



USC
Suzanne
Dworak-Peck
School of Social Work

Field Education Manual

2021-2022

VAC Manual

Maintained By: Suh Chen Hsaio and Ruth Cislowski Revised: August 2021

ATTENTION: The Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work fully adheres to the School's and the university's policies and protocols. All MSW Students are expected to review, understand, and comply with the policies and protocols included in [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), [Current Student Website](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work MSW Policies and Procedures](#), and [VAC Field Education Manual](#).

VIRTUAL ACADEMIC CENTER FIELD EDUCATION MANUAL USC SUZANNE DWORAK-PECK SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

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WELCOME

As the Director of Field Education, I welcome students and Field Instructors who are engaged in the interactive process of teaching and learning about the practice of professional social work in the real world. Field Education is committed to providing opportunities for our students to develop skills in the most current practices, particularly in evidence-based interventions, and to receive supervision by the finest Field Instructors in the country.

This Field Education Manual is designed to provide general information and guidance about Field Education and the Field Practicum to students and Field Instructors at both at both of our Academic Centers (AC) - the On Campus Program (OCP) and the Virtual Academic Center (VAC).

Individual and specific questions are encouraged and can be directed to those field faculty who are assigned to each student as Field Faculty Liaisons at each Academic Center. If there continues to be a concern, then the advisor/liaison can contact the Associate Director of Field Education for further discussion. The roles of the Director, the Associate Director, the Regional Directors, and the Faculty are to provide our students as much support as possible in the process of integrating theory with practice.

Field Education is the “Heart of Social Work” and we want to provide an experience for each student that represents the reality of professional social work practitioners and agencies today. The experiences in the Field Practicum can evoke a range of reactions and like the challenges in our communities, the process of learning in the Field is dynamic and complex. You may confront difficult situations and dilemmas in the first few months. With early and open communication and good collaborative problem solving, the learning during the academic year will be profound and life changing,

I extend my thanks and best regards to students and Field Instructors for beginning a life long journey of learning, self-discovery and transformation.

Ruth Supranovich, EdD, LCSW
Director of Field Education

I. FIELD EDUCATION

Field Education is an independent and integral sequence of the MSW curriculum. Students are exposed to selected and organized opportunities guided by the [Educational Policy and Educational Standards \(EPAS\)](#) and the [nine Core Competencies of the Council on Social Work Education \(CSWE\)](#). Field is the signature pedagogy of Social Work Education. Field Education seeks to validate, apply, and integrate the knowledge, theories, and concepts of social work practice learned throughout the curriculum. Field agencies are expected to provide "in vivo" experiences relevant to the academic content. The student is expected to apply academic knowledge, social work skills, critical thinking, professional behavior, ethics and values learned in the classroom to direct practice work.

In order for integration of learning to occur concurrently in field sites and in the classroom, the agency and the School need to collaborate closely. USC administrators, professors and Field Faculty Liaisons partner with agency field instructors to foster comprehensive and high-quality social work education and training. The collaboration teaches and guides students to practice with cultural humility and to abide by professional social work behavior, values, and code of ethics. This culturally responsive approach helps prepare students to practice social work with diverse populations and to take on leadership roles within the profession.

A. Objectives of Field Education

Field Education prepares students to enter the social work profession by meeting the following objectives:

- To integrate academic learning with all levels of field work (micro, mezzo, macro).
 - To achieve proficiency in the required [competencies](#) for social work education as it relates to field work.
- The [2015 CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) are as follows:
1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
 2. Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
 3. Advance Human Rights and Social, 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
- Develop the ability to understand and utilize a broad range of modalities and interventions in micro, mezzo, and macro practice with diverse populations.
 - Focus on building the knowledge for generalist practice in the 1st semester to establish a broad foundation for direct practice work.
 - Develop a deeper knowledge and depth of skills needed for beginning professional practice in a designated Department of Study in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th semesters.

B. Program Overview

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work is a highly ranked social work graduate program (U.S. News and World Report) in the country. It has the largest full-time Master of Social Work (MSW) program in the country and is ranked as a level one research school. We offer opportunities for students to select from a four-semester, six-semester, or an advanced standing program. The regular standing MSW degree requires the completion of a minimum of 60 semester units, including four semesters of Field Internship. Students must commit to a minimum of at least one eight-hour day (a maximum of 10 hours with prior faculty approval) during regular business hours (Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm) at an approved agency site.

Highlights of the Program:

- Four-semester, six-semester, or advanced standing options enabling students to finish on their timetable
- A choice of academic centers: OCP or VAC
- A choice of three Departments of Study and department specific tracks
- Dual degree programs (OCP only)
- A variety of department specific electives
- Field Internships assigned according to students' learning needs and educational goals

Quick Facts:

Degree Programs

- [Master of Social Work](#)
- [Master of Science in Nursing/Family Nurse Practitioner \(VAC\)](#)
- [Doctor of Philosophy](#)
- [Doctor of Social Work](#)
- [MSW/PhD](#) (OCP only)

Departments of Study

- [Adult Mental Health and Wellness \(AMHW\)](#)
- [Children, Youth and Families \(CYF\)](#)
- [Social Change and Innovation \(SCI\)](#)
 - ❖ Note that each Department of Study offers its own specific track of study (i.e. Military, Social Work in Schools, etc.) that will require completion of specific elective courses.

Dual Degree Programs (OCP only)

- [Master of Social Work/Juris Doctor](#)
- [Master of Social Work/Master of Business Administration](#)
- [Master of Social Work/Master of Science in Gerontology](#)
- [Master of Social Work/Master of Arts in Jewish Nonprofit Management](#)
- [Master of Social Work/Master of Planning](#)
- [Master of Social Work/Master of Public Administration](#)
- [Master of Social Work/Master of Public Health](#)
- [Master of Social Work/Doctor of Philosophy](#)

C. [Campus Locations](#)

	<p>University Park Campus (OCP) Montgomery Ross Fisher Building 669 W. 34th Street Los Angeles, CA 90089-0411 213.740.2711</p>
	<p>Virtual Academic Center (VAC) https://msw.usc.edu/about/ 877.700.4MSW (4679)</p>

D. VAC Field Administration / Field Faculty / Staff

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E. Field Agency Sites

The Field Internship, also known as a student's placement or applied learning in field education, takes place in [USC Memorandum of Agreement \(MOA\)](#) contract approved agencies located throughout the country that represent a wide range of social work services and practice. These agencies are approved sites based on the quality of the professional practice, commitment to addressing social problems and an interest to participate in the professional education of MSW students. The agency is responsible for providing the learning opportunities representative of social work practice within the student's region and/or community. They must subscribe to the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work educational objectives, the [CSWE EPAS and the nine core competencies](#).

Note: MSW students are not allowed to identify nor secure their own field placement site but may suggest potential sites for pre-approval processing.

Field internship sites must treat the students as learners while providing the resources necessary to meet their learning objectives. Unless officially approved by the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Field Faculty and Administration, students may not work at home during the placement hours. Hours worked at home without the express consent of the Field Instructor and assigned Field Faculty will not be counted as meeting the number of hours required for a passing grade.

Note: Students cannot sign any agency "contracts" nor enter into any agreements that refute or negate the provisions in the official agency/organization MOA with the USC Suzanne Dworak-

Peck School of Social Work. This includes important policies regarding placement hours and educational calendar events such as finals week.

There are instances when an agency may not possess the resources to provide all the required learning experiences. In such cases, a secondary placement site may be identified and used for the purpose of meeting the student's learning objectives and accumulation of Field Internship hours. A large multi-disciplinary placement agency site may also decide to broaden the student's experience by rotating to different departments to expand learning opportunities. In any of these options, the primary agency site carries the main responsibility for field instruction while the secondary site provides a Preceptor for supplemental supervision. All options must be expressly pre-approved by the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Field Faculty and Administration prior to the start of the Field Internship or the hours will not be counted toward the number required for a passing grade.

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work welcomes agencies interested in partnering as field placement sites. To qualify as a field placement site, an agency must meet the following criteria:

- Provide a sufficient amount and variety of assignments to develop student knowledge and practice skills.
- Provide an opportunity to work with individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations.
- Provide ample time for weekly field instruction to permit both individual and/or group conferences with students.
- Provide adequate office space, office supplies, telephone availability, computer access for assigned tasks, and clerical support for the student to perform assigned duties.
- Provide opportunities for in-service training and access to agency consultants.
- Have an interest in participating in the student's research.
- Have an interest in aligning the agency's practice framework to theories taught in the classroom.

New agency sites must complete the Agency Qualifying Form (VAC) or the [New Agency Information Packet](#) (OCP) and a [Memorandum of Agreement \(MOA\)](#) approved by the USC Legal Counsel. An agency representative must also meet with a USC Field representative to evaluate the appropriateness of the site and for approval. This process typically takes three to six months to complete.

F. Field Education Requirements

Applied Learning in Field Education courses, which are the student's Field Internship are required courses. The table below provides the sequential overview of the courses for each semester.

