



Social Work

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO
COLORADO SPRINGS

Social Work Practicum Education Handbook

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FORWARD

This Practicum Handbook is designed to support our students, community partners, and faculty by providing information needed for an enriching practicum experience.

We are profoundly grateful to our community partners who generously share their time and expertise in mentoring the next generation of social workers.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

Purpose of the Practicum Education Handbook

This handbook is designed to serve students, practicum agencies, practicum instructors and liaisons, agency task managers, and faculty as a guide to social work practicum education at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS). Use of this handbook along with the [Practicum Education Website](#) will support the reader in a rewarding and educational practicum experience. This handbook was created in accordance with the [Council on Social Work Education](#) (CSWE) [2022 Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards](#) (EPAS).

Students, practicum instructors, and agency representatives are strongly encouraged to read the entire practicum handbook and to use it as a reference. Current and prospective agency practicum instructors and their organizations will find the material in this handbook helpful in understanding social work education at UCCS, roles and responsibilities of parties involved in practicum education, and relevant policies and procedures.

UCCS Department of Social Work Mission Statement

Within the context of the UCCS and College of Public Service (CPS) mission, the mission of the UCCS Department of Social Work is to advance equity and well-being through innovative education, critical inquiry, and active community partnerships, focusing on the empowerment of historically underrepresented members of our local, national and global communities.

Bachelor of Social Work Program Mission Statement

The mission of the baccalaureate social work program is to exemplify the social work core values in preparing students for ethical and competent entry-level generalist practice across multiple populations at micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice.

Master of Social Work Program Mission Statement

The UCCS Master of Social Work program prepares advanced professional social workers for ethical and competent trauma-informed social work practices across diverse and different populations at micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice.

To accomplish this mission, we strive to meet the following goals in accordance with standards outlined by the CSWE in their [Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards](#):

- Educate advanced social work practitioners with knowledge, values, and skills necessary for ethical and competent practice across diverse and different populations with a focus on trauma-informed social work practice (Competencies 1 & 2).
- Engage students in a process of practice-informed research and research-informed practice (Competencies 4 & 7).
- Prepare social workers to provide regional leadership in the development and implementation of policies, programs, and services that support human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice and understand the ways trauma impacts all levels of practice (Competencies 3 & 5).
- Develop social workers who exemplify a commitment to the social work core values while engaging, assessing, intervening, and evaluating trauma informed practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities (Competencies 6, 8, & 9).

Accreditation

The BSW and MSW programs at UCCS are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education's Commission on Accreditation. Accreditation of a baccalaureate or master's social work program by the Council on Social Work Education's Commission on Accreditation indicates that it meets or exceeds criteria for the assessment of program quality evaluated through a peer review process. An accredited program has sufficient resources to meet its mission and goals, and the Commission on Accreditation has verified that it demonstrates compliance with all sections of the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards. Accreditation applies to all program sites and program delivery methods of an accredited program. Accreditation provides reasonable assurance about the quality of the program and the competence of students graduating from the program. For more information about social work accreditation, you may contact [CSWE Accreditation](#).

SOCIAL WORK COMMITMENT TO ANTI-RACISM

Introduction

The Department of Social Work at the UCCS College of Public Service hereby declares its antiracism stance. The mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and to help meet the basic needs of all people, with particular attention to those who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. [The ethical standards of the social work profession](#) demand that social workers engage in social and political action to advance social justice, with a focus on vulnerable, disadvantaged, oppressed, and exploited individuals and groups.

We recognize that the fulfillment of the mission and honoring the values and ethical standards of social work requires direct and intentional opposition to the racist ideologies and white supremacy that are embedded in the foundations of our institutions and systems.

Thus, in accordance with the [mission and goals of UCCS](#) and the College of Public Service, we are fully committed to anti-oppressive practice and anti-racism work.

The complete UCCS Social Work Commitment to Anti-Racism is located on [the department website](#).

