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Field Instruction and the Social Work Curriculum

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|---|---|---|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Professional Identity | <input type="checkbox"/> Ethical Practice | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Critical Thinking | <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity in Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights & Justice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Research-Based Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> Human Behavior | <input type="checkbox"/> Policy Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> Practice Contexts | <input type="checkbox"/> Engage, Assess, Intervene, Evaluate |

OVERVIEW

This introductory chapter provides the historical and current context for understanding the requirement of field instruction in social work programs. It also begins to answer questions about student preparation, supervision, and the coordination of field instruction within the larger educational program.

WHY FIELD INSTRUCTION?

As professionals in the making, social work students attend classes to learn practice principles, values and ethical behaviors, a body of specialized knowledge, and the scientific basis for practice. In field instruction, students apply, under supervision, what they have been learning in the classroom to real situations. Thus, the preparation to become a social work professional is composed of formal learning as well as practical experience—sometimes known as field instruction, field placement, field work, practicum, or internship. Such training experiences are not unique to social work but are common to most of the helping professions.

A career in social work requires many abilities. Social workers must have competence in relating to individuals, families, small groups, organizations, and communities; in assessing needs and problems; and in planning and intervening appropriately. Social workers have to be skilled in carrying out various helping roles such as advocate, broker, educator, group leader, mediator, clinician, community planner and organizer, administrator, and so forth. While students may not be able to acquire expertise in each of these roles during a single practicum, placement in an agency allows them the opportunity to observe other professionals and to learn from their actions. Students can learn from any of the staff around them—all play a role in helping students to become more proficient.

Students not only acquire practical experience from the field, but they also are socialized into the professional subculture. There are two important aspects of this socialization: acceptance of individuals into a professional group where common expectations are held of all members, and the development of a professional self-concept consistent with role models. During field instruction, interactions with clients, colleagues, and the professional community help students master the culture, norms, and values of social work. Field instruction assists students in making the transition from passive learners to active professionals.

The new educational policy and accreditation standards (EPAS) from the Council on Social Work Education emphasize competency-based education. “Competencies are measurable practice behaviors that are comprised of knowledge, values, and skills. The goal of the outcome approach is to demonstrate the integration and application of competencies in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities” (CSWE, 2008, p. 3). Students must acquire the following core competencies. They

1. identify themselves as professional social workers and conduct themselves accordingly;
2. apply social work ethical practice principles to guide professional practice;
3. apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments;

The new educational policy and accreditation standards from the CSWE emphasize competency-based education.

4. engage diversity and difference in practice;
5. advance human rights and social and economic justice;
6. engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research;
7. apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment;
8. engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services;
9. respond to contexts that shape practice; and
10. engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Field education is considered the signature pedagogy in social work. “Signature pedagogy represents the central form of instruction and learning in which a profession socializes its students to perform the role of practitioner” (CSWE, 2008, p. 8).

Field instruction allows students to test whether social work is the best career for them. The choice of a career is a major decision, and not everyone is suited to be a social worker. Because students are closely monitored and evaluated, agency supervisors can help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and determine whether social work is the best choice for them. Occasionally, faculty field liaisons must recommend that students address personal issues before entering their field placements.

Case Example

John has changed college majors four times in the past three years. He entered as an English literature major, then changed to accounting. In his sophomore year, he tried both geography and Russian. After one year of Russian, he dropped out of school to “get his act together.” He worked as a bartender and joked about how easily drunks can be shortchanged and their drinks watered down. When a DUI conviction caused him to lose his driver’s license, John took a couple of social work courses and did well in them although several of his friends say they have smelled alcohol on his breath during class. Last week John was fired from his job for stealing from his employer. He claims the charges are not true and plans to go to school full time next semester to become a social worker because, he says, “It’s easy work—all you have to do is talk.”

Questions

1. Is John ready to become a social worker?
2. What questions could you ask to help John examine his motivations for becoming a social worker?
3. Why, in your mind, should a person choose the career of social work?
4. What characteristics make a good social worker? A poor one?

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE FACULTY FIELD LIAISON?

