



**St AMBROSE  
UNIVERSITY**  
**School of Social Work**

## **PRACTICUM EDUCATION MANUAL 2025-2026 ACADEMIC YEAR**

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### **ST. AMBROSE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK MISSION**

It is the mission of the St. Ambrose University School of Social Work to prepare competent and ethical social work professionals who advocate a just society.

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# ST. AMBROSE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

## PRACTICUM EDUCATION MANUAL

### INTRODUCTION

#### **The Purpose of Social Work**

For more than one hundred years, the social work profession has advanced a dual focus on meeting human need and promoting social change to redress social injustice and inequities. Social work professionals simultaneously direct their activities at improving human and social conditions and alleviating human distress and social problems. Social work, thus, supports a synchronized focus on human systems and the environment, intervening at the points of interaction between them.

The Council on Social Work Education defines the purpose of social work in their Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (2015):

The purpose of the social work profession is to promote human and community well-being. Guided by a person-in-environment framework, a global perspective, respect for human diversity, and knowledge based on scientific inquiry, the purpose of social work is actualized through its quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the enhancement of the quality of life for all persons, locally and globally.

To achieve these purposes, social workers work with people in ways that strengthen their sense of competence, link them with needed resources, and promote organizational and institutional change so that the structures of society respond to the needs of all societal members. Social workers also engage in policy analysis and formulation and conduct research to contribute to social work theory and evaluate practice methods.

#### **Pedagogy for Professional Social Work**

Pedagogy for professional social work is competency-based education. The Council on Social Work Education, the accrediting agency for professional social work education, requires social work programs to prepare graduates for advanced practice through mastery of nine core competencies enhanced both by knowledge and behaviors specific to a program concentration. Students demonstrate integration and application of nine identified competencies in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. The nine core competencies are listed as follows:

1. Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior.
2. Engage diversity and difference in practice.
3. Advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.
4. Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice.

5. Engage in policy practice.
6. Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
7. Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
8. Intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
9. Evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

### **Practicum Education as Signature Pedagogy**

Education for the professions employs central forms of instruction whereby students are socialized to perform the roles of the profession. Defined as signature pedagogy, this is the method by which students integrate theory and practice and learn to perform the roles of a professional social worker. Practicum Education is the signature pedagogy in social work education. The Council on Social Work Education makes clear the essential value of Practicum Education:

The intent of Practicum Education is to connect the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the practical world of the practice setting. It is a basic precept of social work education that the two interrelated components of curriculum—classroom and Practicum—are of equal importance within the curriculum, and each contributes to the development of the requisite competencies of professional practice. Practicum Education is systematically designed, supervised, coordinated, and evaluated based on criteria by which students demonstrate the Social Work Competencies (CSWE EPAS, 2015).

The St. Ambrose School of Social Work advances a robust curriculum where the classroom and the practicum site setting each contribute to the development of student competencies. Practicum placements in community agency settings provide the student with a range of practice experiences to promote the integration of theoretical learning from class work to further knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive/affective processes for professional social work practice.

The Generalist Practicum places emphasis on the application of skills for Generalist social work practice in a practicum site setting. The MSW Empowerment Specialization Practicum builds on the generalist social work practice perspective of the Generalist year curriculum and practicum work as students specialize in empowerment practice. The Practicum prepares students for social work practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

## **MISSION AND GOALS OF ST. AMBROSE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

### **School of Social Work Mission Statement**

It is the mission of the St. Ambrose University School of Social Work to prepare competent and ethical social work professionals who advocate a just society. Consistent with the purposes of social work and Catholic Social Teaching, the St. Ambrose University School of Social Work seeks to advance the well-being of people, to promote social and economic justice and to protect human rights. Emphasizing participant system empowerment, the School prepares graduates to practice competently, ethically and with critical understanding of diversity, human behavior and social contexts.

Students acquire a comprehensive knowledge base, practice skills, and ethical standards for professional practice. These competencies enable graduates to provide resources and opportunities for people to live with dignity and freedom in their transactions with each other and social institutions locally, nationally, and globally.

### **Bachelor of Social Work Mission Statement**

The St. Ambrose University Bachelor of Social Work program “prepares holistic social workers grounded in liberal arts and social justice traditions to enrich lives, facilitate empowerment, and advocate a just society as generalist professionals. Through that generalist lens, the BSW program cultivates the desire to change society at multiple levels by equipping students with knowledge, skills, and values indicative of ethical social work practice.”

The BSW mission captures the professional preparation of an accredited degree with the unique combined foundation of a liberal arts education within a Catholic Intellectual Tradition of lifelong learning and social justice. This generalist foundation incorporates knowledge in several areas of science, humanities, and the arts while also supporting a lifelong commitment to service. The social work profession works with individuals, groups, and communities to facilitate empowerment and advocate change. Social work’s core values include service, social justice, and self- determination, and are all addressed within the BSW program mission.

### **Master of Social Work Mission Statement**

The SAU Master of Social Work program prepares empowerment social workers to use a life-long praxis process in order to ensure collaborative, participant -centered, multi-level, contextualized practice.

Empowerment social workers promote professional social work and advocate for social, economic and environmental justice.

## **BSW Program Goals and Curriculum Objectives**

The idea of empowerment guides all aspects of the St. Ambrose School of Social Work. Program goals reflect an awareness of community context and a commitment to partnership throughout the ecosystem including the program's relationships with the university, with the social work profession, with allied professions, with students in the program, and with the local social work practice community. The program views itself as a resource to meet the university mission, contribute to the social work profession, influence community perspective and functioning, and educate students to carry forward a social justice mission.

Goal 1 Deliver a quality and accessible generalist social work educational program which adheres to the accreditation standards by the Council on Social Work Education while attending to the complex dimensions of knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes to produce ethical, professional, and competent social workers who are prepared to facilitate sustainable and meaningful change with individuals, families, groups, communities, organizations, and society.

- In order to prepare professionals, a program must be high quality, accessible, and meet accreditation standards as set by the CSWE.
- Related to the core value of competence, accreditation by CSWE allows the BSW Program to meet its mission to prepare holistic social workers with skills to facilitate change.

Goal 2. Prepare social work professionals utilizing the strengths of a liberal arts education along with Catholic Intellectual Tradition to righteously serve individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and society towards liberation.

- Several layers of intervention and influence are addressed in the proposed curriculum including individuals, families, groups, communities, and societies due to the contextual nature of change with which social workers approach helping others.
- This focus, which is both broad and in-depth, facilitates the BSW mission to cultivate student desire to change society at multiple levels.

Goal 3. Cultivate and foster strong partnerships with local, regional, state, and national communities to enrich the lives of individuals and communities through collaboration and mutually beneficial relationships.

- Due to social workers understanding that meaningful change involves collaboration at multiple levels, the BSW program mission in practice emphasizes building on partnerships at every level which will inform what is done and how.

Goal 4. Promote the social work profession through active engagement in scholarship by creating and disseminating information to local, regional, state, national, and international audiences.

- The survival and influence of the social work profession depends on our ability to generate new knowledge and continue to critique current knowledge to ensure the best evidence is supporting the interventions taught and practiced.
- Students and faculty engage in scholarship which elevates the mission of the BSW Program related to generalist social work practice.

Goal 5. Support the mission of the university: “An inclusive, Catholic, and diocesan community of learners, St. Ambrose University empowers all Ambrosians to act courageously, to seek wisdom through faith and reason, to work for justice, and to lead lives of service.”

- As a BSW Program housed in a social justice oriented Catholic university, we have a special commitment to complimenting the work of the campus community by having its mission inform ours.
- The campus mission is supported by the BSW program mission to develop holistic social workers given the focus on developing multi-dimensional individuals.

### **MSW Program Goals and Curriculum Objectives**

The idea of empowerment guides all aspects of the St. Ambrose Social Work Program. Program goals reflect an awareness of community context and a commitment to partnership throughout the ecosystem including the program’s relationships with the university, with the social work profession, with allied professions, with students in the program, and with the local social work practice community. The program views itself as a resource to meet the university mission, contribute to the social work profession, influence community perspective and functioning, and educate students to carry forward a social justice mission.

Goal 1. Provide a quality educational program in empowerment social work practice designed to assure the acquisition of advanced knowledge, skills, values, cognitive/affective processes, and ethics necessary for professional social work practice by maintaining accreditation of the MSW program by the Council on Social Work Education.

- The competencies proposed by CSWE and the behaviors subsequently developed by MSW Program faculty serve to guide the professional training of students in competent and ethical directions.
- Graduates of the MSW program show strengths in these skills due to intensive focus on these competencies and the program’s commitment to empowerment practice.
- In collaboration with other health science programs at St. Ambrose and CSWE, the MSW program provides multiple contexts for Interprofessional education promoting team-based client care.

Goal 2. Prepare social work practitioners with Generalist and Empowerment Specialization skills to enable them to engage in multi-level interventions with diverse populations in a range of social service settings.

- Explicit goals of empowerment social work practice are multi-level systemic practice including impact on individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
- Components of empowerment practice including multi-level intervention, promotion of diversity, politicized practice, and systemic analysis combine to allow for understanding and applicability across practice settings.

Goal 3. Nurture University-Agency partnerships by facilitating an educational and scholarship presence in the local, national, and international communities.

- Education, scholarship, leadership and service in these communities utilize an empowerment stance. MSW Program faculty provide training to agencies regarding empowerment practice, ethics, and diversity. In addition, some faculty hold board membership positions in local, national, and global organizations.
- Practicum Education processes and orientations seek to strengthen relationships and build bridges between the School and regional social service and health service providers.
- Continuing education offerings by the MSW program focus on needs of communities. All conference offerings exemplify an explicit empowerment perspective. These trainings also enhance the mission of the Program to produce competent and ethical social workers.

Goal 4. Contribute to the knowledge base of the social work profession by engaging in scholarship for publication and presentation at professional conferences.

- Using a broad model of scholarship including: scholarship of discovery, of integration, of application, of teaching and learning, and of engagement, faculty collect and share information in order to best serve populations which social workers serve.
- Social Workers advocate changes in society through these endeavors. Contribution to the knowledge base of the social work profession is key to the MSW Program.
- Empowerment Scholarship has an explicit goal to positively impact the greater society.

Goal 5. Contribute to the mission of the university: “An inclusive, Catholic, and diocesan community of learners, St. Ambrose University empowers all Ambrosians to act courageously, to seek wisdom through faith and reason, to work for justice, and to lead lives of service.”

- The mission of the MSW Program is clearly aligned with the mission of the larger university, with its focus on both individuals and society. In course offerings, co-curricular events, and informal interaction, the MSW Program seeks to model the missions of both the Program and the University.

### **Unifying Themes of the St. Ambrose MSW Program**

The St Ambrose MSW program articulates EPAS competencies into behaviors reflecting themes and theoretical underpinnings supporting an empowerment method, including – (1) collaborative and reflective processes, (2) the ecosystems perspective, (3) the strengths model, (4) integration of the personal and political, and (5) the ethic of social and economic justice.

**Collaborative & Reflective Processes** – The empowerment method attends to power dynamics present within each human interaction. Empowerment-based practitioners work to construct and maintain their relationships with participants as partnerships to ensure participant privilege and preferences. Achieving and maintaining such collaboration requires open reflection between social workers and participants to evaluate the relationship, the plan, and the progress. Students at St. Ambrose learn to reflect on their work using introspection, self-observation, participant input, and professional consultation.

**Ecosystems Perspective** – The central focus on person: environment transactions defines the social work profession. Social work professionals facilitate beneficial adaptation between individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities and their particular environments. To implement this core purpose, a theoretical orientation emphasizing system interaction is essential. An ecosystems perspective provides such a view, revealing the nature and impact of interaction among human systems. Students learning an empowerment method require an ecosystems perspective for use in identifying problems and solutions at each level of human functioning.

**Strengths Model** – The strengths model assumes that participants have abilities and that environments contain resources. A social worker's responsibility is to discover and activate these abilities and resources to achieve participant goals. Practicing from a strengths model, social workers acknowledge challenges, yet shift emphasis to the strengths that people accumulate over a life of learning, experience, and adaptation. Particularly relevant are the diversity of strengths based in various racial, ethnic, cultural and social identities. By focusing on competence rather than deficits in individual and social functioning, students become empowering practitioners and see the power inherent in activating people's existing strengths and resources.

**Integration of Personal and Political** – “The personal without the political is not social work” is the mantra of the empowerment based social worker. Personal troubles are mired in social issues. Regardless of practice context, empowering social workers recognize the socio-political underpinnings of all human relationships: they consider solutions at the political level even for initially perceived individual problems. St.

Ambrose MSW students learn to critically analyze how social/cultural location impacts participant experience, the worker-participant relationship, and available opportunities.

***Ethic of Social and Economic Justice*** – A social justice ethic reinforces the social work mandate to serve the most vulnerable of society, to enhance the caring capacity of society, to end discriminatory practices, and to expand resources to those in need. As an integral part of a Catholic institution, the School of Social Work spearheads the university's stance favoring social justice and economic equity. The political focus of the empowering social worker consistently focuses on the re-distributive needs of disadvantaged people subjected to discrimination based on poverty, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, oppression, and lack of available community resources. Students at St. Ambrose learn to be activists in shaping the practice context.

