

CONCENTRATION YEAR FIELD
Another step in your journey becoming an
MSW social worker



THE LEARNING AGREEMENT
IS
A MAP FOR CHARTING YOUR PATH

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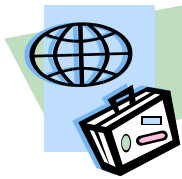
Step 1: Charting Your Course

Thinking, Reflecting, Planning and Researching



1. As an example of a relational document, this student assignment requires significant input from your field instructor as well as review of the department web site with the course syllabus and field policies and expectations.

<http://www.uvm.edu/~socwork/?Page=field/default.html>



2. Reflect on the path you've taken to date in terms of social work practice and experience as well as your goals for the future. Where have you been? Who are you becoming as a social worker? Where do you want to be as a social worker at the end of this year? What do you bring to this year's field learning experience? What are your hopes and aspirations for it? Take the time to think deeply so as to not miss any "overlapping issues" that just might reveal connections to some piece of your work this year.



3. Collaborate with your field instructor for identification of learning assignments, practice opportunities and tasks. Discuss how to integrate your classroom assignments with activities in the field. Don't forget that they, as well as the Department of Social Work faculty (including your field liaison), are your partners on this journey.



4. Discover as much about your agency and the opportunities available to you as you can. Take this opportunity to meet with other staff to learn about their work. This will not only help you write the description of your field site agency but also identify

possible assignments and activities to discuss with your field instructor.



5. Based on the discussions above, make a list of what you and your field instructor have agreed you will be doing in your field placement. **Remember that over the course of the year you must show that you've done some work with or on behalf of individuals, families, small groups, communities and organizations.** You can include such activities as participation in meetings and trainings, interviews with employees in your agency, advocacy on behalf of your client population, consulting research literature, as well as direct contact with clients. Together these form your learning assignments in the field this year.



6. It is absolutely appropriate to use some field hours to prepare and write the learning agreement. It will help to have a discussion now with your field instructor about how to preserve time for this, the four course-required process recordings, and the field evaluations.

Step 2: Writing the Learning Agreement

1. Starting to Write

If you haven't completed Step 1 (Preparation), go back!



Now start at the beginning of the outlined format –see below-(agency/organization; relationship to the work) and not the middle (section three: identification of field assignments connected to objectives). Where you start and how you plan for this year-long

journey informs where and how your adventure will go. There are six sections in the Learning Agreement.



2. Format

This gives you practice in following a defined or required structure for writing in social work practice: something you will have to do often, whether you are involved in direct practice (case notes, court reports, insurance billing) or indirect practice (grant requests, evaluations, manuals).

Follow the structure and format outlined below. It is your choice whether or not to write about your background, activities, and assignments using a first person or third person voice.

COVER PAGE: Names (yours, your faculty field liaison, your MSW field instructor, agency and program); Agency address; Contact information you, your field instructor(s); Student field placement schedule for the year (beginning date in August/Sept and ending date in May as well as the weekly placement schedule - both days and hours) *450 hour minimum for 2nd year concentration students and 600 hour minimum for advanced standing concentration year students, and anticipated breaks/absences from the field. This is a separate page.*

SECTION 1: AGENCY/ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

Transformative practice involves understanding the context of our work. In order to be most effective, we need to understand the purpose, focus, and scope of the organization in which we work. Understanding the agency's structure, policies, and funding enables you not only to be a more effective practitioner for your client, but also to be a better advocate for systems changes to benefit them. In addition, you are an ambassador for your field placement. You'll be asked on several occasions (whether in inter-agency meetings or at Thanksgiving with friends and family) to explain, for example, "What does the Happy Heart Agency really do?" Consider this a

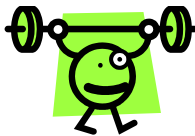
learning opportunity for you to more fully understand and then be able to better answer that question.

You can discover much about your field placement site through formal and informal conversations, reputation (“word on the street”), brochures and web pages. In your own words (NOT cut and paste or direct quotations) what do you know about the agency: its mission, its function and purpose, its organizational structure (governance, staffing, source of funding, type). Also identify any questions you may have at this juncture about the agency/organization (and which you will further explore and investigate).