The primary job of the faculty field liaison is to see that students’ practicum experiences are educational. That job covers all aspects of a student’s experience from placement in the field agency to the final evaluation of his or her total performance. Note, however, that in some programs the field education

director is responsible for placing students in agencies, training agency field instructors, and monitoring students' experiences. Faria, Brownstein, and Smith (1988) identify ten liaison responsibilities that they divide into six roles and four functions. The faculty field liaison functions are commonly the following:

- *Placement*—selects field agencies and field instructors and matches them with students.
- *Linkage*—interprets school policies, procedures, and expectations of field agencies and assesses the fit between school curriculum and educational experiences provided by the agencies.
- *Administration*—ensures completion of placement forms (e.g., students' evaluation of agencies, field instructors, and faculty field liaisons).
- *Evaluation*—evaluates students, field instructors, and agencies; assigns students' grades; and makes recommendations for continued use of agencies and field instructors (more on the evaluation of students in Chapters 2 and 4).

In the performance of their functions, you should see faculty liaisons in the following roles:

- *Adviser*—provides assistance to students in planning for practicum.
- *Monitor*—assesses agencies, field instructors, and students' learning experiences.
- *Consultant*—assists field instructors in developing supervisory skills and provides course outlines and other materials.
- *Teacher*—assists students with the integration of course work and practicum and serves as a role model to students.
- *Mediator*—assists in resolving problems between students and field instructors or other agency personnel.
- *Advocate*—provides relevant information to academic review committees (when necessary) to evaluate students' field and academic performances.

In many programs, faculty field liaisons conduct seminars to provide students with a regular occasion to share their learning and to ask for information or assistance when difficult problems arise. In addition, students may be expected to submit weekly papers or logs of their field experiences and plan individual conferences with their faculty field liaisons. These seminars and conferences provide opportunities for faculty to get to know students, to guide them when necessary, and to help them with integrating theory and practice.

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF FIELD INSTRUCTION IN SOCIAL WORK?

Field instruction has always been a major part of social work training. Its history goes back to the days of the Charity Organization Societies in the last quarter of the nineteenth century when students learned social work by apprenticeship. Through “applied philanthropy” students obtained firsthand knowledge of poverty and adverse social conditions. With this *apprenticeship model*, training emphasized doing and deriving knowledge from that activity.

By the end of the nineteenth century, social work was moving away from the apprenticeship model.

The first training school for social work was a summer program that opened in 1898 at the New York City Charity Organization Society. In 1904, the Society established the New York School of Philanthropy, which offered an eight-month instructional program. Mary Richmond, an early social work practitioner, teacher, and theoretician, argued that although many learned by doing, this type of learning must be supplemented by theory.

At the 1915 National Conference of Charities and Corrections, presenters emphasized the value of an educationally based field-practice experience, with schools of social work having control over students' learning assignments. This idea put schools in the position of exercising authority over the selection of agencies for field training and thus control over the quality of social work practice to which students were exposed.

Early in social work education, a pattern was established whereby students spent roughly half of their academic time in field settings (Austin, 1986). This paradigm was made possible by the networking that emerged from the early organizational efforts of social work educators. For instance, in 1919 the organization of the Association of Training Schools for Professional Social Work was chartered by 17 programs. Thirteen of the original 17 schools were associated with universities or colleges at the postbaccalaureate level by 1923. The American Association of Schools of Social Work, in its curriculum standards of 1932, formally recognized field instruction as an essential part of social work education (Mesbur, 1991).

During the first part of the twentieth century, psychoanalytic theory dominated social work education. This influence tended to focus the attention of students and social work educators on a client's personality rather than on the social environment. The Depression of the 1930s and the enactment of the Social Security Act of 1935 brought about major changes in the United States' provision of social services and need for social workers. Subsequent amendments to this act created several social welfare programs and social work roles.

From about 1940 until 1960, an *academic approach* dominated social work education. This approach emphasized students' cognitive development and knowledge-directed practice. Professors expected students to deduce practice approaches from classroom learning and translate theories into functional behaviors in the field (Tolson & Kopp, 1988).

