through the use of appropriate coping mechanisms. Handles stress effectively by using appropriate self-care and developing supportive (appropriate) relationships with colleagues, peers, and others. Students are encouraged to seek department (Restorative Justice Council) and/or University level (counseling center) resources to assess the best approach to better coping and adaptation.
 - b. Emotional Mental Capacities
 - i. Uses sound judgment based on assessment by advisor, faculty, and/or department leadership. Seeks and effectively uses help for medical or emotional problems that interfere with scholastic and professional performance. Students are encouraged to seek department (Restorative Justice Council) and/or University level (counseling center) resources to assess the best approach to better coping and adaptation.
 - ii. Engages in counseling resources for self or seeks out support and help if

personal problems, psychosocial distress, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties:

1. Compromise scholastic performance.
 2. Interfere with professional judgment, behavior, and performance.
 3. Jeopardize the best interests of those for whom the social work student has a professional responsibility (as outlined in Section 4.05a of the NASW Code of Ethics).
 4. MSW students whose personal problems, psychosocial distress, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties interfere with their academic or professional judgment, behavior, or performance will be assessed by Department administrators and may be referred to the PARC process with recommendations to adjust workload, terminating the program, or taking any other necessary steps to protect clients and others (as outlined in Section 4.05b in the NASW Code of Ethics).
3. Professional Performance Skills Necessary for Work with Clients and Professional Practice
- a. Professional Commitment
 - i. Exhibits a strong commitment to the goals of social work and to the ethical standards of the profession as specified in the NASW Code of Ethics. Demonstrates commitment to the core principles and essential values of social work that includes the respect for the dignity and worth of every individual and his/her rights to a just share of society's resources (social justice).
 - b. Self-Awareness
 - i. Students are to exhibit knowledge of how one's values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions and past experiences affect thinking, behavior and relationships. Accurately assesses one's own strengths, limitations, and suitability for professional practice. Shows awareness of self and how one is perceived by others. Reflects on one's own limitations as they relate to professional capacities. Is willing to examine and change behavior when it interferes with working with clients and other professionals.
 - c. Ethical Obligations
 - i. Current behavior and classroom performance demonstrate adherence to the ethical expectations and obligations of professional practice, noted in the NASW Code of Ethics. Ethical behaviors include:
 1. Adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics.
 2. No history of convictions which are contrary to professional practice.
 3. Systematic evaluation of clients and their situations in an unbiased, factual way. Suspension of personal biases during

- interactions with others.
4. Comprehension of another individual's way of life and values. Empathic communication and support of the client as a basis for a productive professional relationship.
 5. Appreciation of the value of diversity. Effective and nonjudgmental relation to and work with others who are different from oneself. Appropriate service to all persons in need of assistance, regardless of the person's age, class, race, religious beliefs, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and/or value system. No imposition of personal, religious, sexual, and/or cultural values on clients.
 6. Demonstration of respect for the rights of others. Commitment to clients' rights to freedom of choice and self-determination. Maintenance of confidentiality as it relates to human service, classroom activities, and field placement. Demonstration of honesty and integrity by being truthful about background, experiences and qualifications; doing one's own work; giving credit for the ideas of others; and providing proper citation of source materials.
 7. Demonstration of clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries. Does not sexually harass others; make verbal or physical threats; become involved in sexual relationships with clients, supervisors, or faculty; abuse others in physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual ways; or participate in dual relationships where conflicts of interest may exist.

Academic and Professional Conduct Standards

Students have the right to express disagreement related to their academic and professional performance. Students are advised to deal with concerns or problems before they become insurmountable.

Academic Concerns in the Classroom

- The following steps should be taken when students have concerns or problems related to academic performance:
 - Resolution of student academic difficulties should first be initiated and negotiated between the student and the classroom instructor. Students should assume responsibility in initiating and negotiating a resolution of the academic difficulty with the classroom instructor.
 - If the student feels that resolution of the academic difficulty appears improbable, then the student should consult the Department Chairperson or Director of Online Programs.
 - It is the intent of these guidelines that most student academic difficulties can be resolved at the classroom level or in joint consultation with the Department Chairperson.

Grades

Academic standards apply to class work attendance and performance, field education performance and attendance, as well as ethical and professional conduct. (Please refer to the Field Education Manual Section for further information on academic standards for field education performance.)

- Students must maintain a minimum 3.0 ("B") GPA to remain enrolled in the program.
- Students are permitted three units of a "C" grade on their transcript. An additional 3 units or more of a grade of "C" (or below) may result in dismissal from the MSW program or a delay in progressing to the next semester's classes.
- No grade below a "C" can be counted toward graduation.
- Any grade of "C MINUS" or below must be repeated (after an approved course repeat form has been filed with Graduate Studies). If the student does not receive a "C" or better on the second attempt, the student may be dismissed from the MSW program. See Graduate Studies requirements for more information. [Please refer to CSUN Graduate Handbook \(website\)](#).
- If a student already has three units of a "C" grade on their transcript, the student will need to pass all remaining courses with a "C PLUS" or higher. Per University policy, a maximum of 6 units may be repeated.
- Due to our cohort model, repeating a course (with the exception of SWRK 523 being extended into summer) may result in delayed program continuation and graduation.
- In the event of an unresolved academic dispute, the student may elect to use the [University Academic Grievance and Grade Appeal \(AGGA\) Procedures \(website\)](#).

Professional Performance Concerns

Professional performance is based on conduct that occurs during a student's time in the MSW program. The ethical standards of conduct expected of social work students are primarily articulated in the National Association of Social Work (NASW) Code of Ethics. Students are expected to adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics and Standards of the Social Work Department. Failure to adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics may result in a recommendation for a PARC, and potentially MSW program dismissal for professional reasons.

Professionalism and Academic Review Committee (PARC) Process

A PARC review may be requested for field-related concerns, issues of professionalism, or student conduct. PARCs are utilized to provide support, guidance and direction for students. Students may request a PARC or be referred for a PARC review process by any Department faculty or staff member. The PARC review process includes a meeting between faculty and the student, with recommendations provided to the student during the meeting. The outcome of a PARC review is summarized in a letter addressed to the student following the meeting. The Department Chair and Associate Chair are also provided with this letter so the Chair can be informed of the PARC's recommendations and take any further action needed to address the professional issue in question. The Chair will confer with the Associate Chair concerning the letter and any further action.

The Professionalism & Academic Review Committee will:

- Review identified professionalism concerns, including those from the field practicum, which cannot be resolved through other specified channels with the parties involved.
- Review concerns of student conduct which are contrary to the guidelines for professional conduct for social workers as specified in the NASW Code of Ethics.
- Recommend to the Chair/Associate Chair a course of action resulting from the Professionalism & Academic Review Committee (PARC) discussions.

PARC Referral Protocol

Students

- Students may request a Professionalism and Academic Review Committee by emailing the Associate Chair and outlining efforts to resolve the issue. In their email, students requesting a PARC MUST:
 - Demonstrate verbal and/or written attempts to initiate contact with the academic or field faculty to resolve the concern
 - Demonstrate they have sought the assistance of the Restorative Justice Council for support and guidance
- The Associate Chair will confer with the Department Chair to determine if a PARC is warranted
 - If a PARC is not warranted, a meeting between the student and Department Chair, Associate Chair, Program Director and/or Director of Field Education (depending on whom is most relevant for the circumstances) will be scheduled.
 - If warranted, a PARC will be assembled by the Associate Chair.

Faculty

- When ethical or professional concerns arise, all parties are encouraged to attempt to resolve the issue at the lowest level of authority prior to elevating the matter. Concerns regarding field education or classroom professionalism, conduct, or ethical standards will be directly addressed by the faculty, staff, or field liaison with the student
- Faculty or staff will meet with the student to discuss the professionalism, student conduct, or ethical concern and strategize regarding a plan of action, with specific steps for the student and faculty member(s).
 - Field faculty, in consultation with the Director and Assistant Director of Field Education, will create a corrective action plan for the student through development of a Student Support Plan (SSP). A copy of the SSP should be forwarded to the Department Chair and the Associate Chair.
 - Academic faculty will discuss and document classroom corrective plans in an email sent to the student, copying the Associate Chair and the Department Chair.
 - All corrective plans should include:
 - Specific behaviors of concern (i.e., violations of professionalism, ethics or conduct)
 - Expectations for student behavioral change
 - What faculty will do to address, support, evaluate and monitor desired changes

- Proposed time frame. See [Section XIII Problem Resolution, Grievances, Placement Failure and Termination of Field](#) in this manual.
- Issues that remain unresolved shall be referred in writing, with details of the attemptsto address the identified concerns, to the Associate Chair
- Associate Chair will act to determine how the student is doing in other classes and prior field placement(s)
- Associate Chair will consult with Restorative Justice Council to determine level of support and guidance provided
 - Associate Chair will confer with the Department Chair to determine if a PARC is warranted
 - If the PARC is not deemed appropriate by the Department Chair, a meeting between the student and the Department Chair, the Associate Chair, the Director of Field Education and/or the Online Director (as needed) will be scheduled

Professionalism & Academic Review Committee Structure

- The Chair/Associate Chair of the Department will appoint a PARC Chair. The PARC shall consist of three MSW faculty or teaching staff with a preference for one field and one non-field faculty member and one tenure-track faculty.
- In cases where the Chair of the Department is directly involved in the concern of record, the Associate Chair of the Department or Chair of the PARC will assume the responsibilities of the Chair/Associate Chair of the Department in that matter.
- In cases where committee members are directly involved in the concern of record, they will be excused from participation and the Chair/Associate Chair will find an alternate faculty member for this review.
- If the Chair of the PARC is directly involved in the concern of record, he/she will recuse him/herself and the Chair/Associate Chair of the Department will appoint an alternate faculty member to make up the third member of the committee.

