

# Department of Social Work Practicum Handbook 2025-2027



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## Introduction

This handbook is designed for practicum students, practicum instructors, and the University of Detroit Mercy Social Work faculty. In addition, it may be helpful to prospective social work majors who want to learn more about the program and practicum instruction.

## About the Department of Social Work

In 1991, the University of Detroit and Mercy College of Detroit legally merged. Both institutions had a longstanding commitment to providing a high-quality educational experience while also addressing social injustice and meeting the needs of the poor. The University of Detroit's Social Work program, first accredited by the Council on Social Work Education in 1976, and Mercy College of Detroit's accreditation in 1980, have been maintained by the combined program.

### Program Goals

The Department of Social Work seeks:

- To prepare BSW students for ethical, competent entry-level, generalist professional social work practice, particularly in urban settings with diverse, marginalized, vulnerable, and oppressed individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
- To foster a commitment to continuing education, maintaining competence in practice, and enhancing and increasing opportunities for BSW graduates for renewal and advancement within the profession.

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## Non-Discrimination Policy

The University of Detroit Mercy prohibits discrimination in educational and employment opportunities, services, and benefits on the basis of race, color, religion, age, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, disability, income, protected veteran status, or any other status protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws.

## Overview of Practicum Education

Social Work Practicum I and II (SWK 4700/4750) and Integrative Practicum Seminar I and II (SWK 4710/4760) are the capstone courses of the social work curriculum.

The practicum is organized into two academic courses: SWK 4700 (Social Work Practicum I) and SWK 4750 (Social Work Practicum II), each accounting for 5 credit hours. Students enrolled in the traditional BSW program complete approximately 16 hours per week to reach a total of 400 required hours, which is 200 hours per semester at their assigned practicum site.

Practicum and Integrative Practicum Seminar are co-requisite courses, meaning they must be completed during the same semester. Additionally, they must be completed in consecutive fall/winter semesters.

## The Practicum Experience

The practicum experience is a collaborative effort between the University, the agency, and the student. The University takes the lead in preparing students for the practicum agency. It selects and recommends students to the agencies, collaborates with the practicum instructor and the student on setting learning goals, evaluating methods, and addressing student and agency concerns. In turn, the practicum instructor provides professional observational and experiential skills to develop and achieve the goals and objectives of the practicum instruction.

The BSW Program curriculum and related activities are designed to support the program's mission and goals and objectives. The central goal of the BSW degree program is to prepare students for entry-level generalist social work practice. The program equips students with competent generalist-level social work skills integrated with areas of social concern. The objectives for practicum experience in the senior year are for students to:

1. Learn a variety of intervention methods and techniques suitable for working with individuals, families, small groups, and service delivery and change in organizations, neighborhoods, and communities.

2. Articulate a framework or frameworks for applying these intervention methods and techniques at least two social-system levels (individual, family, small groups, organization, neighborhood, and community).

Practicum education is designed, supervised, coordinated, and evaluated based on criteria that assess students' ability to demonstrate program competencies. In the senior year, students connect theoretical and conceptual knowledge from all courses to a practice setting, fostering the implementation of evidence-informed practice. As they learn to use various approaches in working with client systems, students clearly articulate this skill, honing their critical thinking skills. Senior-year objectives focus on analyzing presenting problems or situations, planning, problem-solving, differential use of intervention strategies and techniques, and competency in social work practice. Additionally, students gain an understanding of the placement agency and the scope of social work practice, as well as their knowledge of social work and the use of skills like communication and listening. They also learn to perform within agency standards and appropriately use assistance from the practicum instructor. To achieve these objectives, the senior year meta-focus in class and practicum is on socializing students to the profession. This involves introducing them to social work knowledge, values, and conceptual frameworks to increase self-awareness, ability, and agility in working with and on behalf of clients. Assignments are also given that align with the goals and objectives for practicum work.

### Practicum Roles and Responsibilities

The following roles are essential to the student's practicum experience.

#### Student

The student plays a vital role in practicum education. Student learning is at the heart of the practicum education program, as such, students must take personal responsibility for their learning.