Course Work

Table 1: Semester Course Information

Field Education Courses (18 total units):			
Semester 1 (3 Units)	Semester 2 (5 Units)	Semester 3 (5 Units)	Semester 4 (5 Units)
● Applied Learning in Field Education (589a) – 3 Units	● Applied Learning in Field Education (589b) – 3 Units	● Advanced Applied Learning in Field Education (699a) – 4 Units	● Advanced Applied Learning in Field Education (699b) – 4 Units

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integrative Learning for Social Work Practice (588) – 2 Units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integrative Learning for Advanced Social Work Practice (698a) – 1 Unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integrative Learning for Advanced Social Work Practice (698b) – 1 Unit
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All MSW students (not including Advanced Standing students) on the VAC must complete one semester of Virtual Field Practicum (VFP, 589a) and three semesters of community-based field placement (589b and 699a/b) by completing two semesters of Applied Learning in Field Education and two semesters of Advanced Applied Learning in Field Education as part of graduation requirements. All four courses must be completed sequentially as part of the graduation requirements. All students enrolled in the second semester of Applied Learning in Field Education (589b) and Advanced Applied Learning in Field Education (699a/b) shall attend the corresponding Integrative Learning for Social Work Practice course as indicated in Table 1. Field Education courses are assigned a “Credit” or “No Credit” grade. Applied Learning in Field Education courses are taken concurrently with the corresponding Integrated Learning for Social Work Practice courses.

Field Internship

Students must earn between **1,000 to 1,050** Field Internship hours. All Field Internship hours must be earned by completing the VFP (not including Advanced Standing students) and completion of an internship at a specific agency location assigned through the formal placement process. The first two semesters of field (589a-VFP and 589b) require the completion of a minimum of **450** hours and the third and fourth semesters (699a/b) require a minimum of **550** hours. An exception is all students who are seeking to earn a [California Pupil Personnel Services Credential \(PPSC\)](#) who must earn **600** hours in a school-based or affiliated placement that meets the requirements set forth by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC). The Learning Agreement indicates the number of hours required for each semester in Field Education. All MSW candidates must meet the minimum **1,000** Field Internship hours to earn their degree. Advanced Standing students complete only the field requirements for the third and fourth semesters (699a/b).

The criteria and objectives vary from each Department of Study with a more generalist experience in the first semester of community-based placement to a more specialized experience in the remaining semesters. Field placement days vary depending on the student course schedule. The student will coordinate with the agency regarding the internship schedule. Field placement days are determined through a discussion between the agency and the student, with the requirement that there is at least one 8-hour day during regular business hours. There is no exception to this policy. Evening and weekend hours are very limited or non-existent in most communities. MSW supervision must be available to the student during field internship hours.

Note: Students may not work over 8 hours per day without prior USC faculty pre-approval nor can they work more than 32 hours per week. MSW students may not bank hours to end field internship early nor can they credit hours from 589a to 589b or from 589b to 699a. Field Instructors and students must adhere to the start and end dates of field internship as indicated in the Field Calendar regardless of any excess hours earned each semester. Below are potential exceptions to this policy:

- Internship extensions: Some agencies may require students to continue during the semester breaks for continuity of care. Any extension must be indicated in the Learning Agreement.
- Make-up for missing hours: Any scheduled make-up hours must be completed before the add/drop date of the following semester.

The agency, student, and the Field Faculty Liaison must have a discussion and pre-approve this schedule early in each field internship. Any changes in internship requirements must be noted in the Learning Agreement. Any changes in internship requirements after the initial learning agreement is completed must be made in writing and approved by the field instructor and by the field liaison.

Field Internship is assigned to all students in the VAC. Student's refusal to participate in the field placement process and in Field Internship will delay satisfactory academic progress and may be the cause of a student's inability to complete and graduate from the MSW program. MSW students are not allowed to identify or secure their own field placement site but may suggest potential sites for pre-approval processing. This process takes 3-6 months to complete and does not guarantee the student will be placed at the suggested field agency site.

Students are responsible for pre-placement contact with their placement agency. Pre-placement processing may take place prior to the start of the semester but should not exceed 8 hours per day nor can it exceed **32** hours per week. Although field agency sites may schedule pre-placement processing before the community-based placement begins, they cannot be made mandatory due to students' travel plans or permanent home addresses. Any pre-placement agency expectations must be agreed upon by the student and the appropriate field faculty. If the student is unable to complete pre-placement requirements, the student and appropriate field faculty member and agency personnel must determine how these students will be given an opportunity to make-up the pre-placement processing after semester starts.

Students must make all efforts to complete agency required pre-placement processing, and any delays in making initial agency contact or beginning the Field Internship on time is also the student's responsibility. Students are also responsible for transportation to and from their placement site up to 30 miles in one direction from their place of residence. The School is not responsible for any transportation costs incurred by the student (see *Transportation* on page 17 for other transportation information).

Evaluation/Grading

Applied Learning in Field Education is a 3-unit course in the first two semesters of Field Internship (589a/b) and Advanced Applied Learning in Field Education is a 4-unit course in the third and fourth semesters of Field Internship. They are Credit/No Credit classes. The grading is based on meeting all the requirements: (1) completion of required hours for each semester, (2) timely completion of the Learning Agreement, (3) timely completion of the required Reflective Learning Tools (RLTs, eight per semester), and (4) achievement of the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) as evidenced in a satisfactory end of semester evaluation. The student may complete all the hours but fail to achieve the Competencies, in which case the grade is a "No Credit." Conversely, the student may show promise in the Competencies but fail to complete the required hours. **All four requirements must be met to pass the course and to earn a "Credit" grade.**

Note: Any grade of "In-Progress" or "No Credit" in Applied Learning in Field Education (589a/b) or Advanced Applied Learning in Field Education (699a/b) requires documentation such as an In-Progress/Incomplete Form and/or a Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP).

A Learning Agreement is completed at the beginning of VFP (589a) and community-based placement (589b, 699a, and 699b). Formal evaluations are also submitted at the end of each semester of internship. Field Instructors, students and Preceptors (if applicable) must collaborate when completing all required documents. Field placements are monitored by Field

Faculty Liaisons through periodic agency or virtual meetings, student-Field Instructor meetings, telephone calls, and other contacts. Successful completion of the field internship requires meeting all the expected hours, obtaining satisfactory formal evaluation by meeting expected growth in the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) and completing 8 Reflective Learning Tools turned in weekly each semester while enrolled in each semester of Field Internship.

Field Instruction

Field Instruction is provided by an individual who possesses an MSW and has at least two years of post-MSW agency experience. They must be approved by the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and certified to be a Field Instructor (see Section III.B on page 24). Field Instruction takes place between the student and the Field Instructor in designated agency settings that have been approved by the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and the University. An External Field Instructor (EFI) may be utilized if the agency does not employ an MSW but wants to host an MSW Intern. The same requirements apply to all EFIs.

There is a specific sequence of assignments, activities, and learning goals for Applied Learning in Field Education and Advanced Applied Learning in Field Education aligned with all other courses in the School. The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and the agency collaborate in assisting students to learn and increase their mastery of the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#). The Field Instruction process is conducted within the framework of a particular social work organization and is intentional, active, organized, sequential, and individualized. Over the course of four semesters of field internship, field instruction is expected to include but not be limited to the following:

- Direct practice work with individuals, families, and related groups.
- Direct practice work focusing on groups, communities, organizations, and/or institutional change.
- A diversity of modalities, populations, and treatment delivered in the micro, mezzo, and macro practice settings.
- A range of theoretical and teaching methodologies and models.

Evidence-Based Intervention Training

All MSW candidates are required to complete trainings in three Evidence-Based Interventions. Motivational Interviewing, Problem Solving Therapy, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy are completed either in the VFP or in the first field semester of the Advanced Standing program.

Malpractice Insurance

All students entering field placement are required to participate in the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work's malpractice insurance coverage. The malpractice insurance fee is included as part of the student's commitment deposit. This plan covers students while they are enrolled in their community-based practicum. Copies of the Malpractice Certificate can be obtained from the Field Placement Team.

G. Field Education Roles

Field education is a collaborative effort to provide a social work learning experience to students placed in a designated agency. The collaboration consists of multiple professionals with distinct roles. The roles within field education are as follows:

Director of Field Education:

The Director of Field Education is a University administrator responsible for the development and continuity of the programs and policies of Field Education. This individual has overarching authority over all Field Education activities and functions, and is the direct supervisor of the Associate Director, other field administrators/directors, and all full-time Field Faculty. The Director serves as the final arbiter for issues that cannot be resolved at the Associate Director level.

Associate Director of Field Education:

The Associate Director of Field Education reports directly to the Director of Field Education. This role isThey are responsible for the operational aspects of Field Education activities and is the initial arbiter of any issues pertaining to Field Education. One Associate Director is assigned to OCP and the VAC.

Program Directors (Workforce Development; School Social Work; Telehealth Clinic; Operations):

The Program Directors report directly to the Director of Field Education. They are responsible for the operational aspects of the program and the initial arbiter of any issues pertaining to it.

Regional Directors of Field Education:

The Regional Field Directors provide administrative oversight for operational and programmatic initiatives of Field Education in their respective regions. Their responsibilities include providing comprehensive support to VAC students and field faculty, implementing Field procedures and protocol, overseeing student review meetings, and serving as the initial contact and arbiters for student, Field Instructor, or agency issues. As direct reports to the Director of Field Education, they will represent Field Education at School events and ceremonies when conflicting demands prevent the Director of Field and/or Associate Director from attendance.