INTRODUCTION TO PRACTICUM EDUCATION

Practicum Education at UCCS

Practicum Education is a critical component of the BSW and MSW Programs at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS). The Council on Social Work Education emphasizes that Practicum work is the "signature pedagogy" of social work education:

Practicum education is the signature pedagogy for social work. Signature pedagogies are elements of instruction and socialization that teach future practitioners the fundamental dimensions of professional work in their discipline: to think, to perform, and to act intentionally, ethically, and with integrity. The practicum setting is where students apply human rights principles from global and national social work ethical codes to advance social, racial, economic, and environmental justice. It fosters a learning environment where anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion are

valued. Practicum education is designed to integrate the theoretical and conceptual contributions of the explicit curriculum in the practicum setting. It is a basic precept of social work education that the two interrelated components of curriculum—classroom and practicum—are of equal importance, and each contributes to the development of the requisite competencies of professional practice. Practicum education is systematically designed, supervised, coordinated, and evaluated based on criteria and measures of student acquisition and demonstration of the nine social work competencies. Responding to the changing nature of the practice world and student demographics and characteristics, practicum education programs articulate how they maintain or enhance students' access to high-quality practicum experiences. Practicum education programs develop practicum models to prepare students for contemporary and interprofessional social work practice, including the use of various forms of technology (CSWE, 2022).

The goal of social work practicum education is to integrate the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the practical world of the practice setting in a way that prepares students for competent social work practice. It is designed to facilitate students' professional socialization and expand their perspective of social work practice. The experience also allows students to identify areas in which they need to improve or otherwise develop knowledge, skills, values, and cognitive and affective processes.

Through practicum education, students develop social work competencies under the supervision of an experienced social worker. The ideal practicum placement offers students the opportunity to engage in social work practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels with a diverse client population. Students are challenged to develop strengths in a variety of interventions and apply a range of theoretical concepts and models. Through application of theory in practice with regular supervision from qualified practitioners, students acquire techniques necessary to function effectively as skillful social workers, acting ethically, and with integrity and skill.

Social Work Competencies

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) outlines a competency-based education framework in its [Education Policy and Accreditation Standards](#) (EPAS) which integrates social work knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes relevant to social work practice. Social work students develop these competencies under the supervision of an experienced social worker in their practicum experience:

1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
2. Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
3. Engage Anti-racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice
4. Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice
5. Engage in Policy Practice
6. Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
7. Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
8. Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
9. Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Practicum Course Requirements

Practicum education provides an opportunity for the student to apply the general knowledge of theories and principles presented in the classroom to work with actual clients and agencies. This experience allows the student to explore and develop the role of a professional social worker under the supervision of a qualified professional. The Practicum Instructor serves as a mentor, role model, and a source of feedback to the student

regarding the student's performance and professional growth. Therefore, the purpose of practicum is summed up in three words: integration, application, and socialization. The student integrates what has been learned, applies that knowledge in specific practice situations, and in the process, develops an identity as an emerging, professional social worker. Practicum students complete a seminar course (SOWK 4111 and 4112; SOWK 5111, 5112, 6111, and 6112) while completing practicum hours in an approved agency as detailed below. The eligibility criteria and processes for admission and placement are outlined under Practicum Education Admission and Placement.

BSW Seminar and Practicum I (SWRK 4111)

First course of the two-course BSW practicum practice sequence. Supervised agency practicum with practice situations for developing professional skills, values, and attitudes for social work practice. Includes concurrent practicum seminar to promote integration of theory and practice and critical examination of oneself as a helping professional. Course requires completion of a minimum of 200 practicum hours at an approved social service agency.

BSW Seminar and Practicum II (SOWK 4112)

Second course of the two-course BSW Practicum practice sequence. Supervised agency practicum with practice situations for developing professional skills, values, and attitudes for social work practice. Includes concurrent practicum seminar to promote integration of theory and practice and critical examination of oneself as a helping professional. Course requires completion of a minimum of 200 practicum hours at an approved social service agency.

MSW Generalist Practicum I&II (SOWK 5111 & 5112)

During the Fall and Spring semesters of the Generalist practice year, MSW practicum students have the opportunity to observe the practicum instructor (and other appropriate professionals as approved by the Practicum instructor) and to practice alongside these professionals as they build initial skills and incorporate theoretical perspectives and research informed intervention techniques from classroom learning. Students must complete no fewer than 400 Generalist Practicum hours (200 in the Fall; 200 in the Spring).

MSW Specialized Practicum I&II (SOWK 6111 & 6112)

During the specialization year, MSW practicum students are expected to take on increasing levels of autonomous practice, especially as the practicum progresses. Students will continue to be supervised by the practicum instructor. Skills at the specialization level are expected to incorporate more complexity in terms of a) trauma-informed social work practice, b) systems addressed and their problems; c) theoretical perspective and interventions employed; and d) problem-solving skills and independent critical thinking of the student, all under the supervision of a qualified practicum instructor. Students must complete no less than 500 Specialized Practicum hours (250 in the Fall; 250 in the Spring).

