FIELD PLACEMENT WITHIN AGENCY OF EMPLOYMENT*

It is recommended that MSW students avoid full-time employment while actively involved in coursework. This recommendation is made in an effort to ensure students have the time and energy required to successfully meet the heavy demands of graduate study. The faculty does realize, however, that some students may find it necessary to be employed while in school, and may be interested in completing field placement requirements within their place of employment. Field placements in the first (foundation) year of the MSW curriculum involve fewer clock hours than placements in the second (concentration year so students should plan to complete their foundation-year field placements in a setting outside of their place of employment.

Under certain circumstances described below, and with the approval of the Director of Field Education, students who are working fulltime in a human service organization may arrange to complete their concentration-year MSW field placement within the organization in which they are employed. The following circumstances must be present in order for students to complete field placements within their agency of paid employment:

1) The student would otherwise incur incapacitating financial hardship due to a lack of access to other financial support and do not have access to an altered work schedule, use of adequate annual leave, a leave of absence from employment, or other accommodations that would permit completion of field placement requirements without working fulltime; and

2) The student must provide convincing evidence that excellent opportunities exist for new learning within the current place of employment.

It is essential that professional education requirements be protected for the student completing a field placement within the agency in which s/he is employed. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredits the Colorado State University School of Social Work and provides the following accreditation standard within its Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS),

Accreditation Standard 2.1.8: The program discusses how its field education program develops policies regarding field placements in an organization in which the student is also employed. To ensure the role of student as learner, student assignments and field education supervision are not the same as those of the student’s employment.

In accordance with EPAS Standard 2.1.8 the Colorado State University School of Social Work requires that the following conditions be met in order for a field placement to be completed in a student’s place of employment:

1. The employing organization must be able to provide new learning assignments for the field placement hours that meet the education requirements of the CSU MSW Program and are appropriate to the student’s individual educational needs. Field placement credit will only be given for work that is outside of the student’s usual employment work assignments. The workload for the field placement hours must be carefully monitored and managed to ensure adequate time for the student’s acquisition
and application of new professional knowledge and skills. The student must be allowed time to reflect upon the learning experience, facilitating integration of the newly acquired knowledge and the skills. This may require temporarily altered productivity standards for the student during that portion of paid work time that constitutes the field placement.

2. The student must receive weekly field instruction from a qualified MSW social worker other than the supervisor of the student’s usual employment work assignments. Field instruction is educational supervision that assists the student to integrate theory from the classroom with practice experience in the field placement.

3. The Colorado State University provision of Worker’s Compensation coverage for students’ field placements will not apply if a student completes a field placement in an organization where s/he is employed. The student’s place of employment is responsible for providing that coverage for the employed student.

4. Students can only serve one field placement as a negotiated part of paid employment. Students should make appropriate arrangements to ensure the availability of sufficient time and/or financial resources to allow one of the MSW field placements outside of their place of paid employment. This is typically easier to arrange for the foundation-year field placement of 268 hours.

Students requesting permission to complete a field placement within their agency of employment must submit to the Director of Field Education, along with their application for field placement, a written statement identifying:

- their usual employment work assignment (i.e., formal job description);
- the name of their employed, job-site supervisor;
- the new duties proposed for the field placement activities (i.e., internship description); and
- the name of the MSW field instructor proposed for field instruction.

Students will be expected to discuss the learning potential of the proposed, new field placement duties during their placement interview with the Director or Assistant Director of Field Education. This discussion will include ways in which these new field placement duties reflect the competencies and practice behaviors required by the CSU School of Social Work. An MSW field instructor must be identified and agreeable to provide field instruction prior to approval of the field placement within the student’s agency of employment.

*This policy applies to regularly paid employment, not to stipends provided through grants or contracts obtained by the School of Social Work or provided directly by the organizations accepting students for field placements.*