

## **PROBLEM SOLVING POLICY**

### **Steps to address student challenges and concerns in field practicum**

The Boise State University School of Social Work is committed to assisting students to maximize their learning opportunities and experiences in a field placement. Issues, concerns and demonstrated difficulties need to be identified and addressed in a professional manner in order to provide resolution and/or corrective actions as necessary. Participation in this process is part of the field practicum learning objectives. Every effort is made to assure that the student's rights to due process are protected, as well as assuring the appropriate protections to agency and client interests. When a concern is identified the following sequence of activities should occur:

#### **A. Concerns of the STUDENT about the Agency Field Instructor or Agency**

1. The student will address the concerns with the Agency Field Instructor and see if the issues of concern can be worked out directly. Since the power differential between student and Agency Field Instructor can be somewhat intimidating, especially early in the practicum relationship, the student may wish to consult with her/his Faculty Field Liaison to "rehearse" how to approach the Agency Field Instructor for such a discussion.
2. If the issue at hand cannot be resolved directly with the Agency Field Instructor, the student will contact their Faculty Field Liaison and consult with him/her regarding potential arrangement of a face-to-face meeting among all concerned. External programs may need to use teleconference or video technology as a more responsive way to meet with rural agencies that may otherwise require significant travel time. Such a meeting will serve to clarify problems, discuss potential solutions, and attempt to develop a plan that will allow the practicum to go forth.
3. Should this final approach be unsuccessful, the student, Agency Field Instructor and/or Faculty Field Liaison shall inform the Director of Field Education and all parties shall meet to discuss options available to the student. For external programs a site coordinator will also be involved. If indicated, this meeting may be to arrange termination of the student placement with the agency. Termination of a field placement cannot occur unless the problem-solving process has been fully utilized.
4. If appropriate, the Office of Field will work with the Faculty Field Liaison and the student (or external site program coordinator) to identify other placement options. The Office of Field cannot guarantee that a second field option will be available.

#### **B. Concerns of the AGENCY FIELD INSTRUCTOR about the student**

1. The Agency Field Instructor will address the concerns with the student and see if the issues of concern can be worked out directly. External programs may need to use teleconference or video technology as a more responsive way to meet with rural agencies that may otherwise require significant travel time. Experience with such situations indicates that open and clear communication between the student and Agency Field Instructor often alleviates tense or problematic situations.

2. If the issue at hand cannot be resolved directly with the student, the Agency Field Instructor will contact the Faculty Field Liaison for the placement and consult with him/her about the situation. Often, this sort of strategizing can result in a resolution to the problem.
3. The Faculty Field Liaison is always available to come to the site to meet face-to-face with the student, Agency Field Instructor, and anyone else deemed appropriate. At this point, an action plan for resolving the issue will be developed and agreed to by all parties.
4. Should this final approach be unsuccessful, the student, Agency Field Instructor, and Faculty Field Liaison shall inform the Director of Field Education and meet to discuss options available to the student, and if indicated, arrange termination of the student placement with the agency. Termination of a field placement cannot occur unless the problem-solving process has been fully utilized.
5. If appropriate, the Office of Field will work with the Faculty Field Liaison and the student (or external site program coordinator) to identify other placement options. The Office of Field cannot guarantee that a second field option will be available.
6. If indicated a student may be referred to the Student Development Committee on Students (COS) to address any concerns.

**Field Performance Improvement Plan:**

<https://d25vtythmtl3o.cloudfront.net/uploads/sites/74/files/2012/11/Performance-Improvement-Plan.pdf>

- C. **Situations in which immediate suspension or termination of a placement is necessary (AGENCY DRIVEN):** In the event that an agency wishes to immediately suspend or terminate a practicum placement due to unprofessional behavior of a student, safety concerns for clients or unethical behavior of students the Agency Field Instructor is requested to:
1. Contact the Faculty Field Liaison immediately to discuss the circumstances leading to the situation.
  2. The Agency Field Instructor and/or Faculty Field Liaison (or external program coordinator) will then contact the Director of Field Education to inform of the decision to terminate a student.
  3. Inform the student verbally (with written follow-up) the reason for the suspension or termination.
  4. Work with the Faculty Field Liaison to accomplish any follow-up activities or meetings that need to occur in order to appropriately end the placement.
  5. Discuss with the Faculty Field Liaison and Director of Field Education ways in which the situation leading to the termination can be avoided in the future, and how the agency and university can work together to promote social work education.

