



# **Field Education Manual**

## **2022-2023**

**ATTENTION:** The Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work fully adheres to the School's and the University's policies and protocols. All MSW Students are expected to review, understand, and comply with the policies and protocols included in [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), ["Current Student Website"](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work MSW Policies and Procedures](#) and [MSW Field Education Manual](#).

## Table of Contents

WELCOME – Director of Field Education	4
I. FIELD EDUCATION	5
A. Objectives of Field Education	6
B. Campus Locations	6
C. Administration / Field Faculty / Staff	9
D. Field Agency Sites	10
E. Field Education Requirements	10
Course Work	11
Field Internship	12
Evaluation/Grading	13
Field Instruction	14
Evidence-Based Intervention Training	14
Malpractice Insurance	14
F. Field Education Roles	14
G. Field Placement Process	16
H. Field Calendar	17
I. Transportation	18
II. STUDENT / MSW CANDIDATE	18
A. Introduction	18
Field Placement	18
First Year	19
Second Year	19
Field Education & Employment	20
B. Department Change Process	21
C. Student Tasks & Responsibilities	22
D. Supervision	23
E. Safety and Risk Management	24
F. Challenges and Support	24
G. Professional Expectations	24
H. Social Media	25
III. FIELD INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION	26
A. Introduction	26
B. Field Instructor Qualifications	27
C. Field Instructor Tasks & Responsibilities	27
D. Field Instruction	29
E. Challenges and Support	30
F. Safety and Risk Management	31
G. Field Internship Interruption and Strike Policy	32
IV. FAILURE TO MAKE SATISFACTORY PROGRESS IN FIELD	32
A. Level I - First Academic Warning – Student Performance Improvement Plan	33
B. Level II – Second Academic Warning – Failure to Improve	33
C. Level III - Dismissal and Appeal Procedure	33
D. Students Terminated or Dismissed from Placement Agency or Organization	34
E. Grounds for Dismissal from the MSW Program	36
V. APPENDIX	37

## WELCOME

As the Director of Field Education, I welcome students and field instructors who are engaged in the interactive process of teaching and learning about the practice of professional social work in the real world. Field Education is committed to providing opportunities for our students to develop skills in the most current practices, particularly in evidence-based interventions, and to receive supervision by the finest field instructors in the country.

This Field Education Manual is designed to provide general information and guidance about Field Education and the Field Practicum to students and field instructors at both of our Academic Centers (AC) - the On-Campus Program (OCP) and the Virtual Academic Center (VAC).

Individual and specific questions are encouraged and can be directed to those field faculty who are assigned to each student as Field Faculty Liaisons at each Academic Center. If there continues to be a concern, then the advisor/liaison can contact the Associate or Assistant Directors of Field Education for further discussion. The roles of the Director, the Associate Director, the Assistant Director, and the Faculty are to provide our students as much support as possible in the process of integrating theory with practice.

Field Education is the “Heart of Social Work” and we want to provide an experience for each student that represents the reality of professional social work practitioners and agencies today. The experiences in the Field Practicum can evoke a range of reactions and like the challenges in our communities, the process of learning in the field is dynamic and complex. You may confront difficult situations and dilemmas in the first few months. With early and open communication and good collaborative problem solving, the learning during the academic year will be profound and life changing.

I extend my thanks and best regards to students and field instructors for beginning a life long journey of learning, self-discovery and transformation.

Ruth Supranovich, Ed.D., LCSW  
Director of Field Education  
Professor of Social Work Field Education

## I. FIELD EDUCATION

Field Education is an independent and integral sequence of the MSW curriculum. Students are exposed to selected and organized opportunities guided by the 2015 [Education Policy and Educational Standards \(EPAS\)](#) and the proposed 2022 EPAs. Field is the signature pedagogy of Social Work Education. Field Education seeks to validate, apply, and integrate the knowledge, theories, and concepts of social work practice learned throughout the curriculum. Field agencies are expected to provide "in vivo" experiences relevant to the academic content. The student is expected to apply academic knowledge, social work skills, critical thinking, professional behavior, ethics and values learned in the classroom to direct practice work.

In order for integration of learning to occur concurrently in field sites and in the classroom, the agency and the School need to collaborate closely. USC administrators, professors and Field Faculty Liaisons partner with agency field instructors to foster comprehensive and high-quality social work education and training. The collaboration teaches and guides students to practice with cultural humility and to abide by professional social work behavior, values, and code of ethics. This culturally responsive approach helps prepare students to practice social work with diverse populations and to take on leadership roles within the profession.

### A. Objectives of Field Education

Field Education prepares students to enter the social work profession by meeting the following objectives:

- Integrate academic learning with all levels of field work (micro, mezzo, macro).
- Increase proficiency in the required core competencies for social work education as it relates to field work.

The [2015 CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) are as follows:

1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
  2. Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
  3. Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
  4. Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice
  5. Engage in Policy Practice
  6. Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
  7. Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
  8. Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
  9. Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
- Develop the ability to understand and utilize a broad range of modalities and interventions in micro, mezzo, and macro practice with diverse populations.
  - Focus on building the knowledge for generalist practice in the 1st semester (Departmental MSW program) or in the 1st and 2nd semesters (ISW MSW Program) to establish a broad foundation for direct practice work.
  - Develop a deeper knowledge and depth of skills needed for beginning professional practice in a designated Department of Study in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> semesters (Departmental MSW Program) or in integrative social work practice with optional tracks in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> semesters (ISW MSW Program).

## B. Campus Locations

	<p><b><u>University Park Campus (OCP)</u></b>          Montgomery Ross Fisher Building          669 W. 34<sup>th</sup> Street          Los Angeles, CA 90089-0411          213.740.2711</p>
	<p><b><u>Virtual Academic Center</u></b>  <a href="http://msw.usc.edu/about/technology/technology-overview/">http://msw.usc.edu/about/technology/technology-overview/</a>          877.700.4MSW (4679)</p>

## C. Administration / Faculty / Staff

University Park Campus	
	<p><b>Ruth Supranovich</b>  <b>Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>  <b>Director of Field Education and Clinical Programs</b>  <a href="mailto:supranov@usc.edu">supranov@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Suh Chen Hsiao</b>  <b>Associate Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>  <b>Associate Director, Field Education</b>          213.821.0970  <a href="mailto:shuhsiao@usc.edu">shuhsiao@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Omar Lopez</b>  <b>Professor Title</b>  <b>Director, Workforce Development Stipend &amp; Scholarship Programs</b>          213.821.4040  <a href="mailto:omarl@usc.edu">omarl@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Stephen Hydon</b>  <b>Professor Title</b>  <b>Director, Social Work in Schools/PPSC Programs</b>          213.740.0282  <a href="mailto:hydon@usc.edu">hydon@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Ruth Cislowski</b>  <b>Associate Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>  <b>Assistant Director, Field Education, Working Professional Program</b>          213.764.0188  <a href="mailto:cislowsk@usc.edu">cislowsk@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Carolina Peralta-Ventura</b>  <b>Associate Director of Field Education &amp; Clinical Operations</b>          213.740.2005  <a href="mailto:carolinp@usc.edu">carolinp@usc.edu</a></p>

<b>OCP Support Staff</b>	
	<p><b>Lorena Garcia</b>  <b>Contracts Coordinator</b>  <b>Field Education</b>            213.821.0971  <a href="mailto:garc919@usc.edu">garc919@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Keisha Lee</b>  <b>Operation Coordinator for Field Education</b>            213.821.3634  <a href="mailto:keishale@usc.edu">keishale@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Kimberly Ross</b>  <b>Administrative Assistant II</b>  <b>Field Education</b>            213.740.9416  <a href="mailto:kross@usc.edu">kross@usc.edu</a></p>
<b>OCP Field Faculty</b>	
	<p><b>Rosemary Alamo</b>  <b>Associate Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>            213.740.5832  <a href="mailto:ralamo@usc.edu">ralamo@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Rafael Angulo</b>  <b>Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>            213.821.1397  <a href="mailto:angulo@usc.edu">angulo@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Margarita Artavia</b>  <b>Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>  <b>Professor of Clinical Dentistry Ostrow School of Dentistry</b>            213.740.9465  <a href="mailto:artavia@usc.edu">artavia@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Umeka Franklin</b>  <b>Associate Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>            213.821.4014  <a href="mailto:ufrankli@usc.edu">ufrankli@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Kim Goodman</b>  <b>Associate Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>            213.740.0283  <a href="mailto:kgoodma@usc.edu">kgoodma@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Alison Cole-Kelly</b>  <b>Assistant Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>  <a href="mailto:colekell@usc.edu">colekell@usc.edu</a></p>

	<p><b>Jenebah Lewis</b>  <b>Assistant Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>  213.740.1424  <a href="mailto:jenebah@usc.edu">jenebah@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Kelley Macmillan</b>  <b>Associate Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>  213-821-6450  <a href="mailto:kmacmill@usc.edu">kmacmill@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Phil Meyer</b>  <b>Associate Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>  213.821.1298  <a href="mailto:philmeye@usc.edu">philmeye@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Ricardo Ornelas</b>  <b>Associate Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>  213.740.8905  <a href="mailto:ricardoo@usc.edu">ricardoo@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Christina Paddock</b>  <b>Associate Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>  213.821.2893  <a href="mailto:cpaddock@usc.edu">cpaddock@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Holly Priebe-Sotelo</b>  <b>Associate Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>  213.821.6161  <a href="mailto:hsotelo@usc.edu">hsotelo@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Aubrey Shelby</b>  <b>Assistant Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>  Phone: 213-764-4763  <a href="mailto:tousant@usc.edu">tousant@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Vivien Villaverde</b>  <b>Associate Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>  <b>Teaching Institution Coordinator</b>  213.821.7068  <a href="mailto:villaver@usc.edu">villaver@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Debra Waters-Roman</b>  <b>Associate Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>  213-821-2961  <a href="mailto:watersro@usc.edu">watersro@usc.edu</a></p>
<p>For information on Adjunct Field Faculty please contact <a href="mailto:sswfield@usc.edu">sswfield@usc.edu</a></p>	
<p>Refer to the <a href="#">VAC Field Education Manual</a> for the VAC Field Education Regional Directors, Faculty, and Staff Information</p>	
<p>Telehealth</p>	
	<p><b>Sara Caliboso-Soto</b>  <b>Associate Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>  <b>Assistant Director of Clinical Programs</b>  213.821.4292  <a href="mailto:scalibos@usc.edu">scalibos@usc.edu</a></p>

