



Master of Social Work (MSW) Program Field Practicum Handbook

Table of Contents

Master of Social Work (MSW) Program Field Practicum Handbook	1
Letter from the Field Director	4
Overview	5
Student Safety Protocols	6
Safety Standards	6
Goals for the Field Practicum Placement	7
Field Education Requirements	8
Field Roles	9
Field Director Role and Responsibilities	9
Field Liaison Roles and Responsibilities	10
Student Roles and Responsibilities	10
Processes for Identifying, Approving, and Engaging with Field Education Settings	11
Processes for Orienting and Engaging Field Instructors	13
Expectations of Field Instructors	14
Qualifications of Field Instructors	15
Processes for Placing, Orienting, Monitoring, and Supporting Student Learning	15
Procedures for Resolving Problems in the Field Practicum (Student Initiated)	17
Procedures for Resolving Problems in the Field Practicum (Field Instructor Initiated)	18
Processes for Evaluating Student Learning Congruent with Social Work Competencies	18
Processes for Evaluating Field Education Setting and Field Instructor Effectiveness	20
Policy Permitting Field Placements in Agencies Where Students are Employed:	21
Description of Field Placement Forms	24
<i>Agency Profile Form</i>	24
<i>Memorandum of Understanding Form</i>	24
<i>Learning Needs Assessment Form</i>	24
<i>Student Learning Contract</i>	24
<i>Agency Checklist</i>	24
<i>Mid-Year Field Evaluation</i>	24
<i>Final Field Evaluation</i>	25
<i>Time Log</i>	25
<i>Field Liaison Site Visit Form</i>	25

<i>Student Evaluation of Field Placement</i>	25
<i>Field Instructor MSW Program Evaluation</i>	25
Additional Field Information	25
Required Clearances	25
Criminal Record	26
Communication and Disclosure	26
Instructions for Completion of Clearances	26
Disclaimer	26
Transportation	26
Insurance	26
Agency Checklist	27

Letter from the Field Director

Dear Students,

Congratulations and welcome to the Master of Social Work Field Education Department! This is the practicum component for the Master of Social Work Program, at Messiah University. We are delighted to be working together and hope this note finds you very well.

Practicum is where theory meets practice! This will allow the framework for students to be socialized into the profession of social work and learn to function as professionals. The theoretical concepts you have learned in the classroom will now be applied in the real world. Attached you will find a compilation of materials we hope you will find useful throughout your field education experience.

This manual includes the following:

- An Overview
- Safety Protocols
- Goals for Field Placements
- Field Education Requirements
- Field Roles and Responsibilities
- Other Additional Field Information

Field Faculty and students work collaboratively to identify community-based learning experiences that will advance a student's learning needs and professional interests. We welcome you as our future colleagues and will be here to nurture and support your growth in social work.

Kindest Regards,

Zenya Richardson

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Overview

The Field Education sequence is grounded in the mission and goals of the Messiah University Master of Social Work (MSW) Program. Both classroom and experiential learning are required for students to be effective social work practitioners. The field education opportunities reinforce student learning of theory, practice skills, professional values and ethics, human behavior in the social environment, anti-oppressive practice and the development of cultural humility, and research. In addition, supervised practice provides the basis for critical reflection with respect to integrating Christian faith and social work knowledge, skills, values and ethics. This occurs in an environment where students can bring questions, case situations, and ethical dilemmas back to the classroom and grapple with tensions between their beliefs and practice situations.

The Messiah University Department MSW Program requires students to be in a field placement setting during the generalist portion of the Program and during the advanced generalist practice portion of the Program. Students will complete placements in selected social service and related agencies in the regions local to the online student. Program faculty are responsible for the course structure and content of these placement experiences but rely on agency field instructors to develop tasks that meet competency expectations and to supervise the daily placement activities. Faculty use these field experiences as part of the evaluation process in determining student progress and suitability for the profession based on personal observation, interaction with the student, and feedback from the field supervisor(s) in the agency.

The generalist field placement is a practice experience that runs concurrently with generalist practice courses. Students spend a minimum of 400 hours in placement for the academic year (200 in the fall semester and 200 in the spring semester). Students who enter the Program as Advanced Standing have already met the generalist field placement requirements through their respective BSW program.

The advanced generalist practice field placement is an advanced practice experience that runs concurrently with advanced practice courses and with the student's chosen focus area in either mental health, health, or leadership in organizations. Students spend a minimum of 500 hours in placement for the academic year (250 in the fall semester and 250 in the spring semester). The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), our accrediting body, requires that MSW students complete a minimum of 900 field hours.

Student Safety Protocols

During agency orientation and supervision, the Program expects students and agency supervisors to discuss the potential problems/issues of safety that could be experienced during placement. This includes: the steps for identifying and responding to an issue of safety, agency specific procedures and approaches to take if there is a safety question or concern, steps the agency takes and steps the student should take to reduce risk or safety issues, timelines, and methods for addressing problems of safety.

If a student believes that she/he is being placed in a situation that may be unsafe, the student will immediately inform the Field Instructor, and if necessary, contact the Field Liaison and Field Director before proceeding with the assignment. The obligation rests with the student, the Field Instructor, the Field Liaison, and the Field Director to reach a mutual understanding as to what assignments are appropriate from a safety perspective. If no agreement can be reached, the ultimate decision rests with the Field Director. Likewise, if a student independently initiates what may be perceived as a potentially unsafe field related activity, the Field Instructor should direct the student to not proceed with the activity. If a student proceeds with an unsafe activity after being directed otherwise, then existing field policies shall apply regarding continuance in the placement.

If threatened or injured while in a field placement, or if the student is involved in a safety incident of any kind, the Field Instructor, Field Liaison, and Field Director should be contacted immediately by the student. An incident report will be completed by the student and Field Director with input from all parties involved, and the Field Director will discuss the issue with the Program Director and review the incident with other appropriate Messiah personnel to assure compliance with local, state, and federal policies. The Field instructor, Field liaison, Field Director, and Program Director need to be informed of any safety related issues in a timely nature in order to be appropriately responsive.

Safety Standards

Standard 1. Organizational Culture of Safety and Security: Agencies that employ social workers should establish and maintain an organizational culture that promotes safety and security for their staff.

Standard 2. Prevention: The goal of organizations that employ social workers should be to create a culture of safety that adopts a proactive preventative approach to violence management and risk.

Standard 3. Office Safety: Social workers' office environments should promote safety for social workers and their clients.