6. If appropriate, the Office of Field will work with the Faculty Field Liaison and the student to identify other placement options. The Office of Field cannot guarantee that a second field option will be available.
7. Termination from a field placement may result in a grade of F in field, which would disallow the student to continue in the BSW or MSW program.
8. If indicated a student may be referred to the Student Development Committee on Students (COS) to address any concerns.

**D. Concerns of the FACULTY FIELD LIAISON about the student**

1. The Faculty Field Liaison will address any concerns with the student and see if the issues or concerns can be directly worked out.
2. If the issue at hand cannot be resolved directly with the student, the Faculty Field Liaison will notify the agency and the Director of Field Education of their concerns and a meeting will be arranged to address the Faculty Field Liaison's concerns. External programs shall notify the site coordinator of the concern and include the site coordinator when setting up a meeting with the Director of Field Education.
3. If appropriate, the Office of Field will work with the Faculty Field Liaison and the student (or external site program coordinator) to identify other placement options. The Office of Field cannot guarantee that a second field option will be available.
4. If indicated a student may be referred to the Student Development Committee on Students (COS) to address any concerns.

**E. Concerns of the FACULTY FIELD LIAISON about the agency**

1. The Faculty Field Liaison will address any concerns with the agency and see if the issues or concerns can be directly worked out.
2. If the issue at hand cannot be resolved directly with the agency, the Faculty Field Liaison will notify the agency and the Director of Field Education of their concerns and a meeting will be arranged to address the Faculty Field Liaison's concerns. External programs shall notify the site coordinator of the concern and include the site coordinator when setting up a meeting with the Director of Field Education.
3. If appropriate, the Office of Field will work with the Faculty Field Liaison and the student (or external site program coordinator) to identify other placement options.

**F. Termination of Students from Practicum**

Practicum history indicates that some students experience significant challenges in the development of professional behavior and identity. Students in field practicum are expected to demonstrate professional behavior, attitude, and demeanor in their practicum agency and in their community. Occasionally, serious situations occur in which students fail significantly to adhere to key professional expectations. Failure to adhere to these professional expectations can result in termination of field practicum and/or removal from the BSW/MSW program. These professional expectations mandate students to:

1. Demonstrate respect, empathy, and tolerance with peers, colleagues, and clients;
2. Utilize an assertive and direct style of communication, both verbally and non-verbally;
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the student's role within the formalized structure of the organization;
4. Use established lines of authority appropriately within the organization;
5. Seek guidance from the student's identified Agency Task Supervisor/Agency Field Instructor and prepare for scheduled supervisory sessions;
6. Comply with Agency Field Instructor's directives and utilize supervisor feedback;
7. Dress and act in compliance with Agency protocol;
8. Respect the principle of confidentiality at all levels within and outside the Agency;
9. Give precedence to professional responsibilities over personal concerns;
10. Model a strengths-based perspective in professional interactions;
11. Respect and use established protocol as outlined in the practicum manual;
12. Practice in conformance with the NASW Code of Ethics; and
13. Be truthful with information to clients, Agency Task Supervisor, Agency Field Instructor, Faculty Field Liaison, and the Director of Field Education.
14. Follow the Student Professional Conduct and Professional Standards Policy.

**G.** The Field Office reserves the right to have a student write a reflective essay regarding concerns that arise in a field setting, or if a student is let go from an agency. The purpose is to help the student to reflect upon the situation and the factors that led up to the situation and ways to consider a professional response to assist with student learning. It's imperative that a student be able to reflect upon his/her behavior as an emerging professional social worker. This will allow the Field Office to better assess a student's readiness for another field placement. The student may be required to do additional field hours should another placement be secured and the additional hours will be at the discretion of the Field Office. The additional hours will assist with orientation and entrance to a new agency to allow time for the student to integrate into a new agency and be able to do demonstrate the field competencies in a practice setting. The Field Office may also develop a Performance Improvement Plan at the student's new field placement to assist the student with being successful. Information may be shared with the new field agency describing the reasons why a student was let go from a previous agency and what the student has done to develop professionally and learn from the previous field placement experience. If indicated a student may be referred to the Student Development Committee on Students (COS) to address any concerns.