Field Faculty

This individual is a field faculty member who coordinates, monitors, evaluates, and documents the student's field experience to ensure optimal learning and professional development. They also provide consultation and assistance to the Field Instructor. They report directly to the Director of Field Education and are expected to teach field courses, and complete administrative assignments, as needed.

Field Placement Specialist

These individuals are staff members who are part of the Regional Field Placement Teams that oversee the creation of new field agency partnerships and the placement of students in their field internship sites.

Integrated Learning Instructor/Professor

This individual is a clinical field faculty member who facilitates the Integrative Learning for Social Work Practice courses. They are also the student's Field Faculty Liaison.

MSW Student/Intern

The designation of "intern" is often used to refer to the MSW student when they are placed in an agency and enrolled in the Field Practicum while completing courses to earn a Master of Social Work degree.

Field Instructor

This individual is a professional social worker and an agency representative assigned to provide weekly supervision and instruction to MSW interns in a placement site. The Field Instructor may

work collaboratively with a Preceptor or daily task supervisor in an agency, but they have the primary and overall responsibility for the student's learning, evaluation and linkage with the University.

External Field Instructor

This individual is contracted to supervise MSW Interns and perform all the tasks of a traditional Field Instructor. The EFI may be hired by the agency or the University. An EFI is utilized when an agency does not traditionally employ MSWs. They are to collaborate with the Preceptor in supervising and evaluating the performance of the MSW Intern.

Preceptor

An individual affiliated with the agency who is responsible for a piece of the student's learning. They are supplementary instructional figures who may or may not be a social worker by training. However the Preceptor must work closely with the Field Instructor of record.

H. Field Placement Process

Students are assigned to a section of 589a (VFP) followed by a community-based placement for three semesters (589b and 699a/b) by the Regional Field Placement Team. Assignment is based on a number of factors: the student's Department of Study, work and volunteer experience, educational background, and career aspirations. Other factors considered are available learning opportunities at each agency, geographic location, region or community, and other special needs or circumstances. The placement process occurs while the student is completing the 589a VFP. The Field Placement Team may initiate a Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) as needed when MSW students are meeting challenges during the placement matching process or refusing a final placement match.

Students who are successfully matched are notified of their assignment to a field placement via e-mail. Once notified, the student must contact the agency as soon as possible to arrange a pre-placement visit and to complete any agency specific Human Resources (HR) processing and/or placement orientation prior to the start of the internship. The School is not responsible for any delays caused by the student not making contact with or beginning field internship at the confirmed field placement agency. The start date for field internship varies by program (OCP versus VAC). Please refer to the Field Calendar of the respective academic centers to identify the start date.

Advanced Standing students are assigned to a community-based placement for two semesters (699a/b) by the Regional Field Placement Team during the first department semester. In order to be best prepared for field internship, Advanced Standing students should also complete the Evidence-Based Interventions training, the Field Placement Support Modules, and other assigned tasks while completing the first department semester.

Note: MSW students are not permitted to identify or secure their own field placement site but may suggest potential sites for pre-approval processing. This process takes 3-6 months to complete and does not guarantee the student will be placed at the suggested field agency site.

Additional costs may be incurred by the student to meet the HR requirements of the agency for the Field Internship. These may include special training and security/health clearances (see Appendix J). The students are responsible for the cost incurred.

Students who relocate or change placements during those semesters may experience

significant delays which could affect their ability to progress through the program with their original cohort. Students are required to inform the Regional Field Placement Team a minimum of 90 days before moving or returning from a Leave of Absence. Students who anticipate an international relocation should consult with the Regional Field Placement Team as soon as they have knowledge of their relocation.

I. Field Calendar

To the fullest extent possible, students are expected to observe the agency attendance and time schedule policies. Applied Learning in Field Education (589a/b) and Advanced Applied Learning in Field Education (699a/b) are classes and students must adhere to the Field Calendar which identifies the beginning and ending dates of the internship as well as important Field Education activities and events. Each cohort has its own Field Calendar for each semester that students must follow. It is found in the Field Internship course on the [VAC learning platform](#).

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work schedules specific events that require **MANDATORY ATTENDANCE**. Student attendance and participation is required at the following events:

- Evidence-Based Intervention Training.
- Any other events approved by the University President or the Dean of the School.

Students may participate in the following optional activities and receive field hour credits with the permission of their Field Instructors:

- The Point in Time homeless count
- State Legislative Days (“Lobby Days”)
- Social Work Job Fair (if located in SoCal)

All [University Holidays](#) are sanctioned time off for students from their internships. **If a University Holiday falls on a student’s regularly scheduled day at the agency, the student is not required to attend internship.** If they observe the University holiday, they do not earn credit for those hours and are required to make-up any missed field hours. Students should consult with their Field Instructor and/or Preceptor to ensure their absence would not adversely affect the agency and/or client care. Students are also required to make up any field hours missed due to agency holidays that fall on their scheduled placement day and are not University Holidays.

Students are allowed eight hours each semester to take time off for religious holidays or illness which must be discussed in advance and arranged with the Field Instructor/Preceptor. This time counts in the Field Internship hours and the student does not have to make up this time. Make-up hours for additional time missed must also be discussed with and approved by the Field Instructor/Preceptor.

Students should approach their work at the agency as they would a place of employment, discussing any changes in schedule or promptly informing the Field Instructor/Preceptor of illness or absence. One such discussion is the University policy which prohibits students from working during Study Week. This typically falls on the week after the last day of field placement each semester. Please note that client care and continuity of agency operations must be strongly considered.

Record keeping of required field hours including time spent in placement, optional activities noted above, and make-up hours is a joint responsibility of the student and the Field Instructor.

All records are maintained by the student and the Field Instructor on the FPL, which is found in the Field Internship course on the [VAC learning platform](#).

Agencies may use technology-based timekeeping using agency provided devices. Students cannot be mandated to use their personal devices.

Note: Should a problem arise due to conflicting commitments, the issues should be addressed and communicated by the student and the Field Instructor/Preceptor to the student's USC Field Faculty Liaison.

J. Transportation

MSW candidates are responsible for transportation to and from the field placement site (up to 30 miles in one direction). The School is not responsible for any transported related cost the student might incur.

Students should not transport client(s) in their personal vehicle or company vehicle unless the agency has given the student proper authorization to do so as part of the essential duty of the social work internship. The agency is responsible to provide authorization and orientation for interns to transport clients. Agencies must always provide sufficient information prior to transporting clients. If driving is an essential duty of the internship, it must be discussed with the student during the pre-placement meeting to ensure the MSW student can meet the driving requirement.

NOTE: The University is not responsible for managing any requirements for transportation or driving as part of the Social Work Field Internship and does not maintain insurance for interns driving as part of the essential duties of the social work internship.

II. STUDENT / MSW CANDIDATE: INFORMATION ON STUDENT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN FIELD EDUCATION

A. Introduction

The MSW student/candidate has a unique opportunity of acquiring knowledge and skills in the principles of the Social Work profession and Code of Ethics in the classroom and in field placement. Students are required to learn and simultaneously apply the knowledge in their field internship work. Field Education provides the student this opportunity and helps increase their competency as a future Social Work professional. This requires strong commitment, dedication, and active participation from the MSW student/candidate. The School of Social Work and the agency are both committed in guiding the student through this process.

B. Field Placement

Field Faculty assigns MSW students to a community-based placement for a duration of three semesters. The matching is based on the student's objectives, background, and circumstance.

- Complete and submit the campus specific field placement form.
- Complete the Field Placement Support Modules found on the [VAC learning platform](#).
- Once the School notifies the student of the assigned placement via e-mail, the student must contact the agency as soon as possible to schedule a pre-placement visit.

- Complete all pre-placement requirements as specified by the agency.

As you engage in the Field Placement process, the following information is important to note:

- Students may incur non-refundable costs for additional health/security clearance, specialized training, and/or other HR processing specifically required by the agency.
- Students' lack of timely disclosure of special circumstances may cause significant delays in placement, and/or may lead to a delay in completing the program.
- The Field Placement Team may initiate a Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) process as needed when MSW students are meeting challenges in securing a field placement internship as determined by Field Faculty. Issues that merit this process include but are not limited to the following:
 - Students who engage in unprofessional behavior anytime during the placement matching process or violate any of the [NASW Code of Ethics](#).
 - Students who interview at and are denied placement at two agencies because of inappropriate behaviors or refuse placement at an approved agency(ies).
 - Failing three interviews due to inappropriate student behavior is the equivalent of a placement termination (see *Section IV. D. Students Terminated or Dismissed from the Placement Agency or Organization*).
 - The SPIP protocol will adhere to *Section IV* of this manual.
- If a third agency interview is being sought for the student, significant delays to the student's progress and graduation from the MSW program should be expected.
- The School is not responsible for any delays caused by placement challenges and/or student's lack of prompt attention to any placement related tasks & processes.

Field Education and Employment (POE)

Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) sets the minimum standards for field placement with the student's POE. The School of Social Work has established protocols, procedures, and standards that must be met to ensure an appropriate student learning experience in this setting. These are outlined in the Place of Employment Application. Students must indicate their intention to pursue a POE based internship at the outset of the placement process to the appropriate field faculty in order to receive an application and have the request approved. Students interested in pursuing this option must apply and be approved by field faculty prior to being permitted to use their place of employment as their internship. The application is available by request to your Field Placement Specialist.