Educational standards for field instruction were refined in the 1940s and the 1950s, and field work became known as field instruction. The American Association of Schools of Social Work took the position that field teaching was as important as classroom teaching and demanded equally qualified teachers and definite criteria for the selection of field agencies. In 1951, the Hollis-Taylor report on the state of social work education in the United States asserted that "education for social work is a responsibility not only of educators but equally of organized practitioners, employing agencies, and the interested public. Widely accepted by the profession, this assertion became the cornerstone of all subsequent developments" (Kendall, 2002).

In 1952 the Council on Social Work Education was established and began creating standards for institutions granting degrees in social work. These standards required a clear plan for the organization, implementation, and evaluation of both in-class work and the field practicum. Interestingly, it was not until 1970 that field work was made a requirement for undergraduate programs affiliated with the Council.

Social work education is a responsibility shared by educators, practitioners, and agencies.

The *articulated approach* characterized the third phase in the history of social work field instruction (from about 1960 to the present). This method integrates features from both experiential and academic approaches. It is concerned with a planned relationship between cognitive and experiential learning and requires that both class and field learning be developed with learning objectives that foster their integration. It does not demand that students be inductive or deductive learners but expects that knowledge development and practice will be kept close enough together in time to minimize these differences in learning style (Jenkins & Sheafor, 1982).

Students may not be aware of the tensions and strong disagreements that have existed in previous years over the purpose of field education. When social work programs were housed in other disciplines, academically minded social scientists sometimes argued that the function of field instruction was to allow students to observe and collect data on poverty and social conditions first hand. The emphasis was often on the *study* of social problems. Students were *not* expected to provide services or assist clients. Agencies, of course, wanted students to roll up their sleeves and pitch in and help with the work that they were doing. As social work has matured as a unique discipline, a view of field education has emerged that blends both the academic and experiential perspectives.

The 2008 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards highlight the role of field education as “to connect the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the class room with the practical world of the practice setting” (CSWE, 2008, p. 8). Both classroom and field are of equal importance for the development of the requisite competencies of professional practice. Social work programs are free to use creativity in ensuring that their students develop the required competencies. Therefore, there may be differences in the design, coordination, supervision, and evaluation of students’ field experiences.



Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking Question:

If your agency does not provide you with the conceptual framework to guide your assessments and intervention, how might you go about developing one?

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT STANDARDS FOR FIELD INSTRUCTION?

The Council on Social Work Education requires that undergraduate programs provide each student with a minimum of 400 hours of field instruction. Graduate programs must arrange a minimum of 900 hours. The Council mandates that every program “specifies policies, criteria, and procedures for selecting field settings; placing and monitoring students; maintaining field liaison contacts with field education settings; and evaluating student learning and field setting effectiveness congruent with the program’s competencies” (CSWE, 2008, p. 9).

Case Example

Betty thinks that the requirement of 400 hours in an unpaid field placement is too much—mainly because it takes away from time she could be on the tennis court. Tennis is easily the main interest in her life and is always the major topic in any conversation she starts. Betty has the potential to become a professional tennis player and make more money than she ever would as a social worker, but wants the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) to fall back on.

Her supervisor’s schedule does not overlap with every hour Betty is supposed to be in the agency. Halfway through the semester Betty confides in you that she has

slipped out two or more hours early each day her supervisor wasn't in and also lied about the number of hours that she was supposed to be in the library doing a search for literature.

Questions

1. What is your reaction to Betty's confiding in you?
 2. Does Betty have the characteristics that make a good social worker?
 3. Does 400 hours of field experience seem an excessive amount of time to prepare you to be a social worker?
-

ARE THERE DIFFERENT TYPES OF FIELD PLACEMENTS?

Social work programs can organize the required field instruction in different ways as long as degree programs are educationally directed, coordinated, monitored, and meet the requirements of the Council on Social Work Education. The most common types of field placements are block and concurrent. Under the *block* placement arrangement, a student is placed in a social service agency with an approved learning plan for a block of time—for example, a whole academic term, two full terms, or a summer term. The students devote full time (four or five days per week) to experiential learning in the agency. Under a *modified block model*, students participate in field instruction in a social service agency four days each week while the fifth day is reserved for taking courses.

Under the *concurrent placement*, the students' time is divided between classroom learning and field work experiences. (Typically, students are expected to be in the agency for two or three days per week and to take classes for two or three days.) The exact proportion of time devoted to each set of learning experiences varies, depending on the type of academic term, the number of academic credits, and whether the students are undergraduates or first- or second-year graduate students.