The student shall:

- Follow up on potential sites for practicum instruction provided by the Practicum Director by initiating a meeting with the designated contact person and informing the Practicum Director of his/her perceptions of the meetings.
- Practice and observe practicum instruction site procedures for promptness, attendance, work completion, and appropriate dress.
- Complete assignments of Practicum Instructor.
- Meet with the Practicum Instructor weekly for supervision.
- Participate in agency-sponsored in-service training, where possible, and other related professional meetings.

- Meet any health or general requirements of the practicum instruction site, such as physical examination, drug screens, TB tests, or criminal background checks.
- Complete all academic assignments for practicum instruction.

### Practicum Instructor

The Practicum Instructor is the agency employee who guides assignments in the practicum placement, provides instruction at the practicum placement, and evaluates the student's performance with the student and the faculty advisor. In addition to the Practicum Instructor, some students are assigned a task supervisor, an agency employee who works directly in the program area where a student is placed and assists the student with tasks related to their assignments in practicum education. They also report to the Practicum Instructor on the student's progress in tasks. The Practicum Instructor and the task supervisor are not paid by the University for their work in this capacity but are performing valuable professional volunteer service.

The Practicum Instructor shall:

- Inform the Practicum Director if the student is acceptable for the practicum instruction site.
- Provide on-site supervision to the student(s) weekly.
- Hold a baccalaureate or master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited and have at least two-years of post-social work degree practice experience in social work.
- Make relevant assignments to the student(s).
- Meet at least once per academic year with the Practicum Director.
- Apprise the Practicum Director of any problems or concerns regarding the placement before mid-semester.
- Complete the evaluation forms as requested.
- Attend Practicum Instructor's meetings initiated by the Practicum Director.

### Practicum Director

The Practicum Director has overall administrative responsibility for student practicum placements. The Practicum Director coordinates practicum placements, arranging contractual agreements, and confirming malpractice insurance with the University and outside agencies. If a student requires re-placement in another setting, then it is the responsibility of the Practicum Director to make that arrangement.

The Practicum Director shall:

- Meet with each student applying for practicum instruction and explore the various potential sites which have been previously visited to discuss roles and expectations with the agency and personnel who will be affected by the student's placement.
- Initiate meetings of Practicum Instructors to provide orientation to the social work program and college, address common concerns, and solicit their input on the content of the social work curriculum.
- Facilitate the social work practicum seminar courses.
- Complete an in-person or virtual site visit at with each student at their assigned practicum location at least once during the academic year.

## Selection of Practicum Instruction Sites

The Department of Social Work is acutely aware of the importance of the practicum agency as an opportunity for the student to integrate their theoretical learning into a practice model. To be effective, a practicum instruction agency must meet the following guidelines:

- The agency philosophy of social service shall be compatible with the educational objectives of the social work profession.
- The agency's mission shall be compatible with that of the Department of Social Work.
- The agency may not have exclusionary policies or practices that discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, age, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, disability, income, protected veteran status, or any other status protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws.
- The agency should provide ethical and professional social work services with an emphasis on evidence-based practice. Agencies and agency practicum instructors are expected to follow the *NASW Code of Ethics* and requirements of the Michigan Board of Social Work.
- The agency must provide a practicum instructor who holds a baccalaureate or master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited and have at least two-years of post-social work degree practice experience in social work.
- Students must be allowed to carry out practice assignments that are within the specific mission and goals of the agency, fulfill the educational program of the program, and are geared to the educational needs and interests of the students.
- The agency shall provide the student with a physical place to work within the agency setting and with necessary supplies for their work (desk, supplies, telephone, computer, support services).
- The agency will provide an orientation for students covering rules, regulations, procedures, facilities, and equipment of the agency.
- A representative from the agency must sign an affiliation agreement that outlines agency and school responsibilities.

## Practicum Placement Process

Students are expected to follow the practicum placement process detailed below to secure a practicum placement. Students do not develop their own placements. All practicum placements must be approved by the Practicum Director to ensure they meet the requirements of the program. The University of Detroit Mercy, Department of Social Work cannot guarantee that all students will secure a placement. If students cannot successfully secure a placement at least two weeks prior to the beginning of the fall semester of their senior year, they may be required to withdraw from the social work program or postpone practicum placement.