Note: The hours that are required for the Spring semester must be completed during the Spring semester as the student is completing the corresponding practicum seminar course (4112 for BSW students, 5112 for generalist MSW students, 6112 for specialized MSW students). Students may not offset their requirements for the Spring semester by completing extra hours in the Fall semester. Hours completed beyond the 250 required in the Fall semester do not reduce the number of hours required in the Spring semester.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN PRACTICUM EDUCATION

Practicum Students

It is the responsibility of current and prospective practicum students to complete all required components of the practicum application, placement, and education experience. Students must meet the eligibility criteria required for practicum placement, including all required coursework, prior to beginning their practicum experience. Students must fulfill and abide by the requirements outlined in this handbook, their practicum seminar course syllabus, and the [BSW](#) and [MSW](#) Student Handbooks. Social work practicum students are also expected to abide by all relevant laws and statutes, agency/setting policies, the [NASW Code of Ethics](#), and the [UCCS Student Code of Conduct](#), and each student entering practicum is required to submit a signed practicum application acknowledging understanding of these expectations as part of the [practicum placement process](#) outlined in this handbook.

Practicum Agencies and Settings

UCCS Social Work practicum settings are selected based on the ability of the program, agency, and/or setting to provide students with the experience and supervision required for the respective year of placement (e.g., generalist practice or specialized practice). The practicum setting must be able to provide a variety of activities which enable the student to demonstrate proficiency across the range of competencies listed above.

For BSW students, practicum settings must be able to provide supervision for the student by someone who holds a bachelor's degree in social work or a master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program. For MSW students, practicum settings must be able to provide supervision for the student by someone who holds a master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program and at least two years of practice experience.

Given these stipulations, the UCCS Social Work Practicum Team foresees rare situations in which an agency might not be able to provide student supervision by an instructor who holds the required CSWE- accredited social work degree. An example of such a situation would be if a practicum instructor leaves the agency in the middle of the placement and is replaced by someone who does not hold a social work degree. In such cases, an appropriate practicum instructor from outside of the agency (such as a member of the social work faculty), in close collaboration with the agency, would assume the role of Practicum Liaison and provide supervision from a social work perspective in addition to the supervision provided within the agency or setting. These situations, however, would be exceptions to standard practice. This policy applies to all placements regardless of location.

Selecting Practicum Agencies and Settings

The UCCS Practicum Team does a great deal of community outreach to develop practicum opportunities for students in a range of settings. UCCS also has staff specifically devoted to community outreach and relations, as well as local staff who have reached out to local community organizations. Each potential practicum location is community-based and vetted by a Practicum Director. This is commonly initiated via email, then a structured interview is performed. Each potential location describes their services and what they can provide for student education. A description of all the requirements the program has is explained, and if the potential Practicum location believes they can provide an excellent educational opportunity for our students, we move forward with an affiliation agreement. This applies to in-state, out-of-state, and international placements.

Criteria for Setting Selection

The criteria for selecting a Practicum setting include, but are not limited to:

1. The practicum setting must be formally registered as a legal entity able to enter legal contracts.
2. The practicum setting must follow the guidelines of the [Council on Social Work Education](#) (CSWE) for BSW & MSW programs.
3. The practicum setting must be an organization that embraces and incorporates the values and ethics of the [National Association of Social Workers](#) (NASW).
4. The agency must offer opportunities for social work practice across micro, mezzo, and macro systems.
5. Clients from the agency must be sufficiently diverse in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, age, culture, sexual orientation, and social class to ensure that students are exposed to issues that have an impact on a range of people and problems.
6. The practicum setting must provide direct weekly supervision with a social worker who holds a BSW degree from an accredited institution (for BSW students) or an MSW degree from an accredited institution (for MSW students). In rare situations in which an agency is unable to provide student supervision by an instructor who holds the required CSWE-accredited social work degree, the practicum setting must provide a Task Supervisor to supervise the student in the setting in close collaboration a Practicum Liaison who provides additional supervision to the student from a social work perspective.
7. Although students are to be involved in doing the work of the agency, the agency must recognize that practicum is a learning experience and must agree to view work expectations and workloads for students differently from those of staff.
8. The practicum setting must provide a suitable workplace for student use (e.g., office space, office equipment, etc.). The practicum setting will also provide the necessary tools if working remotely.
9. The practicum setting must observe policies with respect to non-discrimination of race, ethnic origin, sex, age, religion, disability, military or veteran status, gender identity, or sexual orientation.
10. The practicum setting must allow the necessary time for the practicum instructor to adequately supervise students, meet with the faculty liaison and/or the Director of Practicum Placement, attend trainings, and prepare student evaluations as required.
11. Membership in a national standard-setting body appropriate to its function or licensing by the state is encouraged, but not required.
12. The agency must approve the arrangements for the practicum, and the agency staff must be receptive to students and willing to cooperate with their program of learning.
13. The practicum setting must provide a learning environment that allows the student to demonstrate all nine core competencies outlined in the [Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards](#) of the [Council on Social Work Education](#) (CSWE).