Social work programs across the United States have mixed and matched these two types of placements to create models of field instruction. Sometimes first-year graduate students do a concurrent placement (two days per week for two semesters), and second-year students complete a block placement (for 15 weeks at five days per week). Larger schools may offer as many as three models of field practicum for students: the *standard model*—two years of concurrent placements for 28 weeks each year at three days (21 hours) per week; the *extended model*—two years of concurrent placement for 42 weeks each year at two days (14 hours) per week; and the *reduced field instruction model*—one year of placement for 33 weeks at four days (28 hours) per week. Students who work and go to school may have preferences for one model over another. Educationally, all these models are considered sound. For example, in a recent study, Theriot, Johnson, Mulvaney, and Kretzschmar (2006) evaluated the impact of block versus concurrent field placement on the professional development and emotional well-being of students in a BSW program. They found no differences in measures of professional competence, depression, assertiveness, and self-esteem in the two field models.

HOW ARE STUDENTS PREPARED FOR FIELD INSTRUCTION?

At the undergraduate level, social work programs must prepare students for beginning *generalist* social work practice with individuals, families, small groups, organizations, and communities. To reach this objective, most programs follow a three-step graduated approach. At step 1, students enroll in an introductory course in social work and may need to make application to the program.

Step 2 is the completion of basic core courses—social work practice, human behavior and the social environment, social welfare policy and services, and social work research. Step 3 is the placement of students in their field practicum. Faculty field liaisons assign students to social welfare agencies so they can acquire new skills and further refine their existing skills. In many programs, the practicum is scheduled for the senior year.

As an undergraduate student you can expect to spend between one-and-a-half to two days a week in the field agency during a typical semester if there is a two-semester field sequence. The Council on Social Work Education requires a minimum of 400 clock hours in the field, although it is not unusual for programs to require a few more hours than this.

HOW ARE STUDENTS IN FIELD PLACEMENT SUPERVISED?

In most programs, students are placed in a public service agency under the day-to-day supervision of a field instructor who is a social worker employed by the agency. It is the responsibility of the field instructor to provide students with opportunities for contact with various client systems and to oversee students' performance with assigned tasks. Field instructors are considered members of the extended teaching staff of the school and may be granted faculty privileges such as the use of the university library facilities or discounts at the university bookstore.

Field instructors should be well aware of the social work program's philosophy, the content and sequence of courses, and the expected level of student performance. Often there are special training sessions for new field instructors—this ensures that assignments given to students are consistent with students' abilities and the program's expectations. In addition to the supervision students receive from field instructors, social work programs usually assign faculty members as advisers to students and as liaisons between the agency and the school.

Social work programs vary considerably from school to school (and sometimes even within a school) in the level of student monitoring that field liaisons do. Some faculty field liaisons will meet with their students weekly, but others may meet at the beginning, at the midpoint, and at the end of the term. Other faculty field liaisons may meet only for an evaluation at the end of the term. Some faculty will monitor students' progress by requiring written or oral assignments (e.g., case presentations, planned observations, or interviews); others do not. Even though your field instructor may be asked for a recommendation on the grade you earned in your practicum, the assignment of the grade is most often the responsibility of the faculty field liaison.

Field instructors are considered members of the extended faculty.



Professional Identity

Critical Thinking Question: If your field instructor is not helping you to learn advocacy skills, how might you use supervision and consultation in the agency to acquire these skills?



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HOW ARE CLASSROOM LEARNING AND FIELD INSTRUCTION INTEGRATED?

The very nature of field instruction fosters integration with classroom learning—particularly when students meet regularly to discuss what they have been learning. Students are often amazed at how much knowledge they have acquired when taking turns to describe their interesting or problematic cases.

Social work programs have also employed a variety of approaches to nurture integration of theoretical content and field instruction. Some have developed close relationships with agencies and may provide consultation or occasional in-service training to the staff in host agencies. Field instructors may also serve on advisory boards to provide feedback on the social work program's field education component. Whenever the faculty and the staff of field agencies meet and discuss mutual concerns, opportunities arise to explore ways to integrate students' field experiences with classroom learning.

