

UMBC

Baccalaureate Social Work Program – Office of Field Education **Learning Agreement Instructions and Suggestions**

We encourage all of our field instructors to create assignments that are based on agency opportunities as well as students' interests, desires, and personal situations. We hope this list of suggestions inspires you to be creative as well as realistic. It is meant to give you ideas under each competency to help you review what others have done and envision what might be possible for your student/s at your agency. **Please create assignments so that they are measurable and specific to your agency/student/supervision circumstances.**

Some Steps to Consider:

1. When you begin the process, look at the opportunities that are available, the tasks that you perform in your job, and how your student may participate in agency activities.
2. Talk with the student in order to understand her/his interests and life experiences. How might these interests play a role in what you determine as assignments?
3. What are the student's strengths? How might these be expanded through the experiences you provide?
4. What areas in the student's experience are weak and how might you help her/him build skills and knowledge?

You can help your student/s become responsible for her/his own learning by involving her/him in this process of establishing assignments, reviewing progress weekly, giving feedback, and completing the evaluations each semester. The process starts here and you and your student can create a solid foundation upon which to build her/his learning. The Learning Agreement should be a "live document" that is used during each supervision session.

Competency #1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Assignments should involve: ethical decision making, understanding of professional development, professional roles and boundaries, and the use of supervision.

Field Practice Activities to Develop and Demonstrate Competency #1:

- Through process recordings and discussions in supervision, reflect on use of self and demonstrate an awareness of personal strengths and challenges.
- Meet attendance and timeliness expectations of field placement.
- Read policies and procedures, observe colleagues, attend meetings and talk with instructor to understand agency expectations regarding professional behavior.
- Reflect on how personal assumptions impact professional conduct and interactions with clients.
- Maintain attire and appearance in accordance with agency expectations, alter if necessary.
- Prepare a weekly supervision agenda and discussion questions and utilize supervision to review and reflect upon field assignments, to discuss strengths and areas for growth.
- Learn expectations regarding documentation and other required written communication and gain competency in using agency computer systems.
- Document interactions with clients, agency or community according to agency protocol and integrate field instructor feedback in order to ensure that documentation is clear, concise and contains an appropriate level of detail.
- When working with clients, colleagues and field instructor, practice communicating effectively and respectfully, both verbally and nonverbally. Seek feedback and assistance as needed from the field instructor and/or faculty field liaison.
- Modify social media accounts in ways that reinforce professional boundaries and discuss in supervision.
- Use process recordings and supervision to identify, explore and discuss ethical issues.
- Read agency policies related to confidentiality, mandatory reporting and duty to inform; discuss during supervision and follow ethical and legal standards for privacy and confidentiality in accordance with state, federal, agency and institutional standards.
- Discuss common ethical issues for the setting and how to handle them with the field instructor. Talk with colleagues about ethical dilemmas they have encountered and how they arrived at decisions.
- Ask field instructor about rules related to the use of personal and agency technology; discuss and abide by these guidelines.

Competency #2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

Assignments should include: opportunities to discover how a culture's structure may positively or negatively affect the creation or enhancement of privilege and power, to gain self-awareness and to understand the importance of difference when working with clients. Understanding how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience, recognizing the extent to which a culture's structures and values may oppress, marginalize or alienate clients.

Field Practice Activities to Develop and Demonstrate Competency #2:

- In process recordings and supervision, reflect upon communication style, values, cultural differences, transference issues, assumptions and biases, and identify ways they could impact interactions with clients.
- Increase awareness of oppression and learn about cultures, history, socioeconomics, and politics of clients by listening to their experiences and asking questions in order to more fully understand their lives; discuss the effects of oppression in supervision.
- Increase awareness of oppression and learn about the cultures, history, socioeconomics, and politics of clients by participating in relevant trainings and reading applicable articles.
- With field instructor guidance, initiate open discussions of client/worker differences during supervision sessions.
- Identify strengths in clients and reflect upon how to build on strengths in supervision. Be open to discussing personal biases.

Competency #3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice

Assignments should include: experience with oppression and discrimination, and opportunities for advocacy and practice with advancing human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice with clients.

