

**SCHOOL  
OF  
SOCIAL WORK  
BSW FIELD WORK PROGRAM**



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**EXCERPT FROM THE  
BSW FIELD WORK READINESS  
HANDBOOK**

**2003-2004**

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## BSW FIELD WORK: WHAT IS IT?

After completing the bulk of their theoretical study, BSW students receive practical social work experience through the Field Work component of the curriculum. Students must successfully complete a minimum of 425 hours of work in a professional setting under the supervision of a qualified social work practitioner. Field Work is required of all students graduating from the School including those transferring from other programs. Terms of the CSWE accreditation prohibit the School from awarding Field Work credit for previous life experience, or previous professional experience, or for field instruction completed at another college or university. This is normally an unpaid internship, however, occasional exceptions are made with faculty approval for paid placements.

Students normally complete their Field Work during the senior year, two days per week (concurrent with course work), September through April. In order to accommodate individual student programs, placements beginning in January and extending into the summer, are also possible with faculty approval. Such an exception to the standard Field Work placement is also dependent on the availability of a special placement and of faculty who are able to meet the schedule exception.

Although satisfactory completion of Field Work is a requirement for graduation from the BSW program, placement in the field is not automatic. Each student must complete requirements established as prerequisites for Field, must make application for placement as detailed in this Handbook, and must be judged by faculty to be ready to assume the professional responsibilities involved in doing Field Work. Assignment to a particular field agency is also a faculty decision. However, the application process which students follow involves their searching out and expressing preferences about agencies to which they would like to be assigned. These preferences weigh heavily among the several considerations, which the faculty take into account in making assignments. Ultimately, a student's participation in an agency is a privilege granted by that agency. Students are not paid for their services except in rare instances in which an arrangement, made with faculty approval, was negotiated prior to the placement.

Throughout the period of Field Work, each student also attends a small weekly Field Work seminar. These seminars serve as a peer support group, as well as an opportunity to process field experiences and promote the integration of learning from the field with theory learned in the classroom. Weekly Field Work seminars are one and one-quarter hour in length. (Block students meet for two hours.)

Both Field Work and Field Work Seminar are credit courses for which the student earns a letter grade. A total of ten credit hours are awarded for Field Work and two credit hours for Field Work Seminar. In the normal two semesters' placement these are divided evenly, five and one credit hours each semester.

## THE FIELD WORK CALENDAR

Students normally complete the Field Work component of their programs during the senior year, two days per week, September through April. In order to accommodate individual student programs, placements beginning in January and extending into the summer may be arranged with faculty approval. Block placements (4 days per week for one semester) have been approved by faculty under extraordinary circumstances; however, during the 2001-2002 academic year, faculty will be considering a proposal to eliminate the block option altogether.

The calendar for Field Work is based on that followed by the agency rather than the academic calendar. This means that students doing concurrent placements (two days per week) beginning in September must plan to work during semester break. These students are allowed six days vacation during the course of their Field Work experience. (Four days are usually taken sometime during the Christmas holiday period and two days during the spring vacation.) However, students must observe the "days off" of the particular agency in which they are placed. For example, those placed in school settings must observe the School's vacation periods in December, February, and April; and hence, DO NOT get any additional days of vacation. Students may also find this to be the case with religiously affiliated agencies. Students are permitted a reasonable number of sick days; however, absences of more than several days should be discussed with his/her faculty advisor. Under no circumstances may a student complete Field Work with fewer than the required minimum 425 hours.

In the case of students doing concurrent placements beginning in January (or block placements), the time pressures for fulfilling the required minimum 425 hours are somewhat greater. Consequently, no provision for vacation days is possible for these students and even sick days may need to be made up.