## **PRACTICUM EDUCATION WITHIN THE CURRICULUM**

### **Competency Based Curriculum**

The St. Ambrose University School of Social Work program embraces competency-based education and has intentionally constructed its Generalist and Specialization curricula around measurable learning outcomes in both classroom and Practicum. In doing so, the School of Social Work program has concretely articulated behaviors representing the nine core competencies to reflect the knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive/affective processes that define the social work profession and indicate competent social work practice. Student competencies acquired at the generalist foundation level are further refined and synthesized at the specialized level of practice to prepare students with the expertise to critically apply an interdisciplinary knowledge base, integrate research and evidence from multiple sources, and shape engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation processes to fit the unique circumstances of the situation at hand. Graduates of the St. Ambrose University School of Social Work demonstrate their abilities to implement an empowerment method of social work practice that furthers a social justice agenda, honors human diversity, and promotes individual and community well-being.

### **Location of Practicum Education**

As signature pedagogy, Practicum Education is one of two interrelated components and is of equal importance with classroom instruction in contributing to the development of the requisite competencies for professional social work practice. The St. Ambrose University School of Social Work Practicum Education program is designed as a seamless two-year program coordinated by the Director of Practicum Education, with placement activities supervised by program faculty, and student outcomes evaluated based on the criteria by which students demonstrate achievement of core competencies for the Generalist and the Empowerment Specialization.

The purpose of Practicum Education is to provide students with opportunities to develop competence for professional practice. Practicum provides students with an ever changing and intentional learning environment for the facilitation of competency development. In applying concepts and theories learned in the classroom, students test knowledge, apply values, and practice skills in order to develop program competencies for professional practice. This provides a basis for an evidence-informed practice, where students consider relevant research and integrate this information with participant preferences and values, ethical principles, available resources, policy considerations, and overall feasibility.

The Master of Social Work Program has a single specialization of Empowerment social work practice. In preparing students to implement an empowerment method, the MSW program teaches the fundamentals of social work as described in the core competencies of the Council on Social Work's Educational and Policy Accreditation Standards (EPAS, 2015) and advanced knowledge and skills required of a practitioner

using an empowerment method. As such, the program's curriculum design incorporates all of the core competencies for the Generalist augmented by the knowledge and observable behaviors specific to the Empowerment Specialization.

### **Generalist Foundation Pedagogy**

The generalist foundation curriculum prepares students to undertake a broad range of social work interventions to support the social well-being of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Students acquire theoretical frameworks that are evidence-informed and applied through Practicum Education.

Knowledge of ethics and values, diversity, human rights and social and economic justice support skill development in practice, policy, research, and human behavior. The generalist foundation curriculum builds on the liberal arts preparation of the students and develops the students' capacity for generalist social work practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities in an education program based on the ecosystems construct, an empowerment method and strengths model, the integration of the personal and political, and the ethic of social and economic justice. The generalist foundation curriculum also builds a base of the necessary knowledge and values for critical thinking and intervention skill development for the advanced practitioner.

Students have the opportunity to engage in didactic, affective, and experiential learning to build capacity in core competencies during the generalist foundation year. Students are expected to explore their own belief systems, to experience the dynamics of change, and to be open to diversity of opinion, status, and condition.

The Council on Social Work Education (2015) defines generalist practice in the following way:

Generalist practice is grounded in the liberal arts and the person-in-environment framework. To promote human and social well-being, generalist practitioners use a range of prevention and intervention methods in their practice with diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities based on scientific inquiry and best practices. The generalist practitioner identifies with the social work profession and applies ethical principles and critical thinking in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Generalist practitioners engage diversity in their practice and advocate for human rights and social and economic justice. They recognize, support, and build on the strengths and resiliency of all human beings. They engage in research-informed practice and are proactive in responding to the impact of context on professional practice.

This definition of generalist social work practice is supported by the following assumptions:

- Generalist practice provides the basic helping strategies and competencies which underlie social work practice at its beginning level of competence

- Generalist practice considers the interplay of personal and collective issues and works with a variety of human systems – societies, communities, neighborhoods, complex organizations, formal groups, informal groups, families, and individuals – to create changes which maximize social functioning
- Generalist social work practice views problems in context using different skills to intervene at multiple system levels and integrate a combination of methods as required by a particular situation.
- Generalist social work addresses the solution and/or prevention of problems at levels of intervention – personal, familial, interpersonal, organizational, community, institutional, and societal.
- Generalist social work practice looks at issues in context and finds solutions within the interactions between people and their environments.

## **St. Ambrose University School of Social Work Generalist Practice**

Pedagogy for professional social work is competency-based education. The Council on Social Work Education, the accrediting agency for professional social work education, requires social work programs to prepare graduates for generalist practice through nine core competencies enhanced both by knowledge and behaviors. Students demonstrate integration and application of nine identified competencies in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. The nine core competencies along with their associated behaviors are listed below.

### **Competencies and Associated Behaviors for the Generalist Foundation Year**

#### **COMPETENCY 1: DEMONSTRATE ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR**

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant policies, laws, and regulations that may affect practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand that ethics are informed by principles of human rights and apply them toward realizing social, racial, economic, and environmental justice in their practice. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision making and apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize and manage personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. Social workers understand how their evolving worldview, personal experiences, and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers take measures to care for themselves professionally and personally, understanding that self-care is paramount for competent and ethical social work practice. Social workers use rights-based, antiracist, and anti-oppressive lenses to understand and critique the profession's history, mission, roles, and responsibilities and recognize historical and current contexts of oppression in shaping institutions and social work. Social workers understand the role of other professionals when engaged in interprofessional practice. Social workers recognize the importance of lifelong learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure relevant and effective practice. Social workers understand digital technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice.

Social workers:

- a) make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics within the profession as appropriate to the context;
- b) demonstrate professional behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;
- c) use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes;
- d) use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.

## COMPETENCY 2: ADVANCE HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL, RACIAL, ECONOMIC, AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society has fundamental human rights. Social workers are knowledgeable about the global intersecting and ongoing injustices throughout history that result in oppression and racism, including social work's role and response. Social workers critically evaluate the distribution of power and privilege in society in order to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice by reducing inequities and ensuring dignity and respect for all. Social workers advocate for and engage in strategies to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social resources, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably and that civil, political, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected. Social workers:

- a) advocate for human rights at the individual, family, group, organizational, and community system levels;
- b) engage in practices that advance human rights to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.

## COMPETENCY 3: ENGAGE ANTI-RACISM, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (ADEI) IN PRACTICE

Social workers understand how racism and oppression shape human experiences and how these two constructs influence practice at the individual, family, group, organizational, and community levels and in policy and research. Social workers understand the pervasive impact of White supremacy and privilege and use their knowledge, awareness, and skills to engage in anti-racist practice. Social workers understand how diversity and intersectionality shape human experiences and identity development and affect equity and inclusion. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of factors including but not limited to age, caste, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, generational status, immigration status, legal status, marital status, political ideology, race, nationality, religion and spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that this intersectionality means that a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege and power. Social workers understand the societal and historical roots of social and racial injustices and the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination. Social workers understand cultural humility and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, racial, technological, and cultural exclusions, may create privilege and power resulting in systemic oppression. Social workers:

- a) demonstrate anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practice at the individual, family, group, organizational, community, research, and policy levels;

- b) demonstrate cultural humility by applying critical reflection, self-awareness, and self-regulation to manage the influence of bias, power, privilege, and values in working with participants and constituencies, acknowledging them as experts of their own lived experiences.

#### COMPETENCY 4: ENGAGE IN PRACTICE-INFORMED RESEARCH AND RESEARCH-INFORMED PRACTICE

Social workers use ethical, culturally informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive approaches in conducting research and building knowledge. Social workers use research to inform their practice decision making and articulate how their practice experience informs research and evaluation decisions. Social workers critically evaluate and critique current, empirically sound research to inform decisions pertaining to practice, policy, and programs. Social workers understand the inherent bias in research and evaluate design, analysis, and interpretation using an anti-racist and anti-oppressive perspective. Social workers know how to access, critique, and synthesize the current literature to develop appropriate research questions and hypotheses. Social workers demonstrate knowledge and skills regarding qualitative and quantitative research methods and analysis, and they interpret data derived from these methods. Social workers demonstrate knowledge about methods to assess reliability and validity in social work research. Social workers can articulate and share research findings in ways that are usable to a variety of participants and constituencies. Social workers understand the value of evidence derived from interprofessional and diverse research methods, approaches, and sources. Social workers:

- a) apply research findings to inform and improve practice, policy, and programs;
- b) identify ethical, culturally informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive strategies that address inherent biases for use in quantitative and qualitative research methods to advance the purposes of social work.

#### COMPETENCY 5: ENGAGE IN POLICY PRACTICE

Social workers identify social policy at the local, state, federal, and global level that affects wellbeing, human rights and justice, service delivery, and access to social services. Social workers recognize the historical, social, racial, cultural, economic, organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy. Social workers understand and critique the history and current structures of social policies and services and the role of policy in service delivery through rights-based, anti-oppressive, and anti-racist lenses. Social workers influence policy formulation, analysis, implementation, and evaluation within their practice settings with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers actively engage in and advocate for anti-racist and anti-oppressive policy practice to effect change in those settings. Social workers:

- a) use social justice, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lenses to assess how social welfare policies affect the delivery of and access to social services

- b) apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.

## COMPETENCY 6: ENGAGE WITH INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, GROUPS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND COMMUNITIES

Social workers understand that engagement is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with and on behalf of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers value the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and person-in-environment and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to facilitate engagement with participants and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are self-reflective and understand how bias, power, and privilege as well as their personal values and personal experiences may affect their ability to engage effectively with diverse participants and constituencies. Social workers use the principles of interprofessional collaboration to facilitate engagement with participants, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate.

Social workers:

- a) apply knowledge of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, to engage with participants and constituencies;
- b) use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to engage in culturally responsive practice with participants and constituencies.

## COMPETENCY 7: ASSESS INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, GROUPS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND COMMUNITIES

Social workers understand that assessment is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, and they critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in culturally responsive assessment with participants and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Assessment involves a collaborative process of defining presenting challenges and identifying strengths with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities to develop a mutually agreed-upon plan. Social workers recognize the implications of the larger practice context in the assessment process and use interprofessional collaboration in this process. Social workers are self-reflective and understand how bias, power, privilege, and their personal values and experiences may affect their assessment and decision making. Social workers:

- a) apply theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as other culturally responsive and interprofessional conceptual frameworks, when assessing participants and constituencies;

- b) demonstrate respect for participant self-determination during the assessment process by collaborating with participants and constituencies in developing a mutually agreed-upon plan.

#### COMPETENCY 8: INTERVENE WITH INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, GROUPS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND COMMUNITIES

Social workers understand that intervention is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice. Social workers understand theories of human behavior, person-in-environment, and other interprofessional conceptual frameworks, and they critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in selecting culturally responsive interventions with participants and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-informed interventions and participate in interprofessional collaboration to achieve participant and constituency goals. Social workers facilitate effective transitions and endings. Social workers:

- a) engage with participants and constituencies to critically choose and implement culturally responsive, evidence-informed interventions to achieve participant and constituency goals;
- b) incorporate culturally responsive methods to negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of participants and constituencies.

#### COMPETENCY 9: EVALUATE PRACTICE WITH INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, GROUPS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND COMMUNITIES

Social workers understand that evaluation is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with and on behalf of diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers evaluate processes and outcomes to increase practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social workers apply anti-racist and anti-oppressive perspectives in evaluating outcomes. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in evaluating outcomes. Social workers use qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness. Social workers:

- a) select and use culturally responsive methods for evaluation of outcomes;
- b) critically analyze outcomes and apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

#### **MSW Empowerment Specialization Pedagogy**

The St. Ambrose University School of Social Work defines advanced empowerment social work practice in the following manner:

The St. Ambrose University Master of Social Work program has a single specialization of Empowerment social work practice. This advanced practice

method incorporates all of the core competencies of the generalist foundation augmented by knowledge, skills, values, cognitive/affective processes, and behaviors of the empowerment specialization. As *Generalists*, students learn knowledge and develop skills to practice at all system levels including interventions with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. They also learn to recognize that the divisions of the core content areas of social work education into policy, research, human behavior, and practice are merely academic and that the fusion of this knowledge and skill base is necessary for competent and ethical empowerment social work in everyday practice. As *advanced practitioners in the empowerment method*, students never relinquish their generalist core foundation, seeing the contextual in the personal, recognizing the social policy influence in the individual challenge, and acknowledging the social issues and political reality in the assessment of any human problem and condition.

As stipulated by the Council on Social Work Education EP M2.1 (2022) definition of specialized practice, the Empowerment practice specialization teaches students to advance and refine social work practice and the social work profession. Students learn to synthesize multidisciplinary knowledge and skills with a clear vision toward individualization of participants and situations to ensure both cultural competence and cultural humility, ensure basic human rights, demonstrate participant respect, and develop creative solutions arising from unique circumstances. The advanced empowerment curriculum sets students on a life-long praxis process of action, reflection, evaluation, and informed action to ensure competent participant-centered practice, promote their own professional development, and contribute to the social work profession.

