

The Ins & Outs of Social Work Practicum

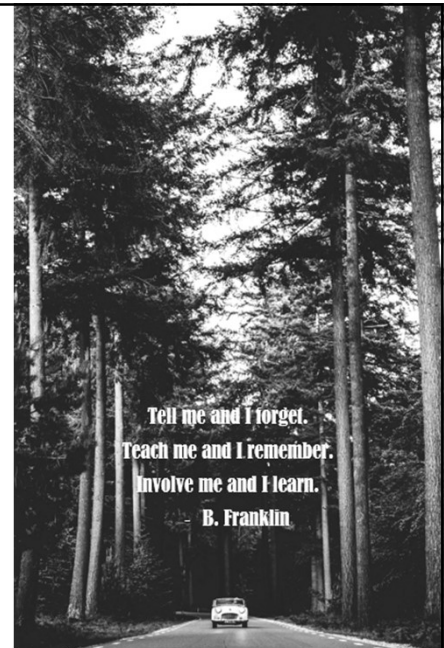
An Overview of Roles & Responsibilities

University of Montana School of Social Work
Online MSW – Field Education Program

UMSSW acknowledges that we are in the aboriginal territories of the Salish and Kalispel people.

Overview

- Practicum Philosophy
- Practicum Timeline
- Practicum Hours
- Roles & Responsibilities

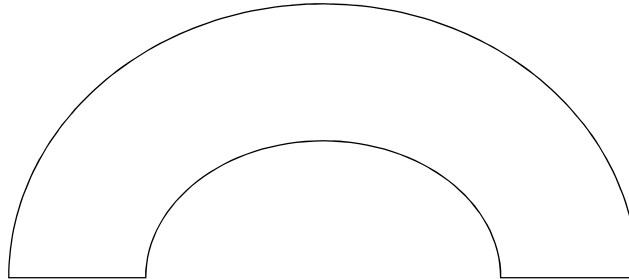


Social Work Practicum Philosophy

Field is considered the “**signature pedagogy**” of social work education

- Socialization to the role of professional social worker
- Integration of theoretical classroom concepts into practice setting
- Development of knowledge and skills in nine competency areas
- Agency Field Instructors serve as supervisors and mentors

Classroom Learning

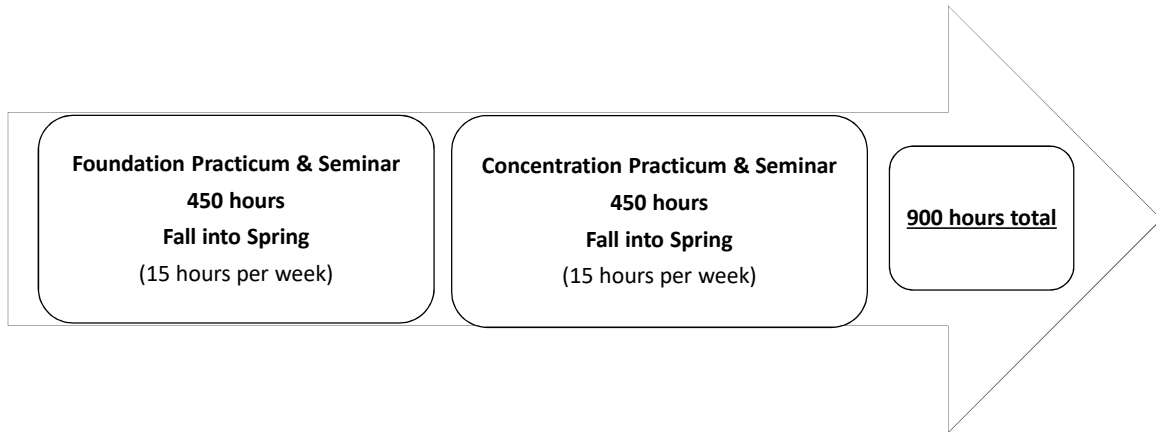


Hands on Practice

Practicum Hours



Practicum Timeline



Hour Requirements

- 450 hours in Foundation year at one agency
 - **Consistent weekly schedule**, approximately 15 hrs./week
- 450 hours in Concentration year at another agency
 - **Consistent weekly schedule**, approximately 15 hrs./week
- Placement Hours
 - Practicum hours occur during regular business hours
 - Evening/ weekend hours are rare if not nonexistent!
 - *Students need to plan to do their practicum hours during regular business hours when other agency staff are available to provide support.*