The placement matching process follows these steps:

- Student completes the electronic practicum placement application during the winter semester prior to their senior year. The link to the practicum placement application will be provided to students via email.
- The Practicum Director reviews the completed application and begins to coordinate the placement assignment process. The Practicum Director may also review the student's admissions file, consult with other faculty, and meet with the student as necessary to identify strengths and needs for practicum education.
- Student receives an email from the Practicum Director regarding the possible agency practicum placement. The email provides instructions to the student regarding their expected follow-up.
- Student schedules an interview at the expected agency site.
- Practicum Instructor and Practicum Director confer to determine whether the student has been accepted to the agency. If accepted, the student is "placed".
- If the Practicum Instructor and/or the student decide the placement is not a good fit, the Practicum Director will work with the student to identify another placement option.

### Unsuccessful Placement Interviews

If a student has one or more unsuccessful placement interviews and the Practicum Director receives feedback relevant to the student's presentation of self, assessed readiness for practicum, or appropriateness of placement choice or concentration in relation to required previous experience, the student will be invited to meet with Practicum Director to discuss. Following this discussion, a student may be asked to develop a plan if it is determined that additional supports are required in practicum placement that must be addressed before continued efforts are made to identify a practicum placement. This may include a recommendation to select a different concentration. Please navigate to the BSW Handbook policy on student performance.

## Practicum Education Policies and Procedures

## Placement

The Practicum Director has primary responsibility for selecting agencies that can provide appropriate practicum education experiences for students. Students do not develop their own placement opportunities but rather work directly with the Practicum Director in identifying appropriate placements.

## Challenges Securing Practicum Placement

Occasionally students may interview at multiple agencies and not be offered a practicum placement. The Department of Social Work cannot and does not guarantee that students will successfully secure a practicum placement. If a student is not offered placement after three interviews, it is the student's responsibility to schedule a practicum advising appointment to discuss barriers to placement with the Practicum Director. If no match is found after three interviews, a review of the student's appropriateness for placement will be conducted by the department faculty. Students that are repeatedly experiencing unsuccessful interviews may not be allowed to continue with the placement process. They may be offered the opportunity to delay placement until the following academic year. Students shall not continue in their seminar coursework, as practicum instruction and seminar must be taken concurrently.

## Dual Relationships

Students are not permitted to be placed at agencies where family members are employed or are receiving services. The Department of Social Work discourages and, in most situations, will not approve placement of students in agencies where they have been employed, or where they have previously received services as a client. These recommendations exist to protect students, agency employees, and clients from conflicts that may arise due to dual relationships. If a student wishes to complete their practicum placement at their place of employment, refer to the Guidelines for Students Considering Practicum at Student's Place of Employment.

## Guidelines for Students Considering Practicum Placement at Student's Place of Employment

Placement at an agency where the student is employed may be proposed by the student. Evaluation and approval of the proposal, to use the agency where the student is employed for a practicum placement, is the responsibility of the Department of Social Work. The agency official with the authority to grant permission for release time for the practicum placement should be contacted before submitting proposals to the Practicum Director for approval. The final proposal must be approved by both the student's proposed agency Practicum Instructor and the Practicum Director.

## Criteria for Approval of Practicum Placement at Student's Place of Employment

At the discretion of the Practicum Director, students may be able to complete their practicum experience at their place of employment. If permitted, student assignments and employee tasks may qualify as practicum hours when directly linked to the nine social work competencies and to the generalist level of practice. Practicum education supervision may be provided by the same supervisor if practicum education supervision is distinct from employment supervision and the supervisor meets the requirements to serve as a Practicum Instructor. The University's liability and professional insurance will cover the student only during practicum placement hours.

The following considerations are made when evaluating a student's request for practicum placement at their place of employment:

- The student shall have worked as a member of the service delivery staff in a human service agency for at least one full year before entering a practicum instruction experience.
- An employee agency selected for practicum instruction must be a recognized social work agency. In all respects, agencies used must meet the regular criteria for practicum instruction.
- The Practicum Instructor must meet the regular criteria used in other practicum instruction settings.
- For students enrolled in the traditional BSW program at least one full day (8 hours) of the two days of practicum instruction each week shall be designated exclusively for practicum instruction. Two additional half-day schedules (4 hours) may complement the educational focus for a total of 16 hours a week.
- The agency designated Practicum Instructor must schedule a minimum of one hour every week for supervision. Practicum education supervision must be distinct from employment supervision.
- The responsibilities and commitments of the student, the Department of Social Work, and the employing agency in which the student proposes to engage in practicum instruction will be clearly defined. In every other respect, practicum instruction must conform to the Department's standards, policies, and procedures as specified in the current manual.
- The agency must recognize the role transition that is expected of its employees who attend the Social Work Program under these arrangements. When engaged in practicum assignments, this includes a change from a worker-supervisor relation to a learner-teacher relationship. It also implies a sincere effort to avoid creating work responsibilities that might jeopardize the student's opportunity to use the learning experiences that have been selected for practicum purposes.