	<p><b>Danielle Brown</b>  <b>Associate Professor of Social Work Field Education</b>  <b>Clinical Coordinator, Tele-behavioral Health Clinic and Trauma Recovery Center</b>  <a href="mailto:brownde@usc.edu">brownde@usc.edu</a></p>
<b>Telehealth Support Staff</b>	
	<p><b>Karla Gomez</b>  <b>Operations Coordinator, Telehealth</b>  213.821.5820  <a href="mailto:karlagom@usc.edu">karlagom@usc.edu</a></p>
	<p><b>Elias Martinez</b>  <b>Administrative Assistant I</b>  213.821.6889  <a href="mailto:em_592@usc.edu">em_592@usc.edu</a></p>

#### D. Field Agency Sites

The Field Practicum, also known as a student's placement or internship, takes place in [USC Memorandum of Agreement \(MOA\)](#) contract approved agencies located throughout the country that represent a wide range of social work services and practice. These agencies are approved sites based on the quality of the professional practice, commitment to addressing social problems and an interest to participate in the professional education of MSW students. The agency is responsible for providing the learning opportunities representative of social work practice within the student's region and/or community. They must subscribe to the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work educational objectives, the [CSWE EPAS and the 9 Core Competencies](#).

**Note:** MSW Students are not allowed to identify nor secure their own field placement site but may suggest potential sites for pre-approval processing.

Field internship sites must treat the students as learners while providing the resources necessary to meet their learning objectives. Unless officially approved by the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Field Faculty and Administration, students may not work at home during the placement hours. Hours worked at home without the express consent of the Field Instructor and assigned Field Faculty will not be counted as meeting the number of hours required for a passing grade.

**Note:** Students cannot sign any agency "contracts" nor enter any agreements that refute or negate the provisions in the official agency/organization MOA with the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. This includes important policies regarding placement hours and educational calendar events such as finals week.

There are instances when an agency may not possess the resources to provide all the required learning experiences in one site. In such cases, a secondary placement site may be identified and used for the purpose of meeting the student's learning objectives and accumulation of Field Internship hours. A large multi-disciplinary placement agency site may also decide to broaden the student's experience by rotating to different departments to expand learning opportunities. In any of these options, the primary agency site carries the main responsibility for field instruction while the secondary site provides a Preceptor for supplemental supervision. All options must be expressly pre-approved by the USC Suzanne

Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Field Faculty and Administration prior to the start of the Field Internship or the hours will not be counted toward the number required for a passing grade.

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work welcomes agencies interested in partnering as field placement sites. To qualify as a field placement site, an agency must meet the following criteria:

- Provide a sufficient amount and variety of assignments to develop student knowledge and practice skills.
- Provide an opportunity to work with individuals, families, groups, communities, and/or organizations unless otherwise indicated by appropriate faculty placement team.
- Provide ample time for weekly field instruction to permit both individual and group conferences with students.
- Provide adequate office space, office supplies, telephone availability, and clerical support.
- Provide opportunities for in-service training and access to agency consultants.
- Have an interest in participating in the student's research.
- Have an interest in aligning the agency's practice framework to theories taught in the classroom.

New agency sites must complete the New Agency Information Packet and a [Memorandum of Agreement](#) approved by the USC Legal Counsel. An agency representative must also meet with a USC Field Faculty to evaluate the appropriateness of the site and for approval. This process typically takes three to six months to complete.

**Note:** The Virtual Academic Center has specific application and approval procedures that must be followed. ([MSW@USC](mailto:MSW@USC))

## E. Field Education Requirements

Applied Learning in Field Education courses, which are the student's Field Internship are required. The table below provides the sequential overview of the courses for each semester.

### Departmental MSW Program Course Work

Table 1: Semester Course Information

<b>Field Education Courses (18 units total):</b>			
<b>Semester 1 (3 Units)</b>	<b>Semester 2 (5 Units)</b>	<b>Semester 3 (5 Units)</b>	<b>Semester 4 (5 Units)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applied Learning in Field Education (589a) – 3 Units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applied Learning in Field Education (589b) – 3 Units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advanced Applied Learning in Field Education (699a) – 4 Units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advanced Applied Learning in Field Education (699b) – 4 Units</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrative Learning for Social Work Practice (588) – 2 Units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrative Learning for Advanced Social Work Practice (698a) – 1 Unit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrative Learning for Advanced Social Work Practice (698a) – 1 Unit</li> </ul>

All MSW students must complete two semesters of Applied Learning in Field Education (Field Internship), 589a/b and two semesters of Advanced Applied Learning in Field Education (Field Internship), 699a/b. All four courses must be completed sequentially as part of the graduation requirements. All students enrolled in the second semester Applied Learning in Field Education (589b) and Advance Applied Learning in Field Education (699a/b) courses must attend the corresponding Integrative Learning for Social Work Practice course as indicated in Table 1. Field Education courses are assigned a “Credit” or “No Credit” grade. Applied Learning in Field Education courses are taken concurrently with the corresponding Integrated Learning for Social Work Practice courses.

#### Field Internship Departmental MSW Program

Students must earn between **1,000** to **1,150** Field Internship hours. All Field Internship hours must be earned by interning at an approved agency site assigned through the formal placement process. The first year requires the completion of a minimum of **450** hours and the second year requires a minimum of **550**. An exception is all [Pupil Personnel Services Credential \(PPSC\)](#) students who must earn **600** hours in either one of the two years of field study. First year [PPSC](#) students must earn an additional **150** hours and second year PPSC students must earn an additional **50** hours. Any field hours earned in the first-year internship do not apply to the second-year internship. The Learning Agreement indicates the number of hours required for each semester in Field Education. All MSW candidates regardless of the type of program they are enrolled in must meet the minimum **1,000** Field Internship hours to earn their degree.

#### Field Internship ISW MSW Program Course Work

Table 2: Semester Course Information

Field Education Courses (12 units total):			
Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 3	Semester 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applied Learning in Field Education I (591) – 3 Units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applied Learning in Field Education II (593) – 3 Units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applied Learning in Field Education III (691) – 3 Units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applied Learning in Field Education IV (693) – 3 Units</li> </ul>

All MSW students must complete all four semesters of Applied Learning in Field Education (Field Internship), 591, 593, 691, 693. All four courses must be completed sequentially as part of the graduation requirements.

Students must earn a minimum of 1200 Field hours. All Field Internship hours must be earned by interning at an approved agency site for a minimum of 1100 field hours assigned through the formal placement process. A minimum of 100 field hours must be earned through attending the classroom portion of the Applied Learning in Field Education courses. The first year requires the completion of a minimum of 510 hours and the second year requires a minimum of 690 hours.

Note: Pupil Personnel Services Credential (PPSC) students must earn a minimum of 600 hours at their assigned PPSC school based field placement. First year PPSC students must earn an additional 150 internship hours to obtain the minimum 600 internship hours required for the PPSC. Any field hours earned in the first year internship do not apply to the second

year internship. The Learning Agreement indicates the number of hours required for each semester in Field Education. All MSW candidates regardless of the type of program they are enrolled in must meet the minimum 1,200 Field hours to earn their degree.

#### Field Internship Expectations for All Departmental and ISW MSW Students

The first year and second year field placements at the OCP are typically in different agencies with an option to stay in the same agency with all the appropriate pre-approvals. The criteria and objectives vary from each Department of Study with a more generalist experience in the first semester to a more focused experience in the remaining semesters. Field placement days vary depending on the student classes. The student will coordinate with the agency regarding the internship schedule. Field placement days are determined through a discussion between the agency and the student, with the requirement that there is at least one 8-hour day. First year, Working Professionals Program (WPP), and second year field placements require at least one 8-hour day during regular business hours. There is no exception to this policy. Evening and weekend hours are very limited and non-existent in most communities. MSW supervision must be available to the student during those hours.

**Note:** Students may not work over 8 hours per day without prior USC faculty pre-approval nor can they work more than 32 hours per week. MSW students may not bank hours to end field internship early nor can they credit hours from the first year to the second year of field internship. Field Instructors and students must adhere to the start and end dates of field internship as indicated in the Field Calendar regardless of any excess hours earned each semester. Below are potential exceptions to this policy:

- Internship extensions: Some agencies may require students to continue during the winter and summer breaks for continuity of care. Any extension must be indicated in the Learning Agreement.
- Make-up for missing hours: Any scheduled make-up hours must be completed by the add/drop date of the following semester.

The agency, student, and the Field Faculty Liaison must have a discussion and pre-approve this schedule as early as possible. Any changes in internship requirements must be noted in the Learning Agreement. Any changes in internship requirements after the initial learning agreement is completed must be made in writing and approved by the field instructor and by the field liaison.

Field Internship is assigned to all WPP and first-year internship students at OCP. First year internship students do not actively participate in the matching process. They are assigned a place of internship by the field placement team. Second year OCP students may participate in the matching process by interviewing with agencies of interest specific to the Department of Study and/or selected track. Student's refusal to participate in the field placement process and in Field Internship will delay academic progress and may be the cause of a student's inability to complete and graduate from the MSW program. MSW students are not allowed to identify their own field placement site but may suggest potential sites for pre-approval processing. This process takes 3-6 months to complete and does not guarantee the student will be placed at the suggested field agency site.

Students are responsible for pre-placement contact with their assigned placement agencies. Pre-placement processing may take place prior to the start of the semester but should not exceed 8 hours per day nor can it exceed **32** hours per week. Although field agency sites may schedule pre-placement processing in the summer, they cannot be made mandatory due to students' travel plans or permanent home addresses. Any pre-placement agency expectations must be agreed upon by the student and the appropriate field faculty. If the

student is unable to complete pre-placement requirements, the student, appropriate field faculty member and agency personnel must determine how these students will be given an opportunity to make-up the pre-placement processing after semester starts.