Standard 4. Use of Safety Technology: Organizations that employ social workers should use technology appropriately and effectively to minimize risk.

Standard 5. Use of Mobile Phones: Social workers should be provided with mobile phones to promote their safety in the field.

Standard 6. Risk Assessment for Field Visits: Social workers should assess and take steps to reduce their risk for violence prior to each field visit.

Standard 7. Transporting Clients: Social workers should acknowledge particular safety concerns when transporting clients.

Standard 8. Comprehensive Reporting Practices: Social workers should engage in comprehensive reporting practices regarding field visits.

Standard 9. Post-Incident Reporting and Response: Employers of social workers should develop protocols that follow an incidence of violence or abuse.

Standard 10. Safety Training: Social workers should participate in annual training (or case supervision as needed) that develops and maintains their ability to practice safely.

Standard 11. Student Safety: Social workers need to be prepared for safe social work practice during their student years. As practicum experiences are an important part of the social work curriculum, schools of social work are responsible for ensuring that social work students are educated about concepts and techniques related to safety as well as supervised in safe environments. Social work safety should be part of the curriculum/training of field practicum instructors. Schools should place students in settings with sound safety policies and procedures that should be reviewed with students in school and in the placement setting. Professional safety should be part of the school and agency orientations. Students who have safety concerns about their placements must be provided with support until the safety concerns have abated. If the concerns cannot be addressed adequately, the student must be offered an alternative placement.

* The MSW Program supports student safety in the field by adhering to the following: National Association of Social Workers. (2013). [*Guidelines for Social Work Safety in the Workplace*](#). Washington, DC: Author, pp. 9-23.

Goals for the Field Practicum Placement

Field Education Goals

1. Integrate and apply social work knowledge from the classroom to the field with various client systems, from engagement and assessment through intervention, termination, and evaluation.
2. Demonstrate skill in verbal and written communication through preparing, presenting, and discussing relevant issues and case material in a group setting.
3. Analyze the structure and impact of the organization related to social work practice.
4. Develop interpersonal skills in initiating and terminating professional relationships with client systems and peers.
5. Be self-critical, self-reflective, and evaluative in order to improve one's social work practice and to be accountable for one's own behavior.
6. Give and receive constructive criticism, support, and information to enhance one's practice and to work cooperatively with others.
7. Assess one's own practice of social work relative to the values and ethics of the profession.
8. Utilize personal, client, interprofessional, and societal resources to provide for client needs.
9. Demonstrate a sensitivity to and acceptance of cultural, racial, age, gender, ethnic, religious, and sexual differences in one's practice of social work.
10. Integrate Christian faith principles with the knowledge, skills, and values of the social work profession.

Field Education Requirements

The MSW field placements provide the student with specific social work service delivery experiences within an agency setting. Students receive a minimum of 900 hours of supervised practice experience. Opportunities are provided that connect social work theory with practice, emphasize the values and ethics of the profession, reinforce the Program's goals and objectives, support a generalist or advanced generalist approach, utilize theory-based practice knowledge, facilitate experiences across all levels of practice (micro, mezzo, macro), and provide exposure to multiple areas of practice and client populations. *Although the MSW Program is an online program, field placements are generally conducted in-person in agencies that are local to where a student lives, so please plan accordingly.*

MSW field placements occur over the course of two semesters. Students begin the placement search and process as early as possible to ensure enrollment in the Field Seminar course beginning in the fall semester. Placements must be arranged in coordination with the Field Director, the agency, and the student, with students taking an active role in identifying possible placement options in their local region. Students meet virtually with the Field Director to discuss possible agencies that are available for placement depending on student learning needs and placement opportunities available. Only one agency at a time should be pursued by the student. Once a student is offered a placement, the student may not attempt to pursue another. Once an agency has been identified as a potential placement for the student, the student must contact the agency Field Instructor for an interview. If the agency Field Instructor and the student agree on the placement for the student, the agency and the student confirm the placement with the Field Director. The social work faculty provides final approval for all field placements. Students are also responsible during this time for completing all the agency paperwork and completing all of the necessary clearances to begin their field experience in the fall semester.

Students may make an application for a field placement by two means. In both situations, students must notify the Field Director of potential placements they plan to pursue prior to contacting any agency. The first means is through a direct application where the student identifies a placement of interest and pursues this independent of the Program database and with the approval of Field Director. If a student uses this direct application approach, it is incumbent upon the student to first obtain permission from the Field Director to proceed, and to inform the field site of the full requirements for a field placement and then provide complete contact information including the Field Instructor resume and Agency Profile form to the MSW Field Director. Second, the student, in conjunction with the Field Director, may make an application to an agency found in the MSW Field Placement database. After making contact, the student would notify the Field Director and update any contact information. Students are expected to accept the first placement that is offered to them. Students may only contact/interview with one placement prior to requesting permission from the Field Director to contact/interview with a second placement if the first agency declines the placement. An agency's acceptance of a student for field experience is viewed as a contract of agreement between the student, agency, and the MSW Program. Therefore, it is essential to notify the agency immediately following the interview if, during the interview, the student identifies that the placement would not be a good fit. Once the agency accepts a student, the Field Instructor resume and the Agency Profile form must be completed and submitted to the Field Director. The student and Field Instructor begin the process of completing the Learning Contract at the beginning of the field placement.

Although the expectation is that a placement is obtained as early as possible, a placement, which begins at the start of the fall semester, must be secured no later than August 1. Students who are unable to secure a placement by this date would be required to meet virtually with the Field Director to discuss other options, including the possibility of being assigned a placement or delaying placement to the following year. The MSW Program does not assume responsibility for assisting a student in securing a

field placement beyond what has been outlined above. Students must successfully complete both the generalist field placement and the advanced generalist practice field placement to be considered for graduation. Students discharged from field placement for violating program, University, agency and/or professional ethical standards may be dismissed from the Program.

Field Roles

Agency: An agency is considered to be a practicum placement setting that is an approved site where students can participate in practice experiences equivalent to their level of practice and within the generalist and advanced generalist models of social work.

Field Director: The Field Director is a faculty member of the Messiah University MSW Program who is responsible for the overall development and maintenance of the Program's field education component.

Field Instructor: The Field Instructor is a community agency employee approved by the Field Director to oversee the day-to-day activities of social work students participating in field placement and who has agreed to supervise a student in field practice at the agency where the worker is employed.