### A SAMPLING OF BSW FIELD WORK AGENCIES USED IN RECENT YEARS

AIDS Action, Boston, MA  
Beverly Hospital, Beverly, MA  
Boston Alzheimer Center, Jamaica Plain, MA  
Catholic Charities/North, Lynn and Salem, MA  
Center for Addictive Behaviors, Salem, MA  
Chelsea Housing Authority, Chelsea, MA  
Child Development Programs of Cape Ann, Inc., Gloucester, MA  
DARE Family Services, Roxbury, MA  
Essex County Community Corrections Center, Newburyport and Lawrence, MA  
Family Center of Somerville, MA  
Greater Lowell VNA Hospice, Lowell, MA  
Harbor Schools & Family Services, Newbury, MA  
Marblehead Public Schools (Bell School), Marblehead, MA  
Massachusetts Department of Social Services, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, and Salem, MA  
Morgan Memorial Employment and Rehabilitation Center, Salem, MA  
North Essex Mental Health Center, Newburyport, MA  
North Shore Community Action Program, Peabody, MA  
North Shore Community College, Danvers and Beverly, MA

North Shore Elder Services, Danvers MA  
Pioneer House, Salem, MA  
Revere Public Schools (Lincoln Elementary), Revere, MA  
Salem District Court, Probation Department, Salem, MA  
Salem Public Schools - Horace Mann Lab School, Salem, MA  
Solstice Adolescent Program, Rowley, MA (Health & Education Services, Inc., parent agency)  
Somerville District Court, Trial Division, Somerville, MA  
Sutton Hill Nursing & Retirement Center, North Andover, MA  
Wellspring House, Gloucester, MA

### REQUIREMENTS FOR FIELD WORK READINESS

A formal application process is required for students wishing to enter Field Work. Students who wish to be assigned to placement must demonstrate their readiness for undertaking Field Work through fulfillment of both academic and non-academic criteria.

#### Academic Requirements

Students in the BSW Program are required to take five social service courses prior to beginning Field Work. These are Introduction to Social Welfare, Social Service Volunteer Practicum, Generalist Practice I, Generalist Practice II, and a fifth social service course (preferably Race, Class and Ethnicity) taken at Salem State College. Grades of at least a “C-” are required in these major courses. The student must achieve a cumulative grade point average of at least “B-” in these five social work courses prior to being considered for a Field Work agency assignment. At the end of his/her Field Work experience, the student may have no more than 15 credits to complete his/her degree.

#### Non-Academic Requirements

In addition to the academic requirements and standards that must be maintained prior to field placement, the student must meet additional, non-academic standards established by the faculty. As the College Catalogue states, a “student’s readiness for assignment to a Field Work agency will be assessed by his/her level of maturity and responsibility and his/her commitment to the field of social work as ascertained in consultation with his/her departmental advisor”.

##### A. Maturity and Responsibility

The Social Work faculty assesses the student’s maturity and responsibility through interactions with the student in the classroom, during the advising process, and through observations of the student’s willingness and ability to follow through on assignments and procedures involved in applying for Field Work. Throughout the first three years of the program, students are expected to complete all course requirements in a prompt and thorough fashion. The student’s relationship to the volunteer agency in the Social Service Volunteer Practicum is also assessed. Students are expected to initiate and keep periodic appointments with their faculty advisors and these appointments will be used to assess the student’s increasing preparedness for Field Work, as well as for academic advising purposes. Students should expect to receive ongoing feedback from their faculty advisors regarding their readiness for Field Work.

The Program recognizes that maturity is not a static or precisely defined entity, but it requires a baseline of emotional or mental health. We maintain that students who are going to interact forcefully in other people's lives must function on at least a level that they are not harmful to the clients. More specifically, students must be able to recognize their own issues as their issues and not the client's, and to be able to keep their own issues separate from their professional interventions. Students must be able to have at least enough control, emotionally and behaviorally, that they are able to listen adequately, assess correctly, and intervene appropriately.

The faculty recognizes that each of us has areas of strength and vulnerability and is continually growing and maturing. The faculty further recognizes that vulnerability in certain areas does not preclude the ability to perform adequately in a professional capacity.

Students who are undergoing personal stress are urged to pursue counseling or psychotherapy. Such participation in counseling will not be held against the student in considering his/her readiness for Field Work. In certain circumstances, participation in counseling may be held as a prerequisite for (or accompaniment to) Field Work.

#### B. Commitment to the Field of Social Work

The Social Work faculty assesses the student's commitment to the field of social work primarily by evaluation of the student's understanding and willingness to be guided by the values of the social work profession: respect for the unique worth of all clients, and their consequent rights to dignity and self-determination. Acknowledging that American culture inculcates prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behavior (racism, sexism, ageism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, etc.) that are inimical to the values of the social work profession, the program offers throughout its curriculum opportunities for students to become aware of their values and attitudes that are inimical to the social work profession. The program does not contend that these can be eliminated within three years, but rather maintains that students must demonstrate an awareness of their contradiction to social work values and a willingness or openness to making their behavior consistent with professional ethical standards. The faculty must feel confident that a student's attitudes and values will not interfere with the student's work with clients in such a way as to jeopardize their clients' rights.

#### STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY TO OBTAIN PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY INSURANCE

All students entering Field Work must be covered by professional liability (malpractice) insurance. Although some placement agencies carry such insurance covering both staff and interns, most do not. Consequently, it is required of students to purchase their own coverage. This insurance may be obtained at a reasonable cost through NASW's agent, the American Professional Agency, Inc.. However, it is first necessary for students to have obtained a student membership in NASW in order to be eligible for this group insurance plan. This process can involve a period of several weeks. Therefore, we recommend that you make joining NASW a part of your Field Work application process in order to avoid delays later in processing your insurance application and apply for insurance coverage a few weeks before beginning placement.

Application forms for both NASW membership and the insurance can be found in Appendix A of this Handbook or may be obtained in the Field Office. During the first month of placement, students must turn in a photocopy of their liability insurance coverage or they will not be allowed to continue in field placement.

We work from the assumption that whatever problems arise during a field placement, can be worked out through unified efforts of the student, the field instructor, and the faculty liaison. On rare occasions, circumstances or problems develop within a student's placement that are sufficiently intractable that a change of agency assignment is necessary. Such a decision and the choice of another placement site are the responsibility of the faculty liaison in consultation with the student, the field instructor, and the BSW Field Work Coordinator.

Even more rarely a student withdraws from, is asked to withdraw from, or fails Field Work. In that event, s/he may apply to be admitted to Field Work again at a later date, however, students must be aware that they are not guaranteed readmission to Field Work. Students must repeat the application process in full. The new application will be reviewed by faculty with particular attention to the preparedness of the student to address and correct the problem(s) that were at issue in the initial field placement.

#### AVENUES OF APPEAL

Appeals of faculty decisions regarding field placement should first be discussed with the student's faculty advisor. Student may also request a conference with the BSW Field Work Coordinator. Further avenues of appeal are consistent with those for the program in general, which are explained in detail in the Student Handbook. This includes automatic referral to the Student Progression Committee of any situation in which faculty believes a request for field placement should be rejected.

#### PROCEDURE FOR OBTAINING A FIELD WORK PLACEMENT

Students are expected to plan ahead for Field Work. As soon as you have a tentative idea of what semester you expect to be ready for Field Work, you should file a "Notice of Intent to Enter Field

Work” form with the field secretary, Cindy Girouard. In the event that your plans change, file a new “Intent” form.

During the semester prior to that in which you hope to begin Field Work, you will need to complete the Field Work readiness process. This process includes conferences with your academic advisor, attendance at readiness meetings scheduled by the BSW Field Work Coordinator, and completion of an application packet. At the beginning of each semester a Field Work Readiness Calendar outlining the schedule for this process is posted and distributed to students who have filed “Intent” forms for the following semester.

To request a Field Work placement you are expected to complete the following tasks:

1. Conference with your faculty advisor (a) early in the semester to establish that you will be academically eligible for field placement, (b) to include registration for Field Work in your preregistration conference, and (c) to submit to him/her your completed application packet and discuss your preferences.
2. Read carefully this Field Work Readiness Handbook.
3. Attend the Field Work Readiness meetings scheduled by the BSW Field Work Coordinator. This should, if possible, include the Agency Day that is scheduled once a year—in spring semester.
4. Prepare a resume describing your past education, employment or volunteer experiences.
5. Visit and interview at three or more possible placement agencies. (Start early as this always takes longer than expected.)
6. Prepare your Field Work Application Packet including:
  - a. A completed “Request for Field Work Placement” form (included in this Handbook.)
  - b. A personal assessment of your own readiness for field placement.
  - c. A copy of your resume.
  - d. One written recommendation from someone familiar with your character and work habits. (Not a SSC faculty member.)
  - e. A summary of the agencies that you visited indicating your preferences. Please include names and telephone number of contact persons.

Procedure for Obtaining a Field Work Placement (Continued)

- f. A separate “special request” statement if you have unique circumstances to be taken into account. For example, all concurrent students will be assigned to an 11:00 a.m. seminar on either Wednesday or Friday. If

you need to be assigned to one or the other of these days, you must include a special request to that effect in your packet.

