



Field Education Frequently Asked Questions for Agencies 2024-2025 Academic Year

This document addresses many common questions that agencies have related to field education and the internship search process. For access to a comprehensive guide to all field education policies, agency personnel are encouraged to review the [Field Manual](#) available on the Office of Field Education website at: <https://www.msudenver.edu/social-work/field-education/field-placement-agency-partners-and-supervisors/>

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) until the end of the spring semester (Early May).

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. How do BSSW/MSW Foundation year internships differ from MSW Concentration year internships?

BSSW and MSW Foundation year internships offer opportunities for the development of **generalist** social work practice. The generalist experience is designed to orient students to foundational social work knowledge and skills. In the BSSW and Foundation years, students develop a base of core social work knowledge, values, and skills and identify opportunities for exposure at all system levels (individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations). BSSW and MSW Foundation year students are expected to have opportunities to demonstrate their generalist practice skills of engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation, whether this be at the individual level or with larger client systems. Amount and length of shadowing and observation should be determined as it relates to the agency's work and internship tasks (ex. if this is the first time the student is learning about power, privilege, and oppression, how might that impact the initial stages of their internship experience?).

The MSW Concentration year internship will offer opportunities for the development of **advanced** social work practice. It will focus on more specialized clinical, mezzo or macro skills, depending on student area of interest and career goals. The concentration year internship will also allow for increasingly autonomous practice and more purposeful selection of interventions based on application of advanced theoretical knowledge. Advanced students should be able to exercise more autonomy once on-boarded and trained. Shadowing at the start is appropriate, especially for more specialized/niche practice.

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

Internships are designed to take place when the Field Instructor/Task Supervisor 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

4. 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 to maintain clear and timely communication about the status of their application materials. Please notify students and the Office of Field Education if your agency's capacity changes and/or once internship openings have been filled.
 - 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 goals for a developmentally appropriate internship.
- **Employment-Based Internship Request:** Students may request that their current employer consider an Employment-Based (EB) internship, though any EB internship request is not guaranteed and requires approval from both the employer and the Office of Field Education. When requesting an EB internship, students are provided with a detailed set of instructions because the process is different than applying for a traditional internship. They are directed to first determine if their employer is already an affiliated agency partner with MSU Denver's Dept. of Social Work and if so, identify who is the agency's Internship Coordinator (if applicable), as this person will typically need to approve the EB internship request. The student should discuss their EB request with their direct supervisor, as well as the Internship Coordinator and whomever will serve as the student's Field Instructor.
 - Each agency may determine whether or not they allow EB internships and/or whether or not they will approve a specific employee's request for an EB internship. Each agency's Internship Coordinator should familiarize themselves with the updated Field Manual policies regarding EB internships in order to determine whether or not, and if so under what conditions, EB internships will be approved at their agency.
 - 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.
 - For additional details, please see the Field Manual and/or the Employment-Based (EB) internship FAQs which will be provided to all agency partners at the beginning of the search cycle. Please reach out to the Office of Field Education if you have specific questions and/or would like to request further consultation.
- **Finalizing the Internship:** Once an agency offers a student an internship, the 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 submitting 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.

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

Students applying for internships which will start in Fall 2024 will begin contacting agencies as early as February 12th, 2024. Please note that Master of Social Work students continue to be admitted into the program throughout the spring and so some students may initiate their internship search throughout the spring and not apply to agencies until late April/May. Students must have an internship secured by August 1st for a timely start with the fall semester which begins on August 19th, 2024.

6. *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. Agencies differ 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 require an attestation letter). Agencies must also inform the Office of Field Education about any other screening requirements for students (e.g. code of conduct, waivers, student agreements, etc.).

7. *Can students use the same field agency for their internship 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 (advanced practice) year. The MSW Concentration year internship may not be the same as either the Foundation year or BSSW internship. In rare cases, where *new learning reflecting advanced practice skills* is available and/or a *new supervisor (Field Instructor and/or Task Supervisor)* 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.

8. *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 internship?*

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

9. *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 or MSW degree from an accredited social work program with at least two years of post-degree work experience.
- MSW students - FI must have an MSW degree from an accredited social work program 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 in integrating social work knowledge, values, and skills into the student's practice.

10. *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 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/OSFI to provide constructive feedback. Supervision time with the Task Supervisor must be supplemented with the required supervision time with the Field Instructor. While all students must have a Field Instructor, not all students will have a Task Supervisor.