External Field Instructor: Depending on the practicum context and the availability of social work supervision in the agency or workplace setting, an external social work field instructor will be assigned to ensure compliance with accreditation standards regarding field instruction for social work students. The external social work field instructor must meet the requirements for social work supervision that are outlined in the field policy. The external field instructor should complement the onsite supervision provided. The external field instructor does not directly observe students in practice or assign students roles or tasks at the practicum agency.

Field Liaison: The Field Liaison is a Messiah social work faculty member assigned to each student in field placement and serves as a link between the student, the agency, and the MSW Program.

Student: A student in the context of field placement is enrolled in the MSW Program taking prerequisite or corequisite courses and is enrolled in the corresponding Field Instruction & Seminar course.

Field Director Role and Responsibilities

- A major responsibility of the Field Director is to work with the MSW Program Director to assure that the field component of the Program maintains compliance with CSWE standards and to assure that all aspects of field education meet the requirements of the MSW Program.
- The Field Director screens, reviews, and approves agencies for field placements and screens, reviews, and approves Field Instructors to supervise students according to the policies and procedures established by the Program.
- It is the responsibility of the Field Director to facilitate the Field Orientation for Field Instructors, Field Liaisons, and students. The orientation is provided for the sharing of information regarding the organization, sequencing, and content of the educational curriculum, and for emphasizing the interrelationships among human behavior, social policy, research, and practice content. The Field Director will assist in providing other training opportunities for field instructors as the need arises.

- The Field Director administers all other aspects of the field placement experience for students as necessary so as to develop and maintain quality field placement.
- The Field Director maintains a 50% course reduction to administer the responsibilities of a field director.
- The Field Director is responsible for sharing pertinent information about field practice to students in order to facilitate student learning while at the agency.
- It is the responsibility of the Field Director to maintain clear practice and evaluation goals for the field practice experience and for each student.
- The Field Director approves and finalizes all student selections of an agency for field experience. Additionally, the Field Director may assist in facilitating the resolution of issues that arise as a result of a student being in placement.

Field Liaison Roles and Responsibilities

- The Field Liaison helps facilitate the relationship between the school, the student, and the agency.
- The Field Liaison is expected to meet virtually with the Field Instructor and the student once a semester to discuss student progress and concerns. The meeting should take place mid-semester. During the meeting, the liaison should use the Learning Contract and the Field Evaluation Form to guide the evaluative process. A copy of the Field Liaison Site Visit Form should be sent to the student, Field Instructor, and Field Director after each visit.
- It is important for the Field Liaison to discuss any issues or concerns regarding the learning contract, student progress, or the placement with the Field Director, the Field Instructor and/or student.
- The Field Liaison has the responsibility to facilitate the mediation of issues that arise between the Field Instructor and the student that impact student performance or are a result of a student not meeting placement expectations. The Field Liaison will consult with the Field Director related to issues that arise between the Field Instructor and the student.
- The Field Liaison will work with the Field Director to develop adequate field placement opportunities and to improve the field placement component of the Program.
- The Field Liaison provides evaluative feedback to the Field Director related to agency effectiveness in providing field education.

Student Roles and Responsibilities

- The student has the responsibility to ensure that they meet the criteria for participation in a field of experience.
- It is the student's responsibility to obtain all clearances necessary to fulfill the required duties within each agency and to do so in a timely fashion.
- It is the responsibility of the student to actively participate in the selection of a field placement as outlined in the policy for field placement and to complete the process in a timely fashion for approval for that site.
- The student needs to work with the agency to develop and submit a learning contract to the faculty of Field Instruction & Seminar by the date specified.

- It is necessary for the student to develop a plan in coordination with the agency Field Instructor, Field Liaison, and the Field Director to complete the 900 placement hours necessary to meet Program requirements.
- The student has the responsibility to coordinate their own transportation to and from placement and to clarify who is responsible to provide transportation when conducting placement responsibilities. The student is also responsible for having adequate liability insurance as deemed by state requirements.
- The student is to always act in an ethical and professional manner, including arriving at the placement site on time and on the days that they are scheduled.
- The student is expected to comply fully with Program, University, agency, state, and professional standards and requirements.
- Students must work with the Field Director, Field Liaison, and/or Field Instructor to complete within the expected time frame all assignments, forms, and evaluations necessary to meet the MSW Program requirements.
- The student is to be an active participant in the field placement experience, in supervision, and to utilize the resources available to learn and develop the skills necessary to practice generalist and advanced generalist social work.

Processes for Identifying, Approving, and Engaging with Field Education Settings

Process for identifying field education settings:

Agency staff, students, and/or faculty may identify an agency as a potential placement site.

Field education settings are identified using the following criteria:

- A field education setting is an approved agency site where students can participate in practice experiences equivalent to their level of practice and within the generalist and advanced generalist models of social work.
- The field education setting should have a clearly defined service, and the goals of the agency should be compatible with the mission and goals of the social work profession and the mission and goals of Messiah's MSW Program.
- The agency is familiar with the MSW Program objectives and supports the curriculum objectives of the practice courses.
- The agency can provide students with the opportunity for micro, mezzo, and macro practice from the generalist and/or advanced generalist perspectives outlined by the MSW Program.
- The agency demonstrates a level of stability that ensures the continuity of field experience during a student's placement and provides adequate orientation, space, equipment, clerical services, fiscal support, and personnel policies to create a sufficient learning environment.
- The agency demonstrates the availability of a qualified Field Instructor with adequate time to carry out the responsibilities needed to provide the student with a quality field experience. In agencies without Field Instructors that hold a CSWE-accredited master's degree in social work (MSW), the program will allow for an external field instructor.

- An external social work field instructor must meet the requirements for social work supervision that are outlined in the field policy. The Field Director and Program faculty may serve as Field Instructors for MSW students, provided they meet all field instructor qualifications and are not concurrently teaching the student in any field course.
- It is important that the agency is able to provide appropriate learning experiences for students, including work assignments, participation in staff conferences, and other agency and community experiences that will enhance the student's field experience.
- The agency provides consistent and quality opportunities for the student to accumulate a minimum of 400 hours of practice experience (for the generalist practicum) and a minimum of 500 hours of practice experience (for the specialization practicum) related to the Program's objectives.
- The agency provides adequate time for Field Instructors to carry out the responsibilities of field instruction including adequate time for training seminars, supervision, educating students and mentoring.
- The responsibilities and tasks assigned to the student need to be consistent with the identified learning needs of the student.
- The agency participates in a mutual evaluation process involving the agency, the student, and the MSW Program. The agency monitors and evaluates the student's performance consistent with the objectives of the MSW Program and consistent with the generalist and advanced generalist perspectives outlined by the Program and CSWE competencies.
- The agency is encouraged to accept more than one student for placement, creating a desirable learning environment, and provides additional opportunities and support for student learning.