Students must make all efforts to complete agency required pre-placement processing prior to the field start date. It is the student's responsibility to make initial agency contact and complete all mandatory on-boarding requirements in order to begin the Field Internship on time. Students are also responsible for transportation to and from their placement site up to 30 miles in one direction from their place of residence. The School is not responsible for any transportation related costs the student might incur (see transportation on page 18).

#### Evaluation/Grading for the Departmental MSW Curriculum

Applied Learning in Field Education is a 3-unit course (589a/b) in the first year and a 4-unit course (699a/b) in the second year of Field Internship. It is a Credit/No Credit class. The grading is based on meeting all the requirements: (1) completion of required hours for each semester, (2) timely completion of the learning agreement, (3) timely weekly completion of the required Reflective Learning Tools (4 per semester), and (4) achievement of the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) as evidenced in a satisfactory end of semester evaluation. If the student completes all the field hours but fails to achieve expected demonstration of the Competencies, the grade will be "No Credit". **All four requirements must be met to pass the course and to earn a "Credit" grade.**

**Note:** Any grade of "In-Progress" or "No Credit" in 598a and 699a/b requires documentation such as In Progress/Incomplete Form and/or a Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP).

#### Evaluation/Grading for the ISW MSW Curriculum

Applied Learning in Field Education is a 3-unit course (591, 593, 691, 693). It is a Credit/No Credit class. The grading is based on meeting all the requirements identified in the syllabi for both classroom assignments and internship requirements: (1) completion of required hours for each semester, (2) timely completion of the learning agreement, (3) timely completion of the required Reflective Learning Tools (4 per semester), (4) achievement of the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) as evidenced in a satisfactory end of semester evaluation, and (5) classroom assignments. If the student completes all the field hours but fails to achieve expected demonstration of the Competencies, the grade will be "No Credit". All requirements must be met to pass the course and to earn a "Credit" grade. Failure to meet any one of the requirements will result in a No Credit grade and students must repeat the entire course.

**Note:** Any grade of "In-Progress", "Incomplete" or "No-Credit" in any of the field education courses requires documentation such as In Progress/Incomplete Form and/or a Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP).

A Learning Agreement is completed at the beginning of each internship year. Formal evaluations are also submitted at the end of each semester of internship. Field Instructors, students and Preceptors (if applicable) must collaborate when completing all required documents. Field placements are monitored by Field Faculty Liaisons through periodic agency or virtual meetings, student-Field Instructor meetings, telephone calls, and other contacts. Successful completion of the field internship requires meeting all the expected hours, obtaining satisfactory formal evaluation by meeting expected growth in the [CSWE](#)

[Social Work Competencies](#) and completing 4 Reflective Learning Tools turned in each semester while enrolled in each semester of Field Education..

### Field Instruction

Field Instruction is provided by an individual who possesses an MSW and has at least two years of post MSW practice experience. They must be approved by the School of Social Work and certified to be a Field Instructor (see Section II.B). Field Instruction takes place between the student and the Field Instructor in designated agency settings that have been approved by the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and the University. An External Field Instructor (EFI) may be utilized if the agency does not employ an MSW but wants to host an MSW Intern. The same requirements apply to all EFI's.

There is a specific sequence of assignments, activities, and learning goals for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year Field Internship aligned with all other courses in the School. The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and the agency collaborate in assisting students to learn and increase their mastery of the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#). The Field Instruction process is intentional, active, organized, sequential, and individualized. It is conducted within the framework of a particular social work agency. Over the course of two years of field internship, field instruction is expected to include but not be limited to the following:

- Direct practice work with individuals, families, and related groups
- Direct practice work focusing on groups, communities, organizations, and/or institutional change
- A diversity of modalities, populations, and treatments delivered in the micro, mezzo, and macro practice settings
- A range of theoretical and teaching methodologies and models

### Evidenced-Based Intervention Training

All first and second year MSW candidates are required to complete a minimum of two Evidenced-Based Intervention trainings. Participation in these trainings counts as Applied Learning hours.

It is the student's responsibility to communicate with and inform their Field Instructors about the assigned date of their respective training if the training date requires an excused day from placement. Should the Field Instructor object to the student's absence, it is the student's responsibility to connect with the Field Faculty Liaison to discuss the missed training.

Students are offered workshops throughout the academic year and are highly encouraged to participate. Workshops and training is offered to supplement and support field internships.

### Malpractice Insurance

All students entering field placement are required to participate in the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work's malpractice insurance coverage. Each student pays a required malpractice insurance fee prior to placement in a field agency (included as part of the commitment deposit). This plan covers students while they are enrolled in their first and second year of field placement. Copies of the certificate can be obtained from the Field Education office ([sswfield@usc.edu](mailto:sswfield@usc.edu)).

## **F. Field Education Roles**

Field education is a collaborative effort to provide a real-life social work learning experience to students placed in a designated agency. The collaboration consists of multiple professionals with distinct roles. The roles within field education are as follows:

- Director of Field Education:  
The Director of Field Education is a University administrator responsible for the development and continuity of the programs and policies of Field Education. This individual has overarching authority over all Field Education activities and functions, and is the direct supervisor of the Associate Director, other field administrators/directors, and all full-time Field Faculty. The Director serves as the final arbiter for issues that cannot be resolved at the Associate or Assistant Director level.
- Associate and Assistant Directors of Field Education:  
The Associate and Assistant Directors of Field Education report directly to the Director of Field Education. These administrators are responsible for the operational aspects of Field Education activities and are the initial arbiter of any issues pertaining to Field Education.
- Program Directors (Workforce Development, School Social Work, Clinical Programs, & Operations):  
The Program Directors report directly to the Director of Field Education. They are responsible for the operational aspects of the program they oversee and the initial arbiter of any issues pertaining to it.
- Field Faculty Liaison:  
This individual is a field faculty member who coordinates, monitors, evaluates, and documents the student's field experience to ensure optimal learning and professional development. They also provide consultation, assistance and evaluation to the student/intern and Field Instructor.
- Field Education Learning Instructor/Professor:  
This individual is the field faculty who facilitates the Applied Learning for Field Education courses and serves as the student's Field Faculty Liaison.
- MSW Student/Intern:  
The designation of "intern" is often used to refer to the MSW student when placed in an agency and enrolled in the Field Practicum and completing courses to earn a Master of Social Work degree.
- Field Instructor:  
This individual is a professional social worker and an agency representative assigned to provide weekly supervision and instruction to MSW interns in a placement site. The Field Instructor may work collaboratively with a preceptor or daily task supervisor in an agency, but he/she has the primary and overall responsibility for the student's learning, evaluation, and linkage with the University.
- External Field Instructor  
This individual is contracted to supervise MSW Interns and perform all the tasks of a traditional Field Instructor.
- Preceptor/Agency Task Supervisor:  
An individual affiliated with the agency who shares responsibility for the student's learning. They may or may not be a social worker by training, however, they must work closely with the Field Instructor of record.

## **G. Field Placement Process**

### First Year (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Semesters of Field Internship) Field Internship:

Field Faculty assigns first-year students and WPP to the placement site on an individual basis. The objective of the first-year placement is to build a generalist social work skill set in

social work methods and practices in either the ISW MSW program or in the Departmental MSW program. Assignment is based on several factors: the student's learning goals, work and volunteer experience, educational background, and career aspirations. Other factors considered are available learning opportunities at each agency, geographic location, region or community, financial aid, and other special needs or circumstances. The placement process takes place prior to or at the start of the first semester of the first year or in the third semester of the WPP and the six-semester program. The Field Placement Team may initiate a Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) as needed when MSW students are meeting challenges during the placement matching process or refusing a final placement match. Students who are successfully matched are notified of their assignment to a first-year or three semester field placement via e-mail. Once notified, the student must contact the agency as soon as possible to arrange an interview/pre-placement meeting and to complete any agency specific Human Resources processing and/or placement orientation prior to the start of the internship. The start date for field internship varies by program (OCP versus the VAC). Please refer to the [Field Calendar](#) of the respective academic centers to identify the start date.

**Note:** MSW students are not permitted to identify nor secure their own field placement site but may suggest potential sites for pre-approval processing. This process takes 3-6 months to complete and does not guarantee the student will be placed at the suggested field agency site.

Students may experience a slow build-up of client caseload in the first semester. See the Appendix section for the First Year Curriculum Objectives & Outline.

#### Second Year (3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Semesters of Field Internship):

Note: The 2nd Year Field Placement Process is not applicable for WPP students.

The goal of the second-year field placement is to build on the first-year experience to help students develop advanced and more focused social work skills and practices across diverse populations within their Departmental MSW or ISW MSW Curriculum track. All 2nd year students may actively participate in choosing their second-year field placement. This process is initiated in the second semester of the first-year. MSW students may interview with up to three agencies chosen from a list of approved placement agency sites. The availability of agencies may be limited to one option in some programs due to geographical constraints, students' availability, or community resources. The interviews will commence in the second semester of the student's first field education year.

Confirmation of the second-year placement is based on mutual acceptance of both the agency and the student after the interview process. Students will be informed of the structure, process and timeline by the Field Placement Team during the Placement Orientation. The Field Placement Team may initiate a Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) as needed when MSW students are meeting challenges during the placement matching interview process or refusing a final placement match. Students who are successfully matched are notified of their field placement assignment via e-mail. Once the match is made, it is the student's responsibility to contact the Field Instructor/Agency Coordinator as soon as possible to complete any agency specific Human Resources requirements and/or agency orientation prior to the start of the field internship. The School is not responsible for any delays caused by the student not making contact with or beginning field internship at the confirmed field placement agency.

**Note:** MSW students are not permitted to identify nor secure their own field placement site outside of the approved agency list but may suggest potential sites for pre-approval processing. This process takes 3-6 months to complete and does not guarantee the student will be placed at the suggested field agency site.

One-time Fee: Incoming students will be charged a one-time fee to access the electronic records for their field internship (i.e. learning agreement, evaluations, and licensure hours tracking).