Empowerment is an advanced social work practice method applicable to any level of human system from individuals to communities and across areas of practice. Economic, social, racial, and environmental justice are the worldview with which empowerment social workers advocate for and with participant systems. Empowering practitioners engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate participant systems in ways that honor participant privilege, promote participant strengths, and develop participant power in a community context. Students build their understanding of the empowerment method on the foundational theories and skills of generalist practice and the knowledge that the personal is political. Within the Empowerment specialization, students learn to apply complex social work theory, to critically analyze power issues within worker-participant relationships, and to implement strategies for re-shaping both interpersonal experience and the context of practice. The empowerment method draws on the skills of critical thinking, complex decision-making, and systems analysis. To sustain an empowering practice requires continual worker introspection, self-evaluation, and feedback in order to develop professional abilities and increase comfort with the ambiguity inherent in working in a multi-systemic context.

Empowerment as a social work practice method has been articulated in the social work literature since the 1980s. Key themes distinguish the empowerment method:

- Collaboration. First, empowerment-based social workers collaborate with participants, emphasizing participant experience and strengths over expert diagnosis and treatment. Workers require an astute understanding of human diversity and the ability to differentiate the unique experience of each participant.
- Context. Second, empowering workers think broadly about possibilities for change, operating with participants to change situations rather than operating on participants to adapt to oppressive conditions. A social justice ethic frames the thinking of an empowering social worker who readily recognizes the social/political roots of individual experience and sees opportunities for change in participants and their environments.
- Multi-level intervention. Third, the empowerment method directs practitioners to intervene across system levels. Workers bridge individually-oriented methods with group, organizational, and community efforts to help participants ally with others, broaden the participation of participants in defining service priorities, and involve participants as key constituents in systems of service delivery.
- Reflection. Finally, empowerment practice is reflective practice. Practitioners thoughtfully apply scientific knowledge to practice situations, construct practice processes to generate practice- based evidence, engage participants as active partners in critically evaluating the work, and reflect on their own values and skills.

## **Course Competencies and Associated Behaviors for the MSW Empowerment Specialization Year**

The student is expected to continue development of the Generalist competencies and behaviors listed above and demonstrate the following added MSW *Empowerment Specialization* associated behaviors:

### **COMPETENCY 1: DEMONSTRATE ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR**

*Implementing an empowerment approach to ethical social work practice requires a social worker's extensive self-awareness. This awareness is based on self-reflection; information from participants, colleagues, and supervisors; scientific knowledge; and ethical analysis of all practice decisions and behaviors. Essential areas of ethical analysis for empowerment-oriented social workers emphasize the worker's socio-cultural location and its impact on practice, as well as the extent to which the worker-participant relationship facilitates empowerment. A praxis process incorporating sources of self-awareness and ethical analysis cycles through phases of reflection, action, and further reflection and steers empowerment-oriented workers toward accountability to participants, community, and the social work profession. Empowerment-oriented social workers:*

- e) evaluate professional actions utilizing a praxis process of reflection-action-reflection informed by participants, colleagues, supervisors, and scientific knowledge,
- f) resolve ethical dilemmas inherent in the empowerment method.

### **COMPETENCY 2: ADVANCE HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL, RACIAL, ECONOMIC, AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

*Empowerment-oriented social workers are committed to advancing human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice. An empowerment-oriented practitioner understands the impact of environmental power dynamics on the identity, development, well-being, and opportunities of individuals and groups. Empowering practitioners analyze the ways in which people's experiences of power are shaped by social and cultural systems, social policy, agency protocols, and global dynamics. In keeping with the goal of empowerment, practitioners act on this knowledge to contribute to a more just society. In addition to their understanding of the sociocultural forces that impact justice and human well-being, empowerment professionals recognize the significance of the natural environment and its impact, globally and locally, upon all species. Practitioners understand an ecological perspective that reveals the interdependence of all life on earth. Empowerment-oriented social workers*

- c) effectively challenge the disempowering attitudes and behaviors that contribute to social injustices, oppression, and discrimination in self and others,

d) *work individually and collectively to advocate for policies at multiple levels which support social, racial and economic justice; protect human rights; and promote well-being of all species, habitats, and ecosystems.*

#### COMPETENCY 3: ENGAGE ANTI-RACISM, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (ADEI) IN PRACTICE

*Empowerment-oriented social workers recognize that anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to socially just practice with historically marginalized populations. The empowerment approach requires ongoing collaboration with participants with diverse identity characteristics. Collaborative partnerships are cultivated through effective communication and nurturing inclusive relationships that recognize participants as strategic partners in the decision-making process. Empowerment-oriented social workers demonstrate the knowledge, skills, values, and cognitive and affective processes associated with the cultural competency model, while embracing cultural humility. Empowerment-oriented social workers are lifelong learners who recognize program participants as subject-matter experts in their lived experiences.*

*Empowerment-based practice further incorporates a strengths-based perspective that acknowledges the positionality of all stakeholders. A strengths-based perspective emphasizes the inherent capabilities of diverse participants and the potential to overcome individual and collective challenges. Empowerment-oriented social workers:*

- c) *collaborate effectively with diverse participant, colleague, and community populations at all practice levels;*
- d) *demonstrate an understanding of cultural competence and cultural humility in acknowledging the strengths and inherent power of participant populations from diverse backgrounds.*

#### COMPETENCY 4: ENGAGE IN PRACTICE-INFORMED RESEARCH AND RESEARCH-INFORMED PRACTICE

*Empowerment-oriented social workers consider and include historically marginalized populations in research design, analysis, and implementation process. Evidence-based practice interventions incorporate participants' preferences, cultural backgrounds, specific life circumstances, and socio-cultural considerations. There is a charge to advocate for more funding and attention to research in underserved communities and areas with limited evidence. A distinguishing quality of empowerment practice is the use of evidence from a participant's perspective in balance with knowledge and evidence generated through research. A critical question is identifying what constitutes valid evidence to guide social work practice, prompting workers to critically evaluate new knowledge and its sources for credibility and applicability in each unique practice situation. Empowerment-oriented social workers continuously evaluate their practices through the lens of new knowledge and by accessing voices from participants, colleagues, and other stakeholders. Empowerment-oriented social workers:*

- c) apply anti-racist and anti-oppressive lenses to critically assess the evidence-base and determine goodness-of-fit for historically marginalized populations;
- d) design, analyze, and implement program evaluations that incorporate stakeholders' views.

#### COMPETENCY 5: ENGAGE IN POLICY PRACTICE

*Empowerment oriented social workers ensure that the lived experience and participation of historically marginalized communities are central to policy practice, including activism and advocacy. Social workers recognize the structural dimensions of oppression and utilizes anti-oppressive and anti-racist frameworks in their practice to actively challenge and transform such systems of oppression. They recognize the role of policy in service delivery and the effects of social policy on a participant's experience. To implement an empowering process, workers acknowledge the pervasive influence of domestic and global social policy in every practice endeavor and use this understanding in their consciousness-raising efforts with participants. Empowerment-oriented social workers engage individually and collectively to influence service delivery, policy formulation, and legislative change. Empowerment-oriented social workers:*

- c) challenge unjust social, racial, political, economic, and environmental policies in all practice activities;
- d) engage in collective action to influence political and economic forces that contribute to individual and community problems.

#### COMPETENCY 6: ENGAGE WITH INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, GROUPS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND COMMUNITIES

*An empowerment method builds upon the generalist foundation in understanding and acting on the dynamic interplay between participants and multiple systems including social, cultural, and political contexts as well as physical environments. Collaboration in engagement elevates subjugated knowledge, activates energy to achieve goals, and exemplifies the value stance of an empowering social work professional in actualizing the principles of self-determination, individualization, the personal as political, and mutual acceptance. Empowerment social work practitioners engage with participants in forming purposeful partnerships, balancing participant strengths with challenges, and in recognizing participant expertise, experience, and resources. To facilitate engagement, empowerment-oriented social workers require an astute understanding of human diversity and consistently practice with an understanding of cultural humility. Empowerment-oriented social workers:*

- c) use critical self-awareness and feedback to construct empowering relationships in collaboration with participants;
- d) facilitate participant system engagement at all practice levels.

## COMPETENCY 7: ASSESS INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, GROUPS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND COMMUNITIES

*An empowerment method builds upon the generalist foundation in understanding and acting on the dynamic interplay between participants and multiple systems including social, cultural, and political contexts as well as physical environments. Collaboration in assessment elevates subjugated knowledge, activates energy to achieve goals, and exemplifies the value stance of an empowering social work professional in actualizing the principles of self-determination, individualization, the personal as political, and mutual acceptance. Empowerment-oriented social workers comprehensively assess participant situations utilizing a social justice ethic in order to recognize social and political roots of individual experience and assess opportunities for change with participants and in their environments. Empowerment-oriented social workers:*

- c) practice cultural humility by collaboratively selecting, modifying, or developing assessment tools in ways that are responsive to diversity;*
- d) assess factors of risk and resilience that hinder or promote participant system competence.*

## COMPETENCY 8: INTERVENE WITH INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, GROUPS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND COMMUNITIES

*An empowerment method builds upon the generalist foundation in understanding and acting on the dynamic interplay between participants and multiple systems including social, cultural, and political contexts as well as physical environments. Collaboration in intervention elevates subjugated knowledge, activates energy to achieve goals, and exemplifies the value stance of an empowering social work professional in actualizing the principles of self-determination, individualization, the personal as political, and mutual acceptance. The empowerment method directs practitioners as an ethical mandate to intervene across system levels. Empowerment-oriented social workers bridge individually oriented methods with group, organizational, and community efforts to help participants ally with others, broaden the participation of participants in defining service priorities, and involve participants as key constituents in systems of service delivery. This multilevel intervention is signature to empowerment practice, whereby the way in which the social worker intervenes with participants is never separate from the multiple contexts which reinforce the oppressive problem-maintaining environment. Empowerment-oriented social workers:*

- c) use strength-oriented empowerment processes to heighten efficacy, competence, and political consciousness;*
- d) demonstrate practice skills necessary to achieve change through integrated clinical and political social work strategies at all practice levels.*

## COMPETENCY 9: EVALUATE PRACTICE WITH INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, GROUPS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND COMMUNITIES

*An empowerment method builds upon the generalist foundation in understanding and acting on the dynamic interplay between participants and multiple systems including social, cultural, and political contexts as well as physical environments. Collaboration in evaluation elevates subjugated knowledge, activates energy to achieve goals, and exemplifies the value stance of an empowering social work professional in actualizing the principles of self-determination, individualization, the personal as political, and mutual acceptance. Empowerment practice is reflective practice. Empowerment practitioners thoughtfully apply scientific knowledge and evidence-based measures to practice situations, construct practice processes to generate practice-based evidence, engage participants as active partners in critically evaluating the work, and reflect on their own values and skills. Empowerment-oriented social workers:*

- c) utilize participant's perspective to continuously monitor and measure practice effectiveness at all practice levels;*
- d) actively involve participants in all steps of evaluation and practice research.*

## PRACTICUM EDUCATION ORGANIZATION

### Overview of Practicum Education Expectations

The purpose of Practicum Education is to provide students with opportunities to develop competence for professional practice. As signature pedagogy, Practicum provides students with an ever changing and intentional learning environment for the facilitation of competency development. In applying concepts and theories learned in the classroom, students test knowledge, apply values, and practice skills in order to develop program competencies for professional practice. This provides a basis for an evidence-informed practice, where students consider relevant research and integrate this information with client preferences and values, ethical principles, available resources, policy considerations, and overall feasibility. The Practicum and the classroom mutually reinforce one another. The following Practicum Education courses and Practicum Seminars run concurrently with theory and practice classes:

#### BSW

- SWK 400 - BSW Practicum I (3 credits)
- SWK 401 - BSW Practicum II (3 credits)
- SWK 402 - BSW Practicum Seminar I (1 credit)
- SWK 403 - BSW Practicum Seminar II (1 credit)

#### MSW

- MSW 591 - Generalist Practicum and Seminar I
- MSW 592 - Generalist Practicum and Seminar II
- MSW 593 - Empowerment Specialization Practicum III
- MSW 594 - Empowerment Specialization Practicum IV
- MSW 603 - Empowerment Practicum Seminar III: Social Work Ethics
- MSW 604 - Empowerment Practicum Seminar IV: Ethical Decision Making

Students are expected to complete Practicum Education in the Generalist sequence with a range of generalist practice experiences with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. In the MSW Specialization year students' Practicum Education assignments are consistent with advanced empowerment practice.

Advanced standing students who hold a BSW degree from a CSWE accredited undergraduate program have one Practicum placement in the MSW Specialization year. Each student, other than the advanced standing student, has two different Practicum placements during the course of study.

Practicum placements are designed to educationally build upon one another. They are also intended to give the student an opportunity to learn about more than one Practicum site's organization and culture so that the student might gain a more comprehensive perspective of social work practice. The student works under the supervision of a Practicum Supervisor with possible additional support provided by a Practicum Task

Supervisor. In certain cases, there may also be an Offsite/SAU Social Work Supervisor. The Practicum Liaison supports the student and the Practicum Supervisor(s) throughout the Practicum.

Practicum placements are confirmed by the Director of Practicum Education on the basis of student interest, learning needs, and practicum site resources. A pre-placement interview between the student and the Practicum Supervisor(s) is required. The pre-placement interview allows the student and the Practicum Supervisor(s) the opportunity to determine the appropriateness of the placement for that individual student. Decisions regarding practicum placement rest solely with the Director of Practicum Education.