Accepting employment at current internship

Students may accept employment while already an MSW Intern at an agency/organization. Prior to accepting any employment offer while an MSW intern, the student must consult with their Field Faculty Liaison and apply for a POE. The student must complete an application and be approved by the appropriate field faculty to continue as an MSW intern and become an employee at the organization. Students should request the application from their Field Faculty Liaison.

Note: Any POE request or placement comes with inherent risks. Employment demands may negatively affect or delay the student's ability to complete the requirements of the MSW program. Students must also be aware that any employment related disciplinary actions and/or termination at any point in time at a current field placement may also lead to termination of field internship. Hours accrued at the time of termination may not count toward the required hours of the Field Practicum.

C. Department Change Process

Students should be aware that any Department of Study change once the placement process begins may cause significant delays in completing the MSW program. Requests must be approved by the Associate or Regional Director of Field Education.

D. Student Tasks & Responsibilities

MSW students are responsible for the following tasks to meet the course objectives for the Applied Learning in Field Education (589b) and Advanced Applied Learning in Field Education (699a/b) classes:

- Contact and meet with the Field Instructor as soon as you are notified of your placement for a pre-placement meeting, HR processing, and/or agency orientation.
- Participate in the agency orientation at the start of internship. If no orientation information is provided, please inquire.
- Learn the different roles, tasks, responsibilities, and scope of practice of the agency
- Be open to feedback and support.
- Meet with your Field Instructor for mandatory weekly supervision. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in a “No Credit” grade in this course.
- Discuss field internship issues in the Integrative Learning for Social Work Practice classes (588 and 698a/b) for added feedback and support.
- Maintain a diverse caseload.
- Seek meaningful opportunities to learn professional and direct micro and/or macro practice skills related to AMHW, CYF, or SCI Department.
- Maintain regular contact with your Field Faculty Liaison throughout the internship and discuss any and all questions/issues as soon as they arise.
- Follow all agency, School, or University protocols and complete necessary tasks required to participate in field internship.

Note: The Learning Agreement and Field Evaluation are accessed through the [OLAFE system](#). All other forms referenced in the section below can be located in the Field Internship course on the [VAC learning platform](#).

- Complete the **Learning Agreement** with the Field Instructor in the first five weeks of each semester of community-based placement:
 - Use the [digital/online Learning Agreement/Evaluation form](#). Refer to the OLAFE Manual found in the Tool Box of your Field Internship course on the [VAC learning platform](#) and follow the delineated steps for the Learning Agreement. Review the internship schedule and student learning objectives with the Field Instructor. Write in any approved special schedule arrangement.
- Complete and have your Field Instructor and/or Preceptor review and sign the **Field Practicum Log (FPL)** weekly (internship and supervision hours and the number of Reflective Learning Tools (RLTs) completed during the week).
- Come prepared and actively participate in field supervision.
 - A minimum of one-hour weekly supervision.
 - Depending on the student’s needs, weekly supervision could include some group supervision as long as the student has individual supervision at least twice monthly.
 - Group supervision may be facilitated by non-social work professionals.

- Submit a total of 8 completed **RLTs**. A minimum of 4 RLTs must be submitted by midterm of the semester and a total of 8 by the end of each semester. The student is responsible for timely submission to the Field instructor and making sure the **FPL** is signed by the student and the Field Instructor.
 - There are different types of RLT forms students may use:
 - Micro, mezzo, or macro templates.
 - There may be instances where an agency may require the use of agency specific RLT form(s). It is important for students to consult with the 589a and 589b/699a/699b Instructors for the correct RLT form.
- Submit a signed **FPL** each month to your Field Faculty Liaison.
- Continuously review and evaluate your performance.
- Communicate, consult, and problem solve with the Field Instructor, Field Faculty Liaison, and/or Preceptor for support, concerns/issues, and as needed.
- Participate in Field Faculty Liaison contacts/meetings each semester:
 - Contacts/meetings may vary: on a virtual platform, by e-mail or phone.
 - The meetings in the first and second semesters must be on a virtual platform.
 - The meeting in the third semester of a continuous internship may vary in format as mentioned above.
 - More meetings may be scheduled as needed or as requested by the MSW student, Field Instructor, or Field Faculty Liaison.
- Complete the **Field Evaluation** with the Field Instructor at the end of each semester of community-based placement (589b, 699a, and 699b):
 - Use the [digital/online Learning Agreement/Evaluation form](#). Refer to the OLAFE Manual found in the Tool box of your Field Internship course on the [VAC learning platform](#) and follow the delineated steps for the Field Evaluation.
 - Meet the minimum required level of performance each semester as indicated on the Field Evaluation.
- Complete all additional required evaluations. Consult with the Field Faculty Liaison for the appropriate form(s).
- All paperwork must be completed and submitted before a grade is given for each semester.
- Alert the Field Faculty Liaison immediately if there are any issues or challenges. Issues that mandate Field Faculty Liaison notification include but are not limited to the following:
 - **Any and all harassment (including sexual harassment) and protected-class discrimination issues (<https://eeotix.usc.edu/>).**
 - Issues or difficulty in progressing in the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#)
 - Any violation of the [NASW Code of Ethics](#).
 - Non-compliance with agency policies and procedures.
 - Delays in the submission of the RLTs.
 - Documentation issues and delays.
 - Excessive absences or non-approved schedule changes.

Note: The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work is committed to providing all possible help and support to students and early intervention is essential. (See Sections F and G below for further details.)

Note: Students cannot sign any agency “contracts” nor enter any agreements that refute or negate the provisions in the official agency/organization MOA with the USC Suzanne Dworak-

Peck School of Social Work. This includes important policies regarding placement hours and educational calendar events such as finals week.

E. Supervision

MSW candidates are expected to integrate the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom with their field internship experience. The student gradually develops their identity as a Social Worker and learns the core competencies, values, and ethics of the profession. This is an individualized process and develops over a period of time. This growth is significantly facilitated by the Field Instructor through the process of supervision. The following are some guidelines to help students take full advantage of the field internship experience and supervision:

- Follow the School guidelines for placement.
- Be on time for placement, field instruction, and field seminars.
- Behave and dress in a professional manner as defined by the field placement.
- Abide by the [NASW Code of Ethics](#). Note that any violation of these standards may lead to dismissal from the MSW program.
- Learn and work to achieve the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) (grades are based on achieving these competencies).
- Maintain agency standards and practice guidelines.
- Come prepared to supervise and complete all assignments on time.
- Be open to constructive feedback and make the effort to implement the feedback.
- Be proactive in your role as a learner, articulate learning needs, and seek to meet them.
- Complete and submit RLTs on time to your Field Instructor (1 RLT every other week for a total of 8 RLTs per semester).
- Share concerns/issues/questions promptly with your Field Instructor and/or Field Faculty Liaison.
- Be self-aware; take time to reflect upon and process feelings, thoughts, actions, and reactions.

Note: Students should approach their work at the agency as they would a place of employment, including discussing any changes and issues promptly and informing the Field Instructor and/or Preceptor of illness or absence.

F. Safety and Risk Management

It is the student's responsibility to review, understand, and comply with all the policies and protocols included in [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), "[Current Student Website](#)", [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work MSW Policies and Procedures](#) and [VAC Field Education Manual](#). In addition, it is also the student's responsibility to learn and adhere to all field placement agency/organization policies and protocols.

The MSW student/candidate must follow their field agency's policies and protocols for reporting safety and risk issues that occur in field internship and involve the Field Instructor and the Field Faculty Liaison immediately regarding any safety and risk management related issues that may occur in field internship. This is especially true of any safety issues and policy violations related to (i.e. harassment, sexual harassment, protected-class discrimination issues, etc.). Students can report such incidents to the [Office of Equity, Equal Opportunity & Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) for

support and guidance via <https://eeotix.usc.edu/>. Faculty are mandated to report these incidents to EEO-TIX when informed by the students.

G. Challenges and Support

The MSW student/candidate is expected to be an active learner in Field Education and accept the guidance, support, and the evaluation of the Field Instructor. When there is a mismatch between the student's needs and the available learning opportunities and supports, challenges and issues may occur. Students are encouraged to follow these protocols to resolve any concern for immediate resolution to avoid delays in Field Internship:

- Articulate the problem. Discuss and resolve issues directly with the Field Instructor if appropriate.
- Involve and communicate the issue with the Field Faculty Liaison as early as possible in the process.
- If the issue persists, request the involvement of the Field Faculty Liaison for mediation/resolution.

The MSW student/candidate must always be cognizant that Field Education/Internship is a class (SOWK 589a/b & 699a/b). Students must meet the standards for satisfactory academic progress and performance to pass or move forward in the program. Students who abandon class (SOWK 589a/b & 699a/b) or fail to report regularly to a field placement site do so at the risk of a grade of "No Credit" thus placing themselves in academic jeopardy, possible loss of federal financial aid, and/or risk of dismissal from the MSW program.

Note: It is the philosophy of the School to exert all efforts to resolve issues and try to prevent a replacement. It is disruptive to the student's academic programming and to the agency.

The Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work adheres to all University policies and protocols regarding registration; withdrawal; attendance; grading, grades of in-progress or incomplete; grade appeal; leave of absence; academic probation; equity, diversity, & inclusion; FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act); and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations for students. It also adheres to the University policies and protocols in developing student support plans.