Additional costs may be incurred by the student to meet the HR requirements of the agency for the first and/or second year of Field Internship. These may include special training and security/health clearances. The students are responsible for the cost incurred.

#### Dual Degree - (Currently only available for 60 Unit Curriculum)

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work conducts dual degree programs with several other schools within the University. Students in these programs must meet the basic requirements of both Schools in order to earn both degrees. The first-year field placement is administered primarily by the School of Social Work in collaboration with the dual degree School. The first year of field education follows the same process as described above. The administrative responsibility for the second year of field education varies depending on the dual degree program. In most cases, the collaborating School assumes primary responsibility for the assignment and monitoring of the second-year field education placement. **The dual degree program is completed in consultation with the School of Social Work Academic Advisor.**

#### H. Field Calendar

To the fullest extent possible, students are expected to observe the agency attendance and time schedule policies. Applied Learning in Field Education is a class and students must adhere to the Field Calendar which identifies the beginning and ending dates of the internship as well as important Field Education activities and events.

The School of Social Work schedules specific events that require **MANDATORY ATTENDANCE**. Student attendance and participation is required at the following events:

- Evidence-Based Intervention Training (not applicable for WPP students)
- Any other events mandated by the University President or the Dean of the School

Students may participate in the following optional activities and receive field hour credits with the permission of their Field Instructors:

- The Point in Time homeless count
- State Legislative Days (“Lobby Days”)
- Social Work Job Fair

All University Holidays are sanctioned time off. If a University Holiday falls on one of the student’s regularly scheduled days at the agency, students are not required to attend internship. If students observe the University Holiday, they do not earn credit for field hours that day. Students also do not earn any field hours missed due to agency holidays that fall on their scheduled placement day and are not University Holidays. Students should consult with their Field Instructor and/or Preceptor to ensure their absence would not adversely affect the agency and/or client care.

Students are allowed eight hours each semester to take time off for religious holidays or illness which must be discussed in advance and arranged with the Field Instructor/Preceptor. This time counts in the Field Internship hours and the student does not have to make-up this time. Make-up hours for additional time missed must be discussed with and approved by the Field Instructor/Preceptor.

Students should approach their work at the agency as they would a place of employment, discussing any changes in schedule or promptly informing the Field Instructor/Preceptor of illness or absence. One such discussion is the University policy which protects students from being in field during Study Week. This typically falls on the week after the last day of field placement each semester. Note that client care and continuity of agency operations must be strongly considered.

Record keeping of required field hours including time spent in placement, optional activities noted above, and make-up hours is a joint responsibility of the student and the Field Instructor. Students are required to maintain all records for field assignment electronically as instructed by the Field Faculty.

Agencies may use technology-based timekeeping using agency provided devices. Students cannot be required to use their personal devices.

**Note:** Should a problem arise due to conflicting commitments, the issues should be addressed and communicated by the student and the Field Instructor/Preceptor to the student's USC Field Faculty Liaison.

### **I. Transportation**

MSW candidates are responsible for transportation to and from the field placement site. The School is not responsible for any transportation related costs the student might incur.

Students should not transport client(s) in their personal vehicle or company vehicle unless the agency has given the student proper authorization to do so as part of the essential duty of the social work internship. The agency is responsible to provide authorization and orientation for interns to transport clients. Agencies must always provide sufficient information prior to transporting clients. If driving is an essential duty of the internship, it must be discussed during the pre-placement meeting to ensure the MSW student can meet the driving requirement(s).

**NOTE:** The University is not responsible for managing any requirements for transportation or driving as part of the Social Work Field Internship and does not maintain insurance for interns driving as part of the essential duties of the social work internship.

## **II. STUDENT / MSW CANDIDATE: INFORMATION FOR STUDENT AND STUDENT ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES IN FIELD EDUCATION**

### **A. Introduction**

The MSW student/candidate has a unique opportunity of acquiring knowledge and skills in the principles of the Social Work profession and Code of Ethics in the classroom and in field placement. Students are required to learn and simultaneously apply the knowledge in their

field internship work. Field Education provides the student this opportunity and helps increase their competency as a future Social Work professional. This requires strong commitment, dedication, and active participation from the MSW student/candidate. The School of Social Work and the agency are both committed in guiding the student through this process.

## **B. Field Placement**

Field Faculty assigns MSW students to their field placement for the first and second semester of Field Internship. For WPP students, the assignment is for all semesters of field placement based on the student's learning goals and objectives, background and circumstances. For the second-year of Field Internship (3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> semesters), students engage in the selection process. The School is responsible for facilitating the student-agency matching process. The matching is based on the student's learning goals and objectives, background, and circumstance. For each respective year of Field Internship, MSW students must follow the respective procedure (see Field Placement Process page 15).

### First-Year/WPP:

- Complete and submit the campus specific field placement form.
- Once the School notifies the student of the assigned placement via e-mail, the student must contact the agency as soon as possible to schedule a pre-placement visit.
- Complete all pre-placement requirements as specified by the agency.
- Attend and complete the Evidenced Based Intervention trainings (first-year only).

### Second-Year:

- Follow each department/track specific placement process including selecting agencies, interviewing, and ranking the agencies. The agencies will also engage in selecting and ranking the students who have interviewed.
- Follow specified timelines as provided by the placement coordinators.
- Once the School notifies you of your placement, complete in a timely manner all pre-placement requirements and processing.
- Attend and complete Evidenced-Based Practice training as required.

As you engage in the Field Placement process, the following information is important to note:

- Students may incur non-refundable costs for additional health/security clearance, specialized training, and/or other human resources processing specifically required by the agency.
- The Field Placement Team may initiate a Student Performance Review Plan (SPIP) process as needed when MSW students are meeting challenges in securing a field placement internship as determined by Field Faculty. Issues that merit this process include but are not limited to the following:
  - Students who engage in unprofessional behavior anytime during the placement matching process or violate any of the [NASW Code of Ethics](#).
  - Students who interview at and are denied placement at two agencies because of inappropriate behaviors or refuse placement at an approved agency(ies).
  - Failing three interviews due to inappropriate student behavior is the equivalent of a placement termination (see *Section IV. D. Students Terminated or Dismissed from the Placement Agency or Organization*).
  - The SPIP protocol will adhere to *Section IV* of this manual.
- The School is not responsible for any delays caused by placement challenges and/or student's lack of prompt attention to any placement related tasks & processes.

- These challenges may lead to a significant delay in starting field internship and in completing the MSW program.

#### Field Education and Employment (POE):

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) sets the minimum standards for field placement with the student's POE. The School of Social Work has established protocols, procedures, and standards that must be met to ensure an appropriate student learning experience in this setting. These are outlined in the Place of Employment Application. Students must indicate their intention to pursue a POE based internship at the outset of the placement process to the appropriate field faculty in order to receive an application and have the request approved. Students interested in pursuing this option must apply and be approved by field faculty prior to being permitted to use their place of employment as their internship. The application is available by request via [sswfield@usc.edu](mailto:sswfield@usc.edu).

Note that full-time incoming first-year MSW students must provide 90 days notice in advance of the start of the semester to be permitted to request a place of employment field internship.

#### **Accepting employment at current internship**

Students may accept employment while already an MSW Intern at an agency/organization. Prior to accepting any employment offer while an MSW intern, the student is expected to inform their Field Faculty Liaison. If the student is planning to use their new employment position as a part of their field internship, then the student must complete an application and be approved by the appropriate field faculty to continue as an MSW intern within their new position as an employee at the organization. Students should request the application from [sswfield@usc.edu](mailto:sswfield@usc.edu), copying their field liaison on the request. The student should return the completed application to their Field Faculty Liaison.

**Note:** Any POE request or placement comes with inherent risks. Employment demands may negatively affect or delay the student's ability to complete the requirements of the MSW program. Students must also be aware that any employment related disciplinary actions and/or termination at any point in time at a current field placement may also lead to termination of field internship. Hours accrued at the time of termination may not count toward the required hours of the Field Practicum.

#### **C. Department/Track Change Process**

**All requests to change Department must be submitted by the Add/Drop date of the first semester. ISW MSW Track selection should be finalized prior to the start of the 2nd Year Placement Process.** Students should be aware that any changes past the established timeframe may cause significant delays in completing the MSW program and incur additional expense. Any request made after the timeframe must be approved by the Associate or Assistant Director of Field Education for final determination.

WPP Students' request to change their Department/Track must be submitted prior to the start of 589A/591. Any changes received after that may cause significant delays in completing the MSW program. Any request made after the start of 589A/591 must be approved by the Assistant Director of Field Education for final determination.

#### D. Student Tasks & Responsibilities:

MSW students are responsible for the following tasks to meet the course objectives for the Applied Learning in Field Education classes:

- Contact and meet with the Field Instructor as soon as you are notified of your placement for a pre-placement meeting, Human Resources processing, and/or agency orientation.
- Participate in the agency orientation at the start of internship. If no orientation information is provided, please inquire.
- Learn the different roles, tasks, responsibilities and scope of practice of the agency
- Be open to feedback and support.
- Meet with your Field Instructor for mandatory weekly supervision. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in no credit grade in this course.
- Discuss Field Internship issues in the first- and second-year field education classes for added feedback and support.
- Maintain a diverse caseload.
- Seek meaningful opportunities to learn professional direct and /or macro practice skills related to Department/ISW and Track (if applicable).
- Maintain regular contact with your Field Faculty Liaison throughout the internship and discuss any and all questions/issues as soon as they arise.
- Follow all agency, School, or University protocols and complete necessary tasks required to participate in field internship.