Efforts to achieve integration can also be more purposive, as when agency field instructors supervising students for the first time are required to attend seminars on field instruction. These sessions facilitate the integration of field and classroom experiences as field instructors are given access to syllabi, course outlines, bibliographies, curriculum statements, field manuals, newsletters, and other relevant documents.

Most social work programs place the major responsibility on the faculty field liaison for the integration of classroom learning and field instruction. As discussed earlier, the faculty field liaison may use methods such as holding field seminars, commenting on students' logs, or holding conferences with students to increase the integration of classroom and field experiences.

The students' role, too, should be recognized. Students can enrich their learning by sharing relevant information that they have come across and by

making a point to bring into the classroom their interesting field experiences, discussions, cases, and learning from their agencies. Equally valuable is the habit of reflecting on what is learned in the field. Students should periodically ask themselves questions such as, What knowledge, skills, or values am I learning in the field? How workable are the theories that I have been learning? How do situations encountered with real clients mesh with what I have learned in class? Because our families can influence our attitudes about life and how we view others (e.g., with punitive, condescending, or accepting attitudes), we also need to think about how our own life experiences contribute to our ability to recognize, appreciate, and affirm clients and their efforts, courage, and strengths.

The use of a professional log can be invaluable for recording your reflections about interventions, clients, and the agency, as well as what you might be learning about yourself. Perhaps you will identify areas where you need to acquire information or instruction. Your log can also include narratives of key events, problems, feelings, impressions, lists of things to do or learn, as well as reflections on your reading and questions you want to ask your field instructor or field liaison. Such reflection, practiced from time to time, not only helps you integrate classroom content and field education but also promotes your growth as active, responsible, self-directed learners.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF FIELD SEMINARS?

As a part of the practicum requirements, many social work programs require students to participate in weekly seminars. A *seminar* is a group of students engaged in a special study under the guidance of a professor. The basic assumption underpinning seminars is that each person in attendance has important information to share or contribute. By contrast, in lecture courses the assumption is that the professor has the most knowledge and will be the prime communicator of ideas.

Usually, field seminars are conducted by faculty field liaisons, although they may be directed by field instructors or even students themselves. Faculty field liaisons or seminar leaders make arrangements for the time and place of the meeting, and they determine the frequency of the seminars as well as the focus of each session. In addition, it is their responsibility to see that the discussions are relevant to students' current experiences in their practicum placements. Many see their seminar leadership role as helping students (1) to understand their cases in terms of applicable theories and (2) to integrate discoveries in an area (e.g., practice) with content from another (e.g., policy or research implications).

Seminars may be highly structured, as when students are given specific reading assignments or are asked to make presentations. Or seminars may be loosely structured, as when students take turns relating significant experiences or problems that recently occurred in the field. In structured seminars, it is likely that the faculty field liaison will choose the topics and carefully focus student discussion. Similarly, the faculty field liaison may give specific directions for seminar presentations. Here are a few suggestions if you are required to make a presentation:

1. Keep within the time limit (organize your thoughts and rehearse your presentation).
2. Begin with a brief introduction of what you intend to cover.

3. Limit your main points to three or four, and support these with illustrations.
4. Summarize your main points at the end of your presentation.
5. Stimulate discussion by looking at each person as you speak.
6. Use visual aids to clarify ideas.
7. Anticipate questions, and to encourage discussion, ask several questions of your own.

Whether their seminars are structured or unstructured, most faculty field liaisons prefer that all students contribute to seminar discussions. Informal exchanges can help students feel comfortable with the way their interventions are proceeding. Learning that your peers have had similar experiences or even that they would have handled the problem the same way you did can be very reassuring. In the best seminars, students can feel free to raise questions with the faculty member or other students—to ask for resources or help with a special situation or problem.

To get the most out of an unstructured seminar, prepare ahead of time by reflecting on the past week's important events. Rank order them when time is limited, so that the most pressing matters can be discussed first. Try not to monopolize the group's time. In some instances, it may be necessary to continue the discussion with your faculty field liaison after the seminar or to make an appointment for this purpose.

In seminars, you are expected to be a good listener when others are speaking, to stay alert, and to interact with others in the group. A seminar works well only when everyone takes part of the responsibility to make it interesting by raising questions and sharing information that may not be common knowledge.