Process for approving field education settings:

- Once an agency has been identified, the agency is expected to complete an Agency Profile Form and forward it to the Field Director for review.
- It is the responsibility of the Field Director to review the Agency Profile Form and determine fit and compatibility as a field placement site. As part of the evaluation process, the Field Director will contact an agency representative to discuss Program and agency expectations and to evaluate agency fit and compatibility.
- The Field Director screens, reviews, and approves agencies for field placements and screens, reviews, and approves Field Instructors to supervise students according to the policies and procedures established by the Program.

Process for engaging with field education settings:

- Social work faculty initiates contacts with community agencies to develop and evaluate possible field experience sites.
- The use of Field Orientation and Field Instruction Seminars assist with Field Liaisons facilitating engagement between practicum agencies and social work faculty.

- Evaluative measures instituted to assess student progress during field experience facilitate engagement with agencies and Field Instructors. Program policy dictates at least one virtual site visit per semester to each field placement site.

Processes for Orienting and Engaging Field Instructors

Process for orienting field instructors:

- A virtual Field Orientation is offered to Field Instructors in late August to assure that all Field Instructors are familiar with CSWE core competencies, Program goals and objectives, field practice policies and expectations, Program requirements, and any Program changes that have been instituted in the previous year. Field Orientation provides opportunities for field instructors to interact with each other, to interact with faculty and to ask questions. The Field Orientation is recorded and provided to Field Instructors who are not able to attend due to scheduling conflicts or time zone differences. Field Instructors in those situations are expected to view the recorded orientation. All attendees must complete an evaluation form of the Orientation so that the Field Director can continuously improve the content and format of the Field Orientation.

Process for engaging with field instructors:

- Field Instructors are engaged by the Program throughout the duration of a student's placement, beginning with the Field Orientation. The Program communicates by sharing the Field Handbook, ensuring availability as needed by the Field Education Department, and ongoing communication via email for correspondence, site visits, and phone calls as needed.
- Field Instructors are invited to periodic training and monthly free CEU seminars sponsored by the BSW/MSW Programs.
- Evaluative measures are instituted to assess student progress during field experience, which engages field instructors in the process. Program policy dictates at least one virtual site visit per semester to each field placement site, engaging field instructors in conversations and problem-solving with Field Liaisons.
- Field Instructors may be asked to participate in the Community Advisory Committee.
- The Program learns about and interacts with Field Instructors when situations arise in the field placement in several ways. In Field Seminar, students are encouraged to share with the Field Liaison and with each other what is happening in the field placement; the Field Liaison communicates with the Field Instructor after learning about a potential issue to problem-solve. During the site visit, the Field Liaison asks about any issues in the field placement and works with the Field Instructor to problem-solve those issues. Finally, there is open communication between the Field Instructor and the Field Liaison via email, phone, or a virtual meeting platform for discussing and addressing issues at any point during the Field Placement.
- At times, Field Instructors may experience problems with students in field placement and believe a change of placement would be a desirable outcome. In such instances, the following process (which engages the Field Instructor) must be initiated:
 - If the Field Instructor initiates the request for change, it must be discussed with the Field Director and subsequently the student. Factors involved must be clearly identified.

- The Field Director will discuss the problem with the student's advisor and, if necessary, the Program Director.
- A virtual conference will be held between the student, their advisor, the Field Director, Field Liaison, and the Field Instructor, and a decision will be made regarding the desired change of placement. The discussion of a new field placement will not occur until after such a conference is held. The Program Director may also be consulted.
- The Field Instructor must complete a field evaluation with the student and Field Director.

Expectations of Field Instructors

- The Field Instructor is a social worker approved by the Field Director and who has agreed to supervise students in field practice, preferably at the agency where the social worker is employed. An External Field Instructor will be approved to supervise a student if mandated criteria are met.
- The Field Instructor should have the agency's support to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of a Field Instructor. Additionally, the Field Instructor's methods are to be congruent with the approaches of the Program and of a generalist or advanced generalist social work perspective.
- Field instructors must submit their resume to the Field Director for approval. The resume must outline professional credentials and experiences to assure their qualifications meet Program requirements.
- The Field Instructor (or designee i.e., task supervisor) will interview a potential student for placement and will evaluate the student's appropriateness for the field experience offered by the agency.
- The Field Instructor (or designee i.e., task supervisor) will assure that the student is provided with adequate preparation, orientation activities and resources as outlined in the Agency Checklist in the Field Practicum Handbook.
- It is the responsibility of the Field Instructor to assist in the development of a student Learning Contract in coordination with the student and the Program and forward the completed Learning Contract to the Field Director by the dates designated by the Program.
- The Field Instructor is expected to develop and structure a workload for the student that meets Program requirements of 400 hours for the generalist placement and 500 hours for the advanced generalist practice placement, and micro, mezzo and macro practice exposure which increases in complexity as the learning needs of the students develop and change.
- It is expected that the Field Instructor provides a minimum of one hour of weekly supervision for the student and works with the student to develop a mutually agreed upon agenda for the supervision. Interactions between the Field Instructor and the student while carrying out agency responsibilities are considered additional learning opportunities for the student. Additionally, the Field Instructor should help the student develop an awareness of self in the process of intervention, help the student use oral and written professional communications that are consistent with the language of the field experience setting and of the profession, facilitate critical assessment, implementation, and evaluation techniques in assessing agency policy within ethical guidelines, and assist the student in applying knowledge, values, ethics and practice skills to enhance the wellbeing of people and to work toward the amelioration of environmental conditions that affect people in an adverse manner.
- The Field Instructor is to complete a mid-year and a final evaluation of student progress in coordination with the student and the Program and forward the evaluation to the Field Director by

the dates designated by the Program. Also, the Field Instructor (or designee, i.e., task supervisor) must sign the student's Placement Time Sheet monthly to assure that the student is making adequate progress toward completing the required number of hours for field experiences.