**Note:** All forms referenced in the section below can be found on the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Field Education website: [Field Education Forms](#)

- Complete the assigned electronic learning agreement with the Field Instructor by the assigned due date in consultation with your Field Faculty Liaison.
  -
- Be prepared and actively participate in field supervision.
  - A minimum of 1-hour individual/group weekly supervision.
  - Depending on the student's needs, weekly supervision could include group supervision as long as the student has individual supervision at least twice per month.
  - Group supervision may be facilitated by non-social work professionals.
- Turn in a total of four (4) completed [Reflective Learning Tools](#) (RLT). The student is responsible for timely submission to the Field Instructor (FI). There are different types of RLT forms students may use. Please consult with the Field Faculty Liaison.
  - There may be instances where an agency may require the use of agency specific RLT form(s). It is important for students to consult with their Field Faculty Liaison in these instances.
- Continuously review and evaluate your performance.
- Communicate, consult, and problem solve with the Field Instructor, Field Faculty Liaison, and/or Preceptor for support, concerns/issues, and as needed.
- Participate in Field Faculty Liaison contact/meeting each semester. Contacts/meetings may be virtual, e-mail or phone.
  - The first meeting in the first semester will be face-to face via a virtual platform.
  - The second required meeting will take place within the second semester.

- More meetings may be scheduled as needed or as requested by the MSW student, Field Instructor, or Field Faculty Liaison and may take place at the agency.
- Complete the semester evaluation with the Field Instructor at the end of each semester.
  - Evaluate your progress in learning the skills in the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#).
  - Verify that required placement hours are being met for each semester. (Refer to Section F, Field Education Requirements)
  - 1<sup>st</sup> year [PPSC](#) students must earn a minimum of 1,250 hours.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> year Department [PPSC](#) students must earn a minimum of 1,050 hours.
  - [PPSC](#) students must complete the PPSC Evaluation Form.
  - Meet the School and the agency objectives and requirements.
  - Meet the required minimum evaluation levels each semester as indicated in the evaluation form.
  - Complete and submit a minimum of four (4) Reflective Learning Tools for each semester.
  - Complete the Reflective Learning Tool Log for each semester.
  - Discuss the evaluation with the Field Instructor and enter the digital signature on or before the identified deadline. Do not input any digital signatures on the form until a discussion has occurred and all information is finalized.
- Follow the signature protocol after the semester evaluation is discussed and finalized (the student must sign first, then the Field Instructor, and finally the Field Faculty Liaison). Make sure to follow this sequence of steps to avoid any technical issues.
- All paperwork must be completed and turned in before a grade is given for each semester.
- Consult the Field Faculty Liaison and Academic Advisor if you are a dual degree student.
- Alert the Field Faculty Liaison immediately if there are any issues or challenges faced by the MSW student. Issues that mandate Field Faculty Liaison notification include but are not limited to the following:
  - **Any and all harassment (including sexual harassment) and protected-class discrimination issues (<https://eeotix.usc.edu/>)**
  - Issues or difficulty in progressing in the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#)
  - Any violation of the [NASW Code of Ethics](#)
  - Non-compliance with agency policies and protocols
  - Excessive absences or non-approved schedule changes
  - Delays in the submission of the Reflective Learning Tools
  - Documentation issues and delays

**Note:** USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work is committed to providing all possible help and support to students and early intervention is essential (See Sections F and G below for further details).

**Note:** Students cannot sign any agency “contracts” nor enter any agreements that refute or negate the provisions in the official agency/organization MOU with the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. This includes important policies regarding placement hours and educational calendar events such as finals week.

## E. Supervision

MSW candidates are expected to integrate the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom with their field internship experience. The student gradually develops his/her identity as a Social Worker and learns the core competencies, values, and ethics of the profession. This is an individualized process and develops over a period of time. This growth is facilitated by the Field Instructor through the process of supervision. The following are some guidelines to help students take full advantage of the field internship experience and supervision:

- Follow the School guidelines for placement.
- Be on time for placement, field instruction, and field seminars.
- Behave and dress in a professional manner as defined by the field placement.
- Abide by the [NASW Code of Ethics](#). Note that any violation of these standards may lead to dismissal from the MSW program.
- Learn and work to achieve the [CSWE 's Core Competencies](#) (grades are based on achieving these competencies).
- Maintain agency standards and practice guidelines.
- Come prepared to supervision and complete all assignments on time.
- Be open to constructive feedback and make the effort to try or implement the feedback.
- Be proactive in your role as a learner, articulate learning needs, and seek to meet them.
- Complete and submit Reflective Learning Tool (RLT) assignments on time to your field instructor
- Share concerns/issues/questions promptly with your Field Instructor and/or Field Faculty Liaison.
- Be self-aware; take time to reflect upon and process feelings, thoughts, actions, and reactions.

**Note:** Students should approach their work at the agency as they would a place of employment, including discussing any changes and issues promptly and informing the Field Instructor and/or Preceptor of illness or absence.

## F. Safety and Risk Management

It is the student's responsibility to review, understand, and comply with all the policies and protocols included in [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), "[Current Student Website](#)", [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work MSW Policies and Procedures](#) and [MSW Field Education Manual](#). In addition, it is also the student's responsibility to learn and adhere to all field placement agency/organization policies and protocols.

The MSW student/candidate must follow their field agency's policies and protocols for reporting safety and risk issues that occur in field internship and involve the Field Instructor and the Field Faculty Liaison immediately. This is especially true of any safety issues and policy violations related to harassment, sexual harassment, protected-class discrimination issues, etc. Students can report such incidents to the [Office of Equity, Equal Opportunity & Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) for support and guidance via <https://eeotix.usc.edu/>. Faculty are mandated to report these incidents to EEO-TIX when informed by the students.

## G. Challenges and Support

The MSW student/candidate is expected to be an active learner in Field Education and accept the guidance, support, and the evaluation of the Field Instructor. When there is a

mismatch between the student's needs and the available learning opportunities and supports, challenges and issues may occur. Students are encouraged to follow these protocols to resolve any concerns for immediate resolution to avoid delays in Field Practicum:

- Articulate the problem. Discuss and resolve issues directly with the Field Instructor if appropriate.
- Involve and communicate the issue with the Field Faculty Liaison as early as possible in the process.
- If the issue persists, request the involvement of the Field Faculty Liaison for mediation/resolution.

The MSW student/candidate must always be cognizant that Field Education/Internship is a class. Students must meet the standards for satisfactory academic progress and performance to pass or move forward in the program. Students who abandon class or fail to report regularly to a field placement site do so at the risk of a grade of "No Credit" thus placing themselves in academic jeopardy, possible loss of federal financial aid, and/or risk of dismissal from the MSW School.

**Note:** It is the philosophy of the School to exert all efforts to resolve issues and try to prevent a re-placement. It is disruptive to the student's academic programming and to the agency.

The Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work adheres to all University policies and protocols regarding registration; withdrawal; attendance; grading, grades of in-progress or incomplete; grade appeal; leave of absence; academic probation; equity diversity, & inclusion; FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act); and Americans with Disabilities (ADA) accommodations for students. It also adheres to the University policies and protocols in developing student support plans.

The MSW student/candidate must involve the Field Instructor and the Field Education Office immediately regarding any issues related to Field Education. This is especially true of any USC policy violation (i.e. harassment, including sexual harassment, protected-class discrimination issues, etc.) and ADA accommodations. Review [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), ["Current Student Website"](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work MSW Policies and Procedures](#) and the [MSW Field Education Manual](#) for complete information. In addition, it is the student's responsibility to learn and adhere to all field placement agency/organization policies and protocols.

**Note: American Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations are provided when an official letter of accommodation from the [USC Office of Student Accessibility and Services \(OSAS\)](#) is presented by the student to each course instructor of record, field placement coordinator, and to their field instructor. The OSAS will assess, identify, and specify any field internship related accommodation(s) needed. The accommodation is not retroactive and is valid when the MSW student submits the letter to each Faculty member. Accommodations are confidential and therefore it is the right and the responsibility of the student to share their accommodation letter with appropriate stakeholder(s) for academic planning. The Field Education team will comply with required ADA accommodations when the letter is received.**

## H. Professional Expectations

All students are expected to adhere to and follow all ethical, legal, and policy standards and mandates of the Social Work profession and the University. Any form of violation to the Social Work professional guidelines may lead to a dismissal from the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. These links identify policies and procedures pertaining to appropriate behavior including professional behavior, non-threatening conduct and use of social media. It is the student's responsibility to learn and adhere to [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), [Disruptive Classroom Behavior](#), [Campus Wellbeing & Crisis Intervention](#), ["Violence-Free Campus"](#), [USC Office of Professionalism and Ethics](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work MSW Policies and Procedures](#), [CSWE SW Competencies](#), [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and [Field Education Manual](#).

## I. Social Media

The information shared on social media does not represent and cannot substitute for the information or guidance provided by faculty, staff or official program documents and communications, regarding Field Education. Official documents, policies, protocols and communications may be retrieved from [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), [Disruptive Classroom Behavior](#), [Campus Wellbeing & Crisis Intervention](#), ["Violence-Free Campus"](#), [USC Office of Professionalism and Ethics](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work MSW Policies and Procedures](#) and [Field Education Manual](#), course syllabi and written & verbal communications from Field Education Faculty and Administration. Any Field Education related issues, disputes, complaints or requests should be redirected to the student's Field Education Liaison or to the Associate Director of Field Education.

Students should use extreme caution when participating in social media forums. Be mindful of any references to the field agency and client related information or interactions. Students are expected to adhere to all legal and ethical responsibilities of the Social Work profession. Keep in mind the public nature of any social media forums despite all security and privacy settings. The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work has provided a social media guideline for students to use ([USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work MSW Policies and Procedures-Social Media Section](#)). The MSW student assumes responsibility for any social media output that is not pre-approved by the current field placement site and/or the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work.

While enrolled in the MSW program at USC, students are expected to adhere to the provisions of [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), [Disruptive Classroom Behavior](#), [Campus Wellbeing & Crisis Intervention](#), ["Violence-Free Campus"](#), [USC Office of Professionalism and Ethics](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work MSW Policies and Procedures](#) and [Field Education Manual](#), [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and the guiding principle of "Do No Harm" in relation to the well-being of fellow students, agency personnel, clients and the communities in which they work and serve in internships. As in any situation, the placement agency has the right to dismiss a student for unprofessional and unethical behaviors that will prompt an academic review process in the form of a Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP).