### **Selection Criteria for Practicum Sites**

Every effort is made to recruit a wide range of practicum sites that reflect the diversity of services and populations. Recommendations for the development of specific practicum sites may be initiated by agencies, students, faculty, advisory board members, and other interested parties. The Director of Practicum Education contacts the prospective practicum site, reviews the Practicum Education requirements, and discusses the site's interest in affiliation with the school. Prospective practicum sites work with the SAU Contract Coordinator to complete an Affiliation Agreement or external agency contract as needed.

Student placement in a practicum site is a shared decision and is dependent on the needs of the School of Social Work and the ability of the practicum site to provide an educational experience consistent with the objectives of the Practicum placement.

Practicum sites must:

1. embrace a philosophy of service that is congruent with social work values and ethic
2. are willing to expose or involve the student in diverse and appropriate agency learning activities to support student development in social work competencies
3. accept students without discrimination related to race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical disability, or political belief, except where such discrimination permitted for employment under federal statutes that govern the facility
4. provide qualified supervisor(s) with interest and professional competence to assume an educational role in providing for agency-based learning experiences consistent with Practicum Education course objectives.

### **Selection Criteria for Social Work Supervisor**

Practicum Social Work Supervisors are selected for the quality of their attention to professional ethics and values and commitment to the educational standards of the School of Social Work. The Bachelor's level Practicum Social Work Supervisor must

possess their BSW or MSW degree from a school accredited by the Council on Social Work Education and have minimum of two years' full-time post social work degree professional practice experience. The Master's level Practicum Social Work Supervisor must possess their MSW degree from a school accredited by the Council on Social Work Education and have minimum of two years full-time post MSW professional practice experience. The Council on Social Work Education determines the social work supervisor criteria. Prior to confirming the practicum placement, the Director of Practicum Education will confirm the social work supervisor meets the CSWE supervisor criteria.

In exceptional cases where a practicum site is able to offer an extraordinary learning opportunity but is unable to provide the student with a Practicum Social Work Supervisor with the required degree and experience, the Director of Practicum Education will appoint a Social Work Supervisor offsite. A Practicum Task Supervisor will be assigned at the practicum site but the staff member does not have to meet the required degree and experience criteria. The Offsite Social Work Supervisor ensures that a social work perspective is maintained in the placement through weekly social work supervision.

### **Components of Practicum Education**

The roles and responsibilities of practicum entities are conceptualized and defined in order to promote student competency development and to support practicum sites and Practicum Supervisor(s). The success of the Practicum Education component rests in part on collaboration and integration of the various entities that take part in this educational endeavor. Each plays an integral role in the development of quality Practicum placement experiences.

### **Practicum Advisory Board**

The Practicum Advisory Board is a committee of the School of Social Work program faculty. Membership includes representatives from practicum sites and the student body appointed by the Director of Practicum Education and approved by the Director of the School of Social Work. The Director of Practicum Education chairs this committee. The Practicum Advisory Board advises the Director of Practicum Education on Practicum-related matters and recommends curriculum policy changes to the Director of Practicum Education for submission to the program's Curriculum Committee.

### **Director of Practicum Education**

The Director of Practicum Education has primary responsibility for the overall direction of the Practicum education curriculum; preparing manuals and forms; securing approved practicum sites; confirming practicum placements for students; coordinating student placement activities; planning the orientation for students, Practicum Supervisors, and Practicum Liaisons; and mediating any practicum-related problems encountered by students and/or Practicum Supervisors. The Director of Practicum

Education, utilizing input from the Practicum Advisory Board, faculty, Practicum Supervisors and students, conducts evaluation of the Practicum Education component of the curriculum.

Responsibilities:

1. Securing and approving practicum sites and supervisors.
2. Referring students for pre-placement interviews and follow up with the practicum site and student to make a final practicum placement decision.
3. Coordinating the placements of students in practicum sites.
4. Scheduling and planning the annual fall Practicum Orientation for students and Practicum Supervisors.
5. Meeting as needed with Practicum Supervisors throughout the academic year.
6. Planning and collaborating with faculty in the delivery of the Generalist and Specialization practicum experiences.
7. Disseminating the course syllabi, learning agreements, timesheets, evaluation forms, and other materials relevant to the practicum experience to students and Practicum Supervisors.
8. Preparing Practicum Education forms, manuals, and evaluation tools.
9. Assigning a Practicum Liaison who will make planned contacts; for the purpose of assisting Practicum Supervisor(s) and student in facilitating the Learning Agreement and evaluating student performance and learning opportunities in the Practicum placement.
10. Mediating any practicum related concerns encountered by students, Practicum Liaisons, and/or Practicum Supervisors.
11. Chairing the Practicum Liaison Committee.
12. Chairing the Practicum Advisory Board.

### **Practicum Liaison**

Practicum Liaisons are faculty or adjunct faculty members who work with the Director of Practicum Education to coordinate Practicum Education between the School of Social Work and the practicum site. Ongoing communication takes place between the Practicum Liaison, Practicum Supervisor(s), and the student. The Practicum Liaison serves as an educational consultant to the Practicum Supervisor(s) and provides information on curriculum relevant to the student's educational experience. This includes contact with the Practicum Supervisor(s) and the student to review site activities in relation to the practicum experience learning objectives, the selection and sequencing of assignments, the individualizing of learning goals and objectives, and the evaluation of the level of competence achieved.

Responsibilities:

1. Conduct required planned contacts with the student and the Practicum Supervisor(s) during the academic year to provide consultation and formal evaluation of the student's performance in the practicum.
2. Review and grades all Practicum Education coursework, holds periodic conferences with both the student and Practicum Supervisor(s), evaluate the student's educational learning, and recommend a grade.
3. Consult with the Practicum Supervisor(s) and the student to reconcile problems in the practicum.
4. Serve as an educational resource to the Practicum Supervisor(s).
5. Serve on the Practicum Liaison Committee.

### **School of Social Work**

It is the responsibility of the Director of Practicum Education and the social work faculty to assess student readiness for Practicum Education. It is the responsibility of the Director of Practicum Education to facilitate the placement of the student in an appropriate practicum site. The School of Social Work is also responsible for providing an orientation to Practicum Supervisors. The School of Social Work seeks to enlist Practicum Supervisor(s) for membership on curriculum review and policy development committees and to engage in university-agency partnerships for consultation and training.

#### Responsibilities:

1. Providing an annual Practicum Education Orientation to review curriculum and expectations for practicum students.
2. Providing an annual orientation for Practicum Supervisors to provide Practicum Education requirements and support.
3. Providing student malpractice insurance coverage in the amount of \$1,000,000/\$3,000,000.
4. Providing free registration to current Practicum Supervisors to attend St. Ambrose University School of Social Work CEU events.

### **Practicum Site**

The practicum site is the setting for the practicum. Selection of practicum sites is based on the ability to provide a quality learning experience, commitment to collaborative participation in professional education, and commitment to service. Administrative support is a valued and necessary component of the Practicum placement and represents a significant commitment to professional education. Administrators at practicum sites demonstrate their commitment by ensuring that the setting meets the School of Social Work standards, the Practicum Supervisor's job responsibilities are adjusted to make available time for student instruction and supervision, and resources are provided.

Responsibilities:

1. Provide practicum supervision for practicum students from St. Ambrose University School of Social Work. Practicum placements will be mutually agreed upon and will be dependent on the needs of the School of Social Work and the ability of the agency to provide an educational experience consistent with the objectives of the practicum placement.
2. Provide qualified Practicum Supervisor(s) with interest and professional competence to assume an educational role in providing for site based learning experiences consistent with Practicum Education course objectives.
3. Orient practicum students to policies, forms, schedules, safety procedures and risk management aspects of the organization.
4. Comply with principles of confidentiality and privacy regarding practicum students.
5. Allow time for Practicum Supervisor(s) to conduct the required one hour weekly social work supervision to discuss learning activities, participate in planned meetings with the Practicum Liaison, and attend the annual Practicum Supervisor Orientation.
6. Complete and submit an evaluation of practicum student performance at the end of each semester within the format provided by the school.
7. Contact the Practicum Liaison if concerns arise with a student's performance or significant events occur within the practicum site which have an impact on the completion of the Learning Agreement.
8. Ensure practicum students placed have adequate physical facilities and clerical support to complete practicum work.
9. Discuss with practicum students the policies regarding background checks and health/immunization requirements.
10. Maintain ultimate responsibility for programs and services.

**Practicum Social Work Supervisor**

This person serves as the practicum student's teacher and supervisor at the practicum site providing instruction, ongoing feedback, and assessment of the student's acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values. This person has overall responsibility for planning and directing the learning experience for the practicum student at the practicum site. Direct supervision may come primarily from another staff member who serves as a Practicum Task Supervisor, mutually agreed upon. The Practicum Social Work Supervisor has a social work degree from a CSWE-approved School of Social Work with at least two years post degree experience.

Responsibilities:

1. Interviews students for practicum placement consideration.

2. Arranges learning activities including orientation to the agency and community, and assigns tasks and projects.
3. Serves as a professional role model for the practicum student in developing professional behaviors and identifying with the social work profession.
4. In collaboration with the practicum student, develops a Learning Agreement based upon the criteria established by the School of Social Work.
5. Completes evaluation on the practicum student's performance at the end of each semester that is discussed with the student and Practicum Liaison.
6. Conducts one-hour weekly social work supervision with the practicum student to provide feedback, review the Learning Agreement, answer questions, and discuss practice issues in connection with the NASW Code of Ethics.
7. Attends the annual Practicum Supervisor Orientation by the School of Social Work.

### **Practicum Task Supervisor**

When there is a Practicum Social Work Supervisor at the practicum site, the Practicum Task Supervisor serves as an additional support person for the student in the Practicum placement. This person may be responsible for providing direct supervision of the student. The Practicum Task Supervisor supports the Practicum Social Work Supervisor to instruct, provide ongoing feedback, and assist with assessment of student's acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values.

When there is no Practicum Social Work Supervisor at the practicum site, the Practicum Task Supervisor serves as the student's teacher and supervisor providing instruction, ongoing feedback, and assessment of the student acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values. This person has overall responsibility for planning and directing the learning experience for the student in the agency.

#### **Responsibilities:**

1. Serves as a professional role model for the student in developing professional behaviors.
2. Facilitates learning activities including orientation to the practicum site and assigns tasks.
3. Available to the student to provide feedback and answer questions.
4. Completes the Practicum Supervisor Evaluation on the student's performance at the end of each semester.

### **Offsite/SAU Social Work Supervisor**

In cases where a practicum site is able to provide an exceptional placement opportunity but does not have a staff member with a social work degree, the Director of Practicum Education will secure an Offsite Social Work Supervisor. The assigned Offsite Social

Work Supervisor will either be a community member (Offsite Social Work Supervisor) or a faculty member (SAU Social Work Supervisor). The supervision will be conducted face to face either in person or virtually. This Supervisor ensures that a social work perspective is maintained in the practicum placement and the learning activities of the student. This person will facilitate the required weekly one hour social work supervision for the entire academic year.

**Responsibilities:**

1. Supports the Practicum Supervisor(s) and/or practicum student in selecting learning activities to meet social work competencies.
2. Provides the required one hour weekly social work supervision with the student for the entire academic year.
3. Serves as a resource person to the Practicum Supervisor(s).
4. Reports practicum concerns to the Practicum Liaison.

**Practicum Student**

Students participate in the selection of the practicum placement by consulting with the Director of Practicum Education about their professional interests and interviewing with Practicum Supervisor(s) for placement consideration. Students set a practicum schedule that meets the required weekly practicum hours. Students may need to be flexible in their regular practicum schedule to be available to attend staff meetings and required staff development. While efforts will be made to locate a practicum placement that fits the preferred geographical area and professional interests, the Director of Practicum Education cannot guarantee accommodation of all student preferences. Students are expected to demonstrate flexibility in considering practicum options. As adult learners, students should be proactive in maximizing learning opportunities by seeking out challenging experiences that enhance their repertoire of professional knowledge and skills.

**Responsibilities:**

1. Follow administrative policies, standards, and practices of the practicum site.
2. Conform to the standards and practices established by the School for Practicum Education including adherence to the *Code of Ethics* of the National Association of Social Workers and the *Behavioral Standards for Professional Social Work*. Behavior consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics in classroom, community, and Practicum Education include but are not limited to:
  - a. basing professional practice, relationships, and interactions on the social work values of respect for human dignity, cultural differences and human diversity; self-determination; confidentiality and privacy rights; and social justice
  - b. developing constructive professional relationships with participants and others

- c. avoiding dual relationships and conflicts of interest with agencies and participants
- d. working constructively and cooperatively with supervisors, peers, instructors and other professionals
- e. complying with practicum site policies and School of Social Work standards and procedures
- f. maintaining participant, agency, and classroom confidentiality
- g. disclosing any dual relationships, conflicts of interest, legal issues, or criminal justice issues that may affect their performance or admissibility to a particular Practicum setting
- h. applying established social work methods and skills as well as research and theories of human behavior to social work situations

3. Respect the confidential nature of practicum site files and participant information. Maintain strict confidentiality regarding agency matters. Obtain practicum site approval for the use of any case material or records outside of the agency, maintaining accepted standards of confidentiality.
4. Be present at the practicum site according to the school's requirements and the practicum schedule set up with the Practicum Supervisor(s) at the beginning of the semester.
  - a. In the event of an unavoidable absence or tardiness, the student must notify the Practicum Supervisor(s) in advance.
  - b. If the absence will be two days or more, the student must notify the Practicum Liaison as well and provide a plan to make up the missed practicum hours within the current semester.
5. Prepare and participate in the required weekly supervision with the Practicum Social Work Supervisor (Offsite or SAU Social Work Supervisor, if applicable). This includes reviewing the Learning Agreement to identify progress, discussing practicum work within the practicum site, and sharing reflections to and questions about the practicum experience.
6. Take responsibility for learning within the practicum and use the practicum experience as an opportunity to enrich and extend the whole social work curriculum. This includes, but is not limited to, continual self-evaluation in identifying learning needs, development of the Learning Agreement, maintaining a Reflective Practicum Journal, and completing Self Evaluations at mid semester and end of the semester.
7. Prepare for and actively participate in required meetings with the Practicum Liaison and Practicum Supervisor(s). This includes completion and submission of required practicum coursework by the deadlines listed in the Practicum Timesheet.