Review Protocol

Students

- A member of the Restorative Justice Circle may be invited to attend the PARC meeting to offer additional support or provide additional information. Students may not select the faculty assigned to the PARC. Parents, partners, lawyers, children or other individuals personally related to the student or PARC members may not attend the meeting.
- If a student fails to attend a PARC meeting, recommendations will be based on related materials and input provided by the instructor or other identified individuals with relevant information. A copy of the final recommendation letter will be sent to the student and placed in the student's file.
- Students under review may be subject to changes in academic standing which could affect student's ability to complete the program. In some instances, the PARC may not have completed the review process in time for a student's graduation. Participation in graduation and commencement activities does not ensure official completion of program.
- While the student is under review, they are prohibited to contact, discuss, or

communicate with the PARC or Restorative Justice Council (RJC) members and referring faculty members regarding proceedings outside of officially sanctioned meetings.

Faculty

- If deemed appropriate by the Chair and Associate Chair, the Associate Chair will convene a PARC; assigning a PARC Chair and members of the PARC (see Professionalism & Academic Review Committee Structure).
- The Chair of the PARC may convene a pre-conference meeting for the committee to review preliminary information. The committee will then decide if it is necessary to proceed with the full process.
- If deemed necessary, the Chair of the PARC will convene one or more meetings, if possible, within one week after receiving the request for review.
- The Chair of the PARC will coordinate logistics with PARC members and notify the Associate Chair of the Department of the meeting time and location.
- The Associate Chair of the Department will email notification of the review meeting to the student as needed. A copy of the notification will be placed in the student's folder.
- The PARC members should seek to arrive at a plan that will allow the student to improve their professional performance and to make reasonable progress toward their degree.
- The PARC will formulate a recommendation to the Chair/Associate Chair of the Department in writing within one week of the review. A copy of the recommendation will be placed in the student's file.
- The Chair/Associate Chair of the Department will notify via email the student and the faculty making the referral of any resulting decisions within one week of the committee recommendation.
- The PARC may reconvene at the request of the Chair/Associate Chair of the Department, faculty, or student to determine if satisfactory progress is being made toward improved performance.

Other Professionalism & Academic Review Committee Considerations

- The PARC shall only obtain information regarding student concerns from the Associate Chair, the Department Chair, the Restorative Justice Council (if involved) and the referring party. Only those people who have been identified prior to the date of the proceedings to provide information attend the PARC meeting. Those individuals must participate separately and are not to remain to hear information from other persons scheduled. Exceptions can be made when the information to be provided by two or more persons is so closely related that separate appearances would seriously diminish the value of the information to be provided.
- PARC meetings shall not be recorded.
- The location and/or format of the PARC meeting(s) may be arranged to facilitate the attendance of those (i.e. online students) who are not required to be present on the CSUN campus. This could take the form of a teleconference or Zoom meeting.
- The committee chair is responsible for all meeting notes and documentation. A copy of the

formal notification and any PARC communications to the student, including the final decision of the committee, shall be placed in the student's file.

- In addition to considering recommendations made by the PARC, the Chair/Associate Chair of the Department may consider the recommendations of University entities outside the Department (e.g. Graduate Studies, Student Affairs) when making decisions about program matriculation.
- PARC recommendations and decisions may be subject to review by the CSUN Graduate Studies Department.
- The PARC members will work in conjunction with University policies and procedures (e.g. AGGA or Student Conduct and Discipline) to maintain high professional and academic standards and students' due process.

Procedures Governing Reinstatement

If a student has been terminated from the program due to an academic, professional, or ethical issue, reinstatement in any of the CSUN graduate social work programs will not be allowed.

IX. FIELD EDUCATION OVERVIEW

Philosophy

The philosophy of the California State University, Northridge (CSUN) Field Education Program is that field practice supplements and reinforces classroom instruction through the utilization of a field practicum site. The practicum offers students an opportunity to come in contact with a variety of populations that have various types of needs and problems reflective of the population the student may encounter in future practice. In the practicum, the student is able to go where the client population is located, provide a service, and assist in meeting the individual, families, groups, organizations, communities, and societal needs. The practicum plays a vital role in the preparation of competent future social work professional practitioners.

In addition to the skills and theoretical knowledge needed for direct service with various client systems, students also gain a hands-on understanding of the social work profession's value base, its expectations in terms of practice and its codes of conduct, communication, and protocols.

Council on Social Work Education

Field Education is recognized by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) as the "signature pedagogy" of social work education and the CSUN MSW Field Education Program adheres to the CSWE's Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). The MSW Program administers field education consistent with program goals and objectives that emphasize the importance of multicultural, multiracial focus on human systems and the helping process. The CSUN Field Education Program admits only those students who have met the program's specified criteria for field education, has a written criterion for selecting field placements, a process for monitoring students and maintaining contact between the Field Liaison and

agencies, and a method for evaluating students and the effectiveness of agencies providing field instruction.

Field Education Experience

The fieldwork experience is an extension of the classroom. It is designed to provide a challenge to the student, exposing them to myriad social work practice opportunities. The fieldwork experience is designed to engage students in supervised direct service at macro, mezzo, and micro levels. The fieldwork experience provides students with the opportunity, under supervised conditions, to apply theories and knowledge, learned in both the foundation and concentration-year courses of social work practice. Additionally, the fieldwork experience provides students an opportunity to reflect on their learning and to experiment and develop confidence in the skills they are developing during the experience. It is an integral part of the preparation process for students for entry into the social work profession and allows them to develop a range of intervention techniques and strategies suitable for use in diverse practice settings, with a variety of cultural, ethnic, and racial groups.

Each student is given assignments that build upon each other, focusing on the outcome goals of a self-directed and competent practitioner. Optimally, students will be exposed to diagnostic, leadership, and administrative skills through a combination of field experiences during foundation and concentration years. Emphasis in the foundation-year (first year) of fieldwork is placed upon developing appropriate foundation social work practice skills and knowledge.

During the concentration-year (second year), the student is expected to develop increased insight and depth of understanding of agency and/or client systems and social work practice skills via exposure to a variety of experiences.

The fieldwork experience is tailored to the individual student's needs in an ongoing assessment process involving the student, agency Field Instructor, and Field Liaison. During the first few weeks of the placement period, a Learning Agreement will be developed between the student and the Field Instructor.

The Learning Agreement will specify learning objectives for the student, the experiences and activities in which the student will participate to meet these learning objectives and specific timelines for their implementation and completion.

Selection of Agencies and Field Instructors

The selection of agencies for field education is an important part of the Master of Social Work Program. It is the responsibility of the Field Education Program to determine an agency's suitability for student training and to work closely with interested agencies in this process.

General Criteria Used in Selection of Agencies

- The agency's philosophy, goals, programs and policies are compatible with professional social work standards and the agency practices are consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics.

- The agency is compliant with Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and in the delivery of services, no person shall be excluded from participation or denied benefits or is otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity of that agency or center on the basis of race, color, or national origin.
- The agency maintains a working and learning environment free from discrimination and harassment of students and employees (refer to MSW and/or University policy).
- The agency is in good standing in the community.
- The agency's training program must be compatible with the MSW Program's educational objectives.
- There should be a correlation between the agency and the MSW program's mission so as to provide an integrated class/field curriculum and a consistent learning experience for the student.
- The agency is committed to the Field Education Program, its goals and objectives, and due process protection of the student.
- The agency will support staff time availability for effective field instruction and professional learning, including participation in the MSW Program's orientation, field instruction training, and field liaison visits. It is expected that students receive a minimum of one (1) hour of weekly field instruction for foundation and concentration-year students.
- The agency should provide a range of assignments on an ongoing basis that are appropriate to the student's educational needs. The student workload should reflect opportunity for involvement in varying modalities of service as well as exposure to diverse populations.
- The agency must provide the necessary space and facilities, including privacy for interviewing.
- The agency is willing to sign a Memorandum of Agreement with California State University, Northridge.