## III. FIELD INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

### A. Introduction

Field Instructors play a crucial role in the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Field Education experience. They provide the students the opportunity to merge previous life

and work knowledge with the development of new professional competence. Field Instructors must follow the objectives that are specific to the first- and second-year field internship curricula. The overarching objective of Field Instructors throughout both years and across all departments is to prepare students to enter the Social Work profession.

Field Instructors are engaged in three basic Field Education components. *First*, they must orient the students to the professional system of the agency, including but not limited to the purpose of the agency, the community it serves, its policies and protocols (particularly risk management & safety), and expectations for professional dress and comportment. The agency/organization orientation and the field internship should be geared towards introducing and familiarizing the MSW student to the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#).

The *second* crucial component is the development of the teacher-learner relationship between the MSW student and the Field Instructor. This starts at the first contact wherein the Field Instructor clarifies and establishes roles, expectations, and the framework for the relationship.

The last and *third* component is the development of broad and rich case assignments and field experiences. The MSW student is expected to engage in a wide variety of Social Work activities from the beginning to the end of field placement. Field Instructors are responsible for providing direct practice experiences consisting of but not limited to the following:

- Multi-level practice work: individual, group, and systemic interventions
- Multiple treatment modalities
- Assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, and intervention
- Diverse populations
- Advocacy, resource referral, community needs assessment, evaluation, and documentation
- Termination
- Macro skill development such as advocacy, evaluation, fundraising and development, grant writing, program development, and others as indicated in the specific Department of Study.

Field internship is a time-bound experience, and the Field Instructor carries the responsibility for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the student's educational experience based on the student's progress in meeting the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#).

## **B. Field Instructor Qualifications**

MSW interns are supervised by Field Instructors designated by the agency and the School of Social Work. These Field Instructors are committed to teaching and upholding the values and ethics which have been developed over the long history of the Social Work profession. The Field Instructor must be identified and must complete the application process at the same time an agency site is approved. New or replacement Field Instructors may complete the application process at any time. Field Instructors must have the following to qualify:

- An MSW degree from an accredited School of Social Work
- At least two years of post-MSW work experience
- A completion certificate for new Field Instruction class from USC or any Southern California CSWE accredited School of Social Work consortium partners
- Plan to attend a minimum of an 8-hour long training for new Field Instructors at USC or any Southern California CSWE accredited consortium partners. USC offers a hybrid

(combination of on-ground & on-line) course while the VAC offers an on-line course with synchronous and asynchronous sessions.

In addition, Field Instructors must meet the criteria required to teach and support MSW interns in field placement. They must also be committed to meet all documentation, supervision, and evaluation requirements of the program, particularly the ability to assess student progress based on the most current [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) identified by the [Council on Social Work Education in the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards \(EPAS\)](#).

### C. Field Instructor Tasks & Responsibilities

Field Instructors are responsible for the following tasks to meet the Applied Learning in Field Education course objectives:

- Meet student(s) prior to the start of the internship for a pre-placement meeting.
- Facilitate and assist with any Human Resources process and/or requirements.
- Provide an agency orientation at the start of internship.
- Clearly define the student's role, tasks, responsibilities and scope of practice.
- Provide training, consistent communication, feedback and support to students.
- Assign and maintain a diverse caseload/workload.
- Provide meaningful opportunities to learn professional, direct, and/or macro practice skills related to the student's course of study,

Field internship is a time-bound experience and the Field Instructor carries the responsibility for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the MSW student's educational experience based on the student's progress in meeting the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#).

**Note:** All [forms](#) referenced in the section below can be located on the [Field Education](#) website.

- Complete the electronic **Learning Agreement** with the student by the assigned due date during the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of each internship year:
  - Complete the Field Instructor teaching plan (Section VII).
  - Review the internship schedule and student learning objectives with the MSW student(s). Write in any approved special schedule arrangement.
  - Do not input any digital signatures on the form until all information is finalized.
  - Provide and review the agency/organization Safety & Risk Management, harassment (including sexual harassment) and protected-class discrimination policies and protocols including identifying the individual to whom a report should be made.
  - Follow the signature protocol after the learning agreement is discussed and finalized (the student must sign first, then the Field Instructor, and finally the Field Faculty Liaison). Make sure to follow this sequence of steps to avoid being locked out of the IPT form.
- Identify and assign a Preceptor as needed (include Preceptor feedback in the Learning Agreement/Evaluation).
- Provide Field Instruction
  - A minimum of **1-hour** individual/group weekly supervision.

- Depending on the student's needs, weekly supervision may include some group supervision as long as the student has individual supervision at least twice per month.
- Group supervision may be facilitated by non-social work professionals.
- Review and discuss the [Reflective Learning Tool](#) (a minimum of four (4) must be submitted by the end of each semester). The Field Instructor (FI) must verify the successful completion of all field education assignments at the end of each semester.
  - Alert the Field Faculty Liaison if the student has missed submitting 2 RLT's in a row.
  - There are different types of RLT forms students may use:
    - MSW students must use USC approved [Reflective Learning Tool](#) (RLT) form(s).
    - If the agency requires the use of an agency specific RLT form(s), the agency Field Instructor and student(s) must consult with the Field Faculty Liaison for approval prior to use.
- Continuously monitor and evaluate the student's performance.
- Communicate, consult, and problem solve with the Field Faculty Liaison for support, challenges, and as needed.
- Maintain regular contact with the Field Faculty Liaison throughout the internship to discuss any and all questions/issues as soon as they arise.
- Participate in Field Faculty Liaison contact/meeting each semester. Contacts/meetings may be virtual, e-mail or phone.
  - The first meeting in the first semester will be face-to face in a virtual platform.
  - Subsequent required meetings will take place each semester.
  - More meetings may be scheduled as needed or as requested by the MSW student, Field Instructor, or Field Faculty Liaison and may take place at the agency.
- Provide opportunities for mezzo and macro practice work for first-year students.
- Complete the **Mid-year and the Final Evaluation** with the student at the end of each semester.:
  - Evaluate the student's skills in the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#), including feedback from the Preceptor, if applicable.
  - Verify that the student has met the required placement hours for each semester.
  - Verify that the student has met the School and the agency objectives and requirements.
  - Verify that the student has submitted the four (4) required RLTs.
  - Do not input any digital signatures on the form until all information is finalized.
  - Discuss the evaluation ratings with the student and enter the digital signature on or before the identified deadline.
- Follow the signature protocol after the semester evaluation is discussed and finalized (the student must sign first, then the Field Instructor, and finally the Field Faculty Liaison).
- Complete all additional required evaluations. Consult with the Field Faculty Liaison for the appropriate form(s).
- Provide a grade recommendation on the evaluation form:
  - Recommend a grade of Credit, No Credit, or In-Progress.
  - Please note that an "In-Progress" grade will negatively affect the student's progress and cause a delay in graduation. Notify the Field Faculty Liaison as soon as possible if the student appears to be at-risk of failing to complete any of

- the requirements for Field Internship to develop a Student Performance Improvement Plan – SPIP (see Evaluation/Grading).
- A “No Credit” recommendation should always be made in consultation with the Field Faculty Liaison (as early as possible in the semester), documented, and accompanied by a SPIP (copies will be retained by the student, Field Instructor, Field Faculty Liaison, and the Office of Student Affairs will be notified).
  - The Field Faculty Liaison will approve and assign the final grade.
- Facilitate the scheduled and/or unscheduled termination from the agency.
  - Consult with the Field Faculty Liaison regarding the supervision of dual degree students.
  - Alert the Field Faculty Liaison as soon as possible if there are any difficulties or challenges faced by the student. Issues that mandate Field Faculty Liaison notification include but are not limited to the following:
    - **Any and all harassment (including sexual harassment) and protected-class discrimination issues. Note that faculty are required to report incidents to the appropriate university office.**
    - Issues or difficulty in progressing in the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#)
    - Any violation of the [NASW Code of Ethics](#)
    - Non-compliance with agency policies and protocols
    - Excessive absences or non-approved schedule changes
    - Delays in the submission of the Reflective Learning Tools
    - Documentation issues and delays

**Note:** USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social work is committed to providing all possible help and support to students and early intervention is essential (see Section E below for further details).

**Note:** Students cannot sign any agency “contracts” nor enter any agreements that refute Or negate the provisions in the official agency/organization MOA with the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. This includes important policies regarding placement hours and educational calendar events such as finals week.

#### D. Field Instruction

Field instruction takes many forms and methodologies. It ranges from the didactic method to experiential. It also varies in structure and technique. It is influenced by multiple factors such as the agency’s focus, available resources, and the skills, interest, and the personality of both the instructor and the student. Although field instruction is a highly individualized process, the required components mentioned in the previous section are non-negotiable. The following are some general Field Instructor guidelines for teaching and supervising MSW students and are meant to help establish a supportive learning and working environment:

- Adhere to regularly scheduled field instruction conferences with your student.
- Create a supportive environment and a positive teaching relationship considering your teaching style and the student’s learning style.
- Be aware that you are the role model for client and peer relationships and interactions.
- Acknowledge authority-dependency conflicts and use them as teaching opportunities.
- Establish your role as both supervisor and teacher early in the relationship.
- Make assignments meaningful and utilize the Reflective Learning Tool early in the relationship.

- Focus on the process and not just the content.
- Balance performance monitoring with positive supportive feedback and genuine praise. Feedback needs to be relevant, clear, balanced and timely. Encourage the student to reciprocate.
- Use case and project analysis in helping students examine their work, meet their learning objectives, process their reactions, and foster self-awareness.
- Assist the student to identify feelings, attitudes, biases, and reactions that affect their work.
- Discuss with the Field Faculty Liaison if personal therapy seems indicated.
- Introduce the use of audio taped, video recordings, and/or role-playing to enrich the student's learning.
- Guide students in navigating the Developmental Stages of Internship based on the work of Sweitzer & King, 2004 (see Appendix G).