As included in criteria above, the practicum setting must provide a suitable workspace. Generally, this will include a desk and chair, telephone, computer, supplies, and clerical services, but the UCCS Social Work programs recognize that work environments vary from one agency to another. In all cases, students must be privileged to privacy when conducting client services that require confidentiality. This criterion applies to in-state, out-of-state, and international placements.

Practicum Agency Orientation for Students

Practicum Instructors are expected to provide students with a comprehensive orientation to the agency and practicum site at the start of their practicum placement. This orientation should include, but is not limited to, introducing students to administrators and co-workers with whom the student will be interacting; relevant policies and procedures, including those related to safety, dress, and work hours; expectations for the practicum placement and supervision; as well as any other areas relevant to the student's role.

In some circumstances, practicum sites may offer agency orientation prior to the start of the semester in which students enter practicum. In these cases, the student or agency Practicum Instructor should contact the Practicum Director to receive approval for this arrangement, and to discuss tracking hours prior to the start of the semester.

Evaluating Practicum Effectiveness

Once a year each current practicum agency and Practicum Instructor will be evaluated for effectiveness in providing a student learning environment. The instructor of record for the section of practicum placement the student is enrolled in, the practicum liaison, the students, and, if applicable the person reinforcing the social work perspective participate in the evaluation of practicum effectiveness. All relevant parties evaluate both the practicum placement site and practicum supervision annually using a standardized assessment. Evaluations include assessment of the practicum setting offerings, tasks, safety, and options for fulfilling the EPAS 2022 competencies. Agencies that score low on this instrument are supported to improve the practicum experience.

Criteria for Evaluating Practicum Effectiveness

The criteria for evaluating practicum effectiveness include but are not limited to:

1. Orientation to placement
2. Learning opportunities
3. Practicum supervision
4. Supervisory relationship
5. Learning tools

Site Visits

Each practicum setting agrees to at least one site visit each academic year by a representative from the BSW/MSW Practicum Education program. In most cases, site visits occur during the first semester. Practicum Instructors will also complete a midterm update on the student's work that will be reviewed by Practicum Faculty and Liaisons as needed, and by the BSW/MSW Practicum Director. The Practicum Instructor or student may request additional visits if problems arise. Practicum Faculty will also review practicum journals completed by the student to keep abreast of the student's work in the practicum agency.

Practicum Instructors

Practicum Instructors will meet with students under their supervision for one hour each week. This time may consist of individual or group supervision (up to two times per month) and may be conducted in person or virtually. During supervision time, the Practicum Instructor may talk about the student's learning contract as well as areas of development the student will have with clients. If there is not a social worker on site to provide supervision, the Task Manager will provide supervision over the student's daily work, while the Practicum Liaison will provide supplemental supervision from a social work perspective. Practicum Instructors must abide by the requirements outlined in this handbook and the [NASW Code of Ethics](#).

Selecting Practicum Instructors

In negotiating with agencies/programs/sites about student supervision, the Practicum Director specifies that the BSW Practicum Instructor must hold a bachelor's or master's degree in social work from a [CSWE-accredited program](#), and the MSW Practicum Instructor must hold a master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program with at least two years of post-MSW practice experience. Those

trained professionals who indicate an interest in serving as Practicum Instructors are asked to complete an online application in which they document their academic credentials and professional experience to determine their suitability for supervising social work students.