The MSW student/candidate must involve the Field Instructor and the Field Education Office immediately regarding any issues related to Field Education. This is especially true of any USC policy violation (i.e., harassment, including sexual harassment, protected-class discrimination issues, etc.) and ADA accommodations. Review [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), ["Current Student Website"](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work MSW Policies and Procedures](#) and the [VAC Field Education Manual](#) for complete information. In addition, it is also the student's responsibility to learn and adhere to all field placement agency/organization policies and protocols.

Note: American Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations are provided when an official letter of accommodation from the [USC Office of Student Accessibility and Services \(OSAS\)](#) is presented by the student to each course instructor of record. The OSAS will assess, identify, and specify any field internship related accommodation(s) needed. The accommodation is not retroactive and is valid when the MSW student submits the letter to each Faculty member. The Field Education team will initiate required ADA accommodations when the letter is received.

H. Professional Expectations

All students are expected to adhere to and follow all ethical, legal, and policy standards and mandates of the Social Work profession and the University. Any form of violation to the Social Work profession guidelines may lead to a dismissal from the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work program. These links identify policies and procedures pertaining to appropriate behavior including professional behavior, non-threatening conduct and use of social media. It is the student's responsibility to learn and adhere to [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), [Disruptive Classroom Behavior](#), [Campus Wellbeing & Crisis Intervention](#), [Violence-Free Campus](#), [USC Office of Professionalism and Ethics](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work MSW Policies and Procedures](#), [CSWE SW Competencies](#), [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and [VAC Field Education Manual](#).

I. Social Media

The information shared on social media does not represent and cannot substitute for the information or guidance provided by faculty, staff or official program documents and communications, regarding Field Education. Official documents, policies, protocols and communications may be retrieved from [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), [Disruptive Classroom Behavior](#), [Campus Wellbeing & Crisis Intervention](#), [Violence-Free Campus](#), [USC Office of Professionalism and Ethics](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work MSW Policies and Procedures](#), [CSWE SW Competencies](#), [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and [VAC Field Education Manual](#), course syllabi and written and verbal communications from Field Education Faculty and Administration. Any Field Education related issues, disputes, complaints or requests should be redirected to the student's Field Faculty Liaison or to the Associate Directors of Field Education.

Students should use extreme caution when participating in social media forums. Be mindful of any references to the field agency and client related information or interactions. Students are expected to adhere to all legal and ethical responsibilities of the Social Work profession. Keep in mind the public nature of any social media forums despite all security and privacy settings. The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work has provided social media guidelines for students to use ([USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work MSW Policies and Procedures-Social Media](#) section). The MSW student assumes responsibility for any social media output that is not pre-approved by the current field placement site and/or the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work.

While enrolled in the MSW program at USC, students are expected to adhere to the provisions of [SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), [Disruptive Classroom Behavior](#), [Campus Wellbeing & Crisis Intervention](#), [Violence-Free Campus](#), [USC Office of Professionalism and Ethics](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work MSW Policies and Procedures](#), [CSWE SW Competencies](#), [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and [VAC Field Education Manual](#) and the guiding principle of "Do No Harm" in relation to the well-being of fellow students, agency personnel, clients and the communities in which they work and serve in internships. As in any situation, the placement agency has the right to dismiss a student for unprofessional and unethical behaviors that will prompt an academic review process in the form of a Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP).

III. FIELD INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

A. Introduction

Field Instructors play a crucial role in the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Field Education experience. They provide the students the opportunity to merge previous life and work knowledge with the development of new professional competence. Field Instructors must follow the objectives that are specific to the 589b, 699a, and 699b field internship curricula. The overarching objective of Field Instructors throughout all semesters and across all departments is to prepare students to enter the Social Work profession.

Field Instructors are engaged in three basic Field Education components. *First*, they must orient the students to the professional system of the agency, including but not limited to the purpose of the agency, the community it serves, its policies and protocols (particularly risk management and safety), and expectations for professional dress and comportment. The agency/organization orientation and the field internship should be geared towards introducing and familiarizing the MSW student to the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#). The *second* crucial component is the development of the teacher-learner relationship between the MSW student and the Field Instructor. This starts at the first contact wherein the Field Instructor clarifies and establishes roles, expectations, and the framework for the relationship.

The last and *third* component is the development of broad and rich case assignments and field experiences. The MSW student is expected to engage in a wide variety of Social Work activities from the beginning to the end of field placement. Field Instructors are responsible for providing direct practice experiences consisting of but not limited to the following:

- Multi-level practice work: individual, group, and systemic interventions
- Multiple treatment modalities
- Assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, and intervention
- Diverse populations
- Advocacy, resource referral, community needs assessment, evaluation, and documentation
- Termination
- Macro skill development such as advocacy, evaluation, fundraising and development, grant writing, program development, and others as indicated in the specific Department of Study

Field internship is a time-bound experience, and the Field Instructor carries the responsibility for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the student's educational experience based on the student's progress in meeting the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#).

B. Field Instructor Qualifications

MSW interns are supervised by Field Instructors designated by the agency and the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. These Field Instructors are committed to teaching and upholding the values and ethics which have been developed over the long history of the Social Work profession. The Field Instructor must be identified and complete the application process at the same time an agency site is approved. New or replacement Field Instructors may complete the application process at any time. Field Instructors must have the following to qualify:

- An MSW degree from a CSWE accredited school of social work
- At least two years of post-MSW work experience

- Plan to attend a minimum of an eight-hour training for new Field Instructors conducted by USC or any CSWE accredited school of social work as approved by Field Education
- A completion certificate for new field instruction class from USC or any CSWE accredited school of social work as approved by Field Education

In addition, Field Instructors must meet the criteria required to teach and support MSW interns in field placement. They must also be committed to meet all documentation, supervision, and evaluation requirements of the program, particularly the ability to assess student progress based on the most current [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) identified in the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS).

C. Field Instructor Tasks & Responsibilities

Field Instructors are responsible for the following tasks to meet the Field Internship course objectives:

- Meet student(s) prior to the start of the internship for a pre-placement meeting.
- Facilitate and assist students with any HR process and/or requirements.
- Provide an agency orientation at the start of internship.
- Clearly define the student's role, tasks, responsibilities and scope of practice.
- Provide training, consistent communication, feedback and support to students.
- Assign and maintain a diverse caseload/workload.
- Provide meaningful opportunities to learn professional and direct micro and/or macro practice skills related to the student's Department, semester of study, and/or track.

Field internship is a time-bound experience, and the Field Instructor carries the responsibility for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the MSW student's educational experience based on the student's progress in meeting the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#).

Note: The Learning Agreement and Field Evaluation are accessed through the [OLAFE system](#). All other forms referenced in the section below can be located in the Field Internship course on the [VAC learning platform](#).

- Complete the **Learning Agreement** with the MSW student in the first five weeks of each semester of community-based placement
 - Use the [digital/online Learning Agreement/Evaluation form](#). Refer to the OLAFE Manual and follow the delineated steps for the Learning Agreement.
- Provide and review the agency/organization Safety & Risk Management, harassment (including sexual harassment) and protected-class discrimination policies and protocols, including identifying the individual to whom a report should be made
- Identify and assign a Preceptor as needed (include Preceptor feedback in the Learning Agreement/Evaluation)
- Provide Field Instruction
 - A minimum of **1-hour** individual/group weekly supervision.
 - Depending on the student's needs, weekly supervision could include some group supervision as long as the student has individual supervision at least twice monthly.
 - Group supervision may be facilitated by non-social work professionals.
- Review and sign the **Field Practicum Log (FPL)** weekly (internship and supervision hours and the number of Reflective Learning Tools (RLTs) completed during the week).

- Review and discuss the **RLT** bi-weekly (a minimum of 4 must be submitted by midterm of the semester and a total of 8 by the end of each semester). The Field Instructor (FI) must verify the **FPL** weekly each semester.
 - Alert the Field Faculty Liaison if the student has not submitted 2 or more RLTs.
 - There are different types of RLT forms students may use:
 - Micro, mezzo, or macro templates.
 - If the agency requires the use of an agency RLT form(s), the agency Field Instructor and student(s) must consult with the 589b, 699a, & 699b Instructor/Field Faculty Liaison for approval prior to use .
- Continuously monitor and evaluate the student's performance
- Communicate, consult, and problem solve with the Field Faculty Liaison for support, challenges, and as needed
- Maintain regular contact with the Field Faculty Liaison throughout the internship to discuss any and all questions/issues as soon as they arise
 - Participate in Field Faculty Liaison contacts/meetings. Contacts/meetings may vary: on a virtual platform, by e-mail or phone.
 - The meetings in the first and second semesters must be on a virtual platform
 - The meeting in the third semester of a continuous internship may vary in format as mentioned above.
 - More meetings may be scheduled as needed or as requested by the MSW student, Field Instructor, or Field Faculty Liaison.
- Complete the **Field Evaluation** with the student at the end of each semester of the community-based placement:
 - Use the [digital/online Learning Agreement/Evaluation form](#). Refer to the OLAFE Manual and follow the delineated steps for the Field Evaluation
- Provide a grade recommendation on the **Field Evaluation** ([digital/online form](#)):
 - Recommend a grade of Credit or No Credit on the OLAFE Form
 - Notify the Field Faculty Liaison as soon as possible if the student appears to be at-risk of failing to complete any of the requirements for Field Internship to develop a Student Performance Improvement Plan – SPIP (see *Evaluation/Grading* on page 11).
 - A “No Credit” recommendation should always be made in consultation with the Field Faculty Liaison (as early as possible in the semester), documented, and accompanied by a SPIP (copies will be retained by the student, Field Instructor, Field Faculty Liaison, and Office of Student Affairs).
 - The Field Faculty Liaison will approve and assign the final grade.
- Complete any additional required evaluation. Please consult with the Field Faculty Liaison for the appropriate form(s).
- Facilitate the scheduled and/or unscheduled termination from the agency.
- Alert the Field Faculty Liaison as soon as possible if there are any issues or challenges faced by the MSW student. Issues that mandate Field Faculty Liaison notification include but are not limited to the following:
 - **Any and all harassment (including sexual harassment) and protected-class discrimination issues**
 - Issues or difficulty in progressing in the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#)
 - Any violation of the [NASW Code of Ethics](#)
 - Non-compliance with agency policies and procedures
 - Delays in the submission of the RLTs

- Documentation issues and delays
- Excessive absences or non-approved schedule changes

Note: The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social work is committed to providing all possible help and support to students and early intervention is essential (Please see *Section E* below for further details).