## E. Challenges and Support

Field Education is inherently filled with positive and negative experiences and challenges. It is the job of the Field Instructor to create a stable learning environment in order to address these experiences and challenges as learning opportunities and to facilitate the student's educational progress. It is the responsibility of the Field Faculty Liaison as the University representative to provide support and guidance in order for the Field Instructor and the student to succeed in this endeavor. As part of the process, Field Instructors are asked to balance opposing and/or complementary forces such as the following in order to foster learning:

- Challenge vs. Support
- Autonomy vs. Dependence
- Learning Objectives vs. Agency Objectives
- Authority vs. Mutuality
- Education vs. Training

In most instances, the balancing act is enough to prevent any major problems in the field experience. Sometimes it is not sufficient and challenges in the learning process may occur. Some examples are:

- Persistent unprofessional and/or unethical conduct including disruptive behavior
- Conflicts in teaching and learning styles
- Not meeting agency and field requirements (charting, documentation, inconsistent or insufficient hours, etc.)
- Insufficient skill or inability to meet learning objectives

When these challenges arise, Field Instructors are required to provide an early warning to students of the areas that need improvement, based on the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#):

- Identify and attempt to discuss and resolve the issue(s) directly with the student.
- Document the issue and efforts to resolve it.
- Notify and consult the assigned Field Faculty Liaison of the issue as soon as possible. If you are not certain who the Field Faculty Liaison is, email [sswfield@usc.edu](mailto:sswfield@usc.edu) (OCP) or [vacfield@usc.edu](mailto:vacfield@usc.edu) (VAC) to identify the student's Field Faculty Liaison.
- Invite the Field Faculty Liaison to mediate if you and the student are unable to resolve the issue.

- If the issue persists, collaborate with the Field Faculty Liaison to formulate a formal Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) to identify the issue(s) and step(s) to redress the situation.
- If the issue persists, the Field Faculty Liaison may remove/replace the student. If replacement is indicated, you will be asked to complete an evaluation of the student's progress based on the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) as of the date of the student's departure from the agency.

It is the philosophy of the School to make all efforts to prevent a replacement. It is disruptive to the agency and to the learning process of the student.

**Note:** All Field Instructors are obligated to respond to any field internship related student concerns and to all issues pertaining to Safety & Risk Management, harassment (including sexual harassment, and protected-class discrimination issues). **They are also mandated to report certain field related issues (refer to the below section) to the University Field Faculty Liaison as agreed upon in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).**

## F. Safety and Risk Management Communications

The School recognizes that students cannot be insulated from the risks in providing services to people, institutions, and communities in crisis. Students frequently lack the experience and skills to assess risk and take appropriate precautions. Basic safety measures are thoroughly discussed in the seminar class to help prevent any problems, but it is still not enough. Field Instructors are expected to orient students in basic and agency related policies and procedures that can maximize their personal safety. Field Instructors must also review agency safety and risk management policies and protocols with students. Completion of this orientation must be indicated in the Orientation Checklist portion of the Learning Agreement in the first semester of each Field Internship year. It should include but not be limited to the following:

- Building/office security policy
- Fire, earthquake, and other emergency protocols
- Transportation policies and insurance requirements
- Harassment (including sexual harassment)
- Protected-class discrimination issues
- Home / School / community visit safety policy and protocols
- Crisis intervention and disaster protocols
- Emergency and support contacts
- HIPAA compliant communication protocols including policy on use of personal and/or University email addresses or personal devices
- Federal, state, local, and agency/organization specific safety and risk management policies and protocols (i.e. weapon related policies and others)

Periodic review of these safety measures is strongly recommended. **All Field Instructors are obligated to respond to any student related concerns pertaining to Safety & Risk Management, harassment (including sexual harassment); and protected-class discrimination issues. They are also mandated to report all issues to the University Field Faculty Liaison as agreed upon in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).**

**Note:** All MSW students are required to learn and understand all Social Work profession expectations and all University and agency policies and protocols. Field Instructors are encouraged to do the same ([NASW Code of Ethics](#), [CSWE Educational Policy and Educational Standards \(EPAS\)](#), [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), [USC Disruptive and Threatening Student Behavior Guidelines](#), [Campus Wellbeing & Crisis Intervention](#), [USC Office of](#)

[Professionalism and Ethics](#), [“Violence-Free Campus, USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work MSW Policies and Procedures, and MSW Field Education Manual”](#) to be able to guide and support MSW students in their new role as Social Work Interns.

### **G. Field Internship Interruption and Strike Policy**

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work acknowledges that there may be temporary interruptions to students’ MSW field placements due to local, regional, or national local events such as a natural or man-made disaster, civil unrest, and/or pandemics. Field Education is also aware of the potential for any agency or organization disruption related to strikes or any work actions. The safety and well-being of MSW students are the School’s priority. Field Education will respond based on the principles of educational integrity, focusing on how educational expectations, goals, and objectives can be met and maintained.

In the case of any critical incident, the priority is the student’s safety and the primary consideration is the student’s educational experience rather than the merits of any given interruption. It is the School’s belief that some interruptions may not provide a climate conducive to a sound educational experience. Field Education will make the assessment and decide on a course of action depending on the situation. The Field Faculty Liaison and Field Instructor will coordinate and organize alternative plans to support the training and the continuation of field education for students (See Appendix I and for possible course of action).

Field Education’s policy regarding agency strikes/work actions is based on the principles of educational integrity. The primary consideration is the student’s educational experience rather than the merits of any given strike or work action. It is the School’s belief that a strike bound agency is not able to provide a climate conducive to a sound educational experience. Field Education will make the assessment and decide on a course of action depending on the situation. The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work encourages the Faculty Field Faculty Liaison and Field Instructor to organize opportunities for students to learn from all parties and engage discussions regarding the issues at hand (See Appendix J for possible courses of action).

## **IV. FAILURE TO MAKE SATISFACTORY PROGRESS IN FIELD EDUCATION – ACADEMIC WARNINGS**

All USC students are entitled to fair warning and non-arbitrary dismissal procedures. The University of Southern California Catalog describes these procedures in the section [“Academic Warning and Dismissal” of Graduate Students](#)” and [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Policies & Procedure](#). This section of the Field Manual provides specific policies and protocols for Academic Warning and Dismissal of Graduate Students as they relate to the Field Internship.

### **A. Level I: The First Academic Warning – Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) – Field Education Student Review Meeting with the Field Instructor**

Students who fail to make satisfactory progress in the Applied Learning in Field Education courses will be informed by the Field Instructor and Faculty Field Faculty Liaison. Satisfactory progress is measured by the student’s timely completion of the required number

of hours and assignments in placement each semester as described in the syllabi, as well as developing and building proficiency in the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#).

**A Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP)** 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:

- Failure to complete the required number of hours in placement and/or
- Failure to submit Reflective Learning Tools in a timely fashion and/or
- Failure to develop proficiency in any of the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) and/or
- Failure to adhere to the [NASW Code of Ethics](#)
- And failing to meet any other professional expectations as identified by the Field Instructor and/or Field Faculty Liaison

The Field Faculty Liaison will contact the student and will schedule a Field Education Review Meeting with the student and Field Instructor. During the meeting, the Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) will be reviewed and finalized by the Field Faculty Liaison. The intent is to identify the specific areas in which the student must improve to successfully complete the 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
  - Failure to meet with Field Instructor and/or Preceptor on a weekly basis
  - Failure to comply with agency policy and procedure
  - Failure to respond to field placement related requests made by Field Instructor and/or Field Faculty Liaison
  - Failure to present oneself in a professional manner as defined by the agency and the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) when interacting with clients, peers, faculty and agency personnel
  - Failure to complete the required Reflective Learning Tools
  - Excessive self-disclosure of personal information which has a deleterious effect on clients
  - Abandonment of Field Placement.
  - Changes in Field Internship placement without the approval of a USC Field Faculty e.g. students may not render a “resignation” or abandon their placement
  - Refusal to work with any Field Education Administration and Faculty including Field Faculty Liaisons and External Field Instructors.
  - Failure to respond to any communication attempts (phone, e-mail, and/or letter), which can place the student at risk of dismissal from the program
  - 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 RLTs by a specific date and submit all future RLTs 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
- Consequences of failing to meet deadlines, including risk of dismissal from the program
- Space for the student to sign and date the letter as an indication of receipt and

understanding

**B. Level II: The Second Academic Warning – Failure to Improve – Field Education Student Review Meeting with the Associate or Assistant Director of Field Education, Field Faculty Liaison, and Academic Advisor**

If the student does not meet the deadlines and expectations set forth in the Student Performance Improvement Plan, an Academic Review Meeting will be conducted with the Associate Director or Assistant Director of Field Education, Field Faculty Liaison, Academic Advisor, and a representative from Student Affairs as needed. A written summary letter of the meeting will be provided to the student. The letter is the second level of written warning that the student is at serious risk of dismissal from the MSW program.

**C. 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. The Associate or Assistant Director of Field Education in collaboration with the Director of Field Education will make the final determination for dismissal if and when a student continues to fail to meet the expectations of the MSW program despite Level I and Level II early interventions and academic warnings.

The student will receive a formal letter of dismissal from the Office of the Director of Field Education. Students who wish to appeal the dismissal must contact the Office of Student Affairs by the specific date indicated in the formal letter. The student must engage in a formal appeals process as outlined in the [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Policies & Procedure](#):

*“...In compliance with the academic policies outlined in [SCampus](#) under University Governance and Academic Policies, the school has two levels of appeal for disputed evaluation after the instructor: 1) Dean and 2) Office of the Provost. In the school, appeals to the Dean will be handled by the MSW Chair*

*...Students wishing to appeal to the MSW Chair must submit to the Assistant Dean, Student Affairs a detailed narrative explaining the reason(s) for the appeal. The student should also outline the outcome/resolution sought. A written decision will be sent to the student after the MSW Chair. Normally the decision should be sent to the student within approximately 15 days after the review. This time may be extended if necessary. The student should be informed in writing if the decision will be delayed.*

*Student Appeal to the Graduate School SCampus specifies the student may appeal to the Office of the Provost. That appeal should be sent to the associate dean for graduate academic affairs in the Graduate School.”*

**Note:** Students are responsible to review, understand and comply with the policies and protocols contained in the [SCampus](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Policies & Procedure](#), and [MSW Field Education Manual](#).