DO STUDENTS WITH UNDERGRADUATE FIELD INSTRUCTION GET CREDIT WHEN THEY WORK TOWARD A MASTER'S DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK?

Yes. Most Master of Social Work (MSW) programs allow applicants with Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degrees from schools accredited by the Council on Social Work Education to apply for *advanced standing* status. If given this status, students are usually granted a waiver allowing them to receive credit for undergraduate field experience. Depending upon the program, students with BSWs from accredited programs may be allowed to waive one or two semesters of coursework.

CSWE's Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (2008) require that "BSW graduates entering MSW programs are not to repeat what has been mastered in the BSW programs. MSW programs describe the policies and procedures used for awarding advanced standing" (pp. 11–12).

Although the basic qualification for advanced standing is graduation from an accredited undergraduate social work program, most programs also insist that applicants earn at least a B average in their social work courses. A written examination covering foundation course material may be required, as well as a personal interview.

IS IT POSSIBLE FOR A STUDENT TO HAVE A FIELD PLACEMENT WHERE HE OR SHE IS ALSO EMPLOYED?

The answer is a qualified yes. Although this option is not routinely available to undergraduates, programs do occasionally allow students to be placed in the same agencies where they are employed. Because certain conditions must be met, not all employment situations qualify as field sites. Students are to be employed in agencies meeting all field instruction and other program standards and expectations. Other requirements often include having responsibilities different from those customarily performed, having a MSW supervisor different from the regular supervisor, and receiving permission from the employing agency for release from paid duties during regular business hours in order to be a student.

The best rationale for requesting a practicum in the agency where one is employed is the availability of unique educational experiences—exposure to a clientele or intervention not available at any other agency. Some agencies also encourage their employees to “cross-train” so that they have a pool of better qualified and experienced staff on which to draw. These agencies may be willing to provide release time for student-employees to learn different skills within the agency. The concern that most faculty field liaisons have with allowing students to have a practicum with an employer is that it may be difficult to view the students as “learners” by the student-employee’s colleagues. Because of their knowledge of the agency and its programs, these students may be given so much responsibility that they are unable to read, study, or reflect on their new practice experiences. As a result, these students may be so busy (especially if not given release time) that they are unable to differentiate between hours spent as a regular employee and time spent as a student intern.

In our experience, large agencies (such as hospitals) provide the best models for situations where students could be both employees and students. For instance, Sue could be a hospital social worker assigned full time to the maternity unit. If a practicum within the psychiatric unit could be worked out, she would have different responsibilities and supervision. When working in the maternity unit, it would be clear that Sue was functioning as an employee; when working in the psychiatric unit, Sue would be functioning as a student.

SUMMARY

This introductory chapter has provided the historical and current context for understanding the requirement of field instruction in social work programs. It has also provided students with information about their preparation, supervision, and the coordination of field instruction within the larger educational program.

Making the Right Career Choice

1. Choosing one's profession is not a decision to be made too quickly. Every profession has somewhat different demands and stresses, and advantages and disadvantages. What are three reasons why you want to pursue a career in social work.

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

2. As you think about your particular talents, abilities, or knowledge, what qualities do you have that would help you to be a good social worker?

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

3. The opposite of strength is weakness or limitation. What challenges do you think you will face as a social worker?

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

4. What roles that social workers perform interest you most? Why?

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

5. What are your long-term career goals? What would you like to do once you finish this degree?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

6. Where do you see yourself working ten years from now? What will you be doing? Who will be your primary clients?

7. Reflect on your responses to these questions, and discuss how your responses may inform about what you need to learn in a field education experience. For instance, what skills might you need to learn? What activities/responsibilities could be built into your learning contract to prepare you for your long-term career goals? What agency or agencies would be beneficial to host settings? Is there anything special you would need to negotiate with your field instructor or faculty liaison?

Altruism as a Foundation for Social Work

Your instructor may ask you to complete this exercise individually or, alternatively, pair you with another student. If this exercise is employed as an ice-breaker, you will be asked to interview someone you don't know and that person will then interview you. This exercise can help you get to know your classmates.

1. Have you previously volunteered for a charity or nonprofit organization? If so, which one, and what did you do for that organization? What would you say was the most important thing you learned from volunteering?