- To assist in the Program evaluation process, the Field Instructor is expected to complete a Field Instructor Evaluation of the MSW Program and forward the form to the Field Director by the date designated by the Program.
- The Field Instructor must be available to meet with the student and Field Liaison once during the semester and be willing to share information about student progress during these meetings and at other times when issues arise.
- The Field Instructor is expected to attend orientation and training seminars provided by the Program. Attendance at these seminars helps assure that the Field Instructor is familiar with the Program's objectives, field instruction requirements, and the learning objectives for the students.
- The Field Instructor will not receive monetary compensation for this role.

Qualifications of Field Instructors

The Messiah University MSW Program requires that all Field Instructors for MSW students hold a CSWE accredited master's degree in social work (MSW). In addition, Field Instructors for MSW students must have at least two years post-master's social work degree experience. To ensure compliance with these policies, all potential Field Instructors must submit a resume outlining professional credentials and experiences to assure their qualifications meet Program requirements. This is submitted to the Field Director. In agencies without Field Instructors that hold a CSWE-accredited master's degree in social work (MSW), the program will allow for an external field instructor. An external social work field instructor must meet the requirements for social work supervision as outlined in the field policy. The Field Director reviews the external field instructor's resume to ensure that the requirements for social work supervision are met. The Field Director and Program faculty may serve as Field Instructors for MSW students, provided they meet all field instructor qualifications and are not concurrently teaching the student in any field course.

Processes for Placing, Orienting, Monitoring, and Supporting Student Learning

Process for orienting students:

- Students are initially oriented to Field Education at the time of their acceptance into the Program; students are advised to meet with the Field Director as soon as possible to begin the field placement process because field placements begin in the immediate fall semester for students who are completing the program in the shortest timeframes.

- A virtual Field Orientation Seminar is offered to students in late August to assure that all students are familiar with CSWE core competencies, Program goals and objectives, field practice policies and expectations, Program requirements, and any Program changes that have been instituted in the previous year. Field Orientation provides an opportunity for students to interact with each other, to interact with faculty, and to ask questions. The Field Orientation is recorded and provided to students who are not able to attend due to scheduling conflicts or time zone differences. Students are expected to view the recorded orientation. All attendees must complete an evaluation form of the Orientation, which helps the Field Director to continuously improve the content and format of the Orientation.

Process for placing students:

- The student must first meet virtually with the Field Director to discuss and confirm possible field placement sites.
- Students will discuss learning needs and placement resources with the Field Director. This discussion helps ensure that the student selects a field placement which most closely fits their learning needs. The Field Director may provide the student with contact information of an agency placement that will facilitate student learning, or the student may provide the Field Director with contact information regarding an agency placement in their local area.
- After meeting with the Field Director and getting approval to move forward, students will contact a potential placement site and schedule an interview in a timely fashion.
- Students will develop a learning needs profile and discuss their learning needs with a potential field experience site. The learning needs profile is used to help the student articulate learning needs with the agency and to develop the learning contract.
- The agency Field Instructor, Task Supervisor, or designee and the student must agree that the student learning needs match the role of the agency. The Field Director will answer any questions or mediate any issues that may arise during this process. The student will report the outcome of the interview to the Field Director. Once the agency and the student agree that the student's learning needs can be met by the agency, the Field Director will review the process and make a final determination of the fit between the student and the placement. It is the Field Director's responsibility to give final approval for the placement of a student with an agency.
- A Memorandum of Understanding will be sent to the agency for signing and the student confirming the placement and a Field Calendar will be shared with students and Field Instructors outlining important dates related to the field practice experience.
- The Field Office has a list of clearances that may be required for field placements that is shared with students as placements are being considered. If an agency has clearances to be completed, students will be informed by the agency directly and will be given guidance on next steps. Liability insurance is provided by Messiah University for students in practicums, and certificates are available to students and agencies. Information on how to request a certificate is located in the student learning management system (Canvas) as part of Field Seminar. They are to submit a request to the Office of Operations.

Process for monitoring and supporting student learning:

- Beginning at the Field Orientation and completed within the first month, a Learning Contract is developed between the agency and the student, completed in the field management system (Exxat), and is available to the Field Liaison for review. The Learning Contract outlines the student's learning objectives and tasks designed to evidence competencies at all levels of practice as identified by the student and the Field Instructor, and methods to be used in monitoring student progress. The Learning Contract is also used as a tool in monitoring student progress during site visits by the Field Liaison and when the Field Instructor completes student evaluations.
- The Field Liaison is expected to meet with the student and the student's Field Instructor once a semester to discuss student progress and issues. The meeting should be scheduled around the mid-point of each semester. To assist in monitoring student progress during this meeting, the Learning Contract should be evaluated, supervisory issues should be evaluated, and initial discussions regarding the Field Evaluation should occur. The Field Liaison will complete a site visit report after each visit and a copy will be provided to the student and Field Instructor.
- The student is expected to log his or her hours in placement on a Placement Time Log Sheet. The log must be signed by the Field Instructor (or designee) on a monthly basis to ensure that the student is making adequate progress toward completing the required number of field hours. These logs will be submitted to faculty as a part of the Field Instruction & Seminar courses.
- If a placement is disrupted, placements that have a Memorandum of Understanding with the University will be considered for a student's new placement. The Field Director and Program will assess the concerns, hours needed and timeline for completion for an individualized plan for the student, tentative field placement and field instructor.
- Field issues and concerns are discussed and solutions are developed by faculty and staff as an agenda item each time they meet for a monthly Program meeting.

Procedures for Resolving Problems in the Field Practicum (Student Initiated)

Students may not unilaterally end a field placement without the knowledge of the faculty advisor/Field Director, Field Liaison and Field Instructor. This action is contradictory to our contractual agreement with agencies.

Students who are experiencing problems should initiate dialogue according to the following process:

- The student must first discuss problems in the field setting with the Field Instructor and subsequently the Field Director and Field Liaison. Factors involved must be clearly identified.
- The Field Director will discuss problems with the Field Instructor.
- A virtual conference will be held between the student, the Field Director, and the Field Instructor, and a decision will be made regarding the desired change of placement. The discussion of a new field placement will not occur until after such a conference is held.
- The Field Director will assist the student in finding a new field placement. Plans for a new placement will specify expectations in terms of hours to be completed, learning goals, tasks, and the basis for evaluation.

- If the situation is not resolved to the satisfaction of the student, the grievance procedures found in the Messiah University MSW Program Student Handbook are to be followed.
- Students may not withdraw from field placement without permission from the Field Director and the Program Director. If a student's schedule is revised to exclude fields, they must also withdraw from the seminar class. The seminar class and field placement must be taken concurrently.

