



Field Education Frequently Asked Questions 2023-2024 Academic Year

General Internship Requirements

1. *How many hours will social work students spend in their field education agency-based internship?*

Social work students will be in their internships for 30 weeks from the start of the fall semester (Mid-August 2023) until the end of the spring semester (Early May 2024).

BSSW and MSW Foundation Year Students:	13-14 hours/week (400 hours/year)
MSW Concentration Year Students:	16-17 hours/week (500 hours/year)

2. *Can an internship be arranged for evening/weekend hours?*

Internships are designed to take place when the Task Supervisor/Field Instructor is regularly employed and available for supervision in order to protect the safety of students, clients and other stakeholders. Some agencies may require specific training/work hours outside the regularly scheduled business hours for internship. It is up to the student and Field Instructor/Task Supervisor to specify work hours before the internship begins. While certain agencies may have evening groups or other opportunities that allow students to complete their required hours during evenings and weekends, this is not required, and at all times, students must have access to their supervisor for supervision and safety reasons. It is up to the student to work with their agency supervisor to arrange their schedule to allow for completion of all required coursework and internship hours.

Applying for Internships

3. *What is the process for students to obtain a field education internship?*

Students work with a Placement Navigator from the Office of Field Education in the spring, before their internship begins, to identify whether they will go through a **traditional internship search**, in which students apply to up to five potential field agencies, OR if they would like to **request an employment-based internship**.

- **Traditional Internship Search:** Students utilize Sonia Field Database in consultation with their assigned Placement Navigator to assist them in selecting and being referred to agencies. Under NO circumstances may a student interview with an agency without prior permission from the Field Office. The student will then contact each agency for an interview. This is typically done by the student emailing an agency a cover letter and resume and requesting an interview.
 - To support students' professional development and ability to find a suitable internship, we strongly encourage agency internship contacts maintain clear and timely communication about the status of their application materials.
 - The interview is a two-way process; agencies may offer or deny an internship to a student, and a student may also determine whether the agency will be able to meet their learning requirements for a developmentally appropriate internship.

- **Employment-Based Internship:** Students may request that their employer consider an Employment-Based (EB) internship. Students are encouraged to discuss their interest in a potential EB internship with the agency as early in the search process as possible. Agencies are encouraged to consider the student's learning opportunities within their job and/or organization. There are many different ways to structure EB internships, so it is best for the student and agency to discuss openly and collaboratively what the pros/cons might be and would work best for each unique situation.
 - The process to request approval for an EB internship is different than the process of interviewing for traditional internships.
 - Students requesting EB internships need to complete additional documentation to demonstrate that they will be able to navigate the dual role of being both an intern and an employee, and that their EB internship will meet all requirements related to supervision and development of social work competencies.
 - A meeting is highly recommended between the student, their supervisor, the agency's internship coordinator, and/or an employee with social work degree who may serve as the student's Field Instructor.
 - Agencies may also require students requesting an EB internship to submit a resume/cover letter or complete an interview.
 - Students may need to modify their work schedule to accommodate their internship requirements; this should be discussed and agreed upon with their supervisor.
 - It is important to note that agencies are not required to approve EB internship requests, and each agency can decide whether or not they allow EB internships.
- **Finalizing the Internship:** Once an agency offers a student an internship and/or the employment-based internship is approved by the Office of Field Education, and the student accepts, the student must finalize their internship by completing an official Field Confirmation Form through the Sonia Field Database and submit it to the Office of Field Education. The internship is not considered finalized until the Field Confirmation Form is completed by both student and agency.

4. *When can students start applying to agencies?*

Students applying for internships starting in Fall 2023 will begin contacting agencies as early as mid-February 2023. Students continue to be admitted into the program throughout the spring and so students may initiate their internship search throughout the spring and not apply to agencies until late April/May. Students should have an internship secured by August 1st for a timely start with the fall semester in mid-August.

5. *Does the university conduct background checks of students prior to entering internship?*

No. MSU Denver does not complete a background check on any student. Each agency is responsible for determining if and how background checks are completed on students, and if so, what the eligibility criteria are. Each agency is different on what is permissible in a criminal background. This should be communicated directly to the student. Agencies are responsible for communicating to the Office of Field Education if there are any expectations related to verifying background check documents (for example, those agencies which use My Clinical Exchange or required an attestation letter).

6. *Can students use the same field agency for their placement in both the BSSW/MSW Foundation and MSW Concentration year?*

Sometimes. In order to ensure a wide breadth of experiences to facilitate growth and learning, internships are typically required to occur in a different agency during a MSW student's concentration year. The MSW

concentration year internship may not be the same as either the foundation year or BSSW placement. In rare cases, where *new learning* and a *new Field Instructor* can be established, the Office of Field Education may approve an exception. Students interested in this same agency request will be required to complete a Same Agency Request form and submit it to the Office of Field Education for review and approval.