Criteria Used in the Selection of Field Instructors

- Field Instructors must hold an MSW degree from an accredited program of social work and must have a minimum of two years of MSW experience.
- Field Instructors providing field instruction to concentration-year students may be licensed at the LCSW level when applicable.
- Field Instructors must be committed to the teaching role of social work field education.
- Field Instructors must have an interest in, and time to fulfill, the responsibility of teaching social work students.

Requirements of Field Instructors

- A completed Field Instructor Information Form
- A resume which includes:
 - Educational Experience
 - LCSW number if applicable

Work experience for at least the past two years, including job titles, agency names, length of employment, and description of duties

- Field Instructor Training (CSUN offers introductory eight-hour training to be completed one time only. A certificate from a previously completed Field Instructor Training from an approved institution is also acceptable). In addition, CSUN offers an advanced session of Field Instructor Training for current Field Instructors who would like Continuing Education credits and additional skills.

The Field Education Program reviews this information in order to ensure all selected Field Instructors meet the selection requirements listed above. The geographic location of field placements encompasses the San Fernando Valley, San Gabriel Valley, Antelope Valley, Los Angeles, and Ventura Counties and other locations serving our distance students in the Online Program.

Placement sites are based on population served by agency, meeting CSWE Field Instructor qualifications, and various student needs. Each student is placed at two different agencies (private, nonprofit, or public) during their two years of field practicum. The program places a strong emphasis on offering each student at least one placement experience different than their prior experiences and sometimes current interests. The purpose of this approach is to further expand upon strengths and maximize student learning in the CSUN MSW Program.

Generalist and Strengths-Based Perspective

A generalist and strengths-based perspective are concepts covered extensively in all foundation year coursework. They provide the basic theoretical framework for the generalist practicum coursework. Students begin to demonstrate an ability to utilize critical thinking skills during the process of engagement, assessment, intervention, evaluation, termination, and follow-up practice. Also encompassed in this process is the utilization of the skills of Motivational Interviewing, which are: open-ended questions, affirmations, reflective listening and summarization. In addition, the following ancillary skills are utilized in working with oppressed and marginalized populations supportive services, empowerment, and advocacy.

Critical Thinking Skills

Students begin to demonstrate an ability to utilize critical thinking skills in their work as they engage in reflective practice activities in class or in field practicum and through their active participation in peer observation. Students are able to utilize research knowledge as it relates to various information collection and assessment data tools that assist in the development of effective and appropriate treatment plans and interventions, and to help them evaluate outcomes of interventions and their own practice. The merging of classroom content with the field practicum is achieved when the Field Instructor and student collaboratively focus attention on the actual application of skills via the material covered in the classroom.

Code of Ethics

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW Code of Ethics is addressed and discussed in field group discussions as part of vignette discussions, in practice scenarios, and in field

instruction in order to help the student combine course content with developing ethical practice skills ([refer to the NASW Code of Ethics \(website\)](#)). In field practicum, the student develops and demonstrates a basic understanding and commitment to social work values and ethics in their practice via gained self-awareness (identification of his/her own value system, biases, the ability to manage complexities involved with ethical dilemmas, including confidentiality, boundaries, and right-to-self-determination issues, etc.). The student also demonstrates beginning competence in this area, through professional commitment to the Code of Ethics and the standards of the social work profession regardless of client, agency, community, or one's own values and expectations. This is reflected in their attitudes, behaviors, communications, and practices.

X. FOUNDATION AND CONCENTRATION-YEAR FIELD REQUIREMENTS

Description of Courses

Field education is a core requirement of the MSW Program. Field education encompasses an integration of a service agency, a Field Instructor, and a University Representative (Field Liaison) all working together to help provide the student with the most well-rounded social work educational experience possible. The student is expected to demonstrate a progressive and incremental level of social work practice proficiency based on the foundation and concentration year field goals and objectives. Therefore, the sequence of field education courses (SWRK 522/522P, SWRK 523/523P, SWRK 622/622P, and SWRK 623/623P) must be taken concurrently with the social work practice courses.

Currently, each of the practicum courses is a three-unit credit course consisting of field internship and weekly field seminar classes. The field seminar courses, taught by the Field Liaison(s), are approximately one hour per week throughout the program. The student's field experiences, journals, and reading materials provide rich topics for group discussions.

Foundation-Year

The focus of the foundation-year field practicum is to provide the students with generalist social work practice/hands-on skills. In the foundation-year, students are placed in an identified social work agency which has met CSWE, CSUN, and MSW Program placement requirements. The assignment is based on faculty assessment of prior experience and entry-level learning needs. In order for the field faculty to make the most appropriate field placement, students are asked to fill out a foundation-year MSW Field Education Application and attend a pre-placement field interview prior to the beginning of the program in the subsequent (fall) semester.

The foundation-year practicum requires that students spend sixteen (16) hours per week, not including lunch, at the same field site during the first academic year. Schedules may vary depending on which cohort the student is in. All schedules must be approved by the Field Education Program. In addition to the field practicum placement, students participate in a field seminar course that offers support, feedback, and input from peers regarding challenges,

positive and negative situations, etc. occurring in their field settings (the specific schedule is determined at the beginning of each academic year).

In the first semester of field practicum, students initiate their assignments by becoming oriented to the agency placement. Students initially observe professionals in practice and later in the semester may begin to carry caseloads, case assignments, and participate in client, agency, and community activities. If students are assigned caseloads, they are expected to carry and manage them with the guidance of the Field Instructor. The foundation-year placement focuses on generalist social work practice skills. The following are the specific foundation-year field courses:

- SWRK 522/522P Foundations of Field Practicum I (3 units)
 - The assigned semester grades are the same for the regular two-unit section and the one unit “P” section.
- SWRK 523/523P Foundations of Field Practicum II (3 units, may be repeated)
 - The assigned semester grades are the same for the regular two-unit section and the one unit “P” section.

Assignments and Expectations for Foundation-Year Field

Grading components for the field practicum coursework include professional use of self, class attendance, class participation, and a variety of assignments. An in-depth description of these components will be covered during the beginning of the field seminar course; although a partial listing is offered below:

Field Placement Time Requirements

The student is required to complete at a minimum 450-500 hours during the foundation-year of field internship at one CSUN-approved field placement agency. However, hours vary by cohort and program. Field days are usually Monday, Wednesday and/or Thursday for two-year on-campus program students and a varied schedule for three-year and on-line program students.

All three-year program and off-site students must have two full days available during regular business hours in order to complete the required field hours.

Field Calendars

Students will be responsible for completing a field calendar at the beginning of their internship which will map out the days and hours they will be at their field practicum site for the entire academic year. The student may need to provide some hours over the semester break to meet their timerequirement and to meet the expectations of the agency in regard to continuity for assigned clients or projects. Students will be required to meet the minimum time requirement as indicated on their cohort specific field calendar, but in most cases the student will exceed the minimum. The field calendar should be developed primarily for agency need, rather than student convenience.

The Field Instructor and the Field Liaison must both approve the calendar. Any subsequent changes to the calendar once approved by the Field Instructor and Field Liaison must also be approved by the Director of Field Education. If a student is placed/replaced after an initial

placement is terminated (for whatever reason), the Field Liaison may issue an incomplete and the timeline and duration of the subsequent internship, including the weekly allowance of hours, will be determined by the Director of Field Education.

Learning Agreement

The student, in conjunction with their Field Instructor, will need to complete a Learning Agreement at the beginning of the academic year. Learning Agreements are to be completed and turned in to the Field Liaison during the first month of the field practicum.

Field Instruction

Students are expected to participate in one hour of individual field instruction (Group supervision is an alternative for a few exceptions with their Field Instructor during each week of field). It is recommended to set up a regular field instruction time.

Student Field Evaluation

Field Instructors are to complete a mid-semester evaluation (approximately the 7th or 8th week of field) for both fall and spring semesters and again at the end of the fall and spring semesters. Students will complete a self-evaluation approximately 3 weeks prior to the end of each semester.

Field Seminar Course

The Field Seminar Course is scheduled for every week students are in field placement. Students are expected to attend all classes and assume an active role in class discussions and activities. Absences, tardiness, and early departures will impact the overall grade.

All field sections of SWRK 522/523 and SWRK 622/623 are assigned based on placements and course equity. Different than other academic courses, students are assigned into these sections with consideration of a number of factors, including balancing the class numbers to support students' learning process and progress. Geographical location of placement site is also a major consideration. Field Liaisons are required to travel to each site to meet with agency-based field instructors. Due to these factors, students may not request a section change. Under few and rare circumstances, it is within the purview of the Director of Field Education to consider a switch if deemed appropriate. Otherwise, all students will remain in their assigned field sections for the entirety of the academic year.

Journals

From the time the student begins field placement, students are expected to complete and submit, Field Journals to their Field Liaison as assigned throughout the academic year while they are in placement, unless otherwise specified by the Field Liaison. Journal entries should be reflective summaries responding to the prompts provided.