8. Complete all documentation according to the practicum site and Practicum Education requirements and expectations.
9. Advise the Practicum Liaison regarding any significant events or changes in status in the practicum. This includes changes to practicum schedule and Practicum Supervisor(s).

### **The Affiliation Agreement**

The Affiliation Agreement clarifies for parties the essential expectations regarding the practicum placement for the practicum site, the School of Social Work, and the student. Affiliation agreements and/or external agency contracts are facilitated by the SAU Contract Coordinator for the College of Health and Human Sciences.

### **Required Practicum Hours**

All practicum students must complete required weekly practicum hours in person at the practicum site according to the practicum schedule listed in their Learning Agreement and the Practicum Timesheet. Practicum schedules should include at minimum three-hour increments for each day a student is designated to be at the practicum site.

Practicum students are expected to keep pace with this schedule and are not permitted to bank hours to adjust the weekly practicum schedule or end their practicum placement early. Students remain in the practicum placement until the last day indicated on the Practicum Timesheet even if they have completed the minimum number of hours.

Included in the required weekly practicum hours is the 1 hour weekly social work supervision and 1 hour of self-care. Compliance with this practicum schedule provides students with the following total number of practicum hours required by the Council on Social Work Education:

- BSW/MSW Generalist level- 12 hours per week for a total of 400 practicum hours
- MSW Empowerment Specialization level- 15 Practicum hours per week for a total of 500 practicum hours

What can be counted towards Practicum hours:

- Time spent at the practicum site participating in activities listed in the student's Learning Agreement
- One-hour social work supervision
- One-hour of self-care
- Travel from the practicum site to meetings, other agencies, trainings, and other Practicum related activities, with approval by Practicum Supervisor(s)
- Professional development sessions, trainings, staff meetings, shadowing opportunities, etc. with approval by Practicum Supervisor(s)
- Completion of Practicum coursework at the practicum site- Learning Agreement, Evaluations, Timesheet, Reflective Journal

What cannot be counted towards Practicum hours:

- Practicum work completed at home
- Travel to practicum site and home
- Practicum Seminar sessions
- Meal breaks
- Homework for other classes completed at the practicum site

In the event of an unavoidable absence or tardiness, the student must notify the Practicum Supervisor(s) in advance. If the absence will be two days or more, the student must also notify the Practicum Liaison and provide a plan to make up the missed practicum hours within the current semester. The plan must be shared with the Practicum Supervisor(s) and the Practicum Liaison. The required practicum hours must be completed in order to receive a passing grade for the current semester.

Only a few practicum sites have evening or weekend hours available. For this reason, practicum students should plan to complete their practicum hours on weekdays during regular business hours. This may require restructuring of the student's employment or other activities. The Director of Practicum Education cannot guarantee accommodation of student preference for alternative placement hours.

### **Required Social Work Supervision**

Students are required to complete 1 hour weekly social work supervision for the entire academic year practicum. Social work supervision should focus on learning, skill development, and competency development. The weekly social work supervision hour is spent evaluating the following areas: the student's strengths, progress, educational needs, accomplishments, and areas in need of development. The student is expected to prepare for the required weekly social work supervision by coming with questions, seeking feedback, identifying topics to discuss, sharing practicum and practice reflections, discussing practice issues in connection with the NASW Code of Ethics, and providing updates on progress with the Learning Agreement.

In the event supervision cannot occur due to an unforeseen circumstance or scheduling conflict, the student is responsible for rescheduling the supervision for another day and time in the same week. If that is not possible, the student must reach out to their Practicum Liaison to notify them of the situation and schedule supervision with the Practicum Liaison.

Students must accurately report the completion of the required 1 hour social work supervision on their Practicum Timesheet. The Practicum Timesheet is considered academic coursework and must be an accurate representation of Practicum hours completed at the practicum site. In the event the Practicum Timesheet is not an accurate representation of Practicum hours, it is considered a violation of Academic Integrity and an automatic Academic Review could be called. Accurate reporting

adheres to the NASW Code of Ethics value of Integrity that social workers act in a trustworthy manner.

### **Self-Care in Practicum**

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics includes language in the Purpose of the NASW Code of Ethics and Ethical Principles sections that address the importance of professional self-care. The emphasis on self-care aims to support social workers in managing the emotional and physical demands of the social work profession, ultimately improving well-being and ability to serve clients effectively. It encourages self-care practices to prevent compassion fatigue and maintain ethical conduct.

- **Purpose of the NASW Code of Ethics-** The Code socializes practitioners new to the field to social work's mission, values, ethical principles, and ethical standards, and encourages all social workers to engage in self-care, ongoing education, and other activities to ensure their commitment to those same core features of the profession.
  - Professional self-care is paramount for competent and ethical social work practice. Professional demands, challenging workplace climates, and exposure to trauma warrant that social workers maintain personal and professional health, safety, and integrity. Social work organizations, agencies, and educational institutions are encouraged to promote organizational policies, practices, and materials to support social workers' self-care.
- **Ethical Principle: Social workers behave in a trustworthy manner.**
  - **Value: Integrity**
  - Social workers are continually aware of the profession's mission, values, ethical principles, and ethical standards and practice in a manner consistent with them. Social workers should take measures to care for themselves professionally and personally. Social workers act honestly and responsibly and promote ethical practices on the part of the organizations with which they are affiliated.

The St. Ambrose University School of Social Work supports students in practicing self-care on a weekly basis during their practicum by providing 1 hour of self-care practice to be counted toward their weekly required practicum hours.

- Students will:
  - Complete a self-care assessment.
  - Create a self-care plan.
  - Share and reflect on their weekly self-care practice in the Reflective Practicum Journal.
  - Report the weekly 1 hour of self-care practice in the Practicum Timesheet.

- Utilize resources provided by the School of Social Work to engage in new or continuing self-care practices.
- Schedule their 1 hour of self-care activity so that it does not interfere with their approved practicum schedule. The 1 hour of self-care cannot be used to arrive late or leave early for a practicum shift.

### **Practicum Seminar**

Practicum Seminar is intended to provide integration and support to students' practicum learning activities. Designed as a continuum, these Seminars provide support and information concurrent to the community-based practicum. The Practicum Seminar also serves as a professional support group and provides an opportunity for practicing group leadership skills.

The Generalist Practicum Seminar at the BSW and MSW level provides an introduction to the National Association of Social Work Code of Ethics. Students will also learn to apply foundation skills, values, and knowledge; to develop an awareness of self; and to discuss practice issues.

The MSW Specialization Practicum Seminar supports students in developing knowledge and skills in the advanced empowerment method. Core components of this seminar include social work values and ethical principles in social work practice and research; program evaluation and outcomes measurement; and consideration of future issues in social work practice.

## **ORIENTATION AND TRAINING FOR PRACTICUM SUPERVISORS**

### **Overview**

Practicum Supervisors provide an essential role in the education and development of professional social workers. To this end, Practicum Supervisors need to understand the educational objectives of the school and their role in working with the student and Practicum Education faculty.

The School of Social Work provides a Practicum Supervisor Orientation and continuing education opportunities for Practicum Supervisors. Orientation to the Practicum Education program occurs through contact with the Director of Practicum Education, in reviewing materials provided by the School of Social Work, and through attendance at the annual Practicum Supervisor Orientation. All Practicum Supervisors are provided the Practicum Education Manual, available in its entirety on the website. Furthermore, Practicum Supervisors are provided information about the curriculum and the CSWE Educational and Policy Accreditation Standards (2022).

Continuing education events, such as the Fall Ethics Event and the Social Justice Conference, provide licensed Iowa and Illinois social workers with continuing education units. These training events sponsored by the School of Social Work provide practice-orientated information for professional social work competencies in ethical practice, human diversity and social and economic justice. In this way the School of Social Work contributes to the continuing education for social workers and furthers the program's goal to develop partnerships with the social service delivery system.

### **Annual Practicum Orientation**

The School of Social Work sponsors the Annual Practicum Orientation in August of each year for practicum students. Presentations anchored to the curriculum with practicum applications are offered by faculty of the School of Social Work. Practicum students meet in small groups with their Practicum Liaison to discuss the development of the Learning Agreement and plan for initial practicum site visits.

### **Fall Ethics CEU Event**

This event fulfills the three-hour continuing education ethics requirement to meet social work licensure requirements.

### **Social Justice Conference**

The School of Social Work holds an annual Social Justice Conference each year for Practicum Supervisors, students, and the regional social work community. This conference features a keynote presentation, panel with professionals and individuals with lived experience, and an action session to engage participants in taking next steps to address the social justice topic of the conference.

## **PRACTICUM EDUCATION ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA, STUDENT SCREENING AND PLACEMENT PROCEDURES**

### **Student Eligibility for Practicum Education**

Students who have been admitted to the School of Social Work have reflected a level of professional readiness to be successful in Practicum Education. Students must complete the required steps of the practicum placement process to be eligible and successfully placed in a practicum site (detailed below). If significant issues are noted at any time during the program and/or in the practicum placement process that pose questions about the student's suitability for practice, the Director of Practicum Education, in consultation with program faculty, will address these concerns directly with the student through Steps of Remediation detailed in the Student Policy Manual.

### **Practicum Placement Process**

The successful completion of the practicum placement process requires students to follow procedures as specified. The School of Social Work articulates an Affiliation Agreement with practicum sites identifying the conditions and process by which student will be placed in approved practicum sites. Students preparing for their practicum placement must adhere to these placement guidelines. All practicum experiences are for the academic year and begin in the fall semester. The practicum placement process begins early in the preceding spring semester. While students may request specific practicum sites, they are not to initiate contact with an agency to seek a placement within that agency without the prior approval of the Director of Practicum Education. Students who do not complete the required practicum placement process steps as instructed may experience interview and placement delays or reduce chances for placement in a preferred Practicum of practice or geographic area.

Students and the Director of Practicum Education collaborate in the following ways during the practicum placement process:

1. The student completes the Practicum Interest Form and submits an updated resume in the SSW Practicum Education Blackboard site prior to meeting with the Director of Practicum Education. This Practicum Interest Form asks students to identify three areas of social work practice they are interested in and their preferred geographic location.
2. The student schedules a meeting with the Director of Practicum Education. The purpose of this meeting is to review the student's interests and professional goals to identify potential practicum site(s) to interview with. The Director of Practicum Education provides feedback to assist the student with updating their professional resume for the interview process. Details regarding the completion of Program Requirements in the SSW Practicum Education Blackboard site are provided. The School of Social Work Program Requirements that must be met to secure a practicum placement.

3. The Director of Practicum Education will contact the site(s) to determine its interest and ability to serve as a practicum site and support a practicum student. If the practicum site is open to interviewing the student, the Director of Practicum Education provides the student with contact information for the student to reach out to schedule a pre-placement interview.
4. The student contacts the prospective practicum site and arranges for a pre-placement interview in a timely manner. The student will provide their professional resume. At the interview, the student should dress professionally and come prepared with questions.

The following topics may be addressed:

- the student's educational goals
- the student's career goals
- the student's preferred learning style
- the student's relative strengths and considered areas for growth
- the kinds of experiences the practicum site is able to offer
- the practicum site's expectations of the student
- practicum site resources available to the student
- the format for supervision
- practicum placement scheduling
- additional expectations and requirements of the practicum site, e.g., criminal and/or other background checks, physical exams, immunizations, waivers of liability, drug screening, liability insurance, etc.

5. After the pre-placement interview(s) are completed, the student informs the Director of Practicum Education regarding their interview feedback and placement preference. The Director of Practicum Education follows up with the agency for their feedback and a final placement decision is made.
6. Practicum placement confirmation letters are emailed to students and Practicum Supervisor(s) by the office of the Director of Practicum Education. The student will be notified of any contract requirements of the practicum site that must be met before the practicum begins.
7. The office of the Director of Practicum Education will notify students of the date and time for the required annual Practicum Education Orientation. In addition, the Practicum Timesheet and Practicum Education Manual are provided to students and Practicum Supervisor(s). All Practicum students are required to attend the annual Practicum Education Orientation provided by the School of Social Work before the practicum begins.

8. Practicum students must contact their Practicum Supervisor(s) by August 1st to establish the date and time to begin placement activities according to the Practicum Timesheet and to receive any reading or other preparatory recommendations.
9. Practicum Liaisons will be assigned and will meet with students at the Practicum Education Orientation.