Students should be aware that consequences may arise from a change in employment status or management at their agency. If a student's employment is terminated by an agency, it could jeopardize the ability to complete practicum requirements. In the case of termination, the Department of Social Work shall investigate the reason for termination before the student

could be reassigned to a new practicum placement. Reassignment and continuation of practicum placement is not guaranteed. The approval and acceptance of the agency practicum instructor rest with the Department of Social Work. The agency must agree to comply with all practicum policies delineated in the University of Detroit Mercy Department of Social Work practicum manual and affiliation agreement.

### Academic Credit for Life/Work Experience

Academic or practicum credit is not granted for life experience or professional work experience.

### Attendance

Students are expected to be at the agency on a consistent, regular basis throughout both semesters to complete the total practicum hours required. Students cannot work extra hours each week to finish practicum early; continuity over time is a desirable developmental factor in the practicum experience.

### Timekeeping

Students are expected to track all time spent at their agency. Students must utilize the timekeeping forms approved by the Department of Social Work. The student's Practicum Instructor must sign and approve all timekeeping forms.

### Unexpected Absences

If students are unable to be at their practicum agency as scheduled for any reason, the student must discuss this with their agency Practicum Instructor. Hours missed must be made up to ensure students complete the total number of hours required each semester. Extensions may be considered in extenuating circumstances but must be approved by the Practicum Director.

### Student Safety

There are inherent risks in social work practice. Therefore, agencies, agency practicum instructors, and students are expected to collaborate to enhance safety and minimize risks in practicum. Agencies are expected to have written policies to address work situations that may entail risk for students. Such situations may include the following: home visits, services to clients outside the agency, services provided at night or on weekends, services to clients who may become angry or violent, exposure to pathogens or toxic substances, and services that are politically sensitive which may result in threats of violence. Agency Practicum Instructors are expected to orient students to their agency's policies and practices regarding risk management and to assign students tasks that are consistent with the student's level of competence.

Students are expected to adhere to agency policies and to promptly address any concerns about their safety with their agency Practicum Instructor.

All students are required to provide a copy of a Michigan State Police criminal background check at the time that they apply for the practicum placement. Agencies may have additional requirements with which students are expected to comply. Agencies may review databases such as the child abuse registry and sex offender registry. Agencies may require that students undergo additional background checks, immunizations, and drug testing. The costs associated with immunizations and background checks are the responsibility of the student. If a student does not obtain clearances for any of these, they may become ineligible for that agency and possibly for another practicum agency placement.

## Harassment

The University of Detroit Mercy is committed to maintaining a working and learning environment that is free of unlawful discrimination and harassment and in which every student is treated with dignity and respect. The University strives to create an environment that supports, encourages, and rewards educational advancement based on ability and performance. Accordingly, the University prohibits to the extent permitted by applicable law, discrimination and harassment against an individual on the basis of that person's race, color, religion, age, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, disability, income, protected veteran status, or any other status protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws.

Students who experience harassment at their practicum agency should alert the Practicum Director immediately. If you experience harassment in your practicum agency, the Department of Social Work faculty is committed to investigating the situation and connecting you with needed support.

## Sexual Harassment

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX") prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs and activities. Title IX applies to public and private educational institutions that receive federal funds – including the University of Detroit Mercy.

Generally, sexual harassment and sexual assault are considered discrimination on the basis of sex. Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment includes a range of behaviors from catcalling, staring at body parts, and inappropriate jokes to sexual assault and rape. The sex of the harasser and the person being harassed is irrelevant.

Unwelcome means that the person being harassed did not request or invite the behavior and regarded the conduct as undesirable or offensive. A failure to complain or flat out say "no" does not mean that the conduct was welcome. In some situations, a person may not be able to complain about unwelcome behaviors because of a power imbalance.