Note: Students cannot sign any agency “contracts” nor enter any agreements that refute or negate the provisions in the official agency/organization MOA with the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. This includes important polices regarding placement hours and educational calendar events such as finals week.

D. Field Instruction

Field instruction takes many forms and methodologies. It ranges from the didactic method to experiential. It also varies in structure and technique. It is influenced by multiple factors such as the agency’s focus, available resources, and the skills, interest, and the personality of both the instructor and the student. Although field instruction is a highly individualized process, the required components mentioned in the previous section are essential and non-negotiable.

The following are some general Field Instructor guidelines for teaching and supervising MSW students and are meant to help establish a supportive learning and working environment:

- Adhere to regularly scheduled field instruction conferences with your student.
- Create a supportive environment and a positive teaching relationship taking into account your teaching style and the student’s learning style.
- Be aware that you are the role model for client and peer relationships and interactions.
- Acknowledge authority-dependency conflicts and use as teaching opportunities.
- Establish your role as both supervisor and teacher early in the relationship.
- Make assignments meaningful and utilize the RLT early in the relationship.
- Focus on the process and not just the content.
- Balance performance monitoring with positive supportive feedback and genuine praise. Feedback needs to be relevant, clear, balanced, and timely. Encourage the student to reciprocate.
- Use case and project analysis in helping students examine their work, meet their learning objectives, process their reactions, and foster self-awareness.
- Assist the student to identify feelings, attitudes, biases, and reactions that affect their work.
- Discuss with the Field Faculty Liaison if personal therapy seems indicated.
- Introduce the use of audio taped, video recordings, and/or role-playing to enrich the student's learning.
- Guide students in navigating the Developmental Stages of Internship based on the work of Sweitzer & King, 2004 (see *Appendix G*).

E. Challenges and Support

Field Education is inherently filled with positive and negative experiences and challenges. It is the job of the Field Instructor to create a stable learning environment in order to address these experiences and challenges as learning opportunities and to facilitate the student’s educational progress. It is the responsibility of the Field Faculty Liaison as the University representative to provide support and guidance in order for the Field Instructor and the student to succeed in this

endeavor. As part of the process, Field Instructors are asked to balance opposing and/or complementary forces such as the following in order to foster learning:

- Challenge vs. Support
- Autonomy vs. Dependence
- Learning Objectives vs. Agency Objectives
- Authority vs. Mutuality
- Education vs. Training

In most instances, a balanced approach is enough to prevent any major problems in the field experience. Sometimes it is not sufficient and challenges in the learning process may occur. Some examples are:

- Persistent unprofessional and/or unethical conduct including disruptive behavior
- Conflicts in teaching and learning styles
- Not meeting agency and field requirements (charting, documentation, inconsistent or insufficient hours, etc.)
- Insufficient skill or inability to meet learning objectives

When these challenges arise, Field Instructors are required to provide an early warning to students of the areas that need improvement, based on the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#):

- Identify and attempt to discuss and resolve the issue(s) directly with the student.
- Document the issue and efforts to resolve it.
- Notify and consult the assigned Field Faculty Liaison of the issue as soon as possible
If you are not certain who the Field Faculty Liaison is, email vacfield@usc.edu to identify the student's Field Faculty Liaison.
- Invite the Field Faculty Liaison to mediate if you and the student are unable to resolve the issue.
- If the issue persists, collaborate with the Field Faculty Liaison to formulate a Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) to identify the issue(s) and step(s) to redress the situation.
- If the issue persists, the Field Faculty Liaison may remove/replace the student. If replacement is indicated, you will be asked to complete an evaluation of the student's progress based on the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) as of the date of the student's departure from the agency.

It is the philosophy of the School to make all efforts to prevent a replacement. It is disruptive to the agency and to the learning process of the student.

Note: All Field Instructors are obligated to respond to any field internship related student concerns and to all issues pertaining to Safety & Risk Management; harassment (including sexual harassment); and protected-class discrimination issues. **They are also mandated to report certain field related issues (refer to the below section) to the University Field Faculty Liaison as agreed upon in the [Memorandum of Agreement \(MOA\)](#).**

F. Safety and Risk Management Communications

The School recognizes that students cannot be insulated from the risks in providing services to people, institutions, and communities in crisis. Students frequently lack the experience and skills to assess risk and take appropriate precautions. Basic safety measures are thoroughly discussed in the seminar class to help prevent any problems but it is still not enough. Field Instructors must also review agency safety and risk management policies and protocols with students. Completion of this orientation must be indicated in the Orientation Checklist portion of

the Learning Agreement in the first semester of community-based placement. It should include but not be limited to the following:

- Building/office security policy
- Fire, earthquake, and other emergency protocols
- Transportation policies and insurance requirements
- Harassment (including sexual harassment)
- Protected-class discrimination issues
- Home / school / community visit safety policy and protocols
- Crisis intervention and disaster protocols
- Emergency and support contacts
- HIPAA-compliant communication protocols including policy on use of personal and/or University email addresses or personal devices
- Federal, state, local, and agency/organization specific safety and risk management policies and protocols (i.e. weapon related and substance related policies, et cetera)

Periodic review of these safety measures is strongly recommended. **All Field Instructors are obligated to respond to any student related concerns pertaining to Safety & Risk Management, harassment (including sexual harassment), and protected-class discrimination issues. They are also mandated to report all issues to the University Field Faculty Liaison as agreed upon in the [Memorandum of Agreement \(MOA\)](#).**

Note: All MSW students are required to learn and understand all Social Work profession expectations and all University and agency policies and protocols. Field Instructors are encouraged to do the same ([SCampus](#), [USC Policies](#), [Disruptive Classroom Behavior](#), [Campus Wellbeing & Crisis Intervention](#), [Violence-Free Campus](#), [USC Office of Professionalism and Ethics](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work MSW Policies and Procedures](#), [CSWE SW Competencies](#), [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and [VAC Field Education Manual](#)) to be able to guide and support MSW students in their new role as Social Work Interns.

G. Field Internship Interruption and Strike Policy

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work acknowledges that there may be temporary interruptions to students' MSW field placements due to local, regional, or national events such as natural or man-made disasters, civil unrest, and/or pandemics. Field Education is also aware of the potential for any agency or organization disruption related to strikes or any work actions. The safety and well-being of MSW students are the School's priority. Field Education will respond based on the principles of educational integrity, focusing on how educational expectations, goals and objectives can be met and maintained.

In the case of any critical incident, the priority is the student's safety and the primary consideration is the student's educational experience rather than the merits of any given interruption. It is the School's belief that some interruptions may not provide a climate conducive to a sound educational experience. Field Education will make the assessment and decide on a course of action depending on the situation. The Field Faculty Liaison and Field Instructor will coordinate and organize alternative plans to support the training and the continuation of field education for students (see *Appendix I* for possible course of action).

Field Education's policy regarding agency strikes/work actions is based on the principles of educational integrity. The primary consideration is the student's educational experience rather than the merits of any given strike or work action. It is the School's belief that a strike bound agency is not able to provide a climate conducive to a sound educational experience. Field Education will make the assessment and decide on a course of action depending on the

situation. The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work encourages the Field Faculty Liaison and Field Instructor to organize opportunities for students to learn from all parties and engage in discussions regarding the issue at hand (see *Appendix J* for possible course of action).

IV. FAILURE TO MAKE SATISFACTORY PROGRESS IN FIELD EDUCATION – ACADEMIC WARNINGS

All USC students are entitled to fair warning and non-arbitrary dismissal procedures. The University of Southern California Catalogue describes these procedures in the section "[Academic Warning and Dismissal](#)" of Graduate Students" and also outlines in the [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Policies & Procedure](#). This section of the Field Manual provides specific policies and protocols for Academic Warning and Dismissal of Graduate Students as they relate to the Field Internship.

A. Level I: The First Academic Warning – Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) – Field Education Student Review Meeting with the Field Instructor and as needed with the Regional Field Faculty Member

Students who fail to make satisfactory progress in the Field Internship will be so informed by the Field Instructor and Field Faculty Liaison. Satisfactory progress is measured by the student's timely completion of the required number of hours and assignments in placement each

semester (450 hours in 589a/b and 550-600 hours 699a/b), as well as developing and building proficiency in the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#).