### **Program Requirements for Practicum Students**

The School of Social Work requires that all practicum students must complete Program Requirements to secure a practicum placement. Students will submit documentation for the following Program Requirements in the SSW Practicum Education Blackboard site:

- Student Consent Form
- Student Practicum Education Agreement
- Mandatory Reporter Training certificates- Child Abuse and Dependent Adult Abuse (within the past 3 years)
  - Online training for Mandatory Reporter available through the Iowa DHS website

### **Contract Requirements for Practicum Students**

Some practicum agencies may have contract requirements for practicum students, such as a background check, drug screen, physical, other immunizations/testing, training, etc. Following confirmation of the practicum placement, students will be notified as soon as possible of contract requirements. Any student with contract requirements for their practicum placement are required to sign up for a Viewpoint Screening account, an online document tracking system Additional costs related to Viewpoint Screening and the contract requirements are the student's responsibility. This process is managed directly by students to verify satisfaction of all contract requirements of the practicum site. Documentation of immunizations, certifications, and other forms required by the practicum site are to be uploaded, stored, and approved in Viewpoint Screening.

### **Criminal Background Check and Child Abuse Registry Check**

Some organizations require students to pass a criminal background check and abuse registry check prior to beginning the placement. Most agencies complete these checks themselves, but some do not. Students whose practicum sites require a criminal background check and child abuse registry check but do not provide these services are able to order background/registry checks for a fee through Viewpoint Screening. This process is managed directly by the student with Viewpoint Screening. Once the checks are complete, the Director of Practicum Education will view the results and report to the practicum site.

## **Employment-based Practicum**

Practicum Education is the signature pedagogy of social work education, where students develop their professional identity and integrate the skills and concepts learned throughout their coursework. The current best practice for Practicum Education requires students to engage in learning activities that allow for the attainment of Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) competencies. The Council on Social Work Education standards address the need to preserve an educational focus within the practicum experience. Students who work in social services are permitted to submit an employment-based practicum application. Please read the process and expectations below.

When a student chooses to apply for an employment-based practicum, it is the student's responsibility to manage the process. This includes completing the application, making sure the necessary parties agree and gathering signatures. An employment-based practicum requires more responsibility on the part of the student.

## **Employment-based Practicum Criteria**

The following criteria must be met for the student to be approved for an employment-based practicum. Please note, many agencies have different policies regarding employment-based practicum. Before pursuing an employment-based practicum, students should first consult with their employer about employment-based practicum policies and procedures. The School of Social Work requires an employment-based practicum to adhere to the following requirements:

- Must meet all of the program's criteria and procedures for Practicum Education.
- Student must complete all practicum work in person and on site at the employer.
- Student has completed a three-month orientation period at the agency in order to be eligible to apply for an employment-based practicum.
- Student must meet the educational objectives and requirements for the practicum set by the School of Social Work.
- Practicum Social Work Supervisor must meet criteria listed below and be different from the student's employment supervisor.
  - BSW level- BSW degree from a CSWE accredited program and 2 years post degree experience
  - MSW level- MSW degree from a CSWE accredited program and 2 years post degree experience
- Learning activities must meet all of the nine social work competencies. If possible, the student should also propose some supplemental learning opportunities beyond work duties.

**The employer must agree to the following:**

- Establish an affiliation agreement with the School of Social Work if one does not already exist.
- Allow the student/employee to have an educationally focused practicum experience.
- Allow the student/employee to participate in activities that link directly to the nine social work competencies. This may or may not be in the same setting as the student's current work.
- Allow the Practicum Supervisor(s) to attend the Practicum Supervisor Orientation prior to the start of the practicum.
- Provide the Practicum Supervisor(s) with sufficient time to provide the minimum requirement one hour per week of social work supervision for the student.

**The Practicum Social Work Supervisor must agree to the following:**

- Provide a social work perspective to the student's practicum experience.
- Provide the required one hour per week of social work supervision for the student. Supervision must focus on learning, skill development, and competency development.
- Allow the student the space and permission to be a learner. In other words, the student's role as a student should be prioritized along with their learning and skill development.
- In collaboration with the student, develops a student Learning Agreement based upon the criteria established by the MSW Program.
- Engage in required contacts with the Practicum Liaison and the student throughout the practicum experience.
- Complete an evaluation on the student's performance at the end of each semester that is discussed with the student and the Practicum Liaison.

**The Practicum Task Supervisor must agree to the following:**

- Provide support to the student with their practicum experience.
- Allow the student the space and permission to be a learner. In other words, the student's role as a student should be prioritized along with their learning and skill development.
- In collaboration with the student, develops a student Learning Agreement based upon the criteria established by the MSW Program.
- Engage in required contacts with the Practicum Liaison and the student throughout the practicum experience.

- Complete an evaluation on the student's performance at the end of each semester that is discussed with the student and the Practicum Liaison.

**The student understands and must agree to the following:**

- To be eligible for an employment-based practicum, the student must:
  - Be in good standing with the employer and not on probation or a performance improvement plan.
  - Be making satisfactory progress in their degree in the School of Social Work.
  - Have completed a three-month orientation period at the agency in order to be eligible to apply for an employment-based practicum.
- First meet with the Director of Practicum Education to discuss their options and if an employment-based practicum is possible and/or appropriate.
- Complete and submit the employment-based practicum application and include all required documentation.
- An approved employment-based practicum cannot be transferred to another agency for any reason or at any time during the academic year.
- Once approved, the student must remain at the agency for the entirety of the academic year practicum.
- Practicum hours must be completed in person and on site at the employer and can only be counted as follow: 12 hours per week for Generalist level and 15 hours per week for Specialization level. Students remain in the practicum until the last day indicated on the practicum calendar even if they have completed the minimum number of required practicum hours.
- If a student is offered a position by their current practicum site, they must notify the Director of Practicum Education and their Practicum Liaison before accepting the position. If they wish to apply for an employment-based practicum, they would follow the same employment-based practicum policy, procedures, and application process.
- A change in status as an employee during the employment-based practicum may place their role as a practicum student in jeopardy. Should the student's employment status with the agency be terminated as well as their practicum, the Director of Practicum Education will convene a meeting with the student and Practicum Liaison to discuss the reason for termination and determine if a practicum replacement is possible.
  - In these cases, a suitable practicum replacement may not be possible. Thus, the student would need to drop the Practicum course along with any co-requisite courses.

- Partial credit for the time spent in the employment-based practicum will not be granted.

**Items that must be submitted with the application:**

1. Job description
2. Competencies Worksheet showing learning activities that meet the 9 social work competencies

**Application Review Process**

Once the application is returned to the Practicum Education Department, it will be reviewed by a committee, and a response will be given as soon as possible to indicate whether the practicum has been approved. A meeting with the student and employer may be required as part of the application review process prior to determining approval. In the case of an appeal, the application will be reviewed from a Practicum Advisory Board member. If a student applies for a second employment-based practicum at the same employer, the Practicum Liaison from the Generalist year will be included in the review process to share and evaluate the appropriateness and fit of completing a second employment-based practicum at the same employer.

## **PRACTICUM EDUCATION DOCUMENTS**

### **Documents to Monitor Student Progress**

#### **LEARNING AGREEMENT**

The Learning Agreement provides the focus for the practicum and is flexible to allow for opportunities offered within a diversity of settings and to promote the learning style, experiences and educational goals of the student within each area of social work competency. The Learning Agreement is completed at the beginning of the fall semester and updated throughout the practicum. Learning activities are identified to provide opportunities for the student to demonstrate capacity in all competency areas. The Learning Agreement identifies the comprehensive list of behaviors comprising social work competencies. It is designed to facilitate the development and measurement of these competencies advancing an ethical, reflective and evidence-informed practice.

Development of the Learning Agreement is initiated and led by the student in collaboration with the Practicum Supervisor(s) to identify learning activities and determine the method and evidence of assessment of identified learning activities. Students must complete and update their Learning Agreement according to the due dates listed in the Practicum Timesheet. The Practicum Liaison will review and provide feedback.

#### **PRACTICUM TIMESHEET**

Students maintain a Practicum Timesheet that must be updated on a weekly basis to accurately report completion of weekly practicum hours, required social work supervision, and 1 hour of self-care. The Practicum Timesheet must be completed on a weekly basis and up to date every Sunday by 11:59pm. It will be reviewed by the Practicum Supervisor and Practicum Liaison. The Practicum Timesheet is considered academic coursework. In the event the Practicum Timesheet is not accurate, it is considered a violation of Academic Integrity and an automatic Academic Review could be called. Accurate reporting adheres to the NASW Code of Ethics value of Integrity that social workers act in a trustworthy manner.

#### **REFLECTIVE PRACTICUM JOURNAL**

The act of journaling involves the regular practice of recording activities and/or situations with the goal of reflecting on those experiences in order to learn from them and enhance professional competencies. Documentation of practice activities is an educational process that involves analysis, integration, synthesis, and critical self-reflection. Students are required to complete a weekly Reflective Practicum Journal to indicate learning activities completed for that week. In addition, at the end of each month students will reflect on the overall month. It is expected that the Reflective Practicum Journal be thoughtful, substantive and demonstrate critical thinking related to integration and application of course content with the practicum experience. Reflective

Practicum Journals need to be grammatically and structurally correct, clear and succinct.

The Reflective Practicum Journal must be completed weekly by 11:59pm every Sunday. The monthly reflection must be completed by the due dates listed in the Practicum Timesheet. The Practicum Liaison will review and may provide feedback. It will also be used for students to share their field experiences during Practicum Seminar class discussion. The Reflective Practicum Journal is essential to success in the field placement as it informs the student in preparing for weekly supervision, contacts with the Practicum Liaison, and completion of the Self Evaluations.

## **Documents to Evaluate Student Learning and Competency Development**

### **EVALUATION OF STUDENT COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT**

Evaluation of student capacity in social work competencies is ongoing and shared by the Practicum Supervisor(s) and student. A portion of the weekly educational supervision hour is spent evaluating the following areas: the student's strengths, progress, educational needs, accomplishments, and areas in need of development. In addition to this informal and on-going evaluation, the student's demonstration of practice competencies is formally evaluated by the Practicum Supervisor(s) at the end of each semester. Students complete Mid Semester Self Evaluations, Student Self Evaluations, and maintain both a Practicum Timesheet and a Reflective Practicum Journal for each semester.

### **PRACTICUM SUPERVISOR EVALUATION**

The Practicum Supervisor Evaluation is completed by the Practicum Supervisor(s) at the end of the fall and spring semesters. The Practicum Social Work Supervisor is responsible for completing the Practicum Supervisor Evaluation. When there is more than one supervisor involved in the practicum, all must be included in completing the evaluation. In situations where there is no Practicum Social Work Supervisor on site, the Practicum Task Supervisor will be responsible for completing the evaluation.

The specific CSWE nine core competencies and behaviors serve as the evaluation criteria. The student is rated on a five-point scale using the criteria listed below. It is expected that student learning will increase over the course of the placement. Student ratings should show increased rating scores from their Fall semester evaluation to their final Spring evaluation scores. Ratings should be that of a student, not a professional in Practicum. A rating of 4 and above indicates the student demonstrates the necessary social work competence for a Passing grade. If there are ratings of 1's or 2's, the Practicum Supervisor must provide a rational for this in the comment section of that competency.

**The student's performance is rated using the following scale:**

- 5 – The student uses this skill consistently and effectively.*
- 4 – The student demonstrates effective use of this practice skill most of the time.*
- 3 - The student understands this skill and offers evidence of appropriate use.*  
*More practice experience is required*
- 2 – The student understands the skill, but shows little ability to implement in practice.*
- 1 – Unacceptable: the student demonstrates little understanding of this skill or its use in practice.*

The evaluation is shared with the student prior to the scheduled Evaluation Meeting with the Practicum Liaison. The student will complete the same evaluation and share it with the Practicum Supervisor(s). The Practicum Supervisor(s) meet with the student to review both evaluations before the Evaluation Meeting with the Practicum Liaison each semester. The submitted evaluation will be reviewed by the Liaison in preparation for the Evaluation Meeting. During each Evaluation Meeting the Practicum Liaison, Practicum Supervisor(s) and student participate in a discussion of the evaluation.

#### **MID SEMESTER SELF EVALUATION**

The Mid Semester Self Evaluation is a narrative report completed by the student that summarizes their progress in addressing activities outlined in the Learning Agreement, as well as the strengths and challenges identified during the semester. The student must share the completed evaluation with their Practicum Supervisor(s) and discuss during weekly supervision. Students must complete the Mid Semester Self Evaluation by the due dates listed in the Practicum Timesheet. The Practicum Liaison will review and may provide feedback.

#### **STUDENT SELF EVALUATION**

The Student Self Evaluation is completed by the student at the end of the fall and spring semesters. Students must complete the Student Self Evaluation according to the due dates listed in the Practicum Timesheet. The specific CSWE nine core competencies and behaviors serve as the evaluation criteria. The Practicum Supervisor(s) will complete the same evaluation and share it with the student. A meeting will be held between the Practicum Supervisor(s) and student to review both evaluations before the Evaluation Meeting with the Practicum Liaison each semester. After supervision, the Practicum Supervisor will then make any necessary changes or additions. The Practicum Supervisor will finalize the Practicum Supervisor Evaluation prior to the scheduled Evaluation Meeting at the end of the semester with the Practicum Liaison. The Practicum Liaison will review the submitted evaluations in preparation for the Evaluation Meeting. During each Evaluation Meeting the Practicum Liaison, Practicum Supervisor(s) and student participate in a discussion of the evaluation.