Title IX requires the University of Detroit Mercy to respond to certain harassment on the basis of sex which it knows about or reasonably should have known about. Specifically, the University must:

- Investigate what happened.
- Take appropriate steps to resolve the matter – the University must do its best to eliminate the harassment, prevent recurrence, and remedy effects even if no formal complaint has been made or when a person making a complaint does not wish to further participate in the process.
- Take interim measures during the investigation to prevent potential further harassment.

If you feel you have been discriminated against on the basis of sex in your practicum placement, the University of Detroit Mercy has a responsibility to investigate your concern and provide you with support. Students should report discrimination on the basis of sex to the Practicum Director. Additionally, students may report the incident(s) to the Title IX Coordinator and Equity and Compliance Specialist at (313) 993-1802.

### Student Professional Liability Insurance

The University provides liability insurance under a large umbrella policy for all students in the practicum internship.

### Student Professional Conduct and Standards

Social work education is preparation for professional practice and as such there are expectations that go beyond academic standards within a classroom. There are physical, cognitive, emotional, and character requirements for effective social work practice, in addition to compliance with social work state licensing laws and ethics. Students who violate or fail to demonstrate adherence to these essential skills, values, and standards as they progress through the social work program and their practicum may be subject to dismissal from the social work program and may be unable to secure a social work license and/or job upon graduation.

Students are evaluated on these professional standards in all areas of the BSW and MSW program including admissions, academic classes, and practicum. Students are expected to possess these attributes and skills at a level appropriate to their year in the program.

### Professionalism

Students are expected to follow agency rules and policies. They are expected to be punctual and dependable. They are expected to demonstrate professional behavior in their interactions with clients, agency staff, and the University of Detroit Mercy faculty and staff. Students should

provide services to clients that are based on relevant social work knowledge and research. Students must demonstrate an ability to prioritize responsibilities and complete assignments.

### Interpersonal Skills

Social work students demonstrate the interpersonal skills needed to relate effectively to other students, faculty, staff, clients, and other professionals. These include showing respect for and consideration of others, listening skills, and the ability to communicate effectively both verbally and non-verbally. Students take appropriate responsibility for their actions and consider the impact on others. They work effectively with others, regardless of the level of authority. Students advocate in an appropriate, respectful and responsible manner taking into consideration the complexity of each situation. They use proper channels for complaints, conflict resolution, and grievances. Students demonstrate a willingness to receive feedback from faculty and practicum instructors, administrators, staff, and colleagues in a positive and respectful manner.

### Values

Students must demonstrate a commitment to the core values of social work including service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence.

### Diversity

Social work students must value diversity. Students must serve in an appropriate manner all persons seeking assistance in their agency regardless of race, color, religion, age, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, income, protected veteran status, genetic information, limited English proficiency, or any other status protected by applicable federal, state, or local law.

Students must not impose their own personal, religious, and/or cultural values on others and must know how their own background and value base affect his or her interactions with clients. Students must be willing to reflect on and change their behavior when it interferes with their ability to work with a client.

### Self-Awareness

Social work students know how their own values, beliefs, attitudes, and past experiences affect their thinking, behaviors, relationships, and overall practice. Students examine their internal processes, their strengths, limitations, and suitability for professional practice. Social work students demonstrate an awareness of how others perceive them and are willing to change behaviors that are non-conducive to working relationships with clients or other professionals.

## Empathy

Social workers endeavor to gain insight and understanding into the values, lived experiences, and beliefs that clients have. Social work students communicate empathy and support clients as a basis for building a productive and professional relationship with the client.

## Self-Care

Social work students recognize the signs of stress and emotional problems, develop appropriate means of self-care, and seek support services when necessary to minimize any adverse impact on scholastic and professional performance. Students must be willing to seek the advice of their faculty advisor and follow recommendations made by their advisor and/or faculty decisions regarding the appropriate maintenance of their academic, physical, or psychological health, which may include assessment and/or therapeutic services.

