Field Education and COVID-19: Frequently Asked Questions
Updated April 10, 2020

Dear Students,

As always, we welcome your feedback, suggestions, and concerns! We will continue to send information and resources via email, and will be scheduling more live question and answer sessions as the need arises.

Are members of the Field Team at UBSSW still available to students and members of the larger field community?

While we are currently not in our building at Baldy Hall, we are continuing to work, and will each continue to be available to students via our regular emails and phone. We are also able to set up scheduled zoom meetings with individual students. Please reach out! sw-field@buffalo.edu is a great way to reach the field team.

Now that New York State has reduced the total number of field hours required to be in line with the Council on Social Work Accreditation’s 85% reduction, what does that mean for students?

This change only impacts current advanced year students, students set to graduate in May or September. These students now are required to complete 345 hours (rather than 480). The hours requirement then reverts back to the full 900 total, or 480 for advanced year.

Students can choose to complete the full 480 hours as originally planned (for your own learning and/or to provide for continuity of service to the agency and to your clients), or exit with 345 hours, after first discussing a plan with their Field Educator and Liaison.

Exiting from field entails: 1) termination with clients; 2) completion and/or reporting on status of current field projects; 3) completion of any required documentation; 4) return of any items such as keys; and, 5) submission of any materials to Taskstream (i.e. remote learning plan), timesheet, supervision record form, and completed reflection. Recall that Field Educators cannot complete evaluations in Taskstream without student submission.

What is happening with student placement for next academic year? When will we hear from the Field Office about placement interviewing?

We originally put a pause on sending students to interview. This was due to feedback from our agency partners. They were needing time and space to manage the day-to-day issues, and were not thinking about next year quite yet.

We have now begun doing outreach to agency partners, and in some cases have been able to send students to interview.
How is field evaluation being handled where students have developed remote work plans or shifted to other field activities?

Students should upload to Taskstream their remote learning plan, and any other documents that may relate to their learning. The timesheet and supervision record form, along with the student’s reflection, should all be submitted in advance of the new deadline of May 1, 2020. Educator evaluation are due in Taskstream by May 8.

What can I do if I am experiencing economic hardship related to the virus?

Students can contact Dana Horne in student services about the Students Helping Students Fund if they're experiencing illness or economic hardship and need financial support. Dana's email is dhorne@buffalo.edu. See http://socialwork.buffalo.edu/current-students/students-helping-students-fund.html.

What if students are not allowed to do face to face work with clients? What should they do?

Our best hope is that you work with your Field Educator and Liaison to develop an individual work plan to continue placement activities, but remotely. Sample activities, and a listing of remote activities can be found on the School’s COVID-19 web page under Field Education, http://socialwork.buffalo.edu/about/covid-19.html.

We hope that supervision can take place remotely either by phone or video conferencing, but we are also open to supervision being a bit more flexible and fluid.

If it's not possible to create a remote work plan within your field placement, members of the Field Team are working on developing supplemental field assignments to help you reach both the hour and the competency requirements.

I have viewed the listing of Remote Activities for field posted on the School’s COVID-19 page. Can we generate our own ideas? Can we complete online CEU or non-CEU trainings as remote activities?

Absolutely! Our advice is to be creative. In some ways, coming up with your own ideas is preferred as we want the activities that you will be doing to be tailored to your placement, and be relevant to your learning needs. We are eager to hear your ideas, and will use them to expand our list of remote activities. We know our current listing is not exhaustive. As we learn of CEU training opportunities they will be added to the list of remote activities.

What if I have been told by my field agency that I’m unable to return to my placement? What if my agency doesn't allow me to work remotely? What if my Field Educator / Field Supervisor is no longer able to supervise me?
The Field Team has developed two student units, one for students completing field in May, and one for students completing in August. Both are designed to provide meaningful learning and support to the local community during the pandemic. Please contact sw-field@buffalo.edu for more information.

We have also created a UB Learns course site (which is still under development), and we'll be using that to provide some instruction for students, for students that are looking for supplemental activities to fulfill their hours, for supervision, and for solidarity and support.

What if I can't complete my hours due to illness, or other obligations? What if I don’t feel comfortable returning to field?

If a student doesn't have their hours completed by the end of the semester, we have the option of assigning a grade of Incomplete, and then we will work with students on developing an alternative plan (for completion of hours) once they are able to return.

If students, for some reason, don't feel comfortable returning - maybe they're worried about a health condition that they or someone they're close to has or they're feeling some distress - we have developed a protocol for students to use and follow if they would like to be released from field for a period of time and that protocol is on the School's website. Please see the Protocol for Requesting Leave from Field posted on the School’s COVID-19 webpage under the Field Education heading.

We are going to be available to consult with students, and will provide support about how you might be able to rearrange your schedule to get more hours in, for example, once you return.