Procedures for Resolving Problems in the Field Practicum (Field Instructor Initiated)

At times, Field Instructors may experience problems with students in field placement and believe a change of placement would be a desirable outcome. *In such instances, the following process must be initiated:*

- If the Field Instructor initiates the request for change, it must be discussed with the Field Director and subsequently the student. Factors involved must be clearly identified. The Field Director will discuss the problem with the student's advisor and, if necessary, the Program Director.
- A virtual conference will be held between the student, their advisor, the Field Director, Field Liaison and the Field Instructor, and a decision will be made regarding the desired change of placement. The discussion of a new field placement will not occur until after such a conference is held. The Program Director may also be consulted.
- The Field Instructor must complete a field evaluation with the student and Field Director.

Processes for Evaluating Student Learning Congruent with Social Work Competencies

Student learning in field education is evaluated through a variety of methods.

- Students and Field Instructors develop a Learning Contract, which identifies specific placement objectives and tasks to be completed that address all of the CSWE core competencies and the methods to evaluate progress. Evaluating progress made in completing the objectives and tasks also provides insight into student learning during the placement experience since the plans are based on the areas students will be evaluated.
- The Field Liaison discusses and evaluates student learning during the two scheduled site visits while the student is in placement. The Field Liaison completes a Field Liaison Site Visit Form during each visit which identifies student progress made in placement, any issues to be addressed and notes action steps to be implemented to facilitate student improvement.
- The Field Instructor, in consultation with the student, completes formal mid-year and final evaluations. Evaluation documents consist of an evaluation of the CSWE nine core competencies and the Program's 10th generalist competency with both Likert items and narrative responses. These forms are to be reviewed during Field Orientation to emphasize their importance as a learning tool.

- The Field Instruction & Seminar faculty assigns a grade for the field experience based on an assessment of the student's work during placement (Learning Contract, evaluations, time sheets, liaison field visits and Field Liaison Site Visit Forms, feedback from the Field Instructor, specific assignments assigned to assess the field experience, field journals and overall assessment of professionalism and competency). Each of these evaluation areas are identified in the course syllabus.

Processes for Evaluating Field Education Setting and Field Instructor Effectiveness

Process for evaluating field instructor effectiveness:

Evaluating Field Instructor effectiveness is an ongoing process that begins before a student enters placement and continues through the completion of all placement requirements. The program uses data-informed evaluation practices, which include direct (virtual) observation during site visits, questionnaire and survey responses, communication and feedback from students during Field Seminar, and an end-of-placement survey that students complete that contains several questions about field instructor effectiveness.

- The Field Instructor's resume is sent to the Field Director. The Field Instructor's resume outlines the qualifications of the field instructor to provide adequate training and supervision to students while in placement and assists the Field Director in initially evaluating that person as a Field Instructor.
- Faculty evaluate potential Field Instructor effectiveness during interactions with the Field Instructors while establishing field sites and during training and orientation seminars.
- Students can express concerns about their field instruction to the Field Liaison as part of the Field Seminar, and Field Liaisons provide feedback to the Field Director.
- The Field Liaison assesses Field Instructor effectiveness during site visits while the student is in placement. During the visits, the Field Liaison assesses the Field Instructor's effectiveness in developing a Learning Contract, providing adequate orientation, creating a work environment that is conducive to learning, assigning appropriate work assignments, and supervision. This feedback is then provided to the Field Director.
- The level of importance a Field Instructor places in completing the evaluation forms, and the information shared about student progress helps the Program in assessing the quality of the Field Instructor.
- Students also complete a Student Evaluation of Field Placement at the end of the experience to assess how well the placement met student learning needs and professional interests, provided adequate supervision time, created a working environment that was conducive to learning, and clearly defined student roles and responsibilities.

Process for evaluating field education setting effectiveness:

Evaluating field education setting effectiveness is an ongoing process that begins before the student enters placement and continues through a student's completion of the placement requirements.

- The initial process begins when the agency submits an Agency Profile Form. The form provides information on the types of services provided by the agency, the areas in which the students would be placed and the responsibilities the students would have while in placement.
- Faculty evaluate potential agency effectiveness during interactions with the agencies while establishing field sites and during the placement and orientation process.

- Field Instructors are given opportunities for training, mentorship, and engagement to assist in field education effectiveness. Opportunities include possible Advisory Board participation, Continuing Education credits, and one-on-one interactions, as needed.
- The Field Liaison assesses the agency's effectiveness during site visits while the student is in placement. During the visits, the Field Liaison assesses the agency's effectiveness in providing adequate orientation, creating a work environment that is conducive to learning, and in assigning appropriate work assignments. A site visit report is completed each semester by Field Liaisons in the internship placement system (Exxat) so feedback about field education setting effectiveness is available to the Field Director.
- Students have the opportunity to share feedback, concerns, and issues about agency effectiveness during Field Seminar courses. Students are also encouraged to speak with their Field Liaison one on one, if necessary. The Field Education Handbook also outlines a process if there are issues that need more in-depth resolutions.
- Field Faculty have opportunities to discuss, evaluate, and share feedback on agency effectiveness during Social Work Departmental meetings scheduled.
- All feedback will be reviewed and utilized on an ongoing basis to ensure data-informed continuous improvement of the Field Education Program including placements and process.
- Students also complete a Student Evaluation of Field Placement at the end of the experience to assess how well the placement met student learning needs and professional interests, provided adequate supervision time, created a working environment that was conducive to learning, and clearly defined student roles and responsibilities.

Policy Permitting Field Placements in Agencies Where Students are Employed:

Students interested in completing field placements in agencies where they are employed must meet specific requirements to ensure that the ten social work competencies can be met at the generalist level of practice or the nine social work competencies at the specialization (advanced generalist) level of practice.

- One option is for a student to use their job roles and responsibilities as suitable tasks for the demonstration of competencies, adding different or new responsibilities to cover any competency gaps.
- Another option is for a student to take on roles and responsibilities that are completely different from those that are part of their employment (if a student's current role in the agency is such that social work competencies would not be met, or the level of practice is not appropriate).
- The Learning Contract is used to ensure that student field assignments are linked to the social work competencies and are reflective of the appropriate level of practice.
- Students who are requesting a placement in the agency in which they are employed must provide the Field Director with a job description and a list of employment responsibilities (options 1 and 2) and submit a plan to show how employment and field responsibilities will be differentiated (option 2).
- The Field Director will determine if a field placement in the agency of employment is appropriate. If approval is granted, the plan will be monitored in coordination with the Field Instructor and during site visits by the Field Liaison.