**D. Students Terminated/Dismissed from the Placement Agency or Organization**

Placement agencies have the right to terminate/dismiss students at any time due to

behaviors that 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. Once terminated/dismissed, the student will receive No Credit for their Field Education class including losing all hours accumulated for that semester. A Student Performance Improvement Plan will automatically be generated, and a review meeting will be convened.

Based on the deliberations of the Field Faculty Liaison and Field Education administrators, the student may be allowed a second placement. However, nothing from their prior field education class, including field hours from the previous placement, will be "rolled over" into the second placement or credited to the student.

Should the student be asked to leave the second placement, no further placements will be assigned. The student will receive a written notice of a "No Credit" grade for the Applied Learning in Field Education class 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 the 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](#), that is considered grounds for dismissal.

#### **E. Grounds for Dismissal from the MSW Program (based on the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and the State Behavioral Health Licensure Standards)**

The Social Work profession is solidly grounded in the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) which defines the professional standard of behavior that practitioners and graduate students must maintain in their work with and behavior toward clients and peers. State behavioral health and professions laws further define behaviors considered so egregious that licensure of a practitioner is denied or revoked.

Consequently, immediate dismissal from the MSW program is based upon these two professional benchmarks: Ethical principles as elucidated in the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and state behavioral health licensure standards. Grounds for immediate dismissal from the MSW program therefore include but are not limited to the following:

- Sexual and/or other inappropriate relationship with clients including interactions within the agency and outside the agency involving exchange of money, cohabitation, or harassment.
- Fraudulent documentation of patient contact, particularly false documentation that may trigger government or private insurance payments and reimbursement for services that were not provided.
- Behaviors that demonstrate callous disregard of the health, safety or wellbeing of self, clients, peers and/or agency staff.
- Actions which cause agency disruptions and create a hostile and/or unsafe work environment.
- Actions which breach patient/client confidentiality including unauthorized access to patient records or misuse and unethical reporting of confidential information to others, thereby violating patient/client rights to privacy.
- Falsification of student field hours or any misrepresentation of student participation in the Field Internship or required Field Internship activities or assignments.
- Falsification of client or agency records or any documentation and fraudulent billing.

- Class abandonment – leaving the field placement without notification or approval from all of the following individuals: the Field Instructor, the Agency Director, the USC Field Faculty Liaison and the Assistant or Associate Director of Field Education. In the Field Internship, class abandonment is made more egregious and deemed unethical because agency clients, who are fragile and are seeking help, are abandoned by the student's abrupt departure.

**Note: It is the responsibility of the student to read and understand the criteria by which academic progress is defined in the course syllabi, the information provided by the [Office of Student Affairs](#), and the information provided in the [Field Education Manual](#).**

## APPENDIX

- A. Field Education Website:  
<http://sowkweb.usc.edu/master-of-social-work/msw-degree/field-education>
- B. Field Education Forms: Calendar, MOU, New Agency Information Packet, Reflective Learning Tool, Learning Agreement/Evaluation, etc.  
<http://sowkweb.usc.edu/master-of-social-work/msw-degree/field-education/form>
- C. Curriculum Snapshot:  
<https://dworakpeck.usc.edu/academics/master-of-social-work/curriculum>
- D. [Current Student Website](https://sowkweb.usc.edu/student-resources/current-students): Class Schedule, OASIS, Student Handbook, etc.  
<https://sowkweb.usc.edu/student-resources/current-students>
- E. [NASW Code of Ethics](https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics):  
<https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics>
- F. [Council on Social Work Education](https://www.cswe.org/): <https://www.cswe.org/>
- G. Policy Regarding Field Placement Interruption due to Critical Incident:

If students are advised by their internship agency, USC or its representatives, and/or government officials not to attend their field placement or if safety or health concerns warrant a temporary interruption in field placement, they should immediately consult via telephone, email or virtual communication with their Field Faculty Liaison, Field Instructor, and Preceptor (if assigned).

If the placement interruption is less than a week, it is anticipated that the hours missed will be absorbed relatively seamlessly throughout the semester. If the placement interruption continues for more than one week, missed field hours will need to be made up with a specific plan. Students will be given opportunities to make up hours by putting in extra time each week, attending internships during semester break periods, or extending their internship after the end of the semester. If the interruption continues beyond a two-week period, the Field Faculty Liaison will be in communication with the agency regarding its ability to return to normal functioning while providing students with appropriate supervision and educational experiences. If the interruption continues beyond a 30-day period, the Field Faculty Liaison in collaboration with placement team members and field education administrators, will determine the most appropriate response to support student completion of their field placement requirements.

The School's Field Education Manual addresses field placement interruptions by emphasizing the needs of students and "educational integrity." In accordance with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the manual focuses on "how educational expectations, goals and objectives can be met and maintained" when agency disruption occurs. To mitigate the impact of extended placement interruption, USC encourages **virtual/off-site learning activities** that fulfill intern hour requirements, increase student educational competencies, and meet the needs of the agency.

### Virtual Continuation of Services Developed by the Agency

Agencies may choose to develop internal plans for the continuation of services via virtual technology. Students are expected to actively participate and, if appropriate, assist in the development of these endeavors:

- **Agency organized activities:** program planning, meetings, and group activities organized remotely by the agency.
- **Change management:** participate in the agency's change management team as it plans and implements the internal processes and external communication needed to manage the disruption in agency functioning.
- **Client meetings (individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities):** utilize teleconferencing applications (could include USC-sanctioned programs such as Zoom or Blackboard) that meet agency and NASW Code of Ethics standards regarding confidentiality, FERPA and HIPAA requirements.
- **Supervision:** participate in weekly supervision using teleconferencing applications.

### Off-site Learning Activities (not a comprehensive list)

During temporary field interruptions that are expected to extend beyond two weeks, Field Instructors, Preceptors and Field Faculty Liaisons should assign students off-site learning activities compatible with CSWE competencies. **All activities must be pre-approved by the agency Field Instructor and Preceptor, if assigned, in consultation with the student's Field Faculty Liaison.** Examples of School-approved off-site field learning activities include:

- **Community networking/resource development:** teleconference with various service providers, participate in asset mapping, and develop a list of resources for clients with services offered, referral process detailed, and eligibility requirements described.
- **Grants:** research potential grant opportunities and/or write sections for a grant proposal.
- **Groups/workshop curricula for clients:** develop curricula for implementation with clients (e.g., grief, trauma, domestic violence, anger management, restorative justice).
- **Legislative policy review:** review relevant laws and policies impacting the agency client population, provide a summary of findings, and/or prepare advocacy materials (e.g., letter to editor, develop key talking points, create infographic or PSA).
- **Literature review:** conduct a literature review on specific topics relevant to field placement (e.g., effectiveness of an intervention, how interruption of services impacts mental health or economic stability).
- **Materials for clients:** develop handouts/flyers/brochures (e.g., explain voting rights, informed consent policies).
- **Organizational policy review:** review agency policies and recommend appropriate updates (e.g., policies on safety, diversity, use of social media, technology utilization).
- **Trainings for agency:** develop trainings to benefit agency (e.g., self-care, ethics).
- **Webinars and trainings:** complete approved online trainings and provide a certification of completion for the Field Instructor's records, write a reflection, and/or prepare a presentation to disseminate knowledge gained. Training examples may include:

Field Instructors, Preceptors and Field Faculty Liaisons in consultation with students may also come up with additional activities or trainings. Collaboration among these four key individuals during times of placement interruption increases the likelihood of optimal student health, safety, and learning experiences that align with agency, School, and CSWE expectations.

#### H. Strike Policy Course of Action:

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 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 department and will not suffer any academic consequences. The field hours missed during the strike period will need to be made up by the student during the regular semester, break periods, and/or in an extended placement beyond the academic year. A plan for missed hours make up will be developed by the Field Faculty Liaison in consultation with the student, the Field Instructor and the Associate or Assistant Director as needed.
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 Department can be sure that the educational integrity of the field work 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 to the student. Students wishing to remain in the agency must discuss this plan with the Field Faculty Liaison who will verify the agency's ability to provide appropriate supervision and educational experiences. The student will be supported in this decision and will not suffer any academic consequences.

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 Liaison. If the agency is found not able to meet the educational requirements of the field department, 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.

#### I. Virtual Academic Center:

[MSW@USC](mailto:MSW@USC)

#### J. Notice of Possible Background Checks, Fingerprinting, Drug Testing, and/or Health Screening:

The University of Southern California, Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work does not require background checks, drug testing or fingerprinting for admission into the social work program. However, external facilities may require social work students to provide a security clearance, background check, health screening, and/or other additional information in order to participate in internships at their sites. The successful completion of internships is a prerequisite for earning a social work degree from USC.

The following are the areas of inquiry typically covered in a background check, although some clinical sites may require a more comprehensive background check:

- A sex offender database search;
- A seven-year review of a student's criminal court history, including arrest records and records of misdemeanor and felony convictions
- Address verification;
- Two name verifications (e.g., current legal name and one other name [AKA]);
- Three county check of records;
- Search of the Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General database of excluded persons; and
- Social Security number verification
- Division of Motor Vehicle record or abstract.

Students are solely responsible for obtaining the documentation needed to satisfy the background check and additional testing requirements of a clinical site. Fees required to obtain the background checks and any additional tests are also the sole responsibility of the student.

Refusal to satisfy the background check and additional testing requirements for clinical placement, or failure to pass these checks and tests, may severely limit placement options and may cause a delay in advancing in the MSW program or prevent graduation due to the student's inability to complete Field Practicum requirements. In such an event, while USC will attempt to place the student at an alternative agency, USC cannot guarantee the availability of placement sites or the student's acceptance into those sites. In such cases, the student may not be able to earn the MSW degree.

The results of the background checks and any additional testing should be reported directly to the agency site. USC does not require a copy of the results but may request confirmation from the student or agency that all requirements for placement have been satisfied.

USC, and its trustees, agents and employees, are not responsible for any claims and liabilities arising out of or in any way related to the background check or additional testing requests or disclosures made to the internship sites.