A **Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP)** is considered the first written academic warning and is required as early as possible in the first semester as well as all the subsequent semesters if a student shows signs of:

- Failure to complete the required number of hours in placement and/or
- Failure to submit RLTs in a timely fashion and/or
- Failure to develop proficiency in any of the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#) and/or
- Failure to adhere to the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and/or
- Failure to meet any other professional expectations as identified by the Field Instructor and/or Field Faculty Liaison.

The Field Faculty Liaison will contact the student and will schedule a Field Education Review Meeting with the student and Field Instructor. During the meeting, the Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) will be reviewed and finalized by the Field Faculty Liaison. The intent is to identify the specific areas in which the student must improve to successfully complete the program. The document should include the following information:

- Specific actions, behaviors, or events that would constitute unsatisfactory progress, such as but not limited to the following:
 - Failure to complete number of required Field hours within the semester
 - Excessive absences from the placement agency
 - Failure to meet with Field Instructor and/or Preceptor on a weekly basis
 - Failure to comply with agency policy and procedure
 - Failure to respond to field placement related requests made by Field Instructor and/or Field Faculty Liaison
 - Failure to present oneself in a professional manner as defined by the agency and the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) when interacting with clients, peers, faculty and

- agency personnel
- Failure to complete the required RLTs
- Excessive self-disclosure of personal information which has a deleterious effect on clients
- Abandonment of Field Placement
- Changes in Field Internship placement without the approval of a USC Field Faculty, e.g., students may not render a “resignation” or abandon their placement
- Refusal to work with any Field Education Administration and Faculty including Field Faculty Liaisons and External Field Instructors.
- Failure to respond to any communication attempts (phone, e-mail, and/or letter), which can place the student at risk of dismissal from the program.
- Refusal to work with the assigned Field Instructor
- Specific actions, behaviors or events that would constitute satisfactory academic progress, such as but not limited to the following:
 - Submit a completion plan with a specific timetable and deadlines
 - Submit all missing RLTs by a specific date and submit all future RLTs on a weekly basis as required
 - Desist from self-disclosure during individual and/or group therapy
- Specific dates within which these actions, behaviors or events must take place
- Consequences of failing to meet deadlines, including risk of dismissal from the program
- Space for the student to sign and date the letter as an indication of receipt and understanding

Note: Some actions, behaviors, and/or events may require a higher level of academic action. The Field Faculty Liaison and the Regional Field Faculty member will make this determination.

B. Level II: The Second Academic Warning – Failure to Improve – Field Education Student Review Meeting with the Regional Director and Field Faculty Liaison

If the student does not meet the deadlines and expectations set forth in the Student Performance Improvement Plan, an Academic Review Meeting will be conducted with the Regional Director and Field Faculty Liaison, and as needed the Associate Director of Field Education, a representative from Student Affairs, and the Student Support Advisor. A written summary letter of the meeting will be provided to the student. The letter is the second level of written warning that the student is at serious risk of dismissal from the MSW program.

C. Level III: Dismissal and Appeal Procedure

A student who continues to fail the Field Education courses, fails to meet the Core Competencies, and/or who engages in unethical/illegal behavior will be dismissed from the MSW program. The Associate Director in collaboration with the Director of Field Education will make the final determination for dismissal if and when a student continues to fail to meet the expectations of the MSW program despite Level I and Level II early interventions and academic warnings.

The student will receive a formal letter of dismissal from the Office of the Director of Field Education. Students who wish to appeal the dismissal must contact the Office of Student Affairs by the specific date indicated in the formal letter. The student must engage in a formal appeals process as outlined in the [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Policies & Procedures](#):

“...In compliance with the academic policies outlined in [SCampus](#) under University Governance and Academic Policies, the school has two levels of appeal for disputed evaluation after the instructor: 1) dean and 2) Office of the Provost. In the school, appeals to the dean will be handled by the MSW Chair.

...Students wishing to appeal to the MSW Chair must submit to the Assistant Dean, Student Affairs a detailed narrative explaining the reason(s) for the appeal. The student should also outline the outcome/resolution that he or she is seeking. A written decision will be sent to the student after the MSW Chair. Normally the decision should be sent to the student within approximately 15 days after the review. This time may be extended if necessary. The student should be informed in writing if the decision will be delayed.

Student Appeal to the Graduate School SCampus specifies the student may appeal to the Office of the Provost. That appeal should be sent to the associate dean for graduate academic affairs in the Graduate School.”

Note: Students are responsible to review, understand and comply with the policies and protocols contained in the [SCampus](#), [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Policies & Procedures](#), and [VAC Field Education Manual](#).

D. Students Terminated or Dismissed from the Placement Agency or Organization

Placement agencies have the right to terminate or dismiss students at any time due to behaviors that the Field Instructor, agency director and/or administrator deem inappropriate or unethical. These are infrequent but problematic occurrences which represent a serious setback to and a disruption of the student’s academic progress and the student’s ability to successfully complete the MSW degree. Once terminated or dismissed, the student loses all hours accumulated for that semester. A Student Performance Improvement Plan will automatically be generated and a review meeting will be convened.

Based on the deliberations of the Regional Field Director and the Field Faculty Liaison, the student may be allowed a second placement. However, no hours from the previous placement will be “rolled over” into the second placement or credited to the student.

Should the student be asked to leave the second placement, no further placements will be assigned. The student will receive a written notice of a “No Credit” grade for the Applied Learning in Field Education class and the student will be considered for dismissal from the MSW program.

Meeting the requirements for overall grade point average is not sufficient to successfully complete the requirements of the MSW program. If a student maintains a high grade point average but fails to adhere to the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and to achieve proficiency in the [CSWE Social Work Competencies](#), then the student by definition is at high risk for dismissal.

E. Grounds for Dismissal from the MSW Program – Based on [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and State Behavioral Health Licensure Standards

The Social Work profession is solidly grounded in the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) which defines the professional standard of behavior that practitioners and graduate students must maintain in their work with and behavior toward clients and peers. State behavioral health and professions laws

further define behaviors considered so egregious that licensure of a practitioner is denied or revoked.

Consequently, immediate dismissal from the MSW program is based upon these two professional benchmarks: Ethical principles as elucidated in the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) and state behavioral health licensure standards. Grounds for immediate dismissal from the MSW program therefore include but are not limited to the following:

- Sexual and/or other inappropriate relationship with clients including interactions within the agency and outside the agency involving exchange of money, cohabitation, or harassment.
- Fraudulent documentation of patient contact, particularly false documentation which may trigger government or private insurance payments and reimbursement for services that were not provided.
- Behaviors which demonstrates callous disregard of the health, safety or wellbeing of self, clients, peers and/or agency staff.
- Actions which cause agency disruptions and create a hostile and/or unsafe work environment.
- Actions which breach patient/client confidentiality including unauthorized access to patient records or misuse and unethical reporting of confidential information to others, thereby violating patient/client rights to privacy.
- Falsification of student field hours or any misrepresentation of student participation in the Field Internship or required Field Internship activities or assignments.
- Falsification of client or agency records or any documentation and in particular fraudulent billing.
- Class abandonment – leaving the field placement without notification to or approval from all of the following individuals: the Field Instructor, the Agency Director, the USC Field Faculty Liaison, the Regional Director, and the Associate Directors for Field Education. In the Field Internship, class abandonment is made more egregious and deemed unethical because agency clients, who may be fragile and are seeking help, are abandoned by the student's abrupt departure.

Note: It is the responsibility of the student to read and understand the criteria by which academic progress is defined in the course syllabi, the information provided by [Office of Student Affairs](#), and the information provided in the [VAC Field Education Manual](#).

V. APPENDIX

A. MSW@USC Field Education Website

<https://msw.usc.edu/academic/field-experience/overview/>

B. MSW@USC Field Education Forms

Field Education forms can be located in the appropriate Field Internship course on the [VAC learning platform](#)

C. Curriculum Snapshot

<https://msw.usc.edu/academic/traditional-msw/curriculum-snapshot/>

D. Current Student Website: Class Schedule, OASIS, Student Handbook, etc.

<http://sowkweb.usc.edu/student-resources/current-students>

NASW Code of Ethics

<https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>

E. Council on Social Work Education

<https://www.cswe.org/Home.aspx>

F. Developmental Stages of Internship based on the work of Sweitzer & King (2004)

1. Anticipation
 - a. Characterized by having mixed feelings of excitement, fear, doubts, and anxiety.
 - b. Tasks: provide orientation, clear expectation, and help the student adjust.
2. Disillusionment and Confrontation
 - a. Characterized by the conflict between the student's unrealistic expectation vs. the reality of the work.
 - b. Task: be available, guide and support in reaching a compromise between expectation and reality.
3. Competence
 - a. Characterized by the increase in sense of confidence, proficiency, and a better understanding of the link between theory and practice.
 - b. Tasks: encourage more sophisticated discussion of value dilemmas, support independence and initiatives, and promote self-care.
4. Culmination
 - a. Characterized by re-appearance of self doubt, sadness, relief, withdrawal, and/or detachment.
 - b. Tasks: Model termination, encourage to start early, encourage students to open up and be vulnerable in supervision to process termination appropriately.