7. Submit your packet to your faculty advisor by the due date stated on the Field Work Readiness Calendar.

The faculty attempts to respond flexibly to the circumstances of individual students, however, any deviation from normal application procedures must be thoroughly discussed with your advisor, and any special request to the faculty must be made in writing including full explanation and justification.

#### RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS BEGINNING THE SEARCH FOR A FIELD WORK AGENCY

1. The BSW Field Work Coordinator is regularly available to discuss concerns and suggest agencies to visit (see Readiness Calendar and her conference schedule for times.)
2. Current or previous lists of students and their placement agencies in Social Work Office.
3. BSW Agency Requests for Field Students (see blue books in Social Work Office.)

.....include agency information forms for possible field placements and contact persons/field instructors for each agency. These have collected over the years so personnel may have changed but agencies may still be interested in having interns.

4. Student Evaluation Forms (see black book in Social Work Office.)

.....Field Work agencies as evaluated by students who have done their Field Work in the past.

5. Your faculty advisor is the first person with whom you should discuss your Field Work plans. Other faculty may have knowledge of a particular type of agency or of agencies in a particular geographical area—you should feel free to ask their advice.
6. Members of the faculty have expertise in different practice areas and with different client populations. As you consider a particular placement interest, you may want to seek out a faculty person with experience in that area as someone with whom to discuss your interest.
7. Students currently in field placements are usually very willing to discuss their field experience. You can often make contact with these students through START. START also schedules one meeting each semester specifically to assist students who are engaged in the Field Work readiness process.

#### LOCATING A NEW PLACEMENT AGENCY

Over the years our list of agencies in which students have been placed for Field Work has grown—partly as a result of students finding new agencies of special interest to them. Whether the student will be placed in such an agency is the decision of the faculty, however, we will be glad to explore the student's request.

The School welcomes student creativity in identifying potential placements in non-traditional settings, so long as qualified social work field instruction is available. On occasion, such agencies have gladly extended themselves in order to obtain the services of an MSW field instructor from some other agency in the community.

A request for placement in a new agency involves the following steps:

- a. The student must submit, along with their regular Field Work application materials, sufficient information about the new agency's program to acquaint faculty with its possibilities. In addition, the student must provide the name and telephone number of the appropriate person for us to contact at the agency.
- b. Faculty will consider this information in making their decision about a placement assignment for the student. If the new agency appears to be appropriate for the student's placement, they will make a tentative assignment, pending –
- c. a visit to the agency by a faculty member to assess the appropriateness of the placement. Only then will the final decision be made.

When a student is dealing with a new prospective placement agency, s/he needs to give that agency some basic information about our program and our expectations for Field Work. Copies of the materials included in Appendix B of the Handbook should be given to the agency representative with whom the student speaks. The agency person is welcome to call the Field Work Coordinator for additional information.

Faculty Advisor \_\_\_\_\_

REQUEST FOR FIELD WORK PLACEMENT

Please Note: This form summarizes your request, details of which may be included in the other pieces of your application packet.

I. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Permanent Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. \_\_\_\_\_

Summer Mailing Address (if different):

\_\_\_\_\_ Tel. \_\_\_\_\_

Residence During the School Year:

\_\_\_\_\_ Tel. \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Grades in Social Work Required Courses:

Date Entered Major: \_\_\_\_\_

Intro. to Social Welfare	_____
SSVP	_____
Generalist Practice I	_____
Generalist Practice II	_____
Race, Class & Ethnicity	_____
Average	_____

Salem State College Grade Point Average: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Expected for Graduation: \_\_\_\_\_

II. What particular skills or interests do you have which might contribute to your Field Work?

III. Employment experience (include summer and part-time jobs):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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IV. Social service experience (include volunteer, SSVP, and paid work):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

V. What are your career plans after graduation?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- VI. What is your style of learning?  
(Are you a self-starter?  
Do you need lots of structure?)
- VII: Will you have a car available for placement?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
- VIII. What communities do you prefer for placement?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- IX. What type of agency or kind of population do you prefer for placement?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- X. How do you assess your readiness for Field Work?  
(Please read carefully the material entitled, “Academic and Non-Academic Criteria for Field Work.” Write and attach a brief statement using the “Self-Assessment Guide” on the following page.)
- XI. Attachments:  
Readiness Self-Assessment  
Resume  
One reference from someone familiar with your work habits and character  
(not SSC faculty)  
Summary of agencies visited, contact persons and your preferences  
“Special request” statement, if appropriate

SELF-ASSESSMENT GUIDE

One of the purposes of this manual is to present you with an overview of issues involved in doing Field Work and of the different Field Work settings so that you can begin to formulate your own ideas concerning placement. We encourage you to examine your readiness for this particular learning experience by a self-assessment of “where you are.” Listed below are several factors that, hopefully, you will consider in this self-assessment in relation to your choice of placement.