2. Have you ever helped someone (e.g., an elderly person or a person with a disability with chores) not for pay, but because you just wanted to help? If so, whom did you help, and how did you help that person? Was this a one-time activity, or was it ongoing for a while?

3. Have you ever seriously considered becoming
 - a. a Big Brother/Big Sister?
 - a. a Peace Corps volunteer?
 - a. blood donor?
4. Give an example of when you shared something of value with another individual. What did you learn from that experience?

5. Name persons in your life who have been role models because of their “giving attitudes”? Who would you say is the person most responsible for influencing you to consider a social work degree? Why?

6. At what jobs have you worked? What lessons did you, as an employee, learn about helping others? Did any of your previous positions help you become more altruistic? Why or why not?

7. Review your responses to the earlier questions, and conclude something about your altruism aptitude. If you consider that altruism might be measured on a continuum from low to high, where might you fall on that continuum?

Obtaining a Historical Perspective

Go to the library or the social work program's Web site to see if you can find the answers to the following questions:

1. When was your college or university founded? By whom?

2. When did the social work program at your college begin? (Note: If you are attending a university that offers both undergraduate and graduate social work programs, you may want to obtain information only on the program in which you are enrolled.)

3. Identify any social service agencies you can find that were involved in the start of the program.

a. Are they still in existence and serving clients?

b. Are they still vitally involved with the social work program? List two ways in which social service agencies are involved with your program.

4. Has the social work program changed in the last five years or so? (Note: You may want to examine the materials your program has submitted for re-accreditation to the Council on Social Work Education. These materials should be available in the library. Alternatively, you could interview a student who is farther along in the program than you, an alumnus of the program, or a faculty member.)

The source of my information was _____.
I also learned that:

5. Reflect upon the historical evolution of social work and your social work program. Is change inevitable? What changes might you expect in the future? Why?



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1. Read the MySocialWorkLibrary case study “Mikki’s Story.” The social worker admits to having “practitioner arrogance” noting that her work was

disempowering the client, that her goal of independence and self-sufficiency was not what the client most desired. How does a social worker guard against making this kind of mistake?

2. Read the MySocialWorkLibrary case study “Stephanie and Rose Doer.” How does the worker show the importance of cultural competence in working with clients and educating other professionals?

PRACTICE TEST The following questions will test your knowledge of the content found within this chapter.

- Which of the following purposes of field education was not discussed in this chapter?
 - Students’ exposure to different clients/client systems.
 - Students’ exposure to professional interventions and roles.
 - Students’ socialization into the professional culture.
 - Students’ learning how social workers act ethically in agencies.
- The functions of the faculty field liaison do not include which of the following?
 - Advising students in planning their practicum.
 - Monitoring students’ learning experiences and progress.
 - Resolving students’ problems with their field instructor/other personnel.
 - Supervising students’ day-to-day activities.
- In self-reflecting on what is being learned in the agency, the topic of least importance is:
 - Professional knowledge, skills, and values being acquired.
 - Application of human behavior and social organization theories.
 - Keeping my field instructor pleased with me.
 - Relevance of cultural contexts and life experiences in understanding clients.
- Which statement was not discussed as a valid reason for not placing students in the agency of their employment?
 - Agency is not meeting the social work program standards.
 - Experiences that the student needs are not available.
 - The student cannot keep the employee and student roles separate.
 - The student or agency may exploit the situation for non-educational purposes.

Short Answer Question:

A college student from another department in the university asks why it is necessary to have field instruction in social work. “Why can’t you learn what you need to know from scientific papers and books?” she asks. Using your best critical thinking skills and your identity with the profession, how would you respond?

ASSESS YOUR COMPETENCE Use the scale below to rate your current level of achievement on the following concepts or skills associated with each competency presented in the chapter:

| 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|--|--|
| I can accurately describe the concept or skill. | I can consistently identify the concept or skill when observing and analyzing practice activities. | I can competently implement the concept or skill in my own practice. |

_____ Analyze models of assessment, prevention, and intervention to guide my practice.

_____ Use supervision and consultation to acquire needed skills.

Answers

Key: 1) d, 2) d, 3) c, 4) d