7. *If a student accepts an internship at an agency, but then another agency unexpectedly contacts them for an interview, can the student switch their confirmed placement?*

No. Once a student makes a commitment to accept an internship at an agency, our program expects the student to honor that commitment. Failure to do so is unethical and reflects poorly on the student as a professional, damages the relationship between the agency and the university, unfairly takes away a potential opportunity from another student, and puts the agency in a position to either lose an intern that they were planning on for the year or re-invest more time and energy into another intern search. Any student who does not honor a commitment (written or verbal) to an agency may be required to go through the Student Support Process and may be required to defer their internship or be dismissed from the program. We ask that agencies inform the Office of Field Education if these circumstances occur.

Supervising Social Work Internships

8. *What are the requirements for supervising students in their internships?*

Each student must receive at least one hour of supervision every week from a qualified agency, Field Instructor (FI).

- BSSW students - *FI must have a BSW degree with at least two years of post-degree work experience OR must have an MSW degree.*
- MSW students - *FI must have an MSW degree with at least two years of post-degree work experience. Field Instructors are NOT required to be licensed as an LCSW.*

Field Instructors assume a teaching role for the students. In supervision they assist the student in integrating social work knowledge, values, and skills into the student's practice.

9. *What is the difference between a Field Instructor, Task Supervisor, Off-Site Field Instructor, Faculty Field Liaison, etc.?*

Field Instructor (FI) - a staff member at the internship agency who is responsible for providing students with at least one hour a week of supervision. FI's must have a social work degree and typically at least two years of post-degree work experience in the field of social work. FI's are responsible for ensuring that the student is provided with learning assignments, tasks, and experiences that integrate social work theory, values, and practice.

Task Supervisor (TS) - a staff member at the internship agency who may be responsible for supervising the day-to-day activities of the student during the internship. The Task Supervisor typically assumes a teaching role in skill development. The TS must work in conjunction with the FI to provide constructive feedback. Supervision time with the Task Supervisor must be supplemented with the required supervision time with the Field Instructor.

Off-Site Field Instructor (OSFI) - a social worker in the community with a BSW/MSW degree who volunteers/contracts to supervise students in agency settings that do not have a qualified social work Field Instructor on staff. The OSFI may be identified by the agency or with the assistance of MSU Denver's Social Work Department. OSFI's provide one hour of supervision every other week. Their role in supervision is to infuse the social work perspective by helping the student to link social work knowledge, values, and skills learned in the classroom to the student's practice. OSFI's do NOT have any direct oversight over the care or treatment of clients

and are not responsible for task assignment, polices or functions of the agency. If a student utilizes an OSFI, they must also have supervision by an on-site (agency employed) Task Supervisor.

Agency Supervisor(s) - a shortened method of referring to all parties that supervise a student (refers to the field instructor and/or the task supervisor)

Faculty Field Liaison (FFL) - a member of the Department’s faculty who provides a link between the agency, student, and school. The Faculty Field Liaison remains in regular contact with the student and the Agency Supervisor(s) to monitor that placement learning objectives are being met, ensure academic curriculum is infused with practice in the field, and assist with mediating any conflicts that may occur in the field. The FFL is also responsible for leading the field seminar class and providing two or three in-person site visits per year to each student’s agency.

Field Seminar - the weekly class led by the FFL, that allows students to process their field experience, integrate class work and agency practice, and develop as social work professionals. The Field Seminar may be held in person, on-campus, or online.

10. Can an agency that does not have a qualified Field Instructor (FI) on staff accept a student intern?

Maybe. In cases where there is not anyone on staff available to serve as a Field Instructor, the agency may elect to find an Off-Site Field Instructor (OSFI) to provide the necessary supervision. This Off-Site Field Instructor may be a board member, a staff member of a closely related agency, or another person with significant knowledge and understanding of the internship agency. In select instances, the university may be able to assist in locating an off-site Field Instructor. The Off-Site Field Instructor is required to provide at least one hour of supervision for the student every other week. In supervision, the student would present what they are working on in their agency and learning in class, and the Off-Site Field Instructor would focus on helping the student connect how the social work knowledge, values, and skills they are learning in the classroom integrate with their field work.

Agencies that use an Off-Site Field Instructor must provide students with a Task Supervisor (TS) to provide regular ongoing support and guidance to the student on a daily basis at the agency. The Task Supervisor supplements every other week supervision provided by the FI. The Task Supervisor does not have to hold a social work degree. However, this person should have significant work experience at the agency or with a similar client population. The Task Supervisor is responsible for monitoring the day-to-day activities of the internship. They must regularly provide one hour a week of supervision for the student. In supervision, the Task Supervisor focuses on skill development and supportive supervision.

