FAQ’S (Frequently Asked Questions)

THE PURPOSE OF FIELD EDUCATION
The field practicum is an integral part of the curriculum in social work education. It engages the student in supervised social work practice that helps develop professional identity and competence and allows for the application of empirically-based practice methods.

WHAT IS A FIELD PLACEMENT?
In order to fulfill CSWE social work practicum requirements, all social work students must complete a social work practice experience in a social service agency with supervision provided by a professional social worker. Undergraduates must be supervised by a social worker, or other approved professional, with either a Bachelor's Degree or a Master’s Degree in Social Work, and graduate students must be supervised by a social worker with a Master’s Degree of Social Work, or other approved Master’s degree professional. Following orientation to the agency, students are expected to become involved in direct or macro service activities at the agency and fulfill all designated field course requirements.

WHAT ARE THE FIRST STEPS TO SECURING A FIELD PLACEMENT?
Prior to beginning the field practicum students will need to review the:

- **Introduction to Field Programs Power Point Presentation, which** is posted on the Field Education website and will provide students with instructions on the application process for field education and will provide an overview of the practicum experience. Students should view the PPT prior to the completion of the field application packet.

Students will also need to attend the:

- **Orientation to the Field Practicum**, just prior to beginning their first semester of their field practicum. The purpose of the **Orientation Meeting** is to review field course requirements, address specific issues pertaining to the practicum experience, address the learning plan, evaluation instruments, and field assignment requirements.

***Specific dates and times for the Orientation Programs vary each semester and are posted on the Field Program calendar, which is posted on the Field website.

HOW MANY FIELD EDUCATION COURSES ARE REQUIRED?

**BSW Course Requirements**
A total of 512 hours are required to complete field education requirements over a two-semester sequence.

- Field Course SOC WRK 421 = a minimum of 256 hours (5 credits)
- Field Course SOC WRK 422 = a minimum of 256 hours (5 credits)
- Field Course SOC WRK 423 (Elective) = a minimum of 256 hours (5 credits)

All of the field hours required average 16 hours a week during the Fall/Spring Semester and 22 hours per week during the Summer Semester.
**MSW Course Requirements**

Students who are required to enroll in four semesters of field will complete a total of 1,160 hours of field practicum (Field courses 721, 722, 821 and 822). However, students who have been exempted from 721, will complete a minimum of 900 hours.

The minimum hour requirements are delineated for each field course as follows:

- √ Field Course SOC WRK 721 = 260 hours (3 credits)
- √ Field Course SOC WRK 722 = 260 hours (3 credits)
- √ Field Course SOC WRK 821 = 320 hours (4 credits)
- √ Field Course SOC WRK 822 = 320 hours (4 credits)

*Elective Field Course 921, 260 hours (3 credits) or 320 hours (4 credits), is available with approval of the Field Office.

All of the field hours required average 16-20 hours a week during the Fall/Spring Semester and 22-24 hours per week during the Summer Semester.

**COMPLETION OF FIELD HOURS REQUIREMENT**

Field education is a course for which all the designated field hours, field assignments, and evaluations must be completed before a final grade is assigned. All designated field hours must be completed for each field course within the semester in which enrollment occurs. Field hours may be extended beyond the end of the semester only with an approved *Request for Field Course Incomplete* form. Students must also get their assigned Liaison and Field Instructor permission for both an early start to their practicum as well as an early completion.

Absences from field due to illness must be documented by a doctor's statement if the time away from field exceeds a one week period. All time away from the field placement must be made up. If a student must be away for an extended period of time, a determination of whether the agency can accommodate the absence will be determined.

**INTEGRATED FIELD SEMINAR REQUIREMENTS**

All BSW students, and MSW students without a SW 721 exemption, are required to participate in a weekly Integrated Field Seminar which is scheduled as a lab immediately preceding or following their concurrent Methods course. The Integrated Seminar is scheduled for 50 minutes and counts toward the total hours of field required each semester. The Field Seminar accounts for 25% of the grade for BSW students and 10% of the grade for MSW students in 721.

