

SECURING AND TERMINATING FIELD PLACEMENTS

School of Social Work, McMaster University

Securing a Placement

The School of Social Work recruits and approves field placements. A procedure is established whereby the student identifies her/his learning objectives and selects placements of interest. The faculty field coordinator reviews placement requests and, in consultation with other faculty, the student and/or field instructors, assigns the student to a potential placement. The student is responsible for arranging and attending an interview with a field instructor from the placement. The purpose of the interview is to assess whether there is match between the students learning objectives, learning style and field instructor/agency learning opportunities and teaching style. Only after the student, field instructor and faculty field coordinator or seminar leader approves the match, is the placement considered secure. The student is expected to remain in the placement until the required 390 hours have been completed and identified learning needs have been met.

Students may not search for their own placement unless approved by the faculty field coordinator.

The School's obligation to students in relation to field placements is to make a reasonable attempt to secure a placement. Subsequent to two unsuccessful attempts to secure a field placement and informal discussions between the student and the seminar leader and/or the faculty field coordinator, the student and/or the seminar leader and/or the faculty field co-coordinator may request, in writing, to the Director, the formation of a "Consultation and Review Committee". The function of this committee is to provide advice to the student and seminar leader about what additional steps might be taken to resolve the placement difficulty for the student. Should these steps fail, the school is not obliged to find a placement for the student

Problems during Placement

If the nature of the problem relates to sexual harassment of or discrimination against a student, please refer to the Sexual Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policies in this manual.

If the problem relates to serious unprofessional behaviour, please refer to the Professional Suitability Policy in this manual

Problems during placement can often be resolved informally. It is very important to address concerns as soon as they arise. Should a problem not be resolved through conversations between the student and the field instructor, the faculty seminar leader must be consulted. The seminar leader is ultimately responsible for placements for his/her group of students. At times, the faculty field coordinator is also involved in attempts to resolve the problem. When problems occur during the field placement that cannot be solved informally, the seminar leader, faculty field coordinator, field instructor or the student may take the problem to the Chair of the Undergraduate Studies Committee and/or the agency Director of Social Work for a meeting of relevant parties. If no solution is forthcoming from the group, the Director of the School of Social Work is notified and requested to form an ad hoc Placement in Difficulty Committee. This committee composed of the student, the field instructor, the seminar leader, the faculty field coordinator and the Chair of the Undergraduate Program and/or the Director of the School and other relevant participants will attempt to resolve the concern. Possible outcomes are:

1. The problem is resolved
2. The student remains in the placement with a specific and agreed upon plan to address the concerns
3. The placement is terminated and the school agrees to attempt to find another placement for the student. Please see the paragraph below related to replacements
4. The placement is terminated and the student withdraws from SW3D06/3DD6 or SW4D06/4DD6.
5. The student fails the placement.

Replacement of a Student

In exceptional circumstances, a seminar leader, a student and/or a field instructor may request that a student be replaced.

- The seminar leader and student or seminar leader and field instructor or a seminar leader alone must provide a written request to the faculty field coordinator outlining the reason for requesting a replacement. The written request must include a description of the student's learning objectives, an evaluation / assessment of the student's performance to date and a statement of the student's learning needs based on conversations related to the original placement
- There is an expectation that a field instructor and a student will discuss any concerns related to the placement before a replacement is requested. Students may not request a replacement until they have attended placement for twelve full days i.e. six weeks of a concurrent placement or three weeks of a block placement (exceptions include incidents of sexual harassment and/or discrimination)
- Before a new placement is confirmed, the student, new field instructor and seminar leader will meet to discuss student learning objectives, learning activities and evaluation processes. It is important to assess if the new placement can provide the learning opportunities, support and instruction necessary for the student's learning needs.
- If another placement is secured, it is expected that the student will need to complete additional placement hours in order to be properly oriented to the new placement and to meet learning objectives.

There is no guarantee that the School will be able to find a replacement and the request may result in the student withdrawing from SW3D06/3DD6 or SW4D06/4DD6

Termination of a Placement

Occasionally, a placement will be terminated without accessing a Placement in Difficulty Committee or a Review of a Student's Suitability for the Practice of Social Work. It should be noted by all concerned parties that the placement of a student in a field setting should not be seen to imply or form a contract of intent that the student necessarily will successfully fulfill the field placement requirements of Social Work 3DD6 or Social Work 4DD6. Placements may be terminated at the request of the field instructor, the faculty of the School, or the student. There is no obligation on the part of the School or its faculty to replace a student who is not successful in their field placement or whose placement is terminated.

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