Educationally Based Recordings

Students are to submit approximately one educationally based recording (EBR) per week to their Field Instructor during the foundation-year or as specified in the course outline. The EBRs are useful learning tools for both the student and Field Instructor. Because it is impossible for

the Field Instructor to be with the student during every client contact, the EBR helps the student keep the Field Instructor informed about their activities. The Field Instructor evaluates the student's assessment of the process, their use-of-self, ability to implement interventions, and overall ability to engage with the individual and/or group. The EBRs enable the student to gradually gain better listening and content retention skills, reflect on their activities, explore the process issues that they were unaware of, analyze the methods they used to handle situations, and explore new learning and skills gained via the field instruction process. The EBR also allows the student and Field Instructor to use these field experiences as the springboard of the field instruction hour. When writing an EBR on a group, it should include the above-identified information as well as the group dynamics between members, roles that members take on, and the group process. Students may use field placement time to complete their EBRs, when possible.

Confidentiality

Information shared in the Field Seminar Course about human service organizations and clients is covered by the NASW Code of Ethics and shared only in a classroom setting for instruction purposes. Given the nature of the Field Seminar Course and the fact that it will focus on concerns and issues faced by students working with actual clients, it is critically important that client confidentiality be maintained. Under no circumstances should a student reveal the name of a client or provide descriptive information that may identify the client, even when names are not mentioned. Discussions outside the classroom regarding information about clients, Field Instructors, peers, or agencies are considered a breach of confidentiality and subject to consequences by the CSUN Social Work Department, NASW, and the individuals whose confidentiality was breached.

Channels of Communication

It is vital that students understand and practice appropriate communication skills when attempting to resolve issues with Field Instructors, peers, Field Liaisons, etc. Students need to identify ways of expressing their needs, concerns, or frustrations directly versus behaving unprofessionally (gossip, engaging in negative talk, aggressive or passive behaviors, etc.). Evaluations will also provide feedback regarding the level of integrity and professionalism students utilize when handling conflict or issues with clients, peers, agency staff, supervisor, Field Instructors, etc.

Concentration-Year

In the concentration-year of field education, students continue to build upon the micro, mezzo, and macro knowledge and skills gained during the foundation-year, and through advanced coursework, continue to expand their application of new skills. Some of these advanced practice skills consist of increased self-analysis and reflection, autonomy, constructive utilization of field instruction, management of more complex case load assignments, and legal and ethical issues. Information sessions for the concentration year field experience is generally held prior to the beginning of the concentration year placement process. All students will be required to complete a concentration-year MSW Field Education Application.

The concentration-year practicum schedules may vary depending on which cohort the student is in. All schedules must be approved by the Field Education Program. In addition to the field practicum placement, students participate in a field course that offers support, feedback, and input from peers regarding challenges, positive and negative situations, etc. occurring in their field settings (the specific schedule is determined at the beginning of each academic year).

Assignments and Expectations for Concentration-Year Field

In the concentration-year of field, in most cases, students have more input on their selection of a placement site. Exceptions include those students in certain off-site cohorts and/or those students subject to an [alternative placement schedule explained in Section XII of this manual](#).

The focus of the concentration-year field practicum is to provide the student with more advanced social work practice/hands-on skills. The focus of this concentration-year encompasses helping the student develop advanced interventions and strategies that will help them work more effectively with all populations. The following are the specific concentration-year field courses:

- SWRK 622/622P Advanced Field Practicum with Urban Families III (3 units)
 - The assigned semester grades are the same for the regular two-unit section and the one unit “P” section.
- SWRK 623/623P Advanced Field Practicum with Urban Families IV (3 units)
 - The assigned semester grades are the same for the regular two-unit section and the one unit “P” section.

In order to reach concentration-year field practicum status, students must have successfully completed the foundation-year field practicum sequence, complete a concentration-year MSW Field Application, and must enroll in SWRK 622/622P and later in SWRK 623/623P. In the Concentration year of field, students will continue to meet during scheduled times for the Field Seminar Course.

Preparation for Field

The concentration-year field placement process includes the selection of a placement consistent with the student’s area of specialization, area of interest, or learning strategy. Concentration-year field placements are chosen from a group of agencies compiled by the field faculty and include interviews. Process for placement in concentration-year field work begins during the spring semester of the foundation-year.

Field Placement Time Requirements

The student is required to complete a minimum of 500 hours, 16 hours per week, for online and three-year stateside cohorts and a minimum of 600 hours, 20 hours per week, for two-year stateside cohort at one field placement agency (public, private, or non-profit agency). Field days are usually Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for stateside two-year program students. The three year and on-line program student schedules are varied. All field schedules must be approved by the Field Education Program. The specific field schedule is distributed and reviewed during the field seminars at the beginning of the academic year.

Field Calendars

Students will be responsible for completing a field calendar at the beginning of their internship which will map out the days and hours they will be at their field site for the entire academic year. The student may need to provide some hours over the semester break to meet their time requirement and to meet the expectations of the agency in regard to continuity for assigned clients or projects. Students will be required to meet the minimum time requirement as indicated on their cohort specific field calendar, but in most cases the student will exceed the minimum. The field calendar should be developed primarily for agency need, rather than student convenience.

The Field Instructor and the Field Liaison must both approve the calendar. Any subsequent changes to the calendar once approved by the Field Instructor and Field Liaison must also be approved by the Director of Field Education. If a student is placed/replaced after an initial placement is terminated (for whatever reason), the Field Liaison may issue an incomplete and the timeline and duration of the subsequent internship, including the weekly allowance of hours, will be determined by the Director of Field Education.

Learning Agreement

The student, in conjunction with their Field Instructor, will need to complete a Learning Agreement for the concentration-year field placement. Learning Agreements are to be turned in to the Field Liaison during the first month of the field practicum.

Field Instruction

Students are expected to participate in one hour of individual field instruction with their Field Instructor during each week of field. Any additional field instruction opportunities, including group instruction, is welcome, but may not replace the individual field instruction provided by the Field Instructor. It is recommended to set up a regular field instruction time.

Student Field Evaluation

Field Instructors are to complete a mid-semester evaluation (approximately the 7th or 8th week of field) for both fall and spring semester and again at the end of the fall and spring semesters. Students will complete a self- evaluation approximately 3 weeks prior to the end of each semester.

Field Seminar Course

The Field Seminar Course is scheduled for every week the student is in field for stateside students. Online students are scheduled for every other week. Students are expected to attend all classes and assume an active role in class discussions and activities. Absences, tardiness, and early departures will impact the overall grade.

All field seminar sections of SWRK 622/623 are assigned based on placements and course equity. Different than other academic courses, students are assigned into these sections with consideration of a number of factors, including balancing the class numbers to support students' learning process and progress. Geographical location of placements site is also a major consideration. Field Liaisons may be required to travel to each site to meet with agency-

based field instructors. Due to these factors, students may not request a section change. Under few and rare circumstances, it is within the purview of the Director of Field Education to consider a switch if deemed appropriate. Otherwise, all students will remain in their assigned field sections for the entirety of the academic year.

Journals

Journal assignments for Concentration Year Students are determined by Field Liaison. Journal entries should be reflective and respond to the prompts provided.

Educationally Based Recordings

Students are to submit approximately one educationally based recording (EBR) per week to their Field Instructor during the concentration-year as specified by the course outline. The EBRs are useful learning tools for both the student and Field Instructor. Because it is impossible for the Field Instructor to be with the student during every client contact, the EBR helps the student keep the Field Instructor informed about their activities. The Field Instructor evaluates the student's assessment of the process, their use-of-self, their ability to implement interventions, and overall ability to engage with the individual and/or group. The EBRs enable the student to gradually gain better listening and content retention skills, reflect on their activities, explore the process issues that they were unaware of, analyze the methods they used to handle situations, and explore new learning and skills gained via the supervisory process. The EBR also allows the student and Field Instructor to use these field experiences as the spring board of the field instruction hour. When writing an EBR on a group, it should include the above identified information as well as the group dynamics between members, roles that members take on, and the group process.

Confidentiality

Information shared in the Field Seminar Course about human service organizations and clients is covered by the NASW Code of Ethics and shared only in a classroom setting for supervisory purposes. Given the nature of the Field Seminar Course and the fact that it will focus on concerns and issues faced by students working with actual clients, it is critically important that client confidentiality be maintained. Under no circumstances should a student reveal the name of a client or provide descriptive information that might identify the client, even when names are not mentioned. Discussions outside the classroom regarding information about clients, Field Instructors, peers or agencies are considered a breach of confidentiality and subject to consequences by the CSUN Social Work Department, NASW, and the individuals whose confidentiality was breached.

Channels of Communication

It is vital that students understand and practice appropriate communication skills when attempting to resolve issues with clients, Field Instructors, peers, agency staff, supervisors, Field Liaisons, etc. Students need to identify ways of expressing their needs, concerns, or frustrations directly versus behaving unprofessionally (gossip, engaging in negative talk, aggressive or passive behaviors, etc.). Evaluations will also provide feedback regarding the level of integrity and professionalism students utilize when handling conflict or issues.

