

**INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES  
ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Policy Number: GA-14

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Version: 1.0

**POLICY TITLE: MSW IV-E SCHOLARS EMPLOYMENT-BASED PRACTICUM**

**OVERVIEW:** The Department of Child Services (DCS) encourages and supports its staff to improve their education and employment status. It is important to exercise joint planning between the School of Social Work, the student, and DCS when a staff member participates in an employment-based practicum. While education is important, it is necessary to ensure we are fulfilling our responsibility to our clients. The employment-based practicum must not conflict with DCS employment.

### **I. DEFINITIONS**

- A. Practicum: Educationally-directed practice experience under the direct supervision of an approved Agency-Based Field Instructor.
- B. Field Liaison: Provides consultation to Agency-Based Field Instructors and student to ensure integration between classroom and field. The Field Liaison enhances communication regarding curriculum matters, field learning opportunities, new developments and demands of practice, and new projects undertaken by the School of Social Work.
- C. Agency-Based Field Instructor: Provides field instruction and practice supervision to the practicum student at their placement site. The Agency-Based Field Instructor also evaluates the student's performance and level of competency on practice behaviors.
- D. Off-Site Field Instructor: Provides educational supervision to the practicum student when there is not an Agency-Based Field Instructor available.

### **II. REFERENCES**

None

### **III. STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE**

- A. All IV-E Master of Social Work (MSW) DCS employees who participate in IV-E employment-based practicum will be limited to counting 16 hours per week of employment-based work towards the employee's work hours.
- B. The following cannot be counted toward the employee's DCS work hours:
  - 1. Practicum seminar,
  - 2. Field instruction,
  - 3. Process recording,
  - 4. Preparation of the Learning Evaluation Tool (LET) (previously referred to as the Learning Plan),
  - 5. Reflection papers or other assignments for the seminar, and
  - 6. Reading and research (such as literature reviews).

**Note:** Any exceptions will be approved by DCS, in conjunction with the Agency-Based Field Instructor, after consideration of DCS local office needs, university requirements, and/or student schedules.

- C. Employment-based practicum must not have an adverse effect on DCS operations. The educational needs of the employee must be met without compromising the business needs of the work unit.
- D. Employment-based practicum can include tasks related to the employee's current work responsibilities, as well as, tasks outside of employee's current work responsibilities.

**Note:** This work must be evaluated for potential new learning and approved by the School of Social Work.

- E. Employment-based practicum must be completed under the supervision of an approved Agency-Based Field Instructor.
- F. Joint planning between the School of Social Work, the student, and the DCS local office is required when:
  - 1. A student decides which concentration area course work they will take, and
  - 2. Planning the concentration year practicum.
- G. Concentration planning should begin in the second year of the program. A meeting must be scheduled including:
  - 1. The student;
  - 2. His or her Supervisor; and/or
  - 3. The DCS Local Office Director (LOD) or Regional Manager (RM); and
  - 4. The Student Coordinator for the Child Welfare Scholars program, if necessary.
- H. Employment-based practicum planning must occur prior to the approval of the employment-based practicum petition. A meeting must be held including:
  - 1. The student;
  - 2. His or her Supervisor;
  - 3. DCS LOD or RM, and
  - 4. Child Welfare Scholars Field Coordinator.
- I. DCS employees whose concentration is Child Welfare and who work primarily with children and families, may need to be reassigned to another unit during the course of the practicum.

**Note:** One (1) example might be moving the employee from an assessment position to an ongoing position.

- J. When available, employees could be assigned to a specialized unit. In DCS local offices without specialized units, a student may be assigned a number of cases with specific concerns during the practicum period. Examples might include:
  - 1. Sexual abuse;
  - 2. Adoption;
  - 3. Engaging fathers;
  - 4. Independent Living (IL) youth;