1. Strengths

What particular skills do you feel you have? Try to identify your own resources. Do you know how to utilize your own resources? In what areas do you have a good knowledge base?

## 2. Limitations

What skills do you feel you are lacking? In what areas of knowledge do you feel you are somewhat lacking? Have you identified some of your own resources but have not developed them at this point to a level that you would consider to be an area of strength?

## 3. Past Experience

Consider your volunteer and paid experiences. Would you like to pursue any of these past experiences or go on to something new?

## 4. Interests

What is the range of interests in the field of social service you have? Identify your areas of interest and ask questions about them.

## 5. Challenge

Do you customarily seek out new experiences or are you more inclined to deepen your abilities in known areas? How readily do you take risks?

## 6. Style

What is your style in a learning situation? Are you a self-starter or do you rely on direction from others or the structure of your environment?

Please consider these factors carefully in coming to conclusions about the type of agency in which you would like to do your Field Work.

## THE EDUCATIONAL TEAM

The student, the faculty liaison, and the field instructor comprise the educational team. Each has certain roles and responsibilities in the process of working together toward providing a successful Field Work experience. These roles and responsibilities are summarized in the sections that follow.

### The Student

Field Work provides opportunity for a student to learn while also providing valuable service to clients and to her/his placement agency. In so doing the student is responsible to employ professional ethics and the highest level of professional skill of which s/he is capable in doing her/his work. The

student is called upon to demonstrate initiative and responsibility in developing and pursuing professional educational objectives throughout the placement.

In addition, students are expected to become familiar with the philosophy and objective of the agency and to become involved in the ongoing operation of the agency according to the mutual understanding between the field instructor, the student, and the faculty advisor. Student participation in an agency is a privilege granted by the good will of the agency.

Agencies establish such policies as working hours, procedure in the event of illness, and general routine directives. Students who do not meet these professional standards of the agency, the standards of our program or the ethical standards of the social work profession will be withdrawn from placement.

#### The Faculty Liaison/Advisor

While in Field Work placement each student is assigned to a faculty member who serves both as liaison to the field agency and faculty advisor to the student until the student's graduation. The faculty liaison's function with the student is to provide guidance, support, general information relevant to Field Work placement and to assist the student in pursuit of her/his learning goals. Further, this faculty member works with the Field Work student to help her/him employ academic knowledge and personal skill in a professional setting. The faculty liaison/advisor also serves as convener of the student's Field Work seminar and is responsible for determining the student's grades for both Field Work and Field Work Seminar.

It is valuable to view the Field Work student, the field instructor and the faculty advisor/liaison as a team that works together to ensure a productive field experience for the student. Within this learning team, the faculty person serves as a coordinator to facilitate the student's progress. S/he is also responsible for making changes of placement or withdrawing a student from placement should that become necessary.

#### The Agency Field Instructor

The agency field instructors are an integral part of our School's BSW program, and, therefore, should provide a helpful and positive experience for the student:

- o by involving the student in meaningful agency experiences;
- o by determining in conjunction with the student, appropriate assignments or case load for the student;
- o by instructing the student as to the goals, scope, and operation of the agency as part of the student's orientation to the agency;

- o by holding weekly conferences with the student;
- o by discussing and evaluating student reports, assessment documents, and process recording;
- o by participating in regular conferences with the faculty liaison;
- o by participating in Field Instructors' Meetings and Workshops at the School;
- o by providing an ongoing evaluation of the student's progress, and completing formal Field Work evaluations; and
- o by making efforts to establish a close relationship with the Field Work student within which the student can benefit from the field instructor's professional skills, attitudes, and experiences.

#### TYPES OF SETTINGS FOR FIELD PLACEMENT

The following summaries do not encompass all field placement possibilities, but give some sense of the diverse settings in which students may be placed.