SECTION 2: YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORK

Consider this as practice for when you look for a job and have to talk about yourself and what you would bring to that particular setting.

How is this setting reflective of a long-held or recent interest of yours? What do you bring in terms of any personal, educational or work experience/background to the work of the agency/organization? Possible areas might include:



Personal and professional assets and strengths you **initially brought** into the program, as well as those you've developed or enhanced after your first year in the field, and the additional knowledge and skills you have gained over the summer.



Your own personal and professional goals for growth and development in this year's field placement. Reach for the stars!

SECTION 3: FIELD ASSIGNMENTS

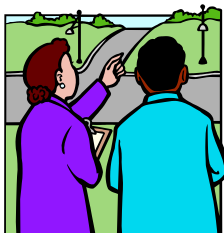


You may have noticed that the learning objectives are almost identical for the concentration year and the

*foundation year field. What's different is that listed below each of the concentration year objectives are practice behaviors which reflect our MSW program's concentration in Transformative Social Work. Identify the 3-4 (out of the 13) objectives under your individual assignments that are most relevant. The practice behaviors might be incorporated into the description of the process for determining your progress/supervision plan and/or the description of the field assignments. You can and should include language that reflects what you are learning in the curriculum. You may find that multiple curriculum objectives could possibly be addressed by a single field assignment or task, as generally any one activity offers multiple areas for learning. **However, please consider which primary skills will be demonstrated in the individual assignments, and then select those 3-4 learning objectives which are most directly relevant to that particular field assignment.***

a. This is where you make a direct link between your various field assignments and each of the 13 field course objectives found in the course syllabus for SWSS 390. Make sure your assignments will give you the opportunity to make progress on the course learning objectives. Keep wording simple, clear, concise, and specific (such as how many clients, what type of group, the specific theories you will learn about and how, the type of contact with families, your role, etc.). **Link no more than 3-4 objectives to any one assignment.**

b. Evaluation is also a practice activity and so the expression of evaluation methods may seem similar to the wording for social work tasks listed in your assignments. However, a key difference is that evaluation methods should identify not only the process (the means by which you and your field instructor and others-including clients-will evaluate your progress on each assignment as they relate to the specific learning objectives) but also the criteria (how will you and others know you are making progress met the objective?). *There is an example at the end of this guide.*



SECTION 4: SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT

Supervision is an integral and essential element of social work practice. Writing this section should be used as an opportunity to

start the conversation with your field instructor(s) about what you all want and expect out of supervision. Who and what else might be involved with the supervision and support of our learning? What agency trainings or practices will be involved?

In describing the plan for supervision and support include both the informal and formal processes. If you have both off site and on site instructors describe their respective roles in their supervision of your practice. Discuss and develop due dates for your assignments in alignment with the field liaison's due date expectations so that there is adequate time for feedback prior to turning assignments into your liaison. Please be specific as to the day/time of formal supervision as well as the specific dates when you will need to turn in your reflective writings (process recordings, project log, etc) to your field instructor.



SECTION 5: SAFETY PLAN

After reviewing the Student Safety Agreement Policy which outlines the required elements, please write up the unique agreement specific to your work within the agency/organization.



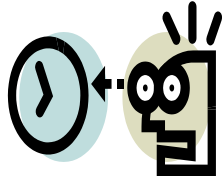
SECTION 6: MONETARY COMPENSATION

If you are receiving any stipend or payment from your field setting, indicate what that agreement is here.

Section 7: Signatures

Leave spaces for your signature, those of your field instructor (s), your field liaison, and the field coordinator. Type the names under each line and leave space for the date notation. Prior to turning it into your field liaison make sure that you and your field instructor (s) have signed and dated it.

Step 3: Getting There On Time: The Due Dates



1. **Your learning agreement is due no later than October 1.** Your field instructor needs to have provided input, reviewed it and signed it before your field liaison receives it. The signed original then is placed in your field file (which you have access to) in the Social Work Department. Make sure that both you and your field instructor keep a copy for yourselves.