5. Foster families;
  6. Kinship placements;
  7. Working with children of incarcerated parents; and
  8. Targeted work with high risk placement disruptions.
- K. Students will be asked to demonstrate advanced skills and the work they do with families is likely to look different than what is done by others in the office including more advanced assessments, more face-to-face contact, more focused interventions. It is also likely that part of the student's practicum assignments will fall outside of his or her current workload. Examples include:
1. Permanency Roundtable;
  2. Developing foster parent support groups;
  3. Participating in Regional Service Councils;
  4. Participating on Fatality Review Groups; and
  5. Other activities as approved by the school and DCS.
- L. DCS employees that participate in Leadership Concentration will have opportunities for development and practice to demonstrate advanced competency in working in administrative positions in the child welfare system. The following options should be considered to maximize the amount of practicum work that can fit into the employee's normal workload:
1. Whether it is necessary to assign the student to another work area for the duration of his or her practicum to allow the employee to have opportunities for new learning; and
  2. Whether there are opportunities to allow the employee to be involved with responsibilities that are not typically in his or her purview.
- M. The student's practicum assignments should fall outside of his or her current workload.

#### **IV. PROCEDURE**

The employee will:

- A. Submit employment-based practicum tasks to the School of Social Work to be evaluated/approved for potential new learning;
- B. Not include the following toward the employee's DCS work hours:
  1. Practicum seminar,
  2. Field instruction,
  3. Process recording,
  4. Preparation of the LET,
  5. Reflection papers or other assignments for the seminar, and
  6. Reading and research (such as literature reviews).

**Note:** Exceptions must be approved by DCS in conjunction with the Agency-Based Field Coordinator.

- C. Work under the supervision of an Agency-Based Field Instructor during work-based practicum;

- D. Participate in work-based practicum activities that do not have an adverse effect on DCS operations;
- E. Begin concentration planning in the second year of the program which will consist of the following. Discussion must include:
  - 1. The student's desired concentration choice;
  - 2. The types of activities needed for the concentration practicum learning agreement; and
  - 3. The DCS local office's ability to support court work and practicum activities needed to meet the school's requirement.
- F. Obtain a written record of the meeting signed by the RM indicating his or her support of the plan;
- G. Return the completed written record to the Agency-Based Field Instructor prior to the student beginning concentration level course work;
- H. Begin employment-based practicum planning prior to the approval of the employment-based practicum petition which will consist of a meeting to discuss the following:
- I. Projects and activities available to the student for inclusion in the practicum;
  - 1. Review of potential scheduling issues; and
  - 2. Any DCS local office issues that might impact the student's ability to meet the practicum requirements.

The DCS Agency-Based Field Instructor will:

- A. Ensure that all activities in the practicum are clearly defined as learning opportunities for the student;
- B. Collaborate with the employee's supervisor to provide feedback to the employee that meets the educational needs of the school and work performance of DCS.
- C. Communicate with the student as follows:
  - 1. Via face-to face meeting every week;
  - 2. Include discussion regarding the delineation of roles;
  - 3. Provide professional model of generalist social work practice within the agency that is consistent with the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics;
  - 4. Individualize student learning tasks and activities based on student learning needs, Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) social work practice behaviors, and the mission of the practicum agency;
  - 5. Provide guidance and assistance to students in completing the Learning Evaluation Tool (LET);
  - 6. Orient students to agency policy and procedures as it relates to work management including dress code, attendance, record keeping, intake and referral, transfer, and termination of clients;
  - 7. Facilitate student understanding and adherence to responsible and ethical conduct at the practicum;
  - 8. Actively assist the students in understanding DCS' general liability, risk management, health, and safety policies;

9. Provide educational supervision. It is expected that the Field Instructor will meet with each student for a minimum of one (1) hour per week to review work performed, assist the student in conceptualizing the issues inherent in learning experiences, articulate thoughts and reactions, and facilitate the integration of classroom and field learning experiences;
10. Provide feedback on student process recordings and other written products produced in the field;
11. Inform the field liaison immediately in the event concerns arise in the student's performance and provide the appropriate documentation;
12. Attend and participate in the field orientation and in periodic trainings with other Field Instructors organized by the MSW Program;
13. Confer periodically with the field liaison;
14. Assess students' progress in achieving competency by completion of evaluative methods provided by the LET.

DATE: January 1, 2013  
John Ryan, Director  
Department of Child Services

A signed copy is on file.

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