All Practicum Instructors should be comfortable teaching from a theoretical and conceptual standpoint as well as training students to perform specific tasks. Professionals serving as Practicum Instructors are expected to demonstrate a high level of skill with respect to communication and practice, as well as commitment to the education of students. Whenever possible, experience in supervision is desirable. On occasion, there may be tasks the BSW or MSW practicum supervisor outsources to a Task Manager, with whom the student will collaborate with on assigned tasks. In such a situation, the student would receive supervision from that Task Manager related to day-to-day tasks and activities while also receiving supervision from their Practicum Liaison.

Practicum Instructor Orientation

The UCCS Social Work Practicum Education Office provides orientation for those interested in becoming Practicum Instructors with UCCS Social Work. Practicum Instructor Orientation is held prior to the beginning of the Fall Semester and is available both on campus and virtually. Online learning modules including the materials covered in orientations are provided to those unable to attend. On-campus orientation typically occurs once per year, while online learning modules may be accessed at the individual's convenience. Orientation content includes use of practicum evaluations, student learning plans, student time logs, and the Experiential Learning Center (ELC) management software.

Practicum Instructor Training

The UCCS Social Work Practicum Education Office also provides ongoing training for practicum instructors. These trainings may occur via one-to-one visits with practicum instructors at the agencies, by attending the group orientations, reviewing the online learning modules, or attending the continuing education opportunities provided by the Department of Social Work. At the beginning of the academic year, the practicum staff sends links to online trainings and directions to all practicum instructors about the use of the practicum evaluations, student learning plans, student time logs, and the Experiential Learning Center (ELC) management software. These materials are sent to all practicum instructors, regardless of how long they have been working with UCCS Social Work practicum students. Practicum Instructors are also invited to ask questions and relay their feedback by e-mail or phone, as needed. As indicated above, the program incorporates the use of Practicum Faculty and Liaisons for ongoing dialogue with agencies concerning student performance.

Task Managers

In the rare situation in which an agency is unable to provide student supervision by an instructor who meets the requirements described above, the agency will appoint a Task Manager to oversee and direct the day-to-day activities of the student in close collaboration with a designated Practicum Liaison or Practicum Faculty and the BSW or MSW Practicum Director.

Practicum Liaisons

Given the stipulation that the BSW Practicum Instructor must hold a bachelor's or master's degree in social work from a [CSWE-accredited program](#), and that the MSW Practicum Instructor must hold a master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program with a minimum of 2 years post-MSW practice experience, the program foresees rare situations in which an agency might not be able to provide student supervision by an instructor who holds the required CSWE-accredited social work degree. An example of such a situation

would be if a Practicum Instructor leaves the agency in the middle of the placement and is replaced by someone other than a social worker. In such cases, a Practicum Liaison, in close collaboration with the agency, is asked to provide supervision to the student from a social work perspective. Practicum Liaisons who provide such supervision are required to hold master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program with at least two years of post-MSW practice experience. The Practicum Liaison reinforcing the social work perspective may also hold a CASWE- accredited degree (from the Canadian social work accreditor, recognized through an MOU with CSWE and CASWE) or an internationally earned ISWDRES-evaluated degree; and two (2) years post-degree experience.

The supervision provided by the Practicum Liaison reinforces the social work perspective by integrating social work knowledge, skills, and values into the supervision process through case discussion and learning activities. The additional supervision occurs outside the practicum seminar on a consistent schedule that is determined in conjunction with the student, the agency Task Manager, MSW Practicum Director, and the Practicum Liaison or Practicum Faculty providing supplemental supervision. The agency Task Manager continues to provide direct supervision at the agency while the faculty member provides the social work perspective. It is important to note these situations are exceptions to standard practice and occur rarely.

Practicum Education Seminar Professor

The Practicum Education Seminar Professor or Practicum Faculty teaches the practicum seminar course and is responsible for reviewing logged hours, grading practicum assignments, and issuing final grades for the practicum seminar course. The Practicum Education Seminar Professor/Practicum Faculty may also be required to conduct site visits and participate in a BSW/MSW Program Retention Committee as assigned by the BSW/MSW Practicum Director.

Directors of Practicum Education

The BSW and MSW Practicum Education Directors oversee practicum education for the Department of Social Work. BSW and MSW Practicum Education Directors engage in ongoing community outreach to support recruitment of sites and Practicum Instructors, orient sites and Practicum Instructors to social work practicum education at UCCS, and support Practicum Instructors with training and consultation as indicated throughout the practicum experience.