2. In essence, this learning agreement forms the map for your journey as a social work student in the field this year. You will want to regularly review it with your field instructor during supervisory meetings as a way of keeping on course.

3. **Process recordings for the fall semester are due to your field liaison Oct 23 and Nov 20.**



4. At the beginning of second semester your learning agreement is to be formally revised in order: 1) to respond to any field liaison feedback on the original document regarding areas needing to be addressed, 2) to identify the changes as a result of completed assignments, 3) and to identify any new or clarified assignments which were identified during the December conversation or 4) to indicate no changes. **This addendum (approved and signed by your field instructor) is due to your field liaison no later than February 4.**

5. Due dates for two required process recordings in the Spring will be identified in January.



When lost or confused, stop and ask for directions from your field instructor, your classmates and your field liaison.

Remember that this is a journey and there will be detours and delays, as well as changes of direction and new destinations once you think you've got it all mapped out. That's fine. The learning agreement is a "work in progress" and will be revised and updated.

An Example of the Field Assignment/Learning Objective Component



Assignment #1: I will be an active member of the North End Enterprise Zone work group. I will facilitate 2 meetings, prepare reports and make recommendations for community change in this area.

Related Objectives

1. Engagement with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities
7. Application of critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments
8. Advancement of human rights and social and economic justice
10. Engagement in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services

Evaluation:

I will complete the tasks as assigned. Reports will be well written, comprehensive and free of jargon. I will request feedback from work group participants as well as my field instructor regarding my advanced practice skills in group and community practice. Supervision discussions as well as the content of reports written will reflect my integration of the N.A.S.W. Code of Ethics. In supervision I will outline the elements of my critical thinking re choice of the policy practice intervention. The reflection section of process recordings will illustrate increasing depth in my self-awareness.

Assignment #2: In the role of a school social worker, I will have a caseload of 3 students. I will meet regularly with each student individually and initiate parent/guardian contact. Additionally, I will complete clinical and organizational documentation required by both the school and the community mental health center.

Related Objectives

1. Intervention with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities.
2. Identification as a professional social worker and conducts oneself accordingly.
6. Application of social work ethical principles to guide professional practice
11. Application of knowledge of human behavior and the social environment

Evaluation

Tasks as outlined will be completed. Feedback from field instructor, teachers, and clients will be obtained. Process recordings will demonstrate how I am employing competing theories of human behavior as well as practice interventions and prioritizing client narratives.

Assignment #3: I will attend at least one training session that is informed by research on practice with people from diverse backgrounds. In addition I will consult research based literature that is focused on working collaboratively with families from different cultures. I will critically examine these research informed practice approaches in supervisory meetings with my field instructor and will thoughtfully apply what I have learned to my practice.

Related Objectives:

10. Engagement of research-informed practice.

7. Application of critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.
8. Engagement of diversity and difference in practice: b. Student employs complex understandings of diversity and difference to engage effectively in transformative relationships at all levels of practice.

Evaluation:

Training session will be completed and research based articles will be discussed presented in supervision in terms of how to apply to practice. Process recordings will demonstrate thoughtful application of research based knowledge related to diversity. I will seek and reflect on feedback from families from different cultural backgrounds on the helpfulness of specific interventions.

Assignment #4 I will facilitate a minimum of three treatment team meetings where family members and other providers are present. During these, I will work to promote a collaborative and respectful environment for all to review the family's case plan and progress made. At the close of each meeting I will ask families and providers to complete a form which asks for their feedback on my facilitation.

Related Objectives:

1. Engagement with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities, b. Student uses a complex combination of skills that include collaboration, transparency, and authenticity to form partnerships that empower clients and underserved populations at all levels of intervention.
4. Evaluation with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
5. Identification as a professional social worker and conducts oneself accordingly, a. student identifies social work opportunities for transformative change.

Evaluation:

- I will have effectively carried out the facilitation role for 3 meetings.
- I will review the feedback received from participants with my field instructor.
- My field instructor will be in attendance during one of these meetings and will provide feedback on my practice as observed with regard to collaboration, respect, and effective facilitation.