Field Education Grading Policy

Students receive one combined grade for their field practicum and field seminar course work. The field education course requires that the student earns a grade of “B minus” or above in order to continue in the CSUN MSW Program. The determination of the grade for the field practicum is made by the Field Liaison with input from the Field Instructor, and is based on the following:

- Student performance at their placement agency as reflected, in part, by the outcome of one or more Student Evaluations;
- Student’s participation, attendance, and punctuality in the Field Seminar Course and field practicum;
- Student’s completion of Field Seminar Course and field placement assignments (quality and timeliness);
- Student’s ability to work through and resolve any conflicts with peers, supervisors, agency staff, clients, Field Education faculty and staff, Field Instructors, etc.;
- Student’s professional use of self
- Student’s prompt and professional follow-through during placement process
- Status of any active Student Performance Plans; and,
- Student’s professional behavior as evaluated by adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics.

Failure to Perform Satisfactorily

If a student earns a “C plus” or “C” grade, the student may not advance to the next semester of the Field Education Program without permission from the Director of Field Education. If the “C plus” or “C” grade is earned in the last semester of the MSW Program, the student will be referred to the Professionalism & Academic Review Committee (PARC) for consideration ([see the Professionalism & Academic Review Committee section in this handbook](#)). If the student receives a “C minus” or lower grade in field, the grade will not count toward graduation and the units will need to be repeated ([see the Academic and Professional Conduct Standards section in this handbook](#)). Should a student be granted the opportunity to retake a field class, this must be done concurrently with at least one academic course.

If a student obtains an “Incomplete” grade in a field course, they will need to complete all unfinished work prior to the beginning of the following semester, otherwise they will receive a failing grade for the field seminar course. The field practicum is a graded course and if a student fails to perform, their grade will be impacted accordingly. In addition, due to the fact that each semester’s field seminar course is built upon the previous semester’s field coursework, the student would not be allowed to continue to the next sequence of coursework until the course/area of deficiency has been corrected.

If it is the behavior that resulted in the student receiving an “Incomplete” and that behavior is determined by the Field Liaison and the Director of Field Education to be of such a nature that placing the student on a Student Support Plan would not help or cause change in the behavior, the student will be referred to the PARC process. Generally, unchangeable behaviors that negatively impact field placement stem from an individual’s inability to set and maintain

personal and/or professional boundaries, an inability to allow for client self-determination, displaying intolerance and/or judgment of clients, poor communication skills, and other behaviors that go against core social work values ([see the Academic and Professional Conduct Standards section in this handbook](#)).

XI. EVALUATION IN FIELD EDUCATION

Evaluations of all program areas are conducted at various points throughout the academic year and with a variety of evaluation tools.

Mid-Semester Student Evaluation

This evaluation is completed each semester by the Field Instructor and submitted to the MSW Field Education Program via IPT (Intern Placement Tracking database). Contents of the evaluation are reviewed with the student directly by the Field Instructor. The Mid-Semester Evaluation provides the Field Liaison an update of the student's current progress, identifies any concerns or issues that may need to be addressed, and identifies current areas of work, strength, and needs for the remainder of the semester.

End of Semester Student Evaluation

This evaluation is completed at the end of each semester by the Field Instructor via IPT and reviewed with the student and by Field Liaison. The evaluation assesses the student's progress in each of the competencies identified in the Learning Agreement, and as such, the student earns a specific evaluation result per area.

Evaluation of Field Liaison by Student and Field Instructor

This evaluation process is conducted at the end of every academic year as required by the department. The evaluations provide the Director of Field Education with varied perspectives of the Field Liaison, evaluating the assistance and support provided to the above noted individuals, as well as the Field Liaison's areas of strength and areas for needed improvement. Student and Field Liaison Evaluation of the Agency Site and the Field Instructor This area of evaluation provides the student and Field Liaison an opportunity to evaluate the agency site and Field Instructor, and provide feedback related to areas of strength and challenge.

XII. GENERAL INFORMATION FOR MSW FIELD EDUCATION

Identification as an MSW Student Intern

Clients, staff, or community personnel may often assume that the credentials of all the staff who work at the same site are the same, therefore, not identifying oneself as a student intern would result in a misrepresentation of credentials. All students are required to represent themselves to clients, staff, and community professionals as a "student intern".

Student Privacy/Confidentiality Waiver

All information related to the student placement and performance in an agency is neither
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private nor confidential, even if the student is in an employment-based practicum setting. Field Instructors are considered members of the field education team and thereby entitled to receive and share with the CSUN MSW Program faculty information pertinent to the student's educational process.

Student Responsibilities and Field Policies

- Students are expected to complete all required prerequisites by the University, Department of Social Work, and agency prior to commencing field (fingerprinting/criminal background checks, TB test and written verification of test status and clearance if test is positive, current Immunization Record, etc.). CSUN MSW Field Education Program makes every effort to have agencies incur the costs of above requirements; however, in some situations the student may need to pay for certain items.
- The CSUN Department of Social Work expects students with prior felony convictions to inform the Director of Field Education of such convictions prior to the start of the field placement process. A question regarding all felony and misdemeanor convictions appear on the MSW Field Education Application. Individuals with felony convictions may not be allowed to work with children or be placed in certain agencies or situations. Students misrepresenting information on the MSW Program and/or MSW Field Education Application will be administratively dropped from the MSW program.
- Students are representatives of the agency and are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner as well as adhere to the policies and regulations of the agency, just as an employee is expected to do, including dress code and agency hours.
- Students are required to remain in their field practicum for the duration of the academic year, unless otherwise approved by the field education program.
- Students must demonstrate professionalism (e.g., follow agency dress code, appropriate written and oral communication with agency staff), appropriate behavior (e.g., timeliness with attendance and paperwork, collegiality with agency staff and other interns), and follow the chain of authority when dealing with conflict. The student will be evaluated on their ability to professionally communicate with others.
- Students are expected to abide by the NASW Code of Ethics.
- Students are required to notify their Field Instructor if they are going to be absent (planned or unplanned) and discuss how they will make up the work and hours. Significant changes in schedule require approval from the Field Education Program.

NOTE: If there is an issue of absences or chronic absenteeism, the issue needs to be addressed with the Field Liaison and the Field Instructor. If the absenteeism is found to be disruptive to the field experience and/or clients, an evaluation as to whether the student should continue or be terminated from the field placement will be addressed. Any deviation from originally approved schedule must be approved by the Field Instructor, the

Field Liaison, and in some cases, the Director of Field Education. Students may not end their practicum or change practicum sites without the prior approval of the Director of Field Education.

- Students are to develop a Learning Agreement in collaboration with the Field Instructor at the beginning of the field practicum.
- Students complete and participate in all scheduled evaluations.
- Students are not to perform duties outside of their scope of practice.
- Students are to disclose previous paid and volunteer work experience in the MSW Field Education Application. Students are not permitted to secure a practicum at a location where they have previously worked and/or volunteered.

Employment-Based Practicum or Job Conversions

In rare instances, a student is granted approval for utilizing their employment as a field practicum during the concentration year. A Memorandum of Agreement is used for this purpose to outline the parameters. Applications for job conversions are generally due in February. The agreement must be signed by the Agency Director, the Field Instructor's supervisor, the proposed Field Instructor (who must be someone who is not the employment supervisor), the student/employee, and the CSUN Director of Field Education. If the job conversion is approved, there is a clear understanding that:

- The duties that the individual performs during their employment hours are different than their duties as an intern;
- The field instruction is provided by someone not currently supervising their employment duties; and
- The student/employee schedule is set so blocks of time for field education are provided (such as two or three full days to perform only student tasks).
- For non-CalSWEC DCFS employees receiving release time, please consult the Director of Field Education.
- In the event of a voluntary or involuntary leave from place of employment, the student may be ineligible to continue with a job conversion placement.

Paid or Stipend Field Practicums

The CSUN Department of Social Work MSW Field Education Program model is based on the NASW guiding principle of service. Students will be introduced to how service is grounded in the social work profession. Paid or stipend field practicums are greatly appreciated by the students and CSUN, however, the majority of field practicums are not paid or stipend. It is important that expectations related to a student's productivity not be evaluated as that of an employee. Even when students are being paid or given a stipend, their role in the agency is not of an employee, but of a student intern.

The student's assignments must be educationally focused. Information on any available stipends will be sent to eligible students. Additional private stipends may be available depending on funding and the individual needs of the agency.