**WHEN SHOULD STUDENTS ENROLL IN A FIELD EDUCATION COURSE?**

All **BSW** Students must:

- Be admitted to the Social Work major and have successfully completed all General Education requirements.
- Be a second semester junior or senior in the Social Work major.
- Have successfully completed Methods Course SOC WRK 310, completing the course with no less than a grade of "B" prior to entering a field practicum.
All **MSW** students must:

- Be admitted to the Graduate Social Work Program
- Have completed the Methods Course SOC WRK 708 if the students does not have a BSW Degree

Students should register for their field education courses at the same time that they register for their other social work courses. Students must be registered for the appropriate field course before they can begin their practicum. Students whose registration has been cancelled for non-payment of fees, or for any other reason, will not be able to continue in their assigned field placement because they are not considered an agent of the University and are therefore not covered by malpractice insurance. Students who are removed from their field placements, or self-initiate the termination of their placement, may be required to drop their concurrent Practice course and may have to forfeit all field hours for that semester.

**CAN FIELD COURSE REQUIREMENTS BE EXEMPTED?**

**BSW students**

Based on the Accreditation Standards of the Council on Social Work Education, previous social service volunteer/employment experience or an internship from a non-accredited BSW Program, cannot be considered as criteria for exemption of any undergraduate field education courses.

**MSW students**

Only Field course 721 can be exempted. A **SOC WRK 721 Exemption Request** form must be submitted and approved prior to entering the initial field placement and/or the first full time academic semester.

Based on Accreditation Standards of the Council on Social Work Education and the Policies of the HBSSW Social Work Program the following circumstances may meet the 721 course exemption criteria:

**a)** Graduation from an accredited BSW program **within the past five years**. Eligibility for exemption from Social Work 721, Field Education I, applies only when a minimum of a “B” average has been achieved in field courses.

**b)** Within the past five years, satisfactory full-time employment in a social work position (following completion of the bachelor’s degree) for a minimum of two years with direct supervision provided by an MSW. The following supporting documentation is required:

1. A job description of the social work position(s) relevant to this exemption request
2. A letter of reference from the MSW social work supervisor(s), which must include a statement documenting the type of social service activities required of the position, an evaluation statement of student’s social work performance, the date of employment and the specific time period during which student received MSW supervision.

**c)** Full-time employment as a social worker following completion of a BSW for no less than two years within a five-year period prior to the date student began the MSW program. Student must have a BSW from an accredited program. (There are no time requirements as to when the BSW degree was conferred). The following supporting documentation is required:

1. A job description of the social work position(s) relevant to this exemption request
2) A letter of reference from student’s immediate supervisor(s), which must include a performance evaluation or statement of performance within the agency and the dates of employment.

d) Completion a supervised field practicum in a human services agency providing direct client services for a minimum of 260 hours. Field Instructor must have a degree in social work or a related field with a minimum of two years of professional experience. The following supporting documentation is required:

1) Field practicum completed evaluation signed by the agency Field Instructor with verification of the hours completed and the Field Instructor credentials.
2) Field course syllabus

HOW ARE FIELD HOURS SCHEDULED?

Since social work courses are taught throughout the week, each student will have to negotiate their specific schedule with their agency Field Instructor. Both BSW and MSW students’ field hours are usually scheduled during traditional office hours (8-5) based on the service needs of the clients and the student’s schedule.

IF I NEED TO BE EMPLOYED FULL-TIME, IS IT POSSIBLE TO ENROLL IN A FIELD EDUCATION COURSE?

Although most students must maintain some part-time employment, it is very difficult to maintain full-time employment and a field experience unless the 40 hours of employment is flexible. Evening and weekend placement options are extremely limited and there is no guarantee for a field placement on evenings and/or weekends.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AT PRACTICUM AGENCY

Occasionally students will have an employment opportunity at the agency where they are completing their practicum experience. This situation often creates a conflict with the completion of the field education course requirements and is not a recommended option; however, is allowed under certain circumstances. (Please refer to the field program manual for specific details on the requirements and the process for requesting an Employment-Based Field Practicum.)

HOW IS THE PROCESS INITIATED FOR FINDING A FIELD PLACEMENT?

Students may review previous agency placements located on the Field Education website, as well as other posted materials regarding practicum opportunities prior to the completion of their field application. Once a student identifies their desired social work practice area they should complete the field application packet. All students planning to enroll in a field education course must complete the Field Application the semester prior to their practicum. Field application electronic forms can be accessed through the HBSSW Social Work Program Field website at http://uwm.edu/socialwelfare/social-work-field-education-program/ All applications are typed on fillable forms and submitted electronically. (Students should also retain a copy of the field application on their computer.) Once completed, the field application packet should be submitted through the Social Work Field Website by the designated deadlines. Incomplete application packets will not be processed.