##### Family and Child Welfare

Family and child welfare services are those aimed at promoting the physical, emotional and social well-being of families and children. The primary focus of the services is to enhance parents' capacities to provide adequately for their families in these respects. Therefore, family and child welfare social workers need to develop skills in and feel comfortable in working with adults, as well as with children.

The range of social work activities required for this work includes: helping families to find and make the best use of resources such as financial assistance, homemakers, day care, recreational, educational and a variety of other concrete services. Workers must also provide, or refer to agencies which will provide, counseling relative to concerns such as marital problems, parent-child relationship problems, parenting needs, childrens' behavior problems, etc.. Another feature of family and child welfare social work is that of advocacy and efforts to bring about changes in policies or programs that could benefit families and children.

There are family and child welfare agencies in both the public and private sectors. Some of the agencies offer services in one specific area, such as family preservation or foster care, while others offer a range of services, e.g. foster care, adoption, family preservation, day care, protective services, group homes, etc.. Consequently, clients served by family and child social workers may be children living with their biological families or with a substitute family (foster or adoptive), in group homes or in child welfare institutions.

### Community Organizing and Planning

Although a Generalist approach to social work incorporates attention to community issues into work in every setting, in some settings community work is the primary professional mission. Starting from an understanding that many of the social problems encountered by individuals and families have their genesis in malfunctioning community environment, the work of these agencies is directed toward the amelioration of these systemic problems. Much of this work can be viewed as preventive in nature--creating an environment in which fewer obstacles to healthy functioning exist for the members of that community.

The community social worker must be familiar with the populations that make up a community, with the economic, social and political influences affecting community life and the power dynamics operating within it. Consequently, it is also essential that the worker have a good understanding of matters of public policy.

Ultimately, the measure of a good community social worker is her/his ability to catalyze needed social change. Therefore, as a field placement setting, a community agency provides especially good opportunities to develop skills in cause advocacy, researching and designing change strategies, community education and empowerment, and the variety of skills necessary to facilitate and communicate with groups.

### Public Schools

Students placed in public schools may work with elementary, junior high or senior high school students. Their work may be associated with that of school social workers, school adjustment counselors, guidance counselors, or they are sometimes attached to the Special Education units in the schools. In every case, they must work closely with teachers, and this cross-disciplinary cooperation provides an important dimension of the learning experience.

Students may be referred for social work attention by teachers, principals, parents, or they may be self-referred. Often behavior in the classroom, e.g. hyperactivity, acting out, underachievement, being socially withdrawn, prompts the referral. Other referrals are based on observations that lead someone to fear that a child is being abused, neglected, may be using drugs or involved in some other self-destructive activities. Work with the children involves helping them to understand problems and find alternative, more effective ways of dealing with them. Both individual and group modalities are widely

used, and with children in primary grades, play therapy is common. Regardless of the age of child involved, the development of trust is essential, and social work students must learn to deal effectively with the variety of ways in which children test the helping relationship. Listening, support, and advocacy skills are all very important.

Services often involve home visits and work with parents relative to their child's problems. At the junior high and high school level, pregnancy, substance abuse or delinquent activities may necessitate working with a variety of collateral agencies such as the courts, medical or other treatment facilities in the community.

### Medical Clinics and Hospitals

As host settings for social workers, medical institutions necessitate that students learn to work effectively with professionals from a variety of other disciplines. Such multi-disciplinary environments provide a particularly rich educational atmosphere for students, but also challenge a student to be able to communicate convincingly her/his own professional judgement to these other professionals. The clients in these situations may be seen in the context of either inpatient or outpatient treatment for illness or injury—often under circumstances of crisis. Helping professionals and interns in medical settings must become well informed about and proficient in dealing with the challenges of managed care while also maintaining high professional standards of service.

Often in the course of providing medical care, child abuse, battering, substance abuse or other serious problems are discovered and require social work attention. In addition, there are clients needing help to negotiate the stresses related to developmental life stages such as birth and death. Dealing with people in such stressful situations requires flexibility and an ability to engage with clients and assess their needs quickly. The social worker must be prepared to relate empathetically to clients during some of the most profoundly emotional moments of their lives—times of acute fear, loss and grief. The student must develop skills in crisis intervention, learning to remain calmly supportive, while also working quickly and efficiently. In addition to providing appropriate support to patients and their families, the student helps with concrete services such as referrals to appropriate community agencies, discharge planning and often serving as a liaison between home and the medical facility.