Students Requesting Alternative Field Practicum Schedule

Students with limited schedule flexibility or other issues impacting their ability to complete their field practicum during normal business hours will need to contact the Assistant Director of Field Education of their cohort. Practicum options will be discussed and efforts will be made to accommodate the student's availability. However, the student needs to understand the following:

- may need to travel over an hour from home to assigned practicum
- may limit their options to be placed in a broader range of field practicum opportunities
- may not have a practicum available
- may not be available for some or all stipends given schedule or other restrictions
- may not be able to participate in the standard second year placement process involving directed interviewing and selection unless granted permission from Field Education Administrative team

Conflict of Interest Policy for Field Internships

Student is to inform the Field Education Program of any personal relationship student may have with individuals associated with potential or assigned practicum. For example, practicums employing significant others, spouses, parents, relatives, or other close personal acquaintances. Such a relationship, combined with the power and responsibility of field instructing or coordinating internships and making determinations regarding evaluations, is considered to be a conflict of interest. For more information or questions, please consult the Director of Field Education.

PPSC Policy

CSUN Department of Social Work program is not state qualified to issue the Pupil Personal Services Credential (PPSC). CSUN students pursuing the PPSC credential must apply to a post PPSC program upon earning the MSW degree. CSUN MSW program is based on a cohort model, therefore, students placed in a school setting in their generalist/first year) of practicum are not eligible to collect field practicum hours toward the PPSC. Only students placed in a school setting in their advanced/second year) of internship are eligible to pursue the PPSC. The hour requirement for the PPSC is 600 hours. Students in the part-time or online programs will need to complete additional weekly hours to fulfill this requirement.

Field Education Models

The CSUN Field Education Program implements the generalists and advanced field practicum courses through the following models:

The Traditional Model is an agency based, face-to-face, in-person field practicum experience.

The Hybrid Model is an agency based, virtual field practicum experience.

The Full Remote Model is a non-agency based, virtual field practicum experience.

The field placement agency may offer an in-person or a virtual field education model. The decision of the Field Education model utilized is left to the discretion of the agency. The Field Education model(s) offered at an agency will follow the Center for Disease Control, local public health department, and CSUN University guidelines related to COVID-19 protection protocols.

Jury Duty

The CSUN MSW Field Education Program will continue to allow MSW students to accrue field practicum hours when called to serve on jury duty, regardless of the length of service. Students called to serve beyond two weeks of service will need to provide the University Field Liaison with documentation of the additional length of time requested for jury duty. The University Field Liaison will collaborate with the student and agency Field Instructor to create a remote field practicum learning plan for the duration of the student's jury duty service.

Field Education Program Strike Procedure

The Field Education Program procedure regarding student field placements and strikes/work actions is based on principles of educational integrity, and focuses on how educational expectations, goals and objectives can be met and maintained. The interest of the students' educational experience rather than the merits of any given strike or work action are of primary consideration. It is the Program's belief that a strike bound agency is not able to provide a climate conducive to a sound educational experience.

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

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

1. The student is encouraged to seriously consider their stance relative to participation or non-participation and may request not to remain in the placement agency during the period of the strike or work action. The student will be supported in this decision by the program, and will suffer **no** academic consequences, and their right to self-determination will be respected. To fulfill your class requirements and CSWE competencies, any field hours missed during the strike period will need to be made up by the student during the regular semester, break periods, or in an extended placement through May/June of the academic year. A plan for missed hours make up will be developed by the student's Field Faculty in consultation with the Director of Field Education, the student and the field instructor. The student should note any impact this action could have on your agency and clients and ensure to the best of their ability that they communicate with their Field Instructor and Field Liaison to mitigate this impact.

2. The student may request to remain in the placement setting during the period of strike or work action. This option will be available **only** when the Field Program can be sure that the educational integrity of the fieldwork placement can be maintained. This means that the supervisory requirements, caseload requirements and other expectations of field work can be consistently met by the agency during the strike or work action period and that there is no danger (academic or otherwise) to the student. Students wishing to remain in the agency must discuss this plan with the Field Faculty who will verify the agency's ability to provide appropriate supervision and educational experiences. The student will be supported in this decision, and will suffer **no** academic consequences.
3. The student should remain aware that in supporting or not supporting any action, they are considered a representative of The CSUN MSW Program and of the larger CSUN campus community. Students need to comport themselves in a professional manner that is reflective of their views and also recognizes their role as a member of the CSUN community.

If a strike or work action continues beyond a three week period, a reassessment of the ability of the agency to provide the appropriate supervision and educational experiences will be made by the Field Faculty. If the agency is found to be unable to meet the educational requirements of the field program, the student may be relocated to another agency site until the strike or work action have been resolved, and/or until the agency is able to provide the appropriate educational activities; or the student may be replaced.

It is expected that field classes will devote time and attention to issues around strikes, work actions, and the subsequent professional dilemmas surrounding these situations. In all cases, it is the responsibility of the field program to meet with students who are confronted with a potential or actual strike situation in order to assist the student in developing a clear understanding of the relevant issues in regard to the strike, and an understanding of the implications of the strike for the student's field education experience. Issues around responsibility to clients during strike situations will also be discussed in field class or in scheduled meetings with students.

XIII. STUDENT PLACEMENT PROCESS

The placement of a student in a field practicum site involves an evaluation and assessment regarding the student's educational experiences, their work experiences, and career goals. This information helps in narrowing and selecting the most appropriate field practicum site for the student.

Practicum decisions are made by the Field Education team after considering educational needs, student experiences, student career goals, agency capacity, community capacity, and input from the agency intern coordinator/field instructor. Not all student requests can be met, but every reasonable effort will be made to consider their requests. Each practicum assignment is for an entire academic year. Practicum generally begins in the fall semester and continue

through the end of the spring semester. Students are strongly recommended to have a CA driver's license, working car, and car insurance, as the majority of the agencies may require it. Those students who do not have their own transportation may have fewer field practicum options available to them. **Students may not pursue their own field practicum sites and should not contact an agency prior to referrals made by the Field Education team.** Field grades may be negatively impacted for students attempting to secure their own practicum outside the direction of the Field Education Program. Every effort is made to secure a broad range of experiences for student learning which encompasses the micro-mezzo-macro practice continuum.

The agency is responsible for providing authorization and orientation for interns to transport clients as well as sufficient information on insurance coverage. Student(s) must always consult with the Field Instructor regarding authorization, insurance coverage, and necessary clearance needed prior to transporting clients at all times. CSUN is not responsible for managing any requirements for transportation or driving as part of the Social Work Field Practicum and does not maintain insurance for interns driving as part of the essential duties of the social work internship.

NOTE: The Field Education Program may have difficulty placing some students. Many agencies will not accept interns with criminal backgrounds. Some students are deemed inappropriate for agency placement for other reasons. In some situations, students will be counseled to explore other graduate program options.

General Steps for Securing a Field Placement

- Student completes and submits the foundation-year and concentration-year Field Education Application per the direction of the Field Education Program. Failure to submit a completed application by the deadline may jeopardize the student's ability to participate in field practicum for the following academic year.
- If student has difficulty adhering to the field practicum schedule or is deemed by Field Education Administrative team as difficult to place in an available field practicum option, the student may be advised to defer or take a leave of absence from the MSW program until reassessed by the Field Education Administrative team.
- The student will prepare, at minimum, a one-page resume for their interview(s). A specific form is provided for concentration-year students.
- If possible, the agency Field Instructor will give verbal or written feedback to the Field Education Program as to whether a student will be accepted or not by their particular agency for practicum.
- The Field Education Program makes the final decision of practicum matching and informs the student and agency.
- The student attends all required orientations and meetings.
- The Field Instructor and Site Field Preceptor attend the Field Instructor Orientation and Training (if applicable).

Foundation Year Placement/Matching Procedure

The school exercises full responsibility for the placement of all foundation year students. These assignments are made by the Assistant Director of Field Education. Incoming foundation year students are instructed to schedule an interview with their assigned agencies prior to the actual start of the practicum. The purpose of this visit is to begin the introduction and orientation process. Practicum assignments are announced to students once the field agency confirms acceptance of the student for the academic year. If any serious questions regarding the student/agency fit are identified at this first contact, the Assistant Director of Field Education will inform the student, provide feedback/reason for not matching, and identify another agency for interview. While students may have interests in other areas of social work practice, the field education program will determine the best setting for a first-year practicum and students may not request another placement based solely on the practicum not matching their main interest area.

Concentration Year Placement/Matching Procedure

Placement procedures differ in the concentration year; in contrast to the foundation year, the students have an active role in their field practicum assignment decision. They have the opportunity to select three agencies from a list of approved concentration year placements that they want to explore. They then interview at these agencies. The Director of Field Education makes the final assignment based on the following data: feedback from the student, feedback from the agency, information available on the student's field education application form, knowledge of the student's educational needs and goals, and her/his judgment as to whether a particular field instructor and/or agency can meet these needs. Active student and agency participation in the concentration year placement process is required. If any serious questions regarding the student/agency fit are identified at this interview contact, the Director of Field Education will immediately alert the agency for feedback. The Director of Field Education will meet with the student to discuss feedback received from the agency. Next steps regarding additional interviews will be determined by the discretion of the Director of Field Education on a case-by-case basis.