Students may review the listing of recent of practicum sites on the field website, and indicate their interests to the Field Liaison to whom they have been assigned during the pre-placement process. Students may suggest placement choices to the Field Liaison, but all referrals to agency sites are made by the Field Liaison who determines pre-placement referrals based on the aforementioned criteria.

Most BSW and MSW field students are placed in agencies providing social services located in Milwaukee and surrounding counties. Students may be placed in other areas in Wisconsin or adjacent states, but placement options in distant areas tend to be limited and while the Field
Faculty will work with students on these requests, there is no guarantee of placement in distant areas. Most practicum opportunities are only available weekday hours. There are very limited options for evening and weekend placements and there is no guarantee of placement for students unavailable during weekday hours.

**Graduate Social Work Students**
Both BSW and MSW students are able to enter a field practicum in the Fall, Spring, or Summer Semesters. Two and three-semester field students are required to complete the practicum in consecutive semesters in one agency. There are some rare exceptions to this policy, primarily related to MSW School Social Work students. 4-semester MSW field students are required to complete two consecutive semesters in two different agency programs (i.e. Fall-Spring, Spring-Summer, Summer-Fall). Field applications are due by the following deadlines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester beginning field education</th>
<th>Due date for field application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FALL</td>
<td>May 15 (<strong>see exceptions below)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPRING</td>
<td>September 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMER</td>
<td>February 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>***MSW Students in School Concentration</td>
<td>February 15th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(seeking a school placement)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>***MSW Students seeking VA Medical</td>
<td>February 15th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Center placement</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

***MSW students who require 4 semesters of field education are required to complete a second field application packet prior to placement in their second agency placement. Students should re-submit all required documents for their second field application.

**WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?**
Following the submission of your Field Application, you will receive an email when your application has been processed. The Social Work Office will send you instructions for completing your background check and inform you of which Field Liaison you have been assigned to. After receiving this notification, students should complete their background check and contact their assigned Field Liaison to schedule an appointment. The purpose of the student/ liaison meeting is to discuss field placement options based on a number of variables to include student experience, professional strengths and interests, and availability of agency practicum opportunities. The meeting with the Field Liaison should be scheduled promptly after your application has been processed, as agency placements are very competitive and many placements fill up quickly. Students should register for the appropriate field education course each semester of field.

Students who fail to meet the field application deadline will not be guaranteed a practicum for the desired semester. In some cases late applicants, or applicants who have not contacted their assigned Liaison in a timely manner, may be placed in a 2\textsuperscript{nd} priority status. 2\textsuperscript{nd} priority status does not guarantee a placement for the desired semester.

**CAN I FIND MY OWN PLACEMENT?**
All referrals for a field placement are to be made by the assigned Field Liaison. Students are not to negotiate their own placement. Students who contact or negotiate a field placement on their own will NOT be placed in the agency to which they have self-referred.

**CAN STUDENTS SUGGEST NEW PLACEMENT SITES?**
Students are encouraged to suggest to their Faculty Field Liaison field placement sites not currently utilized by the School. The Faculty Field Liaison will contact the prospective agency to explore the possibility of developing a new practicum site. If the prospective agency site identified by a student can provide an appropriate practicum experience and has cooperated with completing the required documents, the Field Liaison may refer appropriate field applicants to this agency. However, students who assisted in identifying new sites are not automatically assured of being assigned to this agency.

**WHO IS A FACULTY FIELD LIAISON? WHO IS A FIELD INSTRUCTOR?**

A FIELD LIAISON is an experienced MSW Social Worker who is a member of the faculty in the HBSSW Social Work Program. The Liaison is assigned to work with students to assess field education skills/interests. The Liaison assesses student field learning needs and refers applicants to agency sites for interviews with Social Work Field Instructors to determine whether the student’s needs and the agency opportunities are a good match for the fulfillment of the field education requirements. The Field Liaison shares an overview of the applicant’s interest, professional background, skill level, and past field performance, (when applicable) as part of the referral process. Students and Field Instructors are expected to discuss the outcome of field interviews with the referring Liaison. Once the agency site is confirmed, a Field Liaison is assigned to monitor the student’s field learning during each semester.