### Medical Clinics and Hospitals (Continued)

Although medical settings offer opportunities to work with all aged individuals and their families, the elderly constitute a particularly large proportion of the population served.

As is generally recognized, the health care system is in crisis and desperately in need of change. It is particularly important, therefore, that social workers and students in medical settings be actively involved in matters of health care policy.

### Mental Health

Agencies dealing with mental health problems of clients may be either long-term or short-term inpatient settings dealing with acute mental disorders or outpatient settings providing counseling and guidance to a less disturbed population. Inpatient settings exist in both state and private hospitals, these generally offer opportunities to work with patients individually, in therapeutic groups and in the context

of institutional life—activity and milieu therapy. In addition, discharge planning and preparation of patients to return to community life are an important focus of social work attention.

Outpatient clinical settings, transitional settings such as half-way group homes, therapeutic work units and various types of day programs also provide excellent educational opportunities for field students. In these attention is given to helping clients cope with the demands and stresses of community life, and to developing and improving interpersonal and other survival skills. Again, there is opportunity for the student to develop both individual and group therapeutic skills, and often to work with family units.

Either the inpatient or outpatient mental health settings may serve a particular age group—children, adolescents, adults or elderly. Uniquely positioned somewhere between the hospital and outpatient settings are residential schools for emotionally disturbed children or adolescents. All mental health settings are multi-disciplinary in nature and necessitate learning to blend social work roles and skills with those of staff from other helping professions in the service of clients. All mental health social workers also share the need to be active in the kinds of community and legislative work that would help eliminate obstacles to clients' healthy functioning in the community.

### Developmental Disabilities

As with mental health settings, those programs that are addressed to the needs of developmentally disabled individuals may be either inpatient or outpatient, public or private. Consistent with the push for deinstitutionalization during recent years, there are a variety of programs in the community focused on helping clients develop the skills necessary to survive in the community as independent or semi-independent adults. Typical of these programs are group homes, day programs and therapeutic work units.

There are opportunities within the settings to work with developmentally disabled clients of all ages. Students placed in such settings develop skills in using individual, family and group modalities. There are also opportunities to develop advocacy skills and to be involved in community work aimed at creating a more supportive community environment in which these disadvantaged citizens will be allowed to lead productive lives.

### Substance Abuse

Working with addicted clients can take place in a variety of settings and utilize many social work roles. Hospitals, detox centers, halfway houses, and private or public agencies offer opportunities for social workers interested in working with addicted persons and their families. Counseling, group work, and community organization skills may be needed.

Clients usually present additional needs beyond the addiction itself. Medical, emotional, social, vocational and marital concerns often must be addressed and resolved. Learning to make referrals and using the broad network of social services are fundamental tasks in this field.

Increasingly, clients served in these settings are poly-drug users and/or dual-diagnosed, e.g., having a psychiatric problem in addition to their addiction. Both of these factors greatly complicate their treatment. Addicted clients are often highly resistant to therapy. They are skilled in making up excuses, alibis and “conning” the helping professional. The social worker must learn how to see through their manipulations, confront them with reality and also support their strengths in order to assist them in

achieving a drug-free or alcohol-free life. Knowledge of alcohol or other specific drug addictions is important.

### Corrections

Working with the juvenile offender differs from working with adults. Because the juvenile is seen as a “delinquent”, s/he is generally exempted from the penalties applied to adult offenders.

The emphasis in working with juveniles is rehabilitation. As the juvenile is viewed as being under the major influences of parents, peers and school, programs of help are often structured around these areas. Skills such as listening, supporting, limit setting and companionship are especially important in working with juveniles. Familiarity with theory regarding the developmental problems often associated with adolescence, as well as issues such as drug use and family violence are also important.

Working with the adult offender involves a dual-focus-to ascertain that rulings of the court are being carried out, and to assist in her/his rehabilitation. Consequently, the student worker is pushed to confront very directly the power issues involved in her/his role, as well as the associated problems in building a trusting relationship with clients. When the offender is incarcerated, the kinds of activities that might be employed in the helping process may be quite limited, necessitating flexibility and creativity on the part of the student.