Supervisor Options	Field Instructor	Task Supervisor
Option 1:	One hour of weekly supervision from an on-site Field Instructor AND →	NO TASK SUPERVISOR
Option 2:	One hour of supervision every other week from an on-site Field Instructor AND →	One hour of supervision weekly from an on-site Task Supervisor
Option 3	One hour of supervision every other week (more if needed) from an OFF-SITE Field Instructor AND →	One hour of supervision weekly from an on-site Task Supervisor

Note: Supervision may be a combination of individual and group, depending on the learning style and needs of the student. It is strongly recommended that at least 50% of all supervision hours should be

individual. When group supervision models are used, the Task Supervisor and/or Field Instructor should be available to meet individually as needed throughout the semester, depending on the student's level and learning needs, for the purposes of establishing a trusted relationship and addressing any differentiated learning needs.

11. Does the one hour of supervision need to be a set hour, or can a Field Instructor (FI) or Task Supervisor (TS) provide a cumulative total of one hour of supervision each week?

The supervision hour **must be a set hour each week**. Many FI/TSs provide additional “on the go” supervision throughout the week to manage administrative issues- student tasks, answer questions, and debrief cases. However, field instruction supervision combines other elements of supervision including educational supervision and supportive supervision. Students should have a designated, uninterrupted time to explore the connection between their classroom work and their field practice, and to examine how their personal biases and identities interact with the work they do. In supervision, students should be pushed to grapple with ethical dilemmas and to consider issues of power, privilege, and social justice. Students will experience a range of emotions as they move through their internship and develop into their professional self, and they need a safe space in which to do this.

Field Education Policies

12. Will students be covered under university liability insurance during their internship?

Yes, the work that students complete in their internship as part of the Field Experience class will be covered under MSU Denver's liability insurance in accordance with Colorado State Statute. Details are provided in the affiliation agreement signed between MSU Denver's Dept. of Social Work and the agency. A small number of agencies may require students to purchase liability insurance with limits beyond what the Colorado State Statute covers. Requirements to purchase additional liability insurance should be communicated directly to the student.

13. What is the MSU Denver Dept. of Social Work's policy regarding the use of a personal vehicle and transportation of clients?

Some agencies may require that students have access to their own transportation for the purposes of home visits, community work, etc. It is up to the student to inquire about the agency's vehicle requirements during the interview process. Each agency will have its own policies regarding proof of driver's license and insurance. Students' use of personal or agency vehicles will not be covered under MSU Denver's insurance, nor will MSU Denver or the Department of Social Work reimburse students for the use of their vehicles. All issues regarding transportation, including the transportation of clients, must be discussed between the student and the Field Instructor/Task Supervisor prior to beginning placement. The Department of Social Work will not be responsible for any decisions in regard to transportation in the field.

14. Can a student start their internship before school starts?

Placement hours should be spread over the course of each full semester in order to allow the students to experience the placement in a developmental fashion concurrent with the content of classes (versus early completion of hours). At times, internship agencies may require an earlier start date than the first week of classes for training or other activities. If you and your student agree to an earlier start date, you must contact the Office of Field Education for permission prior to beginning the placement. Requests for early starts must include a rationale for the request of an earlier start date.

15. Will students be required to work over holidays and school breaks?

Students are not required to be in placement during regularly scheduled university holidays and university breaks. University holidays may differ from agency holidays. In this case, students must arrange their work schedule in coordination with their agency supervisor. Agencies may require a student to complete hours of over winter break to ensure continuity of care, however these expectations must be discussed during the initial interview. While students may work extended hours over the winter break, they may not terminate from their internships before the end of the semester. This may mean students will accrue more hours than the required hours.

16. *What if there is a conflict during the internship?*

The Office of Field Education is committed to ensuring that students are placed in quality learning environments in order to complete their field education experience. However, there may be times in which problems arise during an internship. It is best that these issues are addressed openly and immediately. Issues may be brought forth by the Student, Field Instructor/Task Supervisor, Faculty Field Liaison, or Field Office. In any circumstance, the Field Student Support Process outlined in the [Field Manual available on our website](#) should be followed. Students may not end an internship without going through the problem resolution process.

17. *How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted internships and how is the Office of Field Education supporting agencies and students in adjusting internships?*

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact how students, agencies, clients and communities engage in day-to-day activities including the completion of internships. MSU Denver and the Office of Field Education are committed to supporting robust learning experiences in field education through partnership with community agencies. In order to support students, agencies and supervisors, the Office of Field Education has utilized a variety of supports in collaboration with CSWE and Departmental guidelines, including the inclusion of remote/virtual/telehealth services in approved learning activities. The Office of Field Education continues to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on internships and will communicate about any policy changes and/or supplemental learning opportunities for future academic years as needed.

If you have additional questions, please contact the Office of Field Education:

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<https://www.msudenver.edu/social-work/field-education/field-placement-agency-partners-and-supervisors/>