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, in select cases, 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, policies 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 experience class and providing two or three site visits (may be in person or virtual) per year to each student’s agency.

Field Experience Class - 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 Experience class may be held in person, on-campus, or online.

11. 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
<p>Note: <i>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.</i></p>		

12. 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, oversee 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

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

The work that students complete in any unpaid internship as part of the Field Experience class will be covered under MSU Denver’s liability insurance in accordance with Colorado State Statute. In cases where students are completing paid internships and are not otherwise employed by the agency, then the university covers liability insurance. In cases where students are completing an employment-based internship and their internship duties are the same as their employment role, the employment agency’s liability insurance covers the student’s work. Additional details are provided in the affiliation agreement signed between MSU Denver’s Dept. of Social Work and the agency. Rarely, an agency may require students to purchase liability insurance with limits beyond what the Colorado State Statue covers. Requirements to purchase additional liability insurance should be communicated directly to the student early in the internship search process and may impact the coverage provided by MSU Denver’s liability insurance.

14. *Are paid internships allowed? If so, what considerations should my agency take into account?*

Yes. As a non-traditional institution with a focus on reducing barriers in higher education, we appreciate when agencies provide students a stipend or other form of compensation for internships. We understand that not all agencies are in a position to offer compensation. Our list of ‘agencies who provide a stipend’ is one of the most requested lists by students. If an agency offers a student a stipend (whether hourly or set amount [x amounts each semester/end of month/year/depends on agency]), they are not necessarily considered an employee of the agency. However, agencies should ensure that if they are offering students a stipend or paid internship, they are adhering to all the applicable [Labor Law requirements](#).

15. *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 agency to communicate to the student about the agency’s vehicle requirements and mileage reimbursement policies 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 regarding transportation in the field.

16. *Can a student start their internship before school starts?*

Internship hours should be spread over the course of each full semester to allow the students to experience the internship in a developmental fashion concurrent with the content of classes (versus early completion of hours). In rare circumstances, internship agencies may require an earlier start date than the first week of classes. Requests to begin early must be submitted to the Office of Field Education when the student completes the Field Confirmation Form prior to beginning the internship. Retroactive requests to start early and accrue internship hours will not be approved.

Requests for early starts must include a rationale for the request of an earlier start date. The only approved tasks for early starts of student internships are participating in agency orientations and other on-boarding or training related activities. Direct practice

with clients is not an approved activity for early starts. In cases where this request is approved, students may accrue up to, but no more than, 40 internship hours before the start of the fall semester.

Students who accrue hours prior to the start of the semester are not permitted to 'bank' hours and end their internship early. Extra hours **may** be used to lighten the load during the semester at times **with agency supervisor approval**. However, generally, students are to maintain a steady accrual of required hours throughout the semester. Students are required to be in their internship until the end of each semester.

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

Students are not required to be in internship 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 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.

18. *Are there any considerations for students wishing to complete an internship in a private psychotherapy clinic setting?*

While social workers may choose to work in a private clinic after obtaining their licensure, these settings are generally not available for internships. One of the requirements of our community partnerships is providing social work services to "enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty". (NASW Code of Ethics, 2008)

Select private psychotherapy clinics may be suitable for MSW Concentration year internships and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the Office of Field Education.

In order to meet the goals of field learning experience, private practices that wish to be approved should meet the following criteria:

- Demonstrate a commitment to serving vulnerable, oppressed, marginalized, and/or diverse populations by accepting varied payment options such as Medicaid, sliding-scales, etc.
- Engage with multiple external points of contact within the larger social service delivery system (e.g. schools, courts, human services, etc.).
- Articulate a defined mission and agency policies and procedures.
- Utilize a structured intake process.
- Employ at least two practitioners, one of whom is a social worker with at least 2 years of post-degree work experience.
- Provide opportunities for students to engage in differing treatment modalities (ex- individual, couple, family, group).
- Serve a need in the community; address a social issue/problem affecting the community.
- Provide a learning environment where students progress on a continuum that begins with opportunities to shadow/observe social work practice and move towards more independent practice.

19. *What if there is a conflict or challenge during the internship?*

The Office of Field Education is committed to ensuring that students are placed in quality learning environments 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 Support Process outlined in the [Field Manual available on our website](#) should be followed. Students may not end an internship without going through the Field Support Process.

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

field@msudenver.edu

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