## ASSIGNMENT OF GRADE

Practicum is an academic course requirement. Educational evaluation of student learning and performance at the practicum site is intended to be collaborative, continuous, and strength-based. The student's presentation and accomplishments in the Practicum placement are evaluated by the student, the Practicum Supervisor(s), and the Practicum Liaison. The Practicum Liaison will recommend a grade based on the completion and timely submission of all Practicum coursework, completion of required practicum hours and weekly social work supervision, and satisfactory Practicum Supervisor Evaluation. Each semester's Practicum is appraised Credit/Pass or No-Credit/Fail. The Director of Practicum Education reviews the recommended grade and determines the final grade assigned.

Students are at risk for earning a Failing grade in the following instances with no communication to the Practicum Liaison: late submissions of required Practicum coursework, not submitting required Practicum coursework, not meeting the required Practicum hours on a weekly basis and/or per semester, and/or not completing the required weekly social work supervision

## **PROCEDURES FOR ADDRESSING PRACTICUM PLACEMENT CONCERNS**

### **Addressing Concerns in the Practicum**

All practicum placements are made for the entire academic year. Students with a practicum placement secured are expected to fulfill the agreement made with the practicum site. Practicum Supervisor(s) likewise agree to provide a learning environment for the student for the entire academic year. In the event there are concerns with the student or the practicum, it is best to have the necessary parties involved in addressing and planning for remediation. The Practicum Supervisor(s) should inform the student and Practicum Liaison of any student performance concerns and/or behaviors that cause the Practicum Supervisor(s) to question the student's appropriate professional development. It is critical to address concerns as soon as possible. The School of Social Work is focused on and committed to addressing any concerns in a way that supports the student and the practicum site while adhering to agency policy, university policy, and the Social Work Code of Ethics.

Below are the steps to address concerns:

- Face-to-face meeting between the student and Practicum Supervisor(s) to discuss the situation.
- If the situation is not resolved, the student and/or Practicum Supervisor(s) contacts the Practicum Liaison.
- A face-to-face meeting will be held with the student, Practicum Supervisor(s), and Practicum Liaison to address the situation and develop a remediation plan with a mutually agreeable result to maintain the practicum. The Practicum Liaison will document the meeting, including the identified concern(s), and the proposed remediation plan. This document will be emailed to the Director of Practicum Education, student, and Practicum Supervisor(s).
- The Director of Practicum Education will notify the student's Academic Advisor and provide the remediation plan. The Academic Advisor will meet face-to-face with the student to provide additional support.
- If the remediation plan does not address the situation, the Director or Practicum Education is notified.
- The Director of Practicum Education may hold a face-to-face meeting with the student, Practicum Liaison, and Practicum Supervisor(s) to discuss the ability of the student and practicum site to work together for the remainder of the placement and determine the likelihood that the placement can have a successful outcome. The student's academic advisor will be notified and updated on the situation.

## **Termination of Practicum**

When remediation has been unsuccessful, the student, Practicum Supervisor(s), and/or the Practicum Liaison can initiate Practicum termination by submitting a letter to the Director of Practicum Education. The practicum termination letter must include the reason(s) for termination, summary of the events, and attempts at remediation. In addition, the practicum site and the School of Social Work have the discretion to immediately remove a student from the practicum site if either believes such removal is warranted. Situations where removal will be considered warranted include but are not limited to the following:

1. The level of performance in the practicum is determined to be far below the standards expected of a social work student and the student is unable to remedy deficiencies. This includes lacking knowledge and skills for effective social work practice, poor interpersonal communication and relationship skills, inappropriate presentation of self, and showing a lack of commitment to investing in the practicum learning opportunities. The Practicum Supervisor(s) and Practicum Liaison attempted to remedy performance concerns, but efforts were unsuccessful in bringing the student up to the 'Satisfactory' level for the given semester and its Competency standards. This will constitute grounds for an Academic Review to determine the student's fit and/or continuation in the program.
2. Serious or repeated violations of the practicum site's policies and procedures.
3. Failure to disclose previous and/or new critical background information in application forms, pre-placement forms, or during the interview process.
4. Exhibiting behaviors and attitudes that are inconsistent or at odds with the values of the social work profession.
5. Violation of professional ethics and standards for ethical practice.
6. Unexcused and prolonged absences from the practicum.
7. Attempts to harm oneself or others.
8. Any sexual relationship with an agency participant.
9. Reporting to the practicum site under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

The Director of Practicum Education will notify the student of the practicum termination. The Program Director, Practicum Supervisor(s), Practicum Liaison, and the student's Academic Advisor will be included in the email notification of the Practicum termination. An exit meeting may occur with student, Practicum Supervisor(s), Practicum Liaison, and the Director of Practicum Education. The Director of Practicum Education will ensure the termination from the practicum site is conducted in a professional manner. All agency materials, keys, or other equipment provided to the student will be returned immediately to the practicum site. Partial credit for the time spent in the practicum will

not be granted. The School of Social Work policies require students who drop Practicum to also withdraw from concurrent seminar courses.

Following the practicum termination, the Program Director may convene the faculty to conduct an Academic Review to determine the student's standing in the program. (See the *St. Ambrose University School of Social Work BSW or MSW Student Handbook*). Students are not guaranteed that an appropriate alternative practicum may be secured. In cases where an appropriate re-placement cannot be made, as determined by the Director of Practicum Education, the student may need to drop Practicum and co-requisite courses for the remainder of the academic year.

## **EVALUATION OF THE PRACTICUM INSTRUCTION CURRICULUM**

The Director of Practicum Education is responsible for the comprehensive of the Practicum Education program.

### **Student Evaluation of Practicum Education Program**

Students evaluate the practicum site, the Practicum Supervisor(s), and the Practicum Liaison at the end of each practicum through an electronic form provided by the School. The evaluation includes the agency orientation, adequacy of supports, responsiveness of agency staff, contribution of professional growth, and frequency and quality of supervision from the Practicum Supervisor(s). Students complete this evaluation using honest and constructive feedback, and with the understanding that their responses may be shared with their respective Practicum Supervisor(s) and Practicum Liaisons.

Students complete a separate evaluation of the Practicum Education Orientation and the practicum placement process.

### **Evaluation of Practicum Education Program by Practicum Supervisor**

Practicum Supervisor(s) are asked to evaluate the Practicum Education program on an electronic form at the close of the practicum. This evaluation includes the practicum placement process, Practicum Education manual, performance of the Practicum Liaison, readiness of students for practicum, the quality of support from the School, and their suggestions for improvement of the Practicum Education program.

### **End of Fall Semester Report by Practicum Liaison**

Practicum Liaisons complete an evaluation of the practicum sites they visit at the end of the fall semester. This evaluation includes assessment of both practicum site and Practicum Supervisor(s): available resources and learning activities, professionalism and mentoring, discussion of strengths and concerns, and the degree to which the agency and Practicum Supervisor(s) approach to social work practice is compatible with the school's conceptualization of empowerment practice. These reports are provided to the Director of Practicum Education for utilization in the practicum placement process for the upcoming year

## **SECURITY ISSUES**

### **Personal Safety**

Social workers are not immune to violence in our society. The School of Social Work provides information about risk assessment and reduction in Appendix C of this manual. Each practicum site is responsible for orienting the student to the safety policies and procedures of that setting. Practicum Supervisor(s) are responsible for providing students with training on agency safety policies and procedures. Students are likewise responsible for following these agency guidelines. Students should not be required to engage in Practicum assignments in which they feel physically at risk. Any student who feels they have been given an assignment that is not safe is responsible for discussing this with the Practicum Supervisor(s). If the situation remains unresolved and/or a student's concerns about safety begin to interfere with the learning process, the student and Practicum Supervisor(s) should contact the Practicum Liaison to facilitate exploration of the concerns. In the event of any threat or injury to a student while in Practicum placement, the student and Practicum Supervisor(s) must immediately contact the Practicum Liaison and the Director of Practicum Education.

### **Use of Personal Automobile in Practicum**

Students are responsible for their own transportation to and from the practicum site. Practicum students are sometimes asked to use their own cars for agency business, e.g., inter-agency meetings, home visits, attendance at case conferences, court hearings, etc. Students are encouraged to discuss with their Practicum Supervisor(s) whether the agency has insurance to cover these activities. Students should also check their personal automobile coverage to determine if their personal policy covers them during practicum activities. Students are not to use their own automobiles for agency business without sufficient insurance coverage. **In no situation are students to transport participants or agency staff in their own vehicles.** This is for the safety of both participant and student.

### **Use of Personal Cellphone in Practicum**

Students are discouraged from using personal cell phones for participant contact as part of their practicum. Agencies that require students to be available to participants by cellphone during internship hours should provide a cellphone for this purpose at no extra cost to the student. In order to maintain healthy professional boundaries, students are not required to be available to participants outside of internship hours.

### **Professional Liability Insurance**

The School of Social Work arranges for group professional malpractice insurance. Students may also wish to purchase individual professional liability insurance. Further information on individual professional liability insurance through the NASW Assurance Services is available in Appendix C of this manual.

## APPENDIX A: RESOURCES

### CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FIRST THREE WEEKS IN PRACTICUM PLACEMENT

#### Introduction

Social work students frequently describe their Practicum placement experience as the most significant and powerful learning experience in their education. The Practicum experience offers students opportunities to:

- apply concepts, principles and theories learned in the classroom to practice situations
- develop further self-awareness and to understand the influence of former life experiences, attitudes, and values on their social work practice
- identify both strengths and needed areas of growth
- integrate with the values and principles of the profession

St Ambrose School of Social Work endeavors to provide students with practicum site settings that are rich and diverse in learning possibilities. Many of our Practicum Supervisor(s) are highly experienced in working with social work interns and are very familiar with our curriculum. In other cases, Practicum Supervisor(s) and agency placement settings are in their first year of collaboration with the School. Nonetheless, Practicum Supervisor(s) have not only committed themselves to the social work student's professional development, but they also seek to learn from students and to become familiar with what they are reading and learning in theory and practice classes.

Social service agencies and social welfare organizations are necessarily adaptive in responding to client populations and changes in funding streams. It is likely that programs, services, and personnel will change during your practicum. Understanding what policies contribute to these changes, a commitment to flexibility, and active role in identifying and making use of learning opportunities in the agency setting will promote a positive practicum experience. Some of the most meaningful Practicum experiences for students have occurred in agencies undergoing changes that were not anticipated by the agency, practicum student or the Director of Practicum Education at the time of placement.

#### Guidelines for Self-Expectations\*

1. Take responsibility for your own learning by exploring the agency and surrounding community and seeking new experiences and feedback. Ask questions, observe, and participate in diverse agency activities.
2. Familiarize yourself with agency emergency and safety policies and professional liability issues and risks.
3. Complete an ongoing self-evaluation regarding your professional interests, the manner in which you receive feedback, your comfort level regarding diversity, your strengths and needed areas of development.

4. Engage in regular self-reflection and professional growth using your Reflective Practicum Journal and other tools suggested by your Practicum Supervisor(s).
5. Plan and complete a needed project for the agency as a legacy.
6. Prepare for supervision sessions and follow up with suggestions from your Practicum Supervisor(s).

Adapted from: Berg-Weger, M., & Birkmaier, J. (2000). *The practicum companion for social work: Integrating class and Practicum work*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

## CARE OF SELF IN THE PRACTICUM EDUCATION

Practicum students quickly find out that the practicum experience heightens self-awareness, may be stressful, and is demanding in time. Students actively involved in practicum learning will be exploring their attitudes, values and beliefs in addition to learning more about the social work profession and skills inherent in the placement setting.

Additionally, their role as a practicum student demands weekly filed hours. Caring for oneself involves the practice of proactive behaviors designed to maintain emotional, physical, and social health. What follows are some strategies for balancing multiple roles. This list provides some general ideas - but the development of your personal list is also important.

1. Plan ahead, pace your activities, and ensure regular work hours with breaks for snacks and lunch.
2. Work to your strengths and know your limitations.
3. Prioritize your physical and mental well-being.
4. Develop both a personal *and* professional support system.
5. Know and pay attention to your personal signals of being stressed. What are they?
6. Discuss practicum situations and interactions that result in personal distress with your Practicum Supervisor(s) or another colleague to further understand your reactions. Some students may find additional support from a therapist to be helpful.
7. Develop relationships with persons who can challenge and support you.
8. Avoid procrastination.
9. Maintain your sense of humor.
10. Be cautious in your use of artificial methods to maintain your energy (e.g., alcohol, excessive caffeine, drugs, diet aids, stimulants, etc.).

Adapted from: Berg-Weger, M., & Birkmaier, J. (2000). *The practicum companion for social work: Integrating class and Practicum work*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon

## **GUIDELINES FOR PERSONAL SAFETY**

A heightened awareness for the potential of violence provides an opportunity to assess the likelihood of its occurrence. To promote personal safety, social workers scan the environment, assess the person with whom they are working, and pay attention to internal cues. It is critical to be familiar with and adhere to the agency's policies and procedures regarding security issues. Social workers are encouraged to pay attention to their own feelings in Practicum and to discuss any feelings of being unsafe with the Practicum Supervisor(s).

