



DHHS PROCEDURES: FIELD EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS

Effective: October 01, 2017 Revised 3/7/18, 2/24/21

- I. **PURPOSE:** To provide general guidelines for the field placements at Cuyahoga County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for students who are enrolled in academic programs approved by the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) and/or other social services disciplines. DHHS leadership encourages staff to enroll in academic programs designed to develop new skills to apply and integrate into their daily work. Field study increases organizational learning and develops new leaders in health and human services. Field projects facilitate organizational growth and meet organizational needs for enhanced efficiency and innovation that benefit customer experience. DHHS shall provide students opportunities for field education who are enrolled in programs other than social service disciplines on a case by case basis. Students shall be assigned activities that promote the integration of the designated discipline's schoolwork and practice.

PROCEDURES

- I. **Students Who Are Employed By DHHS:**
 - A. Students who successfully complete the enrollment process in a school/university approved by the Council of Social Work education (CSWE) and/or other social services disciplines are required to contact the Professional Development (PD) Department at least four weeks prior to the start date of the scheduled field experience to inquire about field placement opportunities and obtain an field placement application.
 - B. The student submits a portfolio to the designated PD Department representative. The portfolio must include: the student's current resume, field practicum proposal, a statement of purpose that addresses the student's short- and long-term career goals, their area of interest and a letter or e-mail from the student's supervisor or senior manager acknowledging their awareness of the student's enrollment in the academic program and the student's interest in pursuing an internship with the department.
 - C. The student schedules a face to face interview with the designated PD Department representative. At that time, the student submits the completed field placement application. The student's signature on the application verifies their willingness to comply with basic division policies and engage in regular

- supervision. The initial conversation between the student and PD Department representative focuses on gathering information about the student's academic standing, declared concentration, areas of interest for direct practice (including micro versus macro), and learning style.
- D. The Deputy Director or Center Manager makes the final decision to accept or decline the student's application after reviewing the portfolio and recommendation of the PD Department representative.
 - E. The Deputy Director or Center Manager documents their decision in writing, and sends this to the student via email, copying the PD Department representative, as well as the student's supervisor and senior manager.
 - F. The PD Department representative assigns a field instructor at the start of the field placement. The field instructor must have the credentials and experience required by the CSWE and/or other social services discipline. If the assigned field instructor is absent for 2 weeks or more, the PD Department representative assigns a back-up field instructor to provide guidance and support.
 - G. When a field instructor is not available for direct supervision in a specific department, the PD Department representative assigns a task supervisor. The task supervisor is an agency supervisor/manager whose area of practice coincides with the student's selected area of practice and who agrees to provide hands-on supervision.
 - H. The student, the assigned field instructor and task supervisor (if applicable) develop a learning contract according to their university's field education department guidelines that stipulates specific learning goals and objectives. The student and the agency field instructor sign and submit the agency-approved learning contract to the university representative for final approval.
 - I. The assigned field instructor provides regular weekly individual supervision for at least one hour. The field instructor supports the student with guidance and specific feedback on various activities. The field instructor assesses progress tying all activities back to the learning contract and communicating assessment results to the student and university on an on-going basis.
 - J. Students who are employed full-time by DHHS and have successfully completed their probationary period (i.e. the student is off probation) prior to the beginning of the academic year in which the field placement will occur may be eligible, with Deputy Director/Center Manager approval, for 8 hours release time/week from their regular jobs specifically for approved field hours as described in I. K. below.