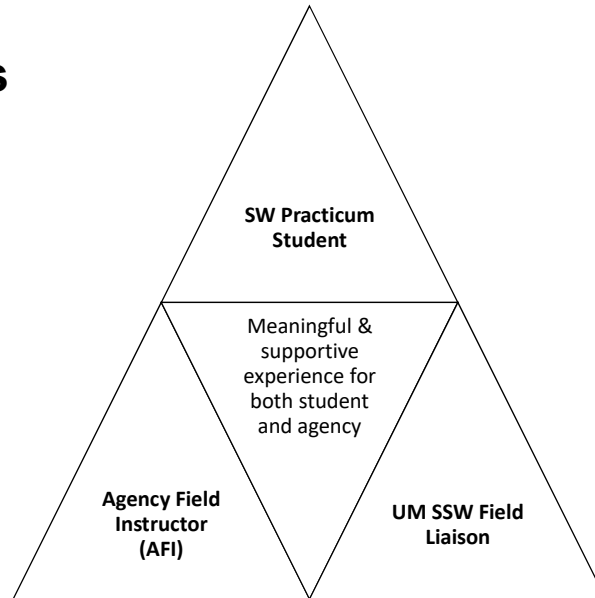
What counts as Practicum Hours?

- Tasks and responsibilities assigned by AFI (ideally direct service centered)
- Initial onboarding activities, ongoing trainings
- Individual/ group supervision hours (with AFI or MSW supervisor)
- Agency meetings (staff, clinical, program meetings etc.)
- Range of external learning activities, e.g. research, advocacy work, visiting other agencies, attending conferences or community meetings
- Synchronous seminar hours qualify only if student attends!
- **Travel and on call hours DO NOT count towards practicum hours!**



Roles & Responsibilities

Field Roles



Student

- **Adult learners & active participants in all aspects of the field education process!**
- Professionalism & Consistency
- Effective communication
- Takes initiative & embraces learning experience
- Seeks, accepts, and implements feedback
- Adheres to the NASW Code of Ethics
- Commitment to the practicum organization, mission, and population – goes beyond just putting in the required hours!
- Open minded & ability to engage in problem-solving

Agency Field Instructor (AFI) – on site!

- Commitment to student and learning experience – Mentor!
- **MSW degree with at least 2-years of post degree experience!**
- Initial training and day-to-day support on site
 - Weekly supervision (1 hour)
- Development of appropriate learning activities & assignment of responsibilities
- Three Zoom-based site visits throughout the 450 hours of practicum
- Regular feedback on student growth and performance
 - Reflective, educational, and supportive supervision
 - Midyear and final evaluation

MSW Supervisor

- Reminder: AFI needs to hold MSW degree + 2 years of post-degree experience
- **When that is not the case, students need to identify an additional MSW supervisor on site!**
- 1 hour of additional supervision/bi-weekly

AFI as main practicum supervisor & support on site, attends site visits, approves timesheets etc.



MSW supervisor will add social work perspective to learning experience but no task-based supervision on site

Field Liaison

- Primary link between student, agency/AFI and the School of Social Work
- **Ongoing communication with and support** of student and agency/AFI
- Attends site visits
- Act as a **resource person for students and AFIs** in regard to questions, resources, and suggestions for learning activities
- Teaches the practicum seminar course which offers additional support to students

Basic Criteria for Agency Participation

- Create and maintain a positive, respectful, and supportive learning environment to allow for rich educational experiences
- Ethics and values of social work profession are demonstrated within agency policies, programming, and service delivery
- Demonstrate a commitment to anti-racism, anti-oppression and LGBTQ affirming practices
- Provide educationally directed field supervision through the designation of an on-site field instructor who will provide regular and ongoing supervision for at least one hour of one-to-one contact per week
- Allow the Agency Field Instructor (AFI) time to attend necessary field trainings, engage in practicum site visits, and complete midyear and final practicum evaluation
- Provide space for the student, including access to a desk, telephone and computer if necessary
- The Agency and the School of Social Work agree that neither will discriminate against any individual on the basis of age, sex, race, religious belief, national origin, disability or sexual orientation. All parties agree to comply with all federal and state anti-discrimination policies.

What Agencies & AFIs make for strong Practicum Experiences?

- Regular & consistent schedule
- Clear communication
- Clear expectations
- Clear role & responsibilities
- Weekly supervision during a set time
- Safe & supportive learning environment
- Diverse onboarding and learning activities

Questions about practicum requirements?

Please do not hesitate to contact the
UMSSW Field Education Program
um.sw.fieldoffice@umontana.edu