Factors most frequently associated with violence include a history of violence, substance abuse, and weapons possession. Social workers who assume an authoritarian manner have a greater probability of encountering a violent reaction from persons with whom they work than those social workers who endeavor to work in collaboration with participants.

The primary goals of risk prevention are to protect all parties and to help the person to gain control of their behavior. Helping the participant to focus on the source of his anger or frustration and finding ways of expressing these feelings verbally are secondary goals.

### **General Personal Risk Reduction Guidelines**

1. Discuss agency safety procedures and protocol with your Practicum Supervisor(s).
2. Advise agency personnel of your schedule and carry a cellphone.
3. Consider the time of day and day of the week in the neighborhood you are entering.
4. Be alert to persons around you and to safe places in the neighborhood.
5. Be wise in your communication of your appearance. Dress in a non-threatening manner wherein you do not call attention to yourself. Comfortable clothes and shoes will allow you to move quickly. Carrying a purse, heavy notebooks, or briefcase may also restrict your movement and make you a target for theft.
6. Assess buildings you enter for safety. Consider using the stairs instead of the elevator.
7. Respect and evaluate any hesitancy a participant has in opening the door to their home as this may signal a less safe environment.
8. If there is any suggestion of a threat to safety, postpone the home visit and discuss the situation with the Practicum Supervisor(s)
9. Stay alert. Note where exits are and chose a location to sit close to an available exit.
10. In talking with participants:

- Encourage talking about feelings and thoughts
- Respond briefly and to the point
- Make eye contact carefully and mirror body language
- Relate with sensitivity to diversity
- Stay calm and keep thinking
- Retreat and/or enable the person with whom you are working to retreat

Adapted from: Weinger, S. (2001). Security risk: Preventing client violence against social workers. Washington, DC: NASW Press.

## LGBTQAI+ STUDENTS AND PRACTICUM EDUCATION

### Where We Stand

Practicum Education is an integral part of our social work program and we are committed to making the experience as positive as we can for all students. This section is designed specifically for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQAI+) students to provide basic information about where we stand on supporting our sexual and gender minority students and challenging homophobic, heterosexist, and transphobic attitudes and behaviors within the context of Practicum Education. While we select agencies that match our commitment to social justice and equity, we also recognize we live in a society with both subtle and overt discrimination toward LGBTQAI+ people. As such, we want to provide a clear picture of how we can support LGBTQAI+ students and model social work values.

In the Practicum of social work, we are guided by the *NASW Code of Ethics* (2021) which states:

- Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people.
- Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person, treating each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity.
- Social workers should not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical ability.

St. Ambrose University affirms that all forms of discrimination and harassment diminish the dignity or impede the academic freedom of members of the university community. The University is committed to providing and maintaining a positive learning and working environment for all students, staff, faculty, and other members of the university community, free of discrimination and harassment. The university will not tolerate any discrimination or harassment that is based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, physical or mental handicap, disability, military status, or any other unlawful basis.

### Self-Disclosing Sexual or Gender Identity in Practicum Education

While deciding when and where to self-disclose or “come out” as lesbian, gay, queer, and/or transgender is a personal choice, working in a safe and comfortable Practicum environment is a right for all students. As individuals who identify as LGBTQAI+, we may withhold personal information about our lives (i.e. our sexual orientation, gender identity or expression), because we fear discrimination, rejection or isolation. We may withhold personal information because disclosure seems irrelevant or inappropriate in our work environment. Not knowing when and what to reveal about who you are is

potentially a question for all professionals. If you identify as a sexual or gender minority, you may have additional questions and need for support.

### **Finding Support**

Be proactive! Please do not hesitate to discuss concerns you may have.

### **Talk to Practicum Education Faculty**

If you have any concerns about your placement, please contact your Practicum Liaison or the Director of Practicum Education. Regardless of your sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, please contact us if you have questions or concerns about:

- Experiences of heterosexism, homophobia, or transphobia within your practicum site
- Support for disclosure of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression within your Practicum placement

### **Talk to Your Practicum Supervisor(s)**

You could ask your Practicum Supervisor(s) if your agency has:

- A nondiscrimination policy that includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression
- Staff who openly identify as sexual and gender minorities
- LGBTQAI+ cultural competency/cultural humility training or professional development opportunities for staff

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

The rapid growth of social media communication tools and their ease of accessibility can have unintended and potentially damaging consequences to users if basic guidelines are ignored. Students are expected to adhere to social work values, ethics, and engage in professional conduct as outlined in the NASW Code of Ethics when using social media communication tools, whether using a personal site or an agency site. Common issues that students need to understand and manage when utilizing social media include, but are not limited to, privacy and confidentiality (Section 1.07), conflicts of interest and dual relationships (Section 1.06), and informed consent (Section 1.03) in our relationships with clients, colleagues, and in our practice settings. Utilizing social media communication tools as a social work professional requires ongoing attention to these ethical challenges. NASW partnered with ASWB, CSWE, and CSWA to develop a uniform set of technology standards for professional social workers to use as a guide in their practice. The four associations jointly developed the Technology Standards in Social Work Practice. This document can be accessed through the NASW website.

As a social work professional it is important to consider whether you are using social media channels for professional activities such as advancing social justice issues, advocating for vulnerable populations and promoting your professional identity versus using these sites to maintain contact with friends and family. Your professional image, that is, the professional self you develop that is guided by social work values and ethical standards, extends beyond the practicum site and physical setting of an office. As social workers we must be cognizant of the legal, ethical, and clinical responsibilities we have as professionals and that those obligations extend to the virtual world of the internet and include the use of social media communication tools. As with the Hippocratic oath to “first do no harm,” it is imperative to consider how to be connected within the context of social media while protecting yourself, your practicum site, your participants, the School of Social Work, and the profession.

**Consider the following topics for discussion with your Practicum Supervisor(s):**

**What are the agency guidelines regarding the use of social media?**

Managing and maintaining privacy settings is critical regardless of whether you use social media for personal and/or professional reasons. As a professional, you must fully consider the extent of your privacy settings, your level of self-disclosure, and how you will monitor interactions with your social media. Be aware that if you do not employ any privacy settings on your social media site, your profile is public and anyone can view your account. All professionals must evaluate the scope of their social media connections. It is your responsibility as a professional social worker to abide by the Code of Ethics and use social work values and principles to guide your social media decisions.

**What privacy and confidentiality concerns should I consider when emailing?**

Many ethical, legal, and clinical issues must be addressed when using email communication. There is a huge potential for unintentionally sharing protected information so always use good ethical judgment. Be cautious about discussing information about your practicum, classroom work, or agency staff. Do not discuss confidential or private information about participants, colleagues, or agency practices even if you are disguising the information. In general, consider the security, privacy, and confidentiality of all communication methods and when in doubt, seek consultation and supervision before embarking into unfamiliar or uncertain areas.

**Can I check my personal social media accounts during Practicum hours?**

No- Your time at the practicum and the resources provided to you at the practicum site must be used for practicum related matters.

**What should I do next?**

Take some time to review these guidelines with your Practicum Supervisor(s) and seek to identify other ethical standards that are applicable in your practice setting. As a social work student, you are continually developing a professional identity and you must be cognizant that your private world has a greater likelihood of becoming public when using social media. Practicum Supervisor(s), colleagues, and even participants may have access to information via the internet that you would otherwise limit to your friends and families so we encourage you to consider the personal versus professional role of social media in your life and your Practicum setting.

Please review the NASW Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice that can be found on the SSW Practicum Education Blackboard site or the NASW website:

<https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/NASW-Practice-Standards-Guidelines/Standards-for-Technology-in-Social-Work-Practice>

Adapted with permission from: University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill School of Social Work (2012). *Guidelines for the use of social media*.

## **DOCUMENTATION AS A TEACHING TOOL**

Documentation of practice activities is an essential educational process that involves analysis, integration, synthesis, and critical self-reflection. Historically, process recordings and recorded role plays have been used in the social work Practicum Education. These formats are useful to student learning to better understand participant interactions and context, sort out the student's feelings, and to review skill development. However, documentation might include an articulation of learning goals, recording information to learn agency convention, or general reflective practicum journaling about the practicum.

All Practicum students in the School of Social Work at St. Ambrose University are required to keep a Reflective Practicum Journal to serve as a tool for learning in the practicum. Students will use this journal to describe progress on learning activities and to examine how these activities relate to outcomes and competency areas. They may also express reactions to practicum experiences, reflect on emerging competencies, and discuss how practicum experiences relate to classroom learning.

## **SOCIAL WORK LICENSURE**

Licensing tests throughout the United States are created and administered by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB). The examinations are designed to measure and establish a minimum level of practice competence and to protect the public from incompetent or poorly prepared practitioners. Iowa requires both BSW and MSW graduates to pass the Intermediate Examination to be licensed as a social worker. The type of exam and level of supervision post-degree required varies depending on the level of degree earned. Students are encouraged to consider their career goals (plans to complete your MSW) before settling on which license to obtain.

In Iowa, there are three different levels of licensure available to those with either a BSW or MSW degree.

- **Bachelor Social Work** – has passed the basic examination of the ASWB
- **Master Social Work** – has passed the intermediate level examination of the ASWB (requires MSW)
- **Independent Social Work** – has passed the clinical level examination of the ASWB (requires MSW)

More information is available from the Iowa Board of Social Work Examiners:

Bureau of Professional Licensure - Iowa Department of Public Health

Phone (515) 281-0254

<https://idph.iowa.gov/Licensure/Iowa-Board-of-Social-Work>

In Illinois, there are two different levels of licensure available to those with either a BSW or MSW degree. A BSW graduate may apply for LSW. An MSW graduate applies for licensure as a Licensed Social Worker (LSW).

More information on the regulations and procedures for application for licensure is available on the Social Work Examination and Disciplinary Board:

Social Work Examining and Disciplinary Board - IL Dept. of Financial and

Professional Regulation

Phone (888) 473-4858

<http://www.idfpr.com/profs/SocialWorker.asp>

### **Additional Web Resources:**

Association of Social Work Boards: [www.aswb.org/](http://www.aswb.org/)

National Association of Social Workers – IA: [www.nasw-heartland.org/?page=NASWIA\\_home](http://www.nasw-heartland.org/?page=NASWIA_home)

National Association of Social Workers – IL: [www.naswi.org](http://www.naswi.org)

Social Work licensure in the US: <https://socialworklicensure.org/>

## MANDATORY ABUSE REPORTING

As a social worker, you are a mandatory abuse reporter in both Illinois and Iowa.

Discuss child and dependent adult abuse reporting laws and agency policies/procedures with your Practicum Supervisor(s).

Ten categories of child abuse are defined under Iowa law when a child under the age of 18 is harmed as a result of the acts or omissions of the person responsible for the care of the child. The ten categories of abuse include:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Child prostitution
- Denial of critical care, neglect
- Mental injury
- Presence of illegal drugs
- Manufacturing or possession of a dangerous substance
- Bestiality in the presence of a minor
- Allows access by a registered sex offender
- Allows access to obscene material

Six categories of dependent adult abuse are defined under Iowa law when a person age 18 or over (who is unable to protect her/his own interests or unable to adequately perform or obtain services necessary to meet essential human needs as a result of a physical or mental condition) is harmed as a result of the acts or omissions of the person responsible for the care of the dependent adult. The six categories include:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Exploitation (physical or financial)
- Deprivation of the minimum food, shelter, clothing, supervision, physical or mental health care (by the caregiver)
- Deprivation of the minimum food, shelter, clothing, supervision, physical or mental health care (by the dependent adult)
- Sexual exploitation of a dependent adult who is a resident of a health care facility

Retrieved from <http://dhs.iowa.gov>

## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest and most recognized membership organization of professional social workers in the United States.

The Association strives to improve the quality of social work practice and to promote public policies that improve society. NASW social workers are engaged in legislative advocacy, community development, continuing education, media outreach, and policy development year- round.

NASW is instrumental in assuring that the social work perspective is incorporated into pending legislation before Congress and in state legislatures. NASW's legislative agenda targets the association's lobbying efforts at legislation and regulations that will provide support to vulnerable groups and advance professional practice training and research opportunities for social workers. NASW's political action committee, known as PACE, works to elect officials that best represent social workers.

NASW promotes the quality and effectiveness of social work practice. This mission encompasses the maintenance of ethical conduct and fair personnel practices.

Membership in NASW entitles social work students and professional social workers to state and local chapter membership, ten issues of *NASW News*, and four issues of the journal *Social Work*. The Association also provides member benefits including JobLink and notification of continuing education opportunities.

Individual professional liability insurance is available through the **NASW Assurance Services**. Individual coverage protects the student directly as the policy holder. In order to apply for this coverage, students must be members of NASW and complete the application form. Further information is available at:

<http://www.naswassurance.org/malpractice/>

Students may join NASW at reduced rates. Membership applications are available at the School of Social Work or online at <https://www.socialworkers.org/>

Information about the NASW Code of Ethics is found at the following link:  
<https://www.socialworkers.org/about/ethics/code-of-ethics>

## **ST. AMBROSE UNIVERSITY POLICY STATEMENTS**

<https://www.sau.edu/DeanofStudents>

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AIDS AND HIV POLICY

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG POLICY DIVERSITY

HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION POLICY SEXUAL VIOLENCE POLICY

## **CSWE EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND ACCREDITATION STANDARDS**

[www.cswe.org](http://www.cswe.org)