

Practicum Supervision

University of Montana School of Social Work
Field Education Program



Supervision in Field Education

- Integral part of students' learning and development as professional social workers
- Per CSWE standards, students are required to receive weekly supervision
 - 1 on 1
 - Group
 - Videoconference/ Zoom
- Dimensions of Supervision
 - Administrative, educational, and supportive supervision
- Benefits of Supervision
 - Mentoring and support
 - Self-care & sustainability

Agency Field Instructor – Supervisory Roles

- **Difference of student supervision VS employee supervision**
- **Trainer and Evaluator** – Orienting students, Policies/Procedures; resources; time sheet accountability; Overall management (orientation, training, task assignment, schedule, paperwork, formal and informal evaluation, i.e. midterm and final, agency documentation)
- **Educator** – Knowledge, skills and competencies, reflection; LA review; Assist in the learning process (focus on education, integrate curriculum into practice in field, i.e. systems theory and client care)
- **Coach and Collaborator** – Providing ongoing, honest feedback and support; Making space for learning(create the physical, emotional and mental space for student to learn, grow, share and ask for help, i.e. self-care)
- When working with generalist/foundation year students, the role focuses more on teaching, providing structure, and mentoring; when working with more clinical/advanced student, shifts the focus to teaching, mentoring, and consulting.

Supervision – Best Practices

- Provide supervision once a week during a dedicated time (30-60 minutes)
- Acknowledge power differences
- Parallel Process to Client Work, i.e. develop rapport and trust
- Model social work engagement and processes
- Ongoing support and safety
- Linkage of theory to practice
- Encourage and facilitate reflection
- Encourage and facilitate hard conversations
- Use the learning agreement as a tool for learning and to assess progress
- Provide clear and consistent feedback
- Assign and review duties and responsibilities of increasing difficulty and challenge as appropriate

Supervision – Tips & Tools



- Clear expectations – time, place, preparation
- Supervision Agenda (either UMSSW one or agency one)
- Communication Styles!
- **Kolb's Learning Inventory** - Identify the predominant learning style of your supervisee
- Integrate the Learning Agreement as a tool to review assignments, tasks, and learning activities – ensure progress towards competencies!
- NASW Code of Ethics
- Ongoing, honest and open feedback
- Identify learning edge – push students out of comfort zone
- Balance of high support and high expectations

Reflective Supervision

- **Build off students' predominant learning style to reflect**
 - **Thinkers:** Facilitate a case presentation and identify the evidence-based practice model used.
 - **Observers:** Observe an intake, write up the assessment, reflect on social worker's techniques. How would you have performed similarly/differently?
 - **Doers:** Process recordings with interview content, social worker and client observations, major themes, interventions.
 - **Feelers:** Watch video recorded sessions. What do you notice? What came up for you?
- **Or, challenge the student to reflect in a different style**

Field Placement Anxiety (FPA)

- **Feelings of apprehension, nervousness, or uneasiness** that relate to social work students' field learning experience.
- **These are all NORMAL reactions** for social work students.
- **Students may need support** for embracing their vulnerable feelings, such as anxiety.
- **When FPA is not understood** by students and AFIs, students' behavior can be misattributed as performance or professional behavior problems.
- **Anxiety is nucleus of social worker's professional growth!**
 - Embracing the unknown, pushing our learning edge, having difficult conversations etc.

<https://www.fieldanxiety.com/>

Additional Resources & Considerations

- UMSSW Field Liaison is your support person!
 - Make sure to stay in touch throughout practicum via email, phone, meetings
- Utilize regular site visits to give feedback to field liaison and student about specific concerns and challenges
- Collaboration and Gatekeeping Responsibility

Thank you!
More information about
supervision in field education
can be found on our website.

