

SWK 3350 - Social Work Experience: Practice & Communication

Welcome to the Social Work Experience course! This course is a requirement in the fall semester of your junior year in the BSSW program and must be taken alongside SWK 3410: Generalist Practice I.

Social Work Experience: Practice and Communication is a 3-credit course:

- 2 credits for the weekly class meetings, and
- 1 credit for the agency volunteer experience.

You cannot pass this class without completing BOTH components of this course. You will meet as a class on-campus for 2 hours or online or in a hybrid format to discuss readings and to integrate your coursework with your agency experience. The focus of this course is to develop as a social work professional - attending to professional roles and boundaries, examining your personal and professional values, developing effective communication skills in written, verbal and non-verbal mediums, demonstrating interpersonal skills, and practicing personal reflection and self-correction. This course will be helpful in getting you ready for your senior year internship.

Through this course, you will have the opportunity to focus on these areas by completing **45 hours of volunteer service** in a community agency whose focus is in providing human/social services. Please use the following guidelines in determining if an agency is appropriate to meet the requirements of this course:

- ✓ The 45 hours must last the duration of the semester. ***This is approximately 3 hours each week.*** You may not complete a bulk amount of hours early or later in the semester; they must be distributed evenly throughout the 15 weeks.
- ✓ You must complete your volunteer hours in a community-based agency. Some of your assignments will involve examining your agency within the community context, so you must have access directly to agency functioning.
- ✓ The agency must be dedicated to providing human/social services.
- ✓ You must serve in a helping role allowing you to practice your developing social work skills. Examples include: serving as an advocate at a shelter, working on a crisis-call line, providing assistance to social workers in the field, helping in an after-school program, working in a homeless shelter, providing educational workshops/outreach to clients, providing general milieu support to clients, observing and/or participating in groups, etc. While many agencies will not allow you to work independently with clients, you should be in an agency that allows you to have direct contact with clients or communities through shadowing and observation at a minimum.

- ✓ There are many different types of settings you can volunteer in (e.g., Departments of Human Services, hospitals, schools, nonprofits), and many social issues and populations you may work with (e.g., adoptions, homelessness, substance abuse, developmental disabilities, domestic violence, youth development).
- ✓ Examples of volunteer opportunities that are **NOT acceptable** include: volunteering with an independent private therapist, working *only* with animals, providing childcare at church, solely being a one-on-one mentor in the community *with minimal agency contact*, one time fundraising events, coalition or board work that does not involve direct outreach activities to communities and/or persons, etc.
- ✓ You must be supervised by an agency staff person who can provide you with ongoing support and feedback on your performance. They must agree to complete one mid-semester and one end of semester evaluation of your performance (forms will be provided).
- ✓ Your employment may count towards your volunteer hours if they meet the outlined parameters for this course and are approved by your course instructor.
- ✓ There are resources for searching for a volunteer position through the Classroom to Career Hub or by using www.metrovolunteers.org or www.volunteermatch.org. Questions about how to access CareerLink will be addressed in the information sessions. If you still have questions after attending and information session, please contact internships@msudenver.edu.
- ✓ You must have your volunteer agency confirmed with your course instructor by **Sept. 6th, 2021 at 11:59pm**. It is recommended that you solidify this placement before the beginning of the semester, if possible. This course has assignments throughout the class that involve your volunteer work. So in order to set yourself up for success in this class you **MUST** have a volunteer placement secured early as soon as possible.

Have fun exploring the many community agencies out there! If you need additional support after you have connected with the above resources, and have attempted to connect with several agencies, please contact your course instructor.