## Ethical Behavior

Students must abide by the ethical standards of the profession developed by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) *Code of Ethics*. The *Code of Ethics* can be found at: <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics->

## Privacy and Confidentiality

Social work students should respect and protect the privacy and confidentiality of clients. Students should not solicit private information from clients unless it is needed to provide services. Students are expected to comply with confidentiality requirements outlined in agency policy, applicable laws, and the NASW *Code of Ethics* and only disclose client information in accordance with such policies and/or if disclosing information is necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm to a client or other identifiable person. Students should not disclose identifying information about clients in seminar and other classes.

## Sexual Relationships and Physical Contact

Students should not engage in physical contact (such as hugging or massaging clients) with clients when there is a possibility of psychological harm to the client as a result. Students should under no circumstances engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with current or former clients – or with other individuals with whom clients maintain close personal relationships where there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client. Social work students, not their clients, assume the full burden of setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries.

## Social Media Guidelines

Social media channels, such as Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, Snapchat, and TikTok are just a few examples of ways to connect with others and share information. Likewise, technology has broadened social workers' capacity to assess and manage information about clients, influence policy, address social justice issues, and receive supervision. However, the rapid growth of social media communication tools and their ease of accessibility can also have unintended and potentially damaging consequences to users if basic guidelines are ignored. Students are expected to adhere to social work values, ethics and engage in professional conduct as outlined in the NASW *Code of Ethics* when using social media communication tools, whether using a personal site(s), agency site(s), or University site(s).

### Addressing Difficulties and Challenges in Practicum

The Department of Social Work is committed to assisting students to maximize their learning opportunities and experiences in a practicum placement. Issues, concerns, and demonstrated difficulties need to be identified and addressed in a professional manner to provide resolution and/or corrective actions as necessary. Participation in this process is part of the 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:

#### Concerns of a Student about the Agency Practicum Instructor or Agency

1. The student will address the concerns with the Agency Practicum Instructor and see if the issues of concern can be worked out directly. Since the power differential between student and Agency Practicum Instructor can be somewhat intimidating, especially early in the practicum relationship, the student may wish to consult with Practicum Director to "rehearse" how to approach the Agency Practicum Instructor for such a discussion.
2. If the issue at hand cannot be resolved directly with the Agency Practicum Instructor, the student will contact the Practicum Director and consult regarding the potential arrangement of a meeting among all concerned. 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. If appropriate, the Practicum Director will work with student to identify other placement options. The Department of Social Work cannot guarantee that a second practicum option will be available.

#### Concerns of the Agency Practicum Instructor About the Student

1. The Agency Practicum Instructor will address the concerns with the student and see if the issues of concern can be worked out directly. Experience with such situations indicates that open and clear communication between the student and Agency Practicum Instructor often alleviates tense or problematic situations.

2. If the issue at hand cannot be resolved directly with the student, the Agency Practicum Instructor will contact the Practicum Director to consult about the situation. Often, this sort of strategizing can result in a resolution to the problem.
3. If appropriate, the Practicum Director will work with the student to identify other placement options. The Department of Social Work cannot guarantee that a second practicum option will be available.
4. If indicated, a student may be referred to the Office of the Dean of Students to address any concerns.

### Immediate Suspension/Termination of Practicum Placement

If 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 Practicum Instructor is requested to:

1. Contact the Practicum Director immediately to discuss the circumstances leading to the situation.
2. Inform the student verbally (with written follow-up) of the reason for the suspension or termination.
3. Work with the Practicum Director to accomplish any follow-up activities or meetings that need to occur to appropriately end the placement.
4. Discuss with the Practicum Director 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.
5. If appropriate, the Practicum Director will work with the student to identify other placement options. The Department of Social Work cannot guarantee that a second practicum option will be available.
6. Termination from a practicum placement may result in a grade of F in practicum, which would disallow the student to continue in the program.

### Concerns of the Practicum Director About the Student

1. The Practicum Director will address any concerns with the student and see if the issues or concerns can be directly worked out.
2. If appropriate, the Practicum Director will work with the student to identify other placement options. The Department of Social Work cannot guarantee that a second practicum option will be available.
3. If indicated, a student may be referred to the Office of the Dean of Students to address any concerns.

### Concerns of the Practicum Director About the Agency

1. The Practicum Director will address any concerns with the agency and see if the issues or concerns can be directly worked out.

2. If appropriate, the Practicum Director will work the student (or external site program coordinator) to identify other placement options.

