

Western Michigan University

School of Social Work

Supervisors' Handbook BSW & MSW Programs

(Fall & Spring) Academic Year 2025–26

Welcome & Role of the Field Supervisor

Welcome to the Western Michigan University School of Social Work Field Education Program. As a Field Supervisor, you play a vital role in guiding students through their professional development. Field education is recognized as the signature pedagogy of social work, integrating academic coursework with experiential learning. You will act as educator, mentor, and evaluator, fostering the growth of students into ethical, skilled, and reflective practitioners.

Key Responsibilities

- Provide a thorough orientation to the agency's mission, structure, policies, and procedures.
- Facilitate at least one hour of dedicated supervision each week.
- Create opportunities for students to engage in learning experiences aligned with CSWE competencies.
- Model professional behavior and uphold the NASW Code of Ethics.
- Communicate regularly with the Faculty Field Liaison to share progress and address concerns.
- Complete midterm and final competency-based evaluations.

Communication & Support Structure

The Faculty Field Liaison is your primary point of contact for addressing concerns, providing feedback, and ensuring student success. The Field Education Office supports you in matters related to policy interpretation, risk management, and resolving challenges that cannot be addressed at the site level.

Student Learning Goals

Field learning is guided by the CSWE 2022 EPAS competencies:

1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
2. Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
3. Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, 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

Observation Guide – Fall Semester (Early Placement Focus)

Observation Area	Key Behaviors to Look For	Notes
Orientation & Role Clarity	Understands agency mission, client populations, and role expectations.	
Professional Behavior & Adjustment	Demonstrates punctuality, preparedness, and adherence to agency policies.	
Supervision Engagement	Attends supervision prepared with questions; applies feedback to practice.	
Skill Development & Application	Begins practicing core engagement skills and simple assessments.	
Cultural Responsiveness	Recognizes diversity and equity considerations in client interactions.	
Documentation Skills	Completes notes with guidance; demonstrates improving accuracy.	
Integration of Theory & Practice	Applies classroom concepts to field scenarios.	
Critical Reflection & Self-Awareness	Begins identifying strengths and areas for improvement.	

Observation Guide – Spring Semester (Later Placement Focus)

Observation Area	Key Behaviors to Look For	Notes
Orientation & Role Clarity	Navigates agency systems independently and confidently.	
Professional Behavior & Adjustment	Models professionalism; anticipates needs in client and agency work.	
Supervision Engagement	Utilizes supervision for complex case consultation; integrates feedback effectively.	
Skill Development & Application	Conducts advanced assessments, interventions, and evaluations.	
Cultural Responsiveness	Consistently applies culturally responsive and anti-oppressive practices.	
Documentation Skills	Produces complete, professional-level records with minimal supervision.	
Integration of Theory & Practice	Links theory, policy, and practice seamlessly.	
Critical Reflection & Self-Awareness	Engages in deep self-assessment and articulates professional identity.	

Evaluation Process

Field Supervisors complete a Learning Contract & Evaluation at midterm and final stages of the placement. These evaluations are based on the CSWE competencies and measure observable behaviors. Providing clear, specific, and timely feedback ensures that students understand their progress and areas for development.

Policies to Know

- Attendance: Students must complete the required hours and follow agency attendance policies. (WMU School of Social Work Field Manual, Section 7, page 41)
- Supervision: Minimum of one hour per week with a qualified Field Instructor (WMU School of Social Work Field Manual, Section 6, page 30).
- Risk Management: Students are covered under WMU's liability policy when acting within the scope of their placement (WMU School of Social Work Field Manual, Section 9, page 49).
- Confidentiality: All client information must be handled according to HIPAA and agency policy (WMU School of Social Work Field Manual, Section 2, page 8).
- Addressing Concerns: Use the communication process in the Field Manual; involve the Faculty Field Liaison as needed (WMU School of Social Field Manual, Section 10, page 51).
- Professional Review Committee: May be convened for significant concerns regarding performance (WMU School of Social Work Field Manual, Section 10, page 51).