A FIELD INSTRUCTOR is a professional social worker employed in a community agency who meets the criteria to provide field education to social work students at the HBSSW Social Work Program. The Field Instructor provides the day-to-day hands-on instruction to the student during their practicum experience.

**ARE THERE ANY CONCURRENT COURSE REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO FIELD?**

- **BSW Students** must complete Methods Course 310 before entering the first semester of field. Subsequently, the Practice Course SOC WRK 410 is taken concurrently with Field Course 421, and Practice Course SOC WRK 427 is taken concurrently with SOC WRK 422. Students are required to meet with their Academic Advisor to ensure that all BSW requirements are included in the academic plan for a successful course completion.

- **MSW Students** are required to complete a Practice course concurrent with their field education practicum. The required Practice course can vary but generally students take Field Course 721 with SOC WRK 709; Field Course 722 with SOC WRK 711; and Field Course 821 with SOC WRK 811. Students should consult with their Faculty Advisor or the Graduate Student Handbook to determine the specific Practice course requirement.

**ARE THERE ANY SEQUENCING REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO FIELD?**

- **BSW Students** are required to complete a minimum of two consecutive semesters in one field setting. An elective semester of field (Field Course SOC WRK 423) is available and should be discussed in advance with the assigned Field Liaison.

- **MSW Students** are required to complete two 2-semester placements (total of 4 semesters) in two separate field agency placements, or three consecutive semesters in one agency if a student is exempt from SW 721. An elective semester of field (Field Course SOC WRK 921) is available and should be discussed in advance with the assigned Field Liaison.

**ARE BLOCK PLACEMENTS ALLOWED?**
MSW Students - Block placements are two semesters of graduate field education taken concurrently. Students in block placements generally complete 40 field education hours weekly. Block placements are an exception and can only be completed in the 821 and 822 advanced level field courses with prior approval from the assigned Faculty Field Liaison and Director of Field Programs. No more than 40 hours per week can be completed in a block placement.

BSW Students - Block placements are not available for undergraduate students.

WHAT ARE THE FIELD EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DOUBLE CONCENTRATION?
Graduate students who are in the Double Concentration track are required to complete their first two semesters of field education in a direct practice setting and the last two semesters of field education in a macro practice setting. Any exceptions to this policy require the approval of the Director of Field Programs.

WHERE CAN I OBTAIN AVAILABLE INFORMATION ABOUT AGENCIES PARTICIPATING IN THE FIELD PROGRAM?
A list of agencies that field students were placed at during the previous academic year is available on the BSW and MSW pages of the Field Website. Additionally, Field Liaisons will discuss practicum opportunities with students during the initial meeting.

ARE ACCOMMODATIONS AVAILABLE TO FIELD STUDENTS WHO HAVE A DISABILITY?
Field students who have a disability and who ask for accommodations in their field placement must be registered with the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) on campus. During the pre-placement process requested accommodations should be identified and shared with the Field Liaison coordinating placement efforts. ARC provides services for students participating in field programs by identifying and implementing reasonable accommodations in field sites; however, it is the student’s responsibility to initiate this process and inform their Field Liaison.

WHAT ARE MY FIELD PLACEMENT OPTIONS?
Agencies providing social work field education placements must meet the criteria and standards as defined by CSWE and the HBSSW Social Work Program. Qualified sites which are potential placement options for students are selected jointly by the student and their assigned Field Liaison. Students will rank order their agency preferences and the Liaison will work on individual agency referrals consistent with the student preference; however, only one referral will be made at a time. Students are not guaranteed a placement site in a specified agency of their choice or in an agency located in a specific geographical area.

Students cannot be placed in an agency which poses a potential conflict of interest, which could include an agency which employs friends or relatives, an agency where the student has received services or where they had previous employment or a volunteer experience. Field placements in agencies where the student is employed are discouraged and this type of placement often does not meet the criteria for field education and may pose a potential conflict of interest.

WHAT WILL MY ASSIGNMENTS BE IN MY FIELD EDUCATION COURSE?
MSW Students - During each semester of your Field Placement you will be required to complete various assignments. Due to the variance in field education practicum sites you will have the opportunity to select some assignments which are consistent with the duties you have in your field practicum. These assignments are designed to be learning and supervision tools which will assist you in the integration between classroom and field, and all assignments are designed to address
the development of social work competencies and to be consistent with social work field education objectives as defined by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).