- K. Use of release time by DHHS-employed students requires that field assignments and field hours are utilized to address organizational needs. Examples of activities that would qualify for release time include, but are not limited to: leading an agency project, participating in work groups and activities related to that project, research to examine agency practice, and gaining experience in a work area different from your job position.
- L. The student's direct supervisor has the right to request the revocation of release time for a period of time for reasonable cause, such as poor performance, failure to comply with the agency's policies and standards of operation or disciplinary issues. The student's supervisor shall present documentation of their rationale to revoke release time to their chain of command and the field instructor before implementing this restriction. The student's direct supervisor, senior supervisor, and field instructor shall then meet to reach a joint decision about whether to revoke release time. The senior supervisor informs the Deputy Director/Center Manager of the concerns in advance and invites them to participate in this meeting; however, their participation is optional. The senior supervisor documents this decision via email and sends a copy to the PD Department representative, which becomes part of the student's field internship record. The student may request that their release time provision be reinstated by providing significant evidence that the problem has been sufficiently resolved. The student's direct supervisor, senior supervisor, and field instructor must again meet to make a joint decision regarding whether to reinstate this provision.
- M. At least once during each semester, the student, field instructor and university representative meet to review the learning contract, discuss the student's progress, areas of growth, improvement and future goals.
- N. The field instructor identifies any internship performance issues in a timely manner and discusses these concerns with the student, task supervisor (as appropriate) and the university representative. These three individuals develop and sign a corrective action plan (CAP) designed to resolve the problem. The CAP shall identify specific time frames and means to address all concerns.
- O. If the issue is not resolved after the implementation of the CAP, the field instructor, student, task supervisor, PD Department representative shall meet and invite the university representative shall to determine if the agency must revoke the student's release time and/ or terminate the field placement. The field instructor shall document this discussion, decision, and rationale in writing and provide a hard copy or electronic copy to all participants, which will become part of the student's field internship record.
- P. The field instructor, task supervisor (if applicable), and PD Department representative in conjunction with the university representative may decide to terminate the student's field placement in writing as a consequence of major

infractions or employee misconduct, as stipulated in the Cuyahoga County Department of Human Resources Employee Handbook, County Code of Ethics, and/or violations of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics and/or other social services disciplines' Code of Ethics.

- Q. No intern may replace a paid staff position.
- R. All interns must notify the agency within 24 hours of any charge or conviction of any criminal offense listed in the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) 5101:2-5-09. Failure to do so results in the student's immediate dismissal from the internship program and conviction of any crime listed in 5101:2-5-09 results in immediate dismissal from the DHHS internship program.
- S. The student, supervisor, field instructor and PD Department representative shall maintain all field internship records in a locked cabinet and/or secure computer server separate from other agency records.

II. Students Who Are Not Employed By DHHS:

- A. All DHHS staff shall direct any inquiries from outside students interested in completing their internships with a DHHS agency to the Professional Development Department. Students may be considered for an internship if they are enrolled in an accredited Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) or Master of Social Work (MSSA and MSW) program.
- B. The student shall submit a portfolio to the designated PD Department representative. The portfolio must include: the student's current resume, the field practicum proposal and a statement of purpose describing his/her short- and long-term career goals.
- C. All students are required to complete a police background check (BCI/FBI) and a drug screen. The BCI/FBI and drug screen must be completed 30 days prior to the internship start date. The PD Department representative shall provide students with specific instructions regarding the dates, times, and locations for the drug screen and BCI/FBI check.
- D. The student shall participate in a face to face interview with the designated PD Department representative. At that time, the student must complete a field placement application. The student's signature on the application verifies their willingness to comply with basic agency policies and engage in regular supervision. The student shall agree to and sign a County DHHS confidentiality agreement. The initial conversation between the student and PD Department representative focuses on gathering information about the student's academic standing, declared concentration, areas of interest for direct practice (including micro versus macro), and learning style.

- E. The PD Department representative decides to accept or reject the student's application contingent upon the results of the initial screening, interview and the availability of field placements within the agency. The PD Department representative's documents their decision in writing and sends a letter to the student via email.
- F. If the student is accepted in the program, the PD Department representative may serve as the field instructor (or shall assign a field instructor) and shall assign each student to a task supervisor for shadowing in a specific area of the agency. The task supervisor is an agency supervisor whose area of practice coincides with the student's selected area of practice and who agrees to provide hands-on supervision to the student.
- G. The field instructor assigns activities to the student that will promote the integration of designated discipline's schoolwork and practice, and whenever possible, advance the growth and needs of the organization.
- H. The student and assigned field instructor or task supervisor develop a learning contract that stipulates specific learning goals and objectives. The student and field instructor sign the agency-approved learning contract and submit it to the university representative for final approval.
- I. The task supervisors provide monthly feedback on students' performance. The reports become part of the student's internship records. The field instructor evaluates the student's progress, areas of growth, and goals using the formal written instrument provided by the respective university.
- J. The field instructor provides weekly individual or small group supervision for at least one hour. The field instructor provides guidance and specific feedback on various activities and assesses progress tied to the learning contract on an ongoing basis.
- K. If concerns arise about the student's participation in field activities, the field instructor shall schedule a meeting in a timely manner to discuss these concerns. The field instructor shall invite the student, task supervisor, and an agency representative, if applicable, to determine whether the student's DHHS internship must be terminated. If a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) is developed by the team, this plan must be specific in activities and timeframes and the field instructor shall review the plan as written to determine next steps.