In working with all offenders and ex-offenders a sense of openness and a non-judgemental attitude is essential. Also, because judgement of offenders is so harsh in the community, involvement in community education and development of community resources for ex-offenders is an important focus of social work attention.

### Adolescents

Agencies specifically with an adolescent client population often fall under other headings, e.g. schools, family and child welfare settings or drug and alcohol programs or residential programs. Such state agencies as Department of Social Services or Department of Youth Services may have purchase-of-service contracts with vendor agencies to provide a variety of services to DYS or CHINS clients. Responsibilities often include developing long-term relationships with the adolescents (many of whom have substantial problems with trust), developing and overseeing job opportunities for them, working with foster families, participating in group recreational activities, and advocating for the adolescent with family, school, court or other outside agencies.

Working with juveniles might include spending a lot of “hanging out” time with her/him to build a trusting relationship and to provide a role model for the youngster. Working with juveniles might also include working with parents and referrals to other agencies such as marital counseling, individual long-term counseling, Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-anon, financial and medical resources, etc..

Adolescents are often a particularly difficult group to work with because of the amount of change and turmoil they are going through negotiating this life stage. Students may find that while they can readily identify with adolescents and their problems, they are too close to this life stage to be completely comfortable, and have difficulty separating themselves from the clients or maintaining the necessary professional distance.

### Elderly Settings

The elderly settings which we use for field placements are particularly valuable in providing students with broad practice experience. For example, in a Council on Aging or Senior Citizens Center the student assists elderly clients to cope with a full range of problems. Financial and other environmental problems, interpersonal and reactive emotional problems must be dealt with, sometimes on a crisis basis, and always complicated by the disadvantaged status imposed upon elderly members of our youth-oriented society. In a nursing home or chronic care hospital, clients may have any of the same problems, but with concerns about illness and institutionalization requiring attention as well. These institutional settings are also valuable in presenting opportunity for the student to work as a member of a medical team--itself a stimulating and educational experience.

Any of these settings is likely to offer both individual and group intervention experience. Work with families is particularly likely in the institutional settings. Finally, as there is a desperate need for issues affecting elderly people to be addressed on community and legislative levels, application of community organization skills and policy practice skills are important for social workers working with, and on behalf of, the elderly population.

### Settlement House and Community Center Settings

Services in settlement houses and community centers are usually advertised as recreational or activity oriented, but efforts are made to develop programs which will enhance personal growth for individuals of all ages. For younger children and adolescents, socialization, opportunities for relating with peers, and general support are hoped for results of the group process. For young adults and senior adults, problem solving and opportunities to diminish their social isolation are likely to be the goals.

The groups that are conducted in these settings tend not to be therapy groups in the traditional sense; rather, they are often considered social groups because the intent is to work with the whole person. In these activities might include arts and crafts, sports, cooking, drama, dance and other recreational foci, but also allow members to develop important life skills. More explicitly educational, support, or mutual aid groups may also be conducted in these settings with groups such as parents of children in day care, adolescents with parents who have alcoholic problems, adolescents who have drinking or drugging problems themselves, support services for recently widowed individuals, etc..

In settlement houses and community centers, community needs assessment is usually an on-going process. Priority is given to flexible program planning in order to respond to the changes in the community. Innovation and initiative on the part of workers and students are often valued.

### Multi-Service Agencies

As the name implies, multi-service agencies offer a wide variety of professional services such as: individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, services to single parents, day care, alternative educational programs, family life education, services to the elderly, social and recreational programs, specialized training programs, organization of community task forces for particular problems, and consultation to other agencies or organizations. Consequently, there are usually opportunities for field students to develop a wide range of skills through involvement in a variety of agency activities. These agencies are often very responsive to the changing needs of a community and able, therefore, to encourage workers'/students' initiative to develop new programs.

### Miscellaneous

The provision of services to clients can be provided at any number of agencies which defy classification. Some of the more common of these include homeless shelters and women's centers, but over the years we have also placed students in churches, legal aid settings, and legislators' offices. Students at such agencies, which do not necessarily see themselves primarily as social service agencies, may have excellent opportunities to practice interviewing and problem solving skills, working within the broad social service network, and, in general, to apply the full range of social work methodology and practice skills to their work with clients. There is often substantial leeway to create learning opportunities that encompass individual, group, and community modalities.