At the beginning of your field placement, you should meet with your agency Field Instructor to discuss which assignments from the assignment list (located on the Field Program website) which would be a good fit for your level of experience and the program structure of the agency. (Assignments completed for other courses CANNOT be used for your Field Practicum assignment.)

You are required to earn a minimum of five points per semester. All assignments have point differentials consistent with the extent of the assignment. (Refer to individual assignment descriptions for all point values.) Once you and your supervisor have determined which of the assignments would provide you with the optimal learning experience you should complete the Learning Plan specifically outlining which assignments you intend to complete for the semester.

BSW Students – Field assignments are incorporated into the weekly Integrated Field Seminar. Details of the assignments are on the Canvas Seminar Course Site. Additionally, there are articles to read and brief videos to watch during each Field Seminar course.

ARE THERE ANY PRE-PLACEMENT CONDITIONS REQUIRED BY SOME SETTINGS?
All Field students must have completed a background check through CastleBranch, Inc. before the student/field agency matching process can proceed. The initial cost is $45.00 paid online to CastleBranch. After your field application has been processed, the Social Work Office will send you instructions via email on how to complete the online background check.

The required CastleBranch Background Check includes both Criminal Background and Caregiver Background Checks. Students are required to complete both a Release of Information form and a Background Information Disclosure form, which are submitted through CastleBranch. The agency to which a student is assigned may also require an additional background check, depending on the needs of the agency. A student may be denied access to a placement site based on the nature of past offenses. Certain offenses may also prevent students from receiving a professional social work license and/or the ability to work in certain agency settings. For more information about caregiver background checks please refer to the following website: https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/caregiver/index.htm

***Students with a criminal background history, or history of substantiated child or elder abuse or neglect reports, should disclose this information to their assigned Liaison during the initial meeting to avoid an inappropriate agency referral.

Due to the personal and professional demands experienced by our social work students the completion of the Field Education requirements often requires students to complete their Field hours prior to, in-between, and following the dates of the academic semester. This dynamic creates a conflict with the parameters of UWM’s student liability insurance coverage. Since professional liability protection for our students during the field practicum is critical, the Social Work Program has implemented an additional Blanket student liability policy through American Casualty Co. Insurance Services. This coverage is effective for all field education students over the entire course of the time required to complete the practicum hour requirements. The cost for student liability insurance is covered by the Helen Bader School of Social Welfare.

MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS
Students who seek placements in medical or health care settings are required to have a
medical examination, which may include a tuberculosis skin test, vaccination or confirmed immunity against rubella, in addition to several other pre-placement requirements. Each agency or hospital determines their own list of medical history, tests and vaccination requirements, and this list can be extensive in some settings. Drug testing may also be required.

Some field placement settings may provide the student with the required medical examination, while others will require that the student submit summaries from their own physician. Students may obtain most required tests and vaccinations at the Norris Health Center on campus for a nominal cost. To schedule an appointment at Norris, call: 414-229-4716.

HEALTH SAFETY TRAINING
In medical and health care settings, students may be required, as part of their agency orientation, to complete the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s (OSHA) Tuberculosis Standard Training and Hazard Communication Standard Training prior to beginning their field placement at the facility to which they have been assigned for their field practicum. In addition, the Bloodborne Pathogen Training is required for those individuals who may be exposed to blood and body fluids during their assignment. The Field Program will also provide trainings for students in Bloodborne Pathogens and HIPAA.

SAFETY IN THE FIELD
Developing an awareness of safety issues, within, around, before and after entering a field placement is considered an important aspect of our professional development. Students have a responsibility to become knowledgeable about their agency role in order to ensure their own well-being as they begin to interface with the community. All social work students are required to read the Safety Techniques and Strategies in Social Work located on the Social Work Field Program website prior to their pre-placement interview at a field placement site. Students are also responsible for learning about specific policies and procedures regarding safety within the agency with their assigned Field Instructor during the first few days of the field practicum.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?
Additional detailed information regarding field education can be located in the Social Work Field Manual on the Field Program website or students can e-mail questions or comments to their assigned Faculty Field Liaison or to Jeanne Wagner, Director of Field Programs at jeannew@uwm.edu.