

CUA



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OVERVIEW OF FIELD EDUCATION

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) identifies field education as the signature pedagogy of the social work profession. Signature pedagogy is defined as “the central form of instruction and learning in which a profession socializes its students to perform the role of practitioner”¹ In social work education, both what is learned in the classroom and in the field internship are seen as essential to the development of the student into a social work practitioner. At NCSWS, we strive to ensure that our field program is well administered, with student interns guided, mentored and evaluated by dedicated field instructors. The Office of Field Education is charged with providing support to all participants in our field program: students, field instructors, internship coordinators, and field liaisons/seminar instructors.

Primary goals of field education are to:

- Educate social work students to provide social services across fields of practice using the generalist practice model in the foundation year;
- Provide knowledge, values and skills for intervention with individuals, groups, families, communities and other systems;
- Help students develop a professional identity consistent with social work values;
- Facilitate the development of skills in the evaluation of one’s social work practice;
- Provide experiences with various client populations particularly those who are vulnerable and oppressed;
- Help students develop a professional commitment to social work practice;
- Work with students to evolve a practice style consistent with their personal strengths and capacities;
- Support students as they develop the ability to work within a human service agency or organization.

Field education is based on the adult learning model, which recognizes the unique strengths that adults bring to learning opportunities, similar to the strengths-based model of problem-solving utilized widely in our profession. The adult learning model recognizes that people are self-directed, have innate strength, are resourceful, bring life experiences to new learning and have internal motivation for growth and change. The major modality of student learning is the relationship between field instructor and student intern. This relationship is established and maintained through the weekly supervisory conference and other tools of teaching/learning. The *Learning Plan*, developed early in the internship, is an example of how the social work program employs adult education theory. Adult education theory

¹ CSWE Educational Policy and Education Standards, Educational Policy 2.3.

promotes the process of contracting on the premise that what adults learn on their own initiative is likely to be learned deeply and permanently.²

In field education, the doing and the reflection upon that doing is the learning.² It is the responsibility of both the field instructor and the student to see that time and place and process for reflection on doing is a valued part of the field education experience. Process recordings, field logs and other field assignments, and ongoing consultation with field instructor and faculty all facilitate this process. Effective supervision includes teaching of practice skills (service delivery and enhancement of technique) and management skills (the handling of interpersonal aspects of the work).

Foundation-level field education and *Social Work Practice* courses are designed to develop a constellation of knowledge, values, principles, and skills that comprise the professional base of social work practice. Advanced-level field education and courses build on, expand, and deepen the basic generalist skills learned at the Foundation-level. The focus throughout is to help the student integrate and apply, in an actual practice setting, the knowledge and principles of social work practice within the context of the values and ethics of the profession.

³ Schon, Donald A. (1995) *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*.