The Field Instructor can be the student's employment supervisor if that supervisor meets the criteria to serve as a Field Instructor and is willing to provide specific supervision that is different from the supervision provided as an employer and is appropriate for an educational field placement.

- The supervision in field education is distinct in that it includes the social work perspective in a thoughtful and intentional manner.
- Supervision and activities must be aligned with the social work competencies outlined in the student's Learning Contract.
- To ensure that educational supervision is taking place, students are required to submit Supervision Logs associated with their social work competencies, clarity is given to students and field instructors on how to incorporate social work competencies in their supervision sessions, and structured supervision time is made a priority.
- The Field Liaison will also act as support to ensure educational instruction is met.

To mitigate the risks of employment-based placements, the Memorandum of Understanding, which is signed by both the Program and the agency, outlines the expectations of the field placement. Field Instructor Orientation explains tools to ensure the role of confusion will not be a concern. Students are encouraged to share assignments, tasks, and program-related information to ensure educational instruction takes place.

In situations where a student becomes unemployed in an organization where field education has co-occurred with employment due to organizational changes or market factors, the Field Liaison will facilitate a continuation of the field placement in that same organization if appropriate (for example, the student's position is eliminated but there are other roles in the agency that could be taken on to complete the practicum), or the Field Director will work with the student to find a new field placement as quickly as possible, assuring that field hours already accumulated will count towards the total number of field hours needed. If a new placement is needed for the remaining field hours, Field Instructor Orientation for the new placement will be conducted and support given by the Field Liaison. An updated Learning Contract will be completed to ensure the competencies are met. In the event that a student is close to completing the required number of field hours and transitioning to a new agency would not be feasible, the Field Liaison will work with the student to create appropriate activities that help to demonstrate the competencies that will count as field hours.

In situations where a student becomes unemployed in an organization where field education has co-occurred with employment due to reasons of cause (typically due to serious misconduct, gross negligence, or repeated poor performance), the Program's Termination Policy for Professional Misconduct (outlined in the MSW Program Student Handbook) will be adhered to. That policy is included here as well:

Termination Policy for Professional Performance Misconduct:

The MSW Program prioritizes student success and professional development. While remediation is always the preferred approach for addressing concerns, there are circumstances where **professional probation or dismissal** may be necessary to protect clients, uphold ethical standards, and maintain program integrity.

Purpose

This policy outlines the process for addressing serious concerns related to **professional competence or ethical conduct**. It also provides examples of behaviors that may result in probation or dismissal.

Behaviors That May Lead to Immediate Probation or Dismissal

While many concerns can be addressed through remediation, the following behaviors are considered severe and may warrant immediate probation or dismissal:

- **Ethical Violations**
 - Breach of client confidentiality.
 - Falsifying records or academic work.
 - Engaging in dual relationships or conflicts of interest.
 - Sexual harassment or inappropriate relationships with clients, supervisors, or faculty.
- **Professional Misconduct**
 - Physical, verbal, or emotional abuse toward clients, peers, or faculty.
 - Discriminatory behavior or failure to respect diversity.
 - Substance use that impairs judgment or client safety.
- **Legal or Safety Concerns**
 - Criminal charges related to violence, abuse, or fraud.
 - Behavior that jeopardizes client safety or violates agency policies.
- **Persistent Unprofessional Behavior**
 - Repeated failure to respond to feedback or comply with remediation plans.
 - Chronic absenteeism or abandonment of field placement.
 - Dishonesty about qualifications, background, or conduct.

Procedures for Addressing Serious Concerns

1. **Written Report**
 - The individual raising the concern (field instructor, classroom instructor, advisor, etc.) submits a written statement to the **Program Director** detailing the nature of the concern and supporting evidence.
 - The student receives a copy of the written concern and notification that a meeting will be scheduled.
2. **Initial Meeting**
 - Within **10 days**, the Program Director will hold a virtual meeting with all parties involved to review the concern.
 - The student may submit a written response prior to the meeting.
 - The Program Director determines whether the concern is substantiated and if further action is needed.
3. **Written Decision**
 - Within **5 working days** of the meeting, the Program Director provides a written response to the student and the reporting party indicating whether the concern warrants further action.
4. **Professional Review Committee (if needed)**
 - Within **10 days**, the Program Director decides whether to appoint a **Social Work Professional Review Committee**.
 - The committee includes:
 - A faculty chairperson.
 - Two MSW faculty members.
 - A student representative chosen by the student involved.
 - The committee meets within **10 days** of appointment to gather evidence and make a recommendation regarding sanctions.
5. **Possible Outcomes**
 - **Warning** with documented expectations for improvement (remediation plan).
 - **Probation** with specific conditions outlined in writing.
 - **Dismissal** from the MSW Program.

6. Final Decision

- Within **10 days** of receiving the committee’s recommendation, the Program Director communicates the final decision in writing to the student and the Dean of the School of Graduate and Professional Studies.

7. Appeals

- All appeals must be submitted to the Dean of the School of Graduate and Professional Studies.

Commitment to Fairness

Our goal is to ensure that all decisions are made with transparency, respect, and a focus on student development—while safeguarding the ethical and professional standards of social work.

Description of Field Placement Forms

Agency Profile Form

The agency profile form is completed by an agency identified as a potential field placement site. The form is evaluated by the Field Director and is used as a tool to assess the feasibility of an agency to provide a social work practice experience for the student that is commensurate with the student’s learning needs.

Memorandum of Understanding Form

This form must be completed by the agency designee and field director. This contract outlines the partnership between the MSW program and the designated agency providing field placements for students. This agreement establishes mutual expectations, responsibilities, and objectives to ensure a supportive learning environment for students.

Learning Needs Assessment Form

This form is completed by the student during the placement planning phase. It is designed to assist students in developing a plan of action for identifying and meeting specific learning needs while in placement, and the form should be used by the student in the decision-making process for assessing agency fit in meeting learning needs. Once a student is in placement the form should also be used by the Field Instructor and the student to develop a student Learning Contract.

Student Learning Contract

During the first two weeks of placement, the student and the Field Instructor should develop a specific learning contract that identifies the specific goals and objectives for the placement experience. The Learning Needs Assessment should be used as a guide for the student and the Field Instructor in creating a plan of action that meets the learning needs of the student and that meets the Program’s goals and objectives for the field experience.