### Termination of Students from Practicum Placement

Students in practicum are expected to demonstrate professional behavior, attitude, and demeanor in their practicum agency and 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 the termination of practicum and/or removal from the BSW program.

The Department of Social Work reserves the right to have a student write a reflective essay regarding concerns that arise in a practicum setting, or if a student is dismissed 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. Students must be able to reflect upon their behavior as an emerging professional social worker. This will allow the Practicum Director to better assess a student's readiness for another practicum placement. The student may be required to do additional practicum hours should another placement be secured, and the additional hours will be at the discretion of the Practicum Director. 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 demonstrate the practicum competencies in a practice setting. The Practicum Director may also develop a Performance Improvement Plan at the student's new practicum placement to assist the student with being successful. Information may be shared with the new practicum agency describing the reasons why a student was dismissed from a previous agency and what the student has done to develop professionally and learn from the previous practicum placement experience. Students may also be referred to the Office of the Dean of Students to address any concerns.

## Resources for Students

Office of the Dean of Students: <https://www.udmercy.edu/life/dean-students.php>

University Wellness Center: <https://www.udmercy.edu/life/health/index.php>

Office of Student Life: <https://www.udmercy.edu/life/slo.php>

Center for Career & Professional Development: <https://www.udmercy.edu/current-students/cec/index.php>

University Ministry: <https://www.udmercy.edu/life/ministry/index.php>

Psychological & Counseling Services: <https://www.udmercy.edu/life/health/counseling.php>

Student Accessibility Services: <https://www.udmercy.edu/academics/academic-affairs/oeo/sas/>

## Guidelines for Practicum Instructors

The following elements may be helpful for practicum instruction:

- Orientation of the student to the practicum site:
  - Clarify the organizational structure.
  - Clarify accountability issues - who is responsible to whom at all levels of the organization.
  - Clarify your supervisory styles - expectations, teaching method.
  - Clarify your expectations regarding student's attendance at staff meetings.
  - Set a mutually agreed upon weekly time for the practicum instructor-student conference: one (1) hour minimum per week.
  - Develop a student work schedule that should include a minimum of 16 hours per week (for traditional BSW students) or 29 hours per week (for FAST students). Student's time in practicum instruction should total 200 clock hours per semester.
- Pre-learning specifics:
  - Clarify the goal and objectives of the agency and in what roles/capacity client contact is made.
  - Work with the student to develop learning objectives for the semester.
  - Jointly review with the student the University of Detroit Mercy practicum evaluation form the instrument used at the end of the semester to assess progress.
  - Inform the student of various experiences, projects, programs within the agency.
- General expectations of the University:
  - The student must be allowed contact with clients, client groups, or client systems
  - The student is expected to have contact with clients, client groups, or client systems
  - The focus should be on learning rather than the number of clients seen/served.
  - The student is expected to attend in-service training activities which are available to regular staff members.
  - The agency is expected to provide the student with adequate office space, telephone availability, and any other essentials related to the performance of professional responsibilities.
- Communications between Practicum Instructor, Student, and Practicum Director:
  - The Practicum Instructor should consult with the Practicum Director when there is some question regarding the appropriateness of any agency assignment.
  - If the Practicum Instructor and a student are having communication issues, the Practicum Director should be contacted if the problem is unable to be worked out between them.

- Any inappropriate behavior on the part of the student should first be approached in the conference between student and Practicum Instructor. If inappropriate behavior is not resolved, the Practicum Director should be contacted as soon as possible. (This also applies to any other professional/personal problems the student might experience.)
- Evaluation:
  - Evaluation of practicum instruction students is a continuous process including written as well as verbal feedback from the Practicum Instructor and Practicum Director. At mid-semester and the end of each semester, the agency Practicum Instructor completes an evaluation. All evaluative material is shared with the student. Students receive a letter grade for their practicum instruction. Practicum Instructors may recommend a grade but the final responsibility for the grade rests with the Practicum Director.
  - Practicum Instructors will complete an evaluation for each student at Fall mid- and end-semester and Spring end-semester. The Practicum Instructor recommends a grade to the Practicum Director who then is responsible for assigning a final grade.
  - At the end of the second semester, the student must turn in an Evaluation of Practicum Placement which should be used in considering that agency for future placements.