G. Generalist Objectives and Outline

1. Socialize to the role of social work in the agency setting, including the professional role with clients, agency staff and other professionals;
2. Demonstrate professional competence and identity, including understanding, accepting and applying professional ethics, values, dress, and behavior;
3. Demonstrate an active and self-evaluative learning role;
4. Develop and sustain relationships and communication with clients;
5. Obtain, organize and communicate accurate information;

6. Begin to apply theory to practice and to engage in orderly thinking, utilizing at least one theoretical framework;
7. Demonstrate assessment skills understanding and conducting a bio-psycho-social history;
8. Demonstrate treatment planning skills based on information, assessment, and resources;
9. Demonstrate a variety of interventions utilizing basic interviewing skills (such as clarifying, interpreting, problem solving, resource linkage, advocacy, etc.);
10. Perform accurate and concise case presentations from a theoretical perspective;
11. Demonstrate and understand professional use of self;
12. Demonstrate knowledge of field placement agency and utilization of community resources;
13. Begin to develop leadership skills in identifying problems/issues and suggest appropriate strategies for change in both practice and policy arenas.

H. **Policy Regarding Field Placement Interruption due to Critical Incident:**

If students are advised by their internship agency, USC or its representatives, and/or government officials not to attend their field placement or if safety or health concerns warrant a temporary interruption in field placement, they should immediately consult via telephone, email or virtual communication with their Field Faculty Liaison, Field Instructor, and Preceptor (if assigned).

If the placement interruption is less than a week, it is anticipated that the hours missed will be absorbed relatively seamlessly throughout the semester. If the placement interruption continues for more than one week, field hours missed will need to be made up with a specific plan. Students will be given opportunities to make up hours by putting in extra time each week, attending internships during semester break periods, or extending their internship after the end of the semester. If the interruption continues beyond a two-week period, the Field Faculty Liaison will be in communication with the agency regarding its ability to return to normal functioning while providing students with appropriate supervision and educational experiences. If the interruption continues beyond a 30-day period, the Field Faculty Liaison in collaboration with placement team members and field education administrators, will determine the most appropriate response to support student completion of their field placement requirements.

The School's Field Education Manual addresses field placement interruptions by emphasizing the needs of students and "educational integrity." In accordance with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the manual focuses on "how educational expectations, goals and objectives can be met and maintained" when agency disruption occurs. To mitigate the impact of extended placement interruption, USC encourages virtual/off-site learning activities that fulfill intern hour requirements, increase student educational competencies, and meet the needs of the agency.

Virtual Continuation of Services Developed by the Agency

Agencies may choose to develop internal plans for the continuation of services via virtual technology. Students are expected to actively participate and, if appropriate, assist in the development of these endeavors:

- **Agency organized activities:** program planning, meetings, and group activities organized remotely by the agency.
- **Change management:** participate (especially SCI students) in the agency's change management team as it plans and implements the internal processes

and external communication needed to manage the disruption in agency functioning.

- **Client meetings (individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities):** utilize teleconferencing applications (could include USC-sanctioned programs such as Zoom or Blackboard) that meet agency and NASW Code of Ethics standards regarding confidentiality, FERPA and HIPAA requirements.
- **Supervision:** participate in weekly supervision using teleconferencing applications.

Off-site Learning Activities (not a comprehensive list)

During temporary field interruptions that are expected to extend beyond two weeks, Field Instructors, Preceptors and Field Faculty Liaisons should assign students off-site learning activities compatible with CSWE competencies. All activities must be pre-approved by the agency Field Instructor and Preceptor, if assigned, in consultation with the student's Field Faculty Liaison. Examples of School-approved off-site field learning activities include:

- **Community networking/resource development:** teleconference with various service providers, participate in asset mapping, and develop a list of resources for clients with services offered, referral process detailed, and eligibility requirements described.
- **Grants:** research potential grant opportunities and/or write sections for a grant proposal.
- **Groups/workshop curricula for clients:** develop curricula for implementation with clients (e.g., grief, trauma, domestic violence, anger management, restorative justice).
- **Legislative policy review:** review relevant laws and policies impacting the agency client population, provide a summary of findings, and/or prepare advocacy materials (e.g., letter to editor, develop key talking points, create infographic or PSA).
- **Literature review:** conduct a literature review on specific topics relevant to field placement (e.g., effectiveness of an intervention, how interruption of services impacts mental health or economic stability).
- **Materials for clients:** develop handouts/flyers/brochures (e.g., explain voting rights, informed consent policies).
- **Organizational policy review:** review agency policies and recommend appropriate updates (e.g., policies on safety, diversity, use of social media, technology utilization).
- **Trainings for agency:** develop trainings to benefit agency (e.g., self-care, ethics).
- **Webinars and trainings:** complete approved online trainings and provide a certification of completion for the Field Instructor's records, write a reflection, and/or prepare a presentation to disseminate knowledge gained.

Field Instructors, Preceptors and Field Faculty Liaisons in consultation with students may also come up with additional activities or trainings. Collaboration among these four key individuals during times of placement interruption increases the likelihood of optimal student health, safety, and learning experiences that align with agency, School, and CSWE expectations.

I. **Strike Policy Course of Action**

If an agency is in a bona fide strike situation prior to the beginning of the field work placement period, no students will be placed for field work in that agency for that academic year. If the agency reaches resolution of the strike situation at some point during the academic year, the agency may be used for a mid-year placement depending on re-assessment of the agency and its ability to meet the learning and educational expectations of the department. This assessment will be completed by one of the field faculty.

If a strike or work action situation occurs in an agency where students are in placement during the course of the academic year. These options may be considered:

1. The student may request not to remain in the placement agency during the period of the strike or work action. The student will be supported in this decision by the department and will not suffer any academic consequences. The field hours missed during the strike period will need to be made up by the student during the regular semester, break periods, and/or in an extended placement through May/June of the academic year. A plan to make up missed hours will be developed by the Field Faculty Liaison in consultation with the student, the Field Instructor and the Associate Director as needed.
2. The student may request to remain in the placement setting during the period of strike or work action. This option will be available only when the Department can be sure that the educational integrity of the field work placement can be maintained. This means that the supervisory requirements, caseload requirements and other expectations of field work can be consistently met by the agency during the strike or work action period and that there is no danger to the student. Students wishing to remain in the agency must discuss this plan with the Field Faculty Liaison who will verify the agency's ability to provide appropriate supervision and educational experiences. The student will be supported in this decision and will not suffer any academic consequences.

If a strike or work action continues beyond a three-week period, a reassessment of the ability of the agency to provide the appropriate supervision and educational experiences will be made by the Field Faculty Liaison. If the agency is found not able to meet the educational requirements of the field department, the student may be relocated to another agency site until the strike or work action have been resolved, and/or until the agency is able to provide the appropriate educational activities; or the student may be replaced.

It is expected that field seminars will devote some time and attention to issues around strikes, work actions, and the subsequent professional dilemmas surrounding these situations in order to assist the student in developing a clear understanding of the relevant issues in regard to the strike, and an understanding of the implications of the strike for the student's field education experience. Issues around responsibility to clients during strike situations may be discussed in field seminars or in special Field Faculty Liaison meetings with students.

J. Notice of Possible Background Checks, Fingerprinting, Drugs Testing and/or Health Screening

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work does not require background checks, drug testing or fingerprinting for admission into the social work program. However, external facilities may require social work students to provide, or submit to, a security clearance, background check, health screening, and/or other additional information in order to participate in internships at their sites. The successful completion of internships is a prerequisite for earning a social work degree from USC.

The following are the areas of inquiry typically covered in a background check, although some clinical sites may require a more comprehensive background check:

- A sex offender database search;
- A seven-year review of a student's criminal court history, including arrest records and records of misdemeanor and felony convictions;
- Address verification;
- Two name verifications (e.g., current legal name and one other name [AKA]);
- Three county check of records;
- Search of the Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General database of excluded persons;
- Social Security number verification; and
- Division of Motor Vehicle record or abstract.

Students are solely responsible for obtaining the documentation needed to satisfy the background check and additional testing requirements of a clinical site. Occasionally an agency may subsidize the fees required to obtain background checks and any additional tests; however, the cost is usually the sole responsibility of the student.

Refusal to satisfy the background check and additional testing requirements for clinical placement, or failure to pass these checks and tests, may severely limit placement options and may cause a delay in advancing in the MSW program or prevent graduation due to the student's inability to complete Field Internship requirements. In such an event, while USC will attempt to place the student at an alternative agency, USC cannot guarantee the availability of placement sites or the student's acceptance into those sites. In such cases, the student may not be able to earn the degree he or she is seeking at USC.

The results of the background checks and any additional testing should be reported directly to the agency site. USC does not require a copy of the results, but may request confirmation from the student or agency that all requirements for placement have been satisfied.

USC, and its trustees, agents and employees, are not responsible for any claims and liabilities arising out of or in any way related to the background check or additional testing requests or disclosures made to the internship sites.

It is required for students to apprise the Field Placement Team of any special circumstances that may impact the selection of the field placement, such as arrests or convictions, including a record which they believe has been expunged. The nature of the special circumstance may impede or significantly reduce placement options available which could affect the student's ability to complete the program and graduate. The Field Faculty member of the Regional Field Placement Team will discuss potential placement options which may be available depending upon the unique circumstances of each situation.