Agency Checklist

This form is designed to facilitate student orientation to the field agency. The form should be completed by the Field Instructor and the student during the first few weeks of placement.

Mid-Year Field Evaluation

The mid-year evaluation is completed during the first half of a student’s placement and is used as a tool by the agency, the student, and the Program in assessing the student’s progress in meeting the learning

needs and placement objectives. Issues identified during the mid-year evaluation process should be addressed by the agency, the student, and the Field Director and a plan of action should be developed to address those concerns.

Final Field Evaluation

The final field evaluation is completed by the Field Instructor and the student during the last weeks of placement and is used as a tool by the agency, the student, and the Program in assessing the student's overall progress toward meeting the student's learning needs and placement objectives. Both the mid-year and the final evaluations will also be used as tools by the faculty in assigning a course grade for the placement.

Time Log

The time sheet is used to document the actual number of work hours a student completes in placement. Students should note that time spent while at lunch is *not* included in the total number of hours spent in the agency. The student is expected to keep a daily record of hours and have the Field Instructor sign off on the timesheet on a weekly basis. The student must submit a copy of the signed timesheet weekly.

Field Liaison Site Visit Form

This form is used by the Field Liaison to document the issues discussed during any agency site visits completed while a student is in placement and to note actions to be taken to address any issues identified during the visits.

Student Evaluation of Field Placement

At the end of the field placement, the student is to complete an evaluation of the field placement experience and submit it to the Field Director. The evaluation will be used to assess the agency's effectiveness in meeting Program goals for the placement.

Field Instructor MSW Program Evaluation

At the end of the field placement, the field instructor is to complete an evaluation of the MSW Program experience and submit it to the Field Director. The evaluation will be used to assess the effectiveness in meeting Program goals.

All field placement forms are available on the *Master of Social Work Orientation and Resources* Canvas site and/or EXAAT for review and submission. If you have any questions regarding the forms, please contact the Field Director.

Additional Field Information

Required Clearances

The student who pursues an MSW degree at Messiah University does so with the understanding that agency-based clearances may be needed. Failure to comply with submitting agency-based clearances may prohibit progression in the Program. Some agencies may also require medical testing, vaccines, or drug screening prior to beginning placement. All background check procedures and associated costs will be the responsibility of the student. Transportation to and from clearance sites will be the responsibility of the student.

Criminal Record

The Messiah University MSW Program cannot guarantee placements for students who have been convicted of misdemeanors and/or felonies or are unable to pass Child Abuse History and/or Criminal Background checks. The Program also cannot guarantee placements for students unable to pass health or drug and alcohol screenings. A positive Criminal Record (Federal and/or State), and or positive Child Abuse History may result in any of the following: limitation of potential field placements, delay in placement, inability to obtain a field placement, dismissal from placement. A positive criminal finding will be considered to the extent to which it relates to the student's suitability for placement. Please note that clearances are agency-based, and the student along with the field director will work collaboratively to assist in field placement.

Communication and Disclosure

Students in the MSW Program recognize that a component of field participation requires allowing the Program to communicate with agencies related to placements. Students should complete a FERPA release. However, a lack of FERPA release on file will not preclude the Program from communicating with field organizations regarding a student's status.

Instructions for Completion of Clearances

Students must work collaboratively with field placements to identify and complete the agency-based clearances needed to complete their field placements.

Disclaimer

If the student completes the MSW Program at Messiah University and obtains an MSW degree, the student will be eligible for licensure or credentialing by a governing body or will be eligible to work for a particular employer. Licensure and credentialing authorities and employers apply their own standards for evaluating whether criminal convictions are disqualifying based on state laws and facility-specific regulations. Messiah University and the MSW Program accept no liability in cases where a third party deems criminal convictions sufficiently serious to cause denial of the applicable license or credential, or to refuse employment opportunities.

Transportation

It will be the student's responsibility in placement to arrange transportation to and from placement. Additionally, some placements may require travel when at the job site. Make transportation arrangements for your placements before the academic year starts.

Insurance

The University provides liability insurance for students involved in a practicum. It is your responsibility to determine if the coverage is adequate, or if you wish to purchase additional coverage. All Messiah students, staff, and faculty who need a certificate of professional liability insurance for an internship, field experience, and/or practicum; or a certificate of liability insurance for a business transaction or facility use, must complete a [Request for Certificate of Insurance Form](http://www.messiah.edu/Operations) which can be found online at: www.messiah.edu/Operations

Agency Checklist

MSW Checklist

Preparing for your MSW Intern

Thank you for your willingness to host the next generation of MSWs! To prepare you for your intern's placement, we wanted to provide you with a reminder of your responsibilities as well as a checklist to help you be completely prepared for placement.

Field Instructors are responsible for:

- Providing one hour of individual supervision per week with the intern
- Reviewing and assessing one written process recording from the intern biweekly (micro, mezzo, and macro process recordings are available in EXAAT)
- Assessing and confirming the intern's hours in the online system, EXXAT.
- Collaborating with the intern and Field Liaison to complete a Virtual Site Visit, Student Learning Contract, and Mid/Final Evaluations
- Communicating with the Field Liaison, Task Supervisor (if applicable), and intern to discuss any issues that arise during agency placement.
- Participating in Field Instruction Orientation, if not already completed and confirmed by the Field Placement team (information provided by the field department post agency start date)
- Should the student fall out of placement, provide documentation of events, and participate in the performance review with members of Messiah University faculty.

In preparing for your MSW Intern you have:

- Connected intern with contacts to complete the onboarding/clearance process.
- Planned with intern start date and anticipated weekly schedule (approx. 13-16 hours per week)
- Scheduled orientation and prepared orientation materials (if applicable)
- Reviewed your calendar to plan for 60 minutes of individual supervision with the intern weekly and to review process recordings (mandatory)
- Spoken with colleagues to arrange for coverage should you not be available to the intern (coordinated with Task Supervisor if working with one)
- Identified a workspace for the intern (if appropriate)
- Planned for tasks to get the intern started (appropriate to intern's year of study)
- Completed EXAAT registration - Information to be provided after the intern's start date.
- Set aside time to attend Messiah's Field Instructor Orientation (highly recommended) - Field Instructor Orientation which takes place in August
- Reviewed the field calendar and made notes of important dates - Information to be provided after the intern's start date.
- RSVP'd to the Virtual Field Instructor Orientation, (**If assistance is needed, please contact the MSW Field Placement Department at zrrichardson@messiah.edu)