Field Practice Activities to Develop and Demonstrate Competency #3:

- Identify relevant social justice issues and increase knowledge of them through research, readings, trainings, or other activities.
- Increase understanding of and reflect upon the impact of social, economic and environmental issues on clients through listening to clients, discussions in supervision, research, readings, trainings or other activities.
- Research current or impending legislation that will impact client systems served by practice site and discuss in supervision.
- Identify strategies to advocate for client access to resources (i.e., attending lobby day); implement one or more advocacy strategies and discuss in supervision.
- Assist clients who have restricted opportunities as a result of their circumstances (i.e., single mothers, homeless individuals) in understanding their rights and identifying new possibilities for themselves.
- Identify common economic barriers to care and discuss with your field instructor in supervision.
- Identify opportunities to incorporate environmental concerns in order to help improve the functioning individuals and communities.
- Develop advocacy skills for the promotion of environmental health and resilience of clients.
- Increase awareness of the need to understand the effects of the natural world on clients.

Competency #4: Engage In Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice

Assignments should include: opportunities to understand the role of research in the agency and its application to practice, and how practice informs research.

Field Practice Activities to Develop and Demonstrate Competency #4:

- Review scholarly research in order to identify best practices related to a specific client challenge.
- Discuss findings and consider strategies for intervening in supervision.
- Read a current research article on micro or macro intervention methods used in your agency and discuss strengths and weaknesses of those interventions with field instructor.
- Compile data for grant applications or other agency reports.
- In collaboration with colleagues, evaluate some aspect of agency programming or of client's experiences with the agency.

Competency #5: Engage in Policy Practice

Assignments should include: discussion of policy and its effect on service delivery, analysis of the policy change process in the agency, and the opportunity to explore policy change.

Field Practice Activities to Develop and Demonstrate Competency #5:

- Assess the differential impact of policies on various populations and discuss or present to field instructor and/or colleagues.
- Follow the implementation of a relevant policy initiative and present learning to field instructor and/or colleagues.
- Research a policy issue or relevant social work bill and present learnings/findings to field instructor and/or colleagues.
- Select a local, state, or federal policy and discuss its impact on client access to and utilization of agency services.

Competency #6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Assignments should include: opportunities to understand the importance of human relationships, learning strategies to engage diverse clients and understanding how students' personal experiences may impact their ability to effectively engage with diverse clients.

Field Practice Activities to Develop and Demonstrate Competency #6:

- Read client chart or records, make a list of questions that arise as a result of this reading and discuss in supervision.
- Learn how to appropriately introduce yourself to clients, staff and community members and practice doing so.
- Begin to establish rapport by reflecting content and reflecting feelings in client interactions.
- Engage with diverse clients by listening to their experiences and asking questions in order to more fully understand their lives.
- Organize a group of clients to discuss a common concern in their community and invite all interested parties to the community meeting.

Competency #7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Assignments should include: understanding that assessments are ongoing, recognize the implications of the larger context in the assessment process, and understanding how students' personal experience and reactions may affect their assessment and decision-making.

Field Practice Activities to Develop and Demonstrate Competency #7:

- Identify client/group/community strengths and needs and discuss with supervisor.
- Complete intakes/psychosocial evaluations/needs assessments and other paperwork according to agency protocols.
- Collect, organize and analyze client (including groups/communities) data to determine appropriate interventions.
- Complete a client genogram and/or eco map as part of a client assessment.
- Meet with community members to assess the scope of a concern and develop and carry out a needs assessment survey in the effected community.

Competency #8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Assignments should include: understanding that intervention is an ongoing component of the interactive process of practice, becoming knowledgeable about evidence-informed interventions to achieve the goals of clients, understanding theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluating and applying this knowledge to effectively intervene with a variety of client groups.

Field Practice Activities to Develop and Demonstrate Competency #8:

- Create a service agreement/treatment plan with client outlining client-centered goals.
- Review client progress toward goals using agency appropriate measures/tools.
- In supervision, discuss and reflect upon client interactions and progress and integrate feedback into future interactions.
- Demonstrate ability to discuss and process information and clearly articulate ideas, thoughts, and concepts when working with and discussing clients.
- Develop and implement a plan with community members to address the identified concerns, based on a needs assessment.
- Review client progress throughout the termination phase; prepare client for final session/meetings and create a transition plan.

Competency #9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities

Assignments should include: recognizing the importance of evaluating processes and outcomes, understanding human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluating and applying this knowledge in evaluating outcomes.

Field Practice Activities to Develop and Demonstrate Competency #9:

- Review client progress toward goals using agency appropriate measures and tools.
- Maintain communication and follow up with client to determine outcomes and potential success.
- Discuss and evaluate interventions with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and/or communities with field instructor in supervision and modify interventions based on findings.
- Monitor the effects of an implemented community-based plan and meet with community members to discuss findings and make changes as needed.