BSW and MSW Practicum Directors also work with practicum students, coordinating placements, orienting students to social work practicum education, and working with students, sites, and faculty to support the student experience. Practicum Education Directors also work to resolve problems and issues that arise during practicum placement in consultation with the BSW and MSW Program Directors, which may include assembling a Program Retention Committee as indicated.

PRACTICUM EDUCATION ADMISSION AND PLACEMENT

Eligibility Criteria for Entrance into BSW Practicum Placement

- Students must have been admitted to the BSW social work program.
- BSW students must complete all prerequisite courses in accordance with the BSW Student Handbook.
- Students must have a cumulative grade point average of 2.7 (C+) or better. All coursework must be graded. Students are not allowed to enter practicum placement with an “I” (incomplete) in a class. If a student enters a practicum placement with an “I” (incomplete), they will be removed from the placement until the course is graded.
- Students must demonstrate ethical and professional behavior in the classroom. This includes adherence to the [BSW](#) and [MSW](#) Student Handbooks, the [NASW Code of Ethics](#), and the [UCCS Student Code of Conduct](#).

Eligibility Criteria for Entrance into MSW Practicum Placement

- Students must have been admitted to the MSW social work program.
- Specialized MSW students must complete all prerequisite courses in accordance with the MSW Student Handbook.
- All coursework must be graded. Specialized MSW students are not allowed to enter practicum placement with an “I” (incomplete) in a class. If a student enters a practicum placement with an “I” (incomplete), they will be removed from the placement until the course is graded.
- Students must demonstrate ethical and professional behavior in the classroom. This includes adherence to the [BSW](#) and [MSW](#) Student Handbooks, the [NASW Code of Ethics](#), and the [UCCS Student Code of Conduct](#).

Additional Requirements to Begin Practicum Placement and Practicum Seminar

Students must register for the required coursework (SOWK 4111, 4112, 5111, 5112, 6111, 6112) to be placed into practicum. If the student has a hold on their account which prevents them from enrolling in the course, they may not enter a practicum placement or start the seminar course until the hold is removed. If the situation is not resolved by the second week of the start of the semester, this may result in the student having to delay practicum placement until the next practicum cycle.

An affiliation agreement with the practicum site must also be fully executed before a student may begin working with the agency. If a student wishes to be considered for a placement at an agency in which the affiliation agreement is not yet executed, the completion of the agreement may impact the student’s ability to begin their practicum work at the start of the semester.

Students must complete all agency clearance requirements of the practicum site, which may include (but are not limited to) a background check, drug screen, finger printing, driving record, social security number, and immunization record review. Students who anticipate any obstacles completing agency clearance requirements should alert the Practicum Director as soon as possible. Students must be aware that although state laws regarding legalization of cannabis are present in Colorado, federal agencies and any organization accepting federal funds must follow federal laws regarding cannabis use and testing.

BSW Practicum Application and Placement Process

All BSW students will meet with the BSW Practicum Director to determine the readiness of the student for practicum placement. Prior to the interview, all students must complete the online application for practicum placement. The application process occurs in Experiential Learning Cloud (ELC), and each student will receive instructions on how to apply via university email. Students entering practicum in the Fall need to have their application submitted by March 15th in the preceding Spring semester.

Students will not be interviewed without a completed application. Late submissions and interviews will occur only with the permission of the BSW Practicum Director. After the interview, the BSW Practicum Director will notify the student in writing that they have been accepted to practicum and will present the student with referrals to possible practicum placements. Students have three weeks from notice to set up an interview with the practicum site. If a student is not accepted by the practicum site, the student will meet with BSW Practicum Director to practice interviewing skills. If the second practicum interview leads to another rejection, then the Practicum Education Director will convene a meeting to reassess the student's readiness for practicum.

MSW Practicum Application and Placement Process

The practicum placement process begins during the Spring Semester prior to the intended placement year. Students are required to submit a practicum application through ELC, and the MSW Practicum Director and team will be available to meet with incoming practicum students to assess each student's readiness for placement and discuss prospective agencies. The student's readiness for practicum placement will be determined by the MSW Practicum Director based on the submitted application materials, the student's academic standing within the program, and discussion with the student. The student should submit their application in ELC prior to meeting with the MSW Practicum Director.

