

Work-Site Placement Checklist



“Can I do my practicum where I work”? That is a hard question to answer just by simply saying yes. The truth is that every agency is different and the amount of support that students receive from their employing agency is different. The option for students to do a work-site placement is possible, but the final outcome can often be disappointing for students. For students it is imperative to understand that for the next two to four years, this is your time to “soak it up”. Making the most of your opportunity to learn in practicum is vital to your future as a practitioner, and it is something you can’t get back.

Many students perceive that a work-site practicum is their only option. For some students this is true, but for others it is just the easier route. I encourage you to carefully consider your options as you begin this journey.

If you are considering applying for a work-site placement, you need to first understand that your agency may not be approved. If your agency is not approved, what are your other options? If there are other options think about making those changes before you begin practicum (i.e. financial aid, student loans, part-time program, more supportive agency etc.)

It is also important to understand what you need from your agency in order to make this work. Whether you are a new employee, have been employed in the agency for many years, or are interviewing with an agency, listed below are the terms that need to be discussed and understood before a work-site placement can be considered. These items are not optional. They are mandated by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). As you are negotiating with your agency, please use the Checklist below to make sure you have addressed these important CSWE mandates for work-site placements.

_____My agency (Administrator and Supervisor) will release me from my current job responsibilities to complete new job responsibilities. During this time you are no longer the employee—you should not be paged, you should not be called back to your regular job duties— you are the student in a new capacity. You need to help your agency understand this. If we are not able to separate these roles, a practicum will not be possible in your agency.

_____My new job responsibilities will need to meet the educational objectives for the practicum course. This will take negotiation between, agency, field director, and student.

_____My agency will need to schedule the days and times that I will be released to be the student. You will need to work with your supervisor and administrator to be very specific about the days and the times you will be the student each week. You will be monitored through student logs to make sure that your agency is releasing you from regular job duties.

_____My agency will provide a MSW, LGSW or LCSW field instructor who has had two years post MSW experience to supervise and provide field instruction. The appointed MSW will have to be approved by the Field Coordinator. The MSW should not be your direct supervisor in your regular job. The agency will allow you to complete one hour of supervision a week with the field instructor and to spend your new responsibilities under the direct supervision of the LGSW or LCSW.

_____Many agencies do not understand what it means to be the student with the approved MSW field instructor. This should be the time where you observe the MSW, model the MSW, work with the MSW, let the MSW observe you, present cases to the MSW, be trained by the MSW etc.

This is a major commitment on the part of the agency. It is not just a time for everyone to say yes without understanding the level of commitment. The first step in negotiating a work-site begins with you the student. As you can see from the level of commitment this is not always the easiest solution. I encourage you to carefully consider other options. Many work-site students leave the program feeling that they have missed out and if they could do it again they would work outside of their agency for practicum.