Student Requirements

All students must sign an acknowledgment in the MSW Field Education Application that includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- I hereby certify that the statements contained in this completed Field Education Application, and any other information included as part of this application and attachments, are true and correct. I agree and understand that any misrepresentation or omission of any material facts on my part may be cause for delay in field placement, separation from the field practicum, and/or can initiate immediate review by the Director of Field Education.
- I hereby give permission to the CSUN School of Social Work, Field Education Program, and its faculty members, and any of the approved field education agencies or field instructors to verify any and all information contained within this application. This can include contacting former employers, field internships, and/or field instructors, reviewing graduate school records, etc.

- I am advised that if any information should come to Field Education Program’s attention, which could affect my professional student status and/or internship role, and thus the field practicum experience, the Social Work Department shall be authorized to assess and discuss significant information with the appropriate parties.
- I understand that any information contained in this field education application packet and/or any pertinent information relating to my professional student role shall be discussed between CSUN faculty and approved field practicum agencies and their representatives.

I understand that most field practicum agencies request security background investigations, fingerprint checks, random drug screens, physical examinations, TB tests, immunization verification, and a valid CA driver’s license, etc. as requirements for their placement interview process and for practicum site confirmation. Agencies may also require random drug screening(s) at any time during the year. I am willing to participate in these additional screenings/evaluations and give permission for the results to be provided to the Social Work Department when requested. I also understand that if I fail these screenings, I will not be confirmed at the specified agency, can become ineligible for field practicum, and therefore not be placed for an entire academic year. I also understand that if during the year I fail a screening, I will be removed from the agency and not placed in another agency for the remainder of the academic year. The Director of Field Education will review my case to determine whether I am eligible to continue the program, and if so, the timeline for returning to field practicum. I understand that failing a drug screen(s) or other agency screening may be grounds for disqualification from the MSW Program

- I understand that I may be financially responsible to pay for clearances, health screenings and trainings (i.e. CPR) if the agency does not cover the cost.
- I understand the placement site has the right to dictate suitable intern attire.
- I shall fulfill the responsibilities of the student intern role, comply with all School Policies and Procedures as outlined in the Field Education Application, the MSW Field Education Manual, and the MSW Student Manual.
- At all times, I shall maintain professional conduct in accordance with the School’s academic standards, i.e., the NASW Code of Ethics, professional social work values, and laws regulating social work practice.
- If I terminate prematurely, I am aware that I will not be placed in the same field practicum setting should the department approve for my re-entry into a field placement and I will, in most cases, forfeit all completed hours.

XIV. PROBLEM RESOLUTION, GRIEVANCES, FIELD PRACTICUM FAILURE, AND TERMINATION OF FIELD PRACTICUM

It is mandated by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) that social work programs institute programmatic termination policies for reasons of academic and professional performance (see Accreditation Standard 4.1, subsection “Advisement, Retention, and Termination”, 4.1.7, CSWE EPAS 2022). Research has shown that the primary locus for termination of students in the MSW program will be in field

internships (Miller & Koerin, 2001). In understanding this level of gatekeeping responsibility, CSUN's Department of Social Work Field Education program goal is to screen in students and educationally guide their matriculation process through the program. To adhere to the mandate of our accreditation body (CSWE), the Field Education Program has instituted the following student-centered policy. Enforcement of this policy will allow the student a tiered due process with a corrective action plan put in place to postpone early termination from the program.

Reference: Miller, J., & Koerin, B. B. (2001). Gatekeeping in the practicum: What field instructors need to know. *The Clinical Supervisor, 20*(2), 2001.

General Field Education Problem Resolution Process

When conflict occurs in the practicum setting, all parties are encouraged to try and resolve the matter at the lowest level of authority prior to elevating the matter. If one or both parties feel that they have tried to resolve the matter but there still is not resolution, then the Field Liaison and the Field Instructor (if they are not one of the two original parties in the conflict) should be involved. A meeting should be set up between the Field Instructor, Field Liaison, and student to address the current problem.

Concerns or Conflicts Regarding Field Practicum

The student has the right to express disagreement or displeasure related to practicum site, Field Instructor, or their Student Evaluation. The student should first discuss disagreement or displeasure with the individual with whom they have a disagreement. If this method does not resolve the matter, then they should proceed through the administrative chain of authority.

4. Field Liaison Faculty
5. Assistant Director of Field Education
6. Director of Field Education
7. Associate Department Chair
8. Department Chair
 - a. If the conflict is not resolved after going through the administrative chain of authority, then a PARC will be called.

Field Practicum Problems as a Result of Student Performance Issues

If student does not meet expectations and/or is in violation(s) of the NASW Code of Ethics, the Field Instructor will notify the Field Liaison. The Field Instructor and Field Liaison will schedule a meeting with the student to discuss concerns and if deemed necessary, a Student Support Plan will be developed. If the problem is not resolved, the Field Liaison will notify the Assistant Director of Field Education of the ongoing issue(s) and write a summary, which will include a more stringent corrective action plan that will be shared with the student. If the student fails to meet expectations of the corrective action plan, then the student will meet with the Field Liaison and Assistant Director of Field Education to discuss the issue(s) and decide as to what action should be taken at that time. Any student performance issues will be reflected in the student's semester evaluation.

NOTE: The student should be aware that they will not be allowed

to change their practicum site until they have met with their Field Liaison and Assistant Director of Field Education to address and successfully resolve the issues identified as barriers in the practicum. If the present issues cannot be resolved, in order to respect the student's due process, the Field Liaison will seek consultation with the Assistant Director of Field Education. A decision to replace a student is left to the discretion of the Assistant Director of Field Education in consultation with the Director of Field Education. The Field Education Program will credit the student full hours up until the point of transition from one agency to the next.

Student Support Plan

A successful Student Support Plan (SSP) is intended to strengthen student performance in the field practicum. It should be written by the Field Liaison with the oversight of the Assistant Director of Field Education, with a copy to the Field Instructor, the student, and the student's file. The plan should include:

- 1) Competency based behaviors or learning activities that need to be improved upon to ensure a successful field practicum experience
- 2) How the progress will be monitored and evaluated
- 3) The date(s) by which the objectives identified must be accomplished by deadlines delineated in the SSP

Once completed, reviewed, and signed by all relevant parties, the document will be adhered to and reviewed as outlined in the plan.

If the student's performance does not improve or does not meet the expectations set forth in the SSP, an evaluation will be made by the Field Liaison and the Assistant Director of Field Education in consultation with the Director of Field Education regarding whether the student should be removed from the agency. If the performance problem is more pervasive and has

ethical or legal implications, the Field Education Program will refer the matter to the Associate Chair of the Department.

Field Practicum Performance Problems Due to Student Personal Issues

If the field practicum problem is a result of personal problems/conflict/challenges that the student is experiencing (e.g. crisis, illness, death in the family, etc.), it is expected that the student will keep the Field Instructor and Field Liaison apprised of the situation on an ongoing basis. All parties involved should follow [the Problem Resolution Process guidelines found in Section XIII. of this manual](#). If these personal problems continue, or negatively impact the clients, agency, or student's ability to meet their social work field practicum obligations/expectations due to absences and/or their ability to competently perform social work functions, then the student will be removed from the practicum site.

If a student decides to officially withdraw academically or is unable to complete the semester at

the same agency, they may be required to reapply to the MSW Program. In certain circumstances, the student may request a leave of absence from the Chair of the Department or the Director of Online/Offsite Programs. For students returning after a leave of absence, the student will need to reapply for Field Education. A new field practicum will need to be secured for the student. Students may need to do additional field hours beyond the minimum requirement to ensure an optimal learning experience regardless of how many field hours the student previously completed. The number of hours required will be determined by the Director of Field Education.

NOTE: Students may need to repeat field hours regardless of how many field hours the student previously completed.

Field Practicum Performance Problems Due to Agency Deficiencies

If the student's performance problems are due to deficits in the practicum agency's practices (e.g. lack of clients, inconsistent field instruction, interpersonal conflicts impacting learning process, etc.), violations of the NASW Code of Ethics (e.g. harassment or discrimination, placing student in dangerous situations, etc.), or due to major agency changes that would greatly impact the student's learning, the process for attempting to resolve this type of issue would follow the same procedure as under [the Problem Resolution Process guidelines found in Section XIII. of this manual](#). If there is no solution that supports the educational objectives of the student and MSW Program, then the Field Liaison will discuss the matter with their Assistant Director of Field Education. If the consensus is that it is not in the best educational interest of the student to continue at that field practicum site, then the student will be removed from that agency and placed at a different agency. Hours and EBRs completed up until removal from agency will be applied towards the student's total number of hours and EBRs required.

Failure to Meet Academic Requirements

If the student does not successfully fulfill the field education requirements, the student's grade will be negatively impacted. Please refer to Field Education Grading Policy.