Generalized Placement Process

Students entering generalized practicum should have their applications submitted by June 1st. Late submissions and interviews will occur only with permission from the MSW Practicum Director. After meeting with the student, the MSW Practicum Director will confirm the student's top choice(s), and students have three weeks from notice to set up an interview with the practicum site. If a student is not accepted by the practicum site, the student will meet with MSW Practicum Director to practice interviewing skills. If the second practicum interview leads to another rejection; then the Practicum Education Director will convene a meeting to reassess the student's readiness for practicum. Note: The generalized practicum must be completed in Colorado. See [Out-of-State and International Practicum Placements](#) for exceptions.

Specialized Placement Process

Screening for specialized practicum placement includes review of academic success and professionalism throughout the generalist practice curriculum. To make specialized practice practicum assignments, students' progress in the generalist courses and practicum placement are carefully considered and students are engaged to explore opportunities that fit their professional interests and goals. The practicum assessment forms from the generalist practice practicum experience are reviewed for traditional students and from BSW practicum for the advanced standing students.

The practicum placement process for Specialized Practice MSW students differs in that students have more autonomy in selecting the community-based agency at which they would like to do their placement. The MSW Practicum Director is still charged with making the actual assignment; however, students have the

opportunity to interview with more than one placement site and both student and agency preferences are given strong consideration in deciding which student will be assigned to which agency. In the interest of assuring a well-rounded social work Practicum experience, in most cases, MSW students may not complete their Specialized Practice practicum placement at the same agency as their Generalist Practice placement. Similarly, students admitted to the Advanced Standing program may not complete their placement at the same placement site at which they completed their BSW practicum placement. Only students who successfully complete the generalist practicum sequence are permitted to begin the specialized practicum sequence.

7 Phases of Practicum Placement Process

The practicum placement process occurs in 7 phases:

1. Students attend the Practicum Fair at the beginning of the Spring Semester.
2. Students complete an application for practicum placement in ELC.
3. Students meet with the BSW or MSW Practicum Director.
4. Potential practicum placement referrals are made, typically in Spring for BSW and Specialized MSW students, and in late Spring and Summer for Generalized MSW students. The student and the potential practicum Instructor will be notified of the referrals and the interview process.
5. After receiving referral information, students must reach out to their potential Practicum Instructor to schedule an interview. The interview must occur within a 3-week period from the referral being made.
 - BSW and Year 1 (Generalist) MSW students will be referred to one agency at a time.
 - Year 2 (Specialized) MSW students will be able to interview at three possible placements.
6. Following the interview, both the student and the potential Agency Practicum Instructor notify the Practicum Director of the match/acceptance or rejection. Rejections must be accompanied by a written explanation. Please note: Students may not reject a match simply because it is not their preferred agency or population.
7. When both the student and the potential Practicum Instructor accept a match, the placement will be confirmed for the coming academic year, and the student will begin practicum placement at the start of the Fall Semester. The student and the Agency Practicum Instructor will coordinate to create the student's practicum schedule for the coming Fall Semester.

Practicum Placements in Employment Settings

Paid practicum placements in any form (e.g., salary, stipend, etc.) are permitted. Payment may include both hours spent in practicum and/or in employment. Students currently employed in a social service or human service program, agency, institution, or organization may complete a practicum in their current job if specific conditions are met. Prior approval of practicum placement plan by the MSW Practicum Director is required before the start of the practicum placement.

Specific guidelines for such cases include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1.) Students may be allowed to use their place of employment as a practicum placement site. When this occurs, the program, agency, institution, or organization must meet all requirements for serving as a placement site including suitability for the competencies specific to the practicum placement level (e.g., generalist practice or specialized practice).

- 2.) Students are usually only placed in an employment setting for one of their two placement experiences. However, consideration for both generalist practice and specialized practice employment-based practicum placements may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Approval of such unusual situations is most applicable when a student changes positions and/or employment locations between the generalist and specialized practice year.
- 3.) The practicum instruction assignments and employment tasks may be the same and counted toward required practicum hours if the tasks have clear links to the social work competencies and their related behaviors. Students may also choose to have practicum instruction assignments that are distinct from the student's normal work activities. In both cases, the practicum instruction assignments are outlined in the student learning contract.
- 4.) Practicum supervision