

INTERVIEW TOPICS

MSW Student Interns – Field Placement

We have found that placements are most successful for both students and field educators when **expectations, needs, and opportunities are clarified in the initial interview**. When issues arise they often stem from a lack of communication about expectations, make sure you are both “on the same page” – please don’t assume! We hope that discussing these topics will be helpful to you in beginning a meaningful and mutually satisfying student/field educator relationship. Please take this document with you to review during the interview.

□ **Discuss student career interests, professional goals, and learning needs.**

□ **Discuss mandatory trainings/orientations:**

-Orientations prior to the beginning of the field placement, typically do not count toward field placement hours. Please contact the Field Director to request any exceptions.

-Be aware of SSW policy related to agency training and potential classroom conflicts: *“In the rare event that a student is mandated to attend a field placement training that conflicts with a scheduled course, the instructor will consider resulting absences as excused and follow university policy (See UB SSW Student Handbook.) In such instances, students will notify the field education office or their field liaisons about the conflict.”*

□ **Screenings/References:**

Students may be required to have a PPD Mantoux (TB test) within the 12 months prior to the start of the field placement. Please discuss all necessary requirements with your agency at the interview. It is important to clarify if the agency has any additional requirements such as specialized screenings (i.e. criminal background checks, drug screenings) or immunizations and any costs that students may incur. Some agencies may also require Letters of Reference.

□ **Conflicts of Interest:**

Does the agency have a policy that may restrict accepting an MSW intern (i.e. if an intern/and or their immediate family member received services from agency, no smoking policy, etc.)? Please note that students should not select placements where: a) they have volunteered or been employed previously (IF you have previously worked or volunteered with the agency you must submit a request with the field office in order to proceed. A Petition form can be found in the My Field Ed portal under forms.); b) they or an immediate family have received services in the past few years; or, c) they have a personal or professional relationship with staff at this agency.

Foundation students should alert the field office immediately if the placement they have been assigned meets any of the above descriptions.

□ **Student Hours:**

(See Field Education Calendar for specific details.)

-Agree upon a specific student field placement schedule (ie days and hours)

-Generally, full-time students have been expected to be in field placement for an 8-hour day. This is based on 7.5 field hours with a half-hour for lunch that is not counted toward field.

-Students in the part-time program may need to flex their hours and may not be in field for 8 consecutive hours. In these cases, an alternate schedule may be developed between the student and the field educator then reviewed with the school for approval. Our expectation is that students will be at placement during hours that preserve the integrity of their learning, never less than 3 hour shifts.

□ **School Setting Placements:**

Please discuss the spring break of the school system versus that of UB. In order to get the minimum required hours, students often need to exchange the time off from UB with that of the school if they do not coincide.

□ **Use of vehicles and any parking expenses:**

-Due to liability issues, students are not allowed to transport clients in their vehicle or agency vehicle(s).

-Will the student need to use their own vehicle to travel between different agency sites or for home visits? Does the agency reimburse interns for mileage? Is there a fee for parking at or near the agency?

□ **Population Served:**

Agency Interviewers may want to share typical examples of populations and situations encountered in the agency's setting. For example, this setting frequently deals with clients confronting death, suicide, sexual trauma, etc. Discussing experiences students have had in preparing to deal with these populations or situations as well as their comfort level may be helpful. However, please be mindful that it is generally inappropriate to discuss a student's personal life experiences in the interview.

□ **Recommended Courses:**

The agency interviewer may want to discuss what courses the student has taken and make suggestions about any particular course that may be useful in getting the most out of the field placement (i.e. Psychopathology, Interventions with Groups). Students may or may not be able to take a particular elective course depending on when the course is offered and their individual schedule.

□ **Agency Mission and Learning Experience:**

We ask that agencies provide as much diversity in the range of experiences as possible for this foundation placement. It is beneficial for the field educator to share with the student typical examples of situations encountered in the field setting. Students will be better prepared for the placement if they are aware and can discuss any concerns about dealing with particular problem areas. Providing agency brochures or other information for the student to take to read is also helpful.

□ **Learning and Supervisory Styles:**

Awareness of differences or similarities from the start can be very helpful in terms of developing a good working relationship. It is not always necessary for the student and field educator to have similar styles in terms of structure, preferred learning, and teaching styles (i.e. experiential, cognitive, etc.) to have a positive experience. Sometimes differences can cause a student to stretch and learn new ways of doing things. This discussion will be important when developing a learning contract but an initial recognition of the preferred style can help. Recognizing and respecting diversity is the key.

□ **Dress code:**

It is useful to clarify terms such as “casual” or “professional” as they may mean different things to different people. Please be specific (i.e. jacket and tie are required or dress is casual but no jeans or sneakers).

□ **Establish a clear outcome:**

Does the agency agree to the student? Does the student agree to the agency? If not, establish a date to know the outcome of the interview. **Students are responsible to follow up. Clear communication between the student and the agency is very important.**

□ **Review “Sample Questions” and incorporate into the interview.**

Sample Questions for Students to Ask in Interview

- 1) What can the agency/field educator provide in terms of learning opportunities?
- 2) What can I expect in terms of supervision? What is the supervisory style of the field educator?
- 3) What services does the agency provide? Find out as much as possible about the agency. Ask for brochures or any written material that might be available. Ask what activities or tasks will I be doing as a student?
- 4) What has their previous experiences been like with students? What seems to have worked well in terms of students/field educators benefiting from the experience?
- 5) What, if any, resources are available at the agency (i.e. computer availability, in-service training opportunities)?
- 6) ***Advanced Year Placement Only***
Are there any necessary prerequisites to having a placement at the agency? (i.e. Some agencies ask that a student have taken a psychopathology course or be willing to take it during the first semester of placement.) You may also want to ask the field educator for any suggestions he or she may have about courses that would be useful in getting the most out of the field placement.

Sample Questions for Agency Interviewers to Ask Students

- 1) What are you looking for in terms of learning? Supervisory style?
- 2) What have you found particularly helpful, or not helpful, in supervisory or learning relationships in the past?
- 3) What might your field educator do that you would find conducive to your learning? What would you probably find negative?
- 4) How do you deal with problems when they arise? For example, how do you think you would handle problems in the student/field educator relationship, or how would you respond if you found that the learning opportunities were not meeting your needs? How could the practicum help you deal with these types of problems?
- 5) What have you found to be your strengths and weaknesses in working with others in teams?
- 6) What has your experience been in working with people in authority? What have your positive experiences been? What difficulties have you experienced?
- 7) Do you have any ideas about how you learn best? For example, are you more comfortable putting a lot of thought in before you face a new situation, or are you more comfortable acting first and reflecting in more detail later?
- 8) ***Advanced Year Placement Only***
What learning objectives have you developed so far for the upcoming practicum? What do you know or what have you