Inability to Secure a Field Practicum

During the foundation year of field practicum, students who either do not want to be placed at any of the agencies that they are assigned to, have been denied a practicum by two different agencies, have demonstrated a lack of professionalism and competence at either the field practicum site, field seminar course, or elsewhere in the program, or a combination thereof, will meet with the appropriate Field Education Program and Social Work Department representatives to assess their readiness for field practicum success. The possible outcome of a practicum failure will result in the student being counseled about their inability to secure a suitable field practicum at this time.

Additionally, the student will be referred to the Department Chair or the Director of Online/Offsite Programs for next steps.

For concentration year students who have difficulty securing a viable practicum at an approved

agency, after following the structure of the 2nd year placement process under the guidance of the Assistant Director of Field Education, students will be advised to consider deferring the field ~~course~~ course and practicum for the remainder of the academic year. This option is to support the student in managing and/or resolving any interpersonal issues or other life stressors that seemingly interfere with the student's ability to meet the standardized expectations of a social work intern.

Optional Field Practicum Hiatus

Field Practicum hiatus is the process used by the Field Education Program to delay replacement of a student into a field practicum agency while the field education administrative team re-assesses the presence of the necessary skills for successful field education matriculation. This may include an opportunity for the student to acquire and demonstrate the practice skills necessary for successful field practicum completion. The Field Education Program will request an Intra-University Professionalism Consultation Committee to convene, made up of representatives from other applied programs for professional degrees and Student Affairs to make recommendations for the student necessary to return to a professional internship. This process may be utilized in certain circumstances when approved by the Director of Field Education.

Program Support and Academic Warning Process for Failure to Make Progress in Field Education

Level I: The First Academic Warning

Student Support Plan (SSP) – A SSP will be implemented for students who fail to make satisfactory progress in the Field Education courses (522/522P, 523/523P, 622/622P, 623/623P). Satisfactory progress is measured by the student's timely completion of the required number of hours and assignments in practicum each semester as well as developing and building proficiency in the CSWE Social Work Competencies and adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics. A SSP is considered the first written academic warning and is required as early as possible in the first semester as well as all the subsequent semesters if a student shows signs of unsatisfactory progress.

The Field Liaison will contact the student and will schedule a meeting with the student and Field Instructor to discuss areas of concerns and areas for improvement. The SSP will be reviewed and finalized by the Field Liaison, in consultation with the Assistant Director of Field Education. The intent is to identify the specific areas in which the student must improve to successfully complete the course/program. The document should include the following information:

Specific actions, behaviors, or events that would constitute unsatisfactory progress, such as but not limited to the following:

- Failure to complete number of required field hours within the semester
- Excessive absences from the placement agency or failure to meet with Field Instructor and/or Preceptor on a weekly basis for field instruction
- Failure to comply with agency policy and procedure
- Failure to respond to requests made by Field Liaison, Director of Field Education,

and Field Instructor

- NOTE Consequences of failing to respond to any communication attempts (phone, e-mail, and/or letter includes the risk of dismissal from the program.
- Failure to present oneself in a professional manner when interacting with clients, peers, faculty and agency personnel
- Failure to complete assignments (including EBRs, journals, learning agreements and field calendars)
- Excessive self-disclosure of personal information which has a deleterious effect on clients
- Abandonment of Field Practicum site
- Students are not allowed to make any changes in their Field Practicum site without the approval of a CSUN Field Liaison. Students may not render a “resignation” or abandon their placement
- Refusal to work with the assigned Field Instructor

Specific actions, behaviors or events that would constitute satisfactory academic progress, such as but not limited to the following:

- Submit a completion plan with a specific timetable and deadlines
- Submit all missing EBR’s by a specific date and submit all future EBR’s on a weekly basis as required
- Desist from self-disclosure during individual and/or group therapy

Specific dates within which these actions, behaviors or events must take place.

NOTE: Consequences of failing to meet deadlines may include risk of dismissal from the program.

- Space for the student to sign and date the letter as an indication of receipt and understanding.

[See the Student Support Plan process in Section XIII of this manual.](#)

Level II: The Second Academic Warning

Failure to Improve – Field Education Student Review Meeting with the Director of Field Education and Field Liaison. If the student does not meet the deadlines and expectations set forth in the Student Support Plan, a Professional Academic Review Committee (PARC) meeting will be conducted. A written summary letter of the PARC meeting will be provided to the student. The letter is the second level of written warning.

Level III: Dismissal and the Appeal Procedure

A student who continues to fail the Field Education courses, fails to meet the Core Competencies, and/or who engages in unethical/illegal behavior will be dismissed from the MSW program. Students who fail more than one field course or are terminated by more than one field placement agency are subject to dismissal. Students are allowed to retake up to 6 units of coursework in the MSW Program, but they may only retake one course in the 12-unit

field sequence. The Director of Field Education in collaboration with the Department Chair/Director of Online/Off Site Programs and PARC will make the final determination for dismissal if a student continues to fail to meet the expectations of the MSW program despite Level I and Level II early interventions and academic warnings. A written decision will be sent to the student after the PARC review committee has decided. Normally the decision should be sent to the student within three (3) working days after the review. This time may be extended if necessary. The student should be informed in writing if the decision will be delayed.

Students who wish to appeal the dismissal from the MSW program should contact the Department Chair to discuss the reason for the appeal by the specific date indicated in the formal letter. Students will be asked to submit a detailed narrative explaining the reason(s) for the appeal. The student should also outline the outcome/resolution that he or she is seeking. After this meeting with the Chair, the student may consult with the Dean's Office, followed by the Associate Vice President (AVP) of Graduate Studies and the Dean of Students.

Termination of Field Practicum Site

Practicum agencies have the right to terminate/dismiss students at any time due to behaviors which the Field Instructor, agency director and/or administrator deem inappropriate or unethical. These are infrequent but problematic occurrences which represent a serious setback to and a disruption of the student's academic progress and the student's ability to successfully complete the MSW degree. Students are required to remain in the same field practicum site for the entire academic year. However, a field practicum site may be terminated if:

- The student has violated the NASW Code of Ethics.
- The agency has failed to provide an appropriate learning experience, appropriate and qualified field instructor, or has not insured a safe and healthy environment for the student.
- The student fails to meet expected performance standards including an ongoing lack of professionalism by the student at either the field practicum site, field seminar course, or both (e.g. poor boundaries, tardiness, absenteeism, missing appointments, inappropriate and/or unprofessional conduct, turning in assignments late, marginal or below marginal assignments, etc.).
- A life event or major change which results in the failure to meet the learning objectives and is not a result of negative circumstances brought on by either party (e.g. funding cuts, unable to provide supervisor, etc.).
- If the student realized that social work is not the right profession for them.

Once terminated/dismissed, all hours accumulated for that semester will be honored. A Student Support Plan will automatically be generated or updated if already in place and a review meeting will be convened. Based on the deliberations of the Field Liaison, Assistant Director of Field Education and Director of Field Education, the student may be allowed a second practicum site. **Should the student be asked to leave the second practicum site, no further practicums will be assigned.** The student will receive a written notice of a failing grade for the Field Education Practicum courses and the student will be considered for dismissal from

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

XV. SAFETY GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOLS

In an effort to improve student safety and help the student increase skills and knowledge about how to more appropriately and effectively handle situations, it is very important for students to gain information regarding the policies, procedures, and expectations that CSUN agency, and Field Instructors have related to safety issues.

The MSW Program Safety Policy

Due to the nature of the work students are involved in, issues related to safety, roleplaying scenarios, discussions related to safety incidents, etc. will be an ongoing topic during the Field Education Program. The purpose of these discussions will be to give the student different perspectives on situations and different ways to approach them, increasing the likelihood that the student will be able to stay safe and more effectively handle even volatile situations. The CSUN MSW Program also expects that agencies will provide their student a safe place (preferably with a lock) where the student can keep their personal belongings.

Policy and Procedures if an Incident Occurs at the Field Practicum Site

If an incident involving a physical or psychological injury to a student occurs, the Field Instructor or an agency representative should contact the Director of Field Education immediately. A discussion would need to occur regarding the incident, what the current status of the situation is, and what the desired outcomes are of the agency, Field Instructor, and student. Both the Field Instructor and Field Liaison will need to document the incident and plan. The Field Liaison will contact the student and assess the student's safety and mental well-being, as well as determine if and when the student can return to their placement or if they need to be removed from that placement and be relocated elsewhere.

Zero-tolerance for Harassment

Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. Any student believing to be harassed at their field practicum site should report incident(s) to their Field Liaison, Department Chair, or other faculty member. Chair or faculty member will then convene a formal investigation, if necessary. Field Liaison, Chair, or faculty member may assist student with reporting the alleged misconduct/violation of the Student Conduct Code to the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs.

Substantiated charges of harassment by a student may result in dismissal from the program. [See page 15 of the Student Handbook for additional information](#) regarding University and Department harassment policies and procedures.