Plan Now

Preparing for Your Field Education Experience
Purpose: Why Field?

• Field presents a hurdle that other courses do not. Although you create a degree plan for all of your courses, your field placement demands a different time commitment.

• **Remember: this is a practicum.** You will be in a professional setting developing the essential skills of social workers. Depending on the type of placement you need (undergraduate, graduate, for example), you must be prepared to spend somewhere between 16 and 40 hours per week in your assigned agency or working with your Field Instructor.

• Once you decide to enter the social work program, please begin to strategize how you will add the necessary field hours to your already-busy life. Typically, agencies do not offer internship hours exclusively in the evenings or on weekends. A few agencies offer flexible times, but ALL require some availability during the work week.

• We understand that accommodating your field experience requires commitment and sometimes sacrifice. However, field is the “signature pedagogy” of social work education (Council on Social Work Education) because it transforms you into a professional.

  • It is essential to your education.
  • It is the springboard for your career.
  • It is the pathway to your life's work.
Personal Assessment:
Please complete the following exercise to evaluate your current responsibilities.
I am a:

- **BSW Student:** Your field placement will account for 18 credit hours.

- **Foundation MSW student** (you do not have a BSW degree): Your field placement will account for 8 credit hours.

- **Advanced Standing MSW student** (you have a BSW degree): Your field placement will account for 8 credit hours.
I plan to take field as a:

- **Split Placement:**
  - (16 hours/week commitment for 2 consecutive semesters (Fall/Spring)
  - (22 hours/week commitment during Summer semester)

- **Block Placement:**
  - (32 hours/week commitment for 1 semester (Fall/Spring)
  - (44 hours/week commitment during the Summer semester)

- If I am in the BSW program, I understand that I must have the block option approved by my academic advisor first and that I cannot do a block placement in the summer.
During my internship, I plan on also working:

- Full-time [ ] ___ hrs/week
- Part-time [ ] ___ hrs/week
- I will not be working during my internship.
I have family obligations.  
☐ No  ☐ Yes  

Total= 0 hours

☐ Partner  
☐ Child(ren)  
☐ Extended family  
☐ Family – Special needs (i.e. disability, illness, aging)  

These obligations require a total of ________ hrs per week.
I am planning on taking other classes while in field:

☐ No
☐ Yes

SOCW_____ 3hrs + study time

SOCW_____ 3hrs + study time

SOCW_____ 3hrs + study time

SOCW_____ 3hrs + study time

These obligations require a total of ________ hrs per week.
I have social/volunteer obligations:

☐ No
☐ Yes

Total = 0 hours

Social:
- (clubs, groups, etc.)
- [___ # hrs weekly]

Volunteer
- [___ # hrs weekly]

These obligations require a total of [_______ hrs per week].
Health Issues

I have health restrictions:

☐ No  →  Total=0 hours
☐ Yes  

Ex: Cannot exceed ___ hours per week

Time for health care appointments, etc.  →  ____ hrs weekly

These obligations require a total of ________ hrs per week.
Wellness/Self-care

I am committed to a scheduled workout routine or other wellness/self-care activity:

□ No
□ Yes

Total = 0 hours

_____ hrs weekly
Time to add it all up!!
Add up all of the totals in the previous slides. This is your overall total hours already occupied in your life.

**TOTAL**

(A week = 24 x 7 = 168 hours)

What's left for your field experience?
Can you meet the hours needed?

☐ Yes  ➔  Great!!

☐ No  ➔  Now what??
Night & Weekends

I will need to accrue all/some of my field hours at night or on weekends:

☐ No
☐ Yes

Great! We are affiliated with over 400 agencies in the DFW area and beyond, most operating only during regular business hours.

☐ I understand that I CANNOT fulfill all of the required field hours in the evenings and weekends.

☐ I understand that I must find at least one business day during regular business hours to be at my field placement.
You may be thinking, “This seems impossible—How will I balance it all??”

Please take the time to go through each aspect presented and think about how you will balance your field placement with other life responsibilities. These are just suggestions and ideas to get you thinking how to creatively rearrange your time.
Rearranging your schedule

Ack!!! How can I make my schedule work??

Let’s Take a closer look!
What are ways I can propose a more flexible work schedule?

Make up time during nights and weekends:
- No → 0 hours gained
- Yes → Hrs/Weekly _____

Use vacation time:
- No → 0 hours gained
- Yes → Hrs/Weekly _____

Ask boss for ideas:
- No → 0 hours gained
- Yes → Hrs/Weekly _____

___Total Hours Gained
**Rearranging your schedule:**

**Family Obligations**

*Family: I need help! Can I ask a family member to take on some of my tasks or pay someone to help?*

- □ No
- □ Yes

If yes, who? ______________

Task _____ hrs _____

Task _____ hrs _____

Task _____ hrs _____

Total Hours Gained:

Can I ask family members to be more independent in certain tasks (i.e. making dinner)?

- □ No
- □ Yes

If yes, who? ______________

Task _____ hrs _____

Task _____ hrs _____

Task _____ hrs _____
Think - Will your class load be manageable in addition to your field placement?

☐ No or I’m not sure

☐ Yes

Can you accept a different graduation date (an additional 4.5 months)?

☐ No

0 hours gained

☐ Yes

Which class(es) can I defer?

SOCW ______ + study time

SOCW ______ + study time

____Total hours gained

Rearranging your schedule: Other Classes
Can I be more flexible here?

- No
  - 0 hours gained

- Yes
  - Reduce hours of volunteer time
    - ____# hours gained
  - Schedule social life around field/school – How? ________________
    - ____# hours gained
  - Total hours gained ____
Rearranging your schedule: Health Restrictions

Can I change appointments without compromising my health?

☐ No → 0 hours gained
☐ Yes

Use vacation time/sick time rather than field time?

☐ Other

_____ Total hours gained
Rearranging your schedule:

**Wellness/Self-care**

**Workouts:**
Can I flex this time?

- □ No
- □ Yes

AM _____ hours
PM _____ hours

Can I switch to a different type of exercise? (workout DVDs at home, etc.)

- □ No
- □ Yes

What? ___________

_____Total hours gained
Rearranging your schedule: Wellness/Self-care (con’t)

Can I incorporate exercise at work & field?

☐ No → 0 hours gained
☐ Yes →
  - Walk more
  - Take stairs
  - Other ______
  - Other ______

Total hours gained
OVERALL WAYS TO REDUCE STRESS & GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR FIELD PLACEMENT
Maximizing Your Educational Experience

Things I can do to reduce my own stress during field:

- Keep a workable, realistic schedule.
- Understand that field is a limited period of time. “This too shall pass.”
- Insist that my family/friends provide the support they promised.
- Keep my health (emotional, mental, physical) my priority.
- Stay up-to-date concerning my field obligations so that I can maintain a feeling of control.
- Use the field experience as the capstone of my career.
- Understand that I am building my professional reputation and resume.
- Keep my expectations of all that I can manage realistic.
- Reach out to my field liaison before a small problem becomes a big problem.
Now that you’ve taken a closer look at your obligations, what is your plan now?
☐ I have now cleared my schedule to devote the necessary time and energy to be successful in my field practicum.

☐ I hereby verify that I have completed this exercise.

*Please note: You are NOT required to turn this into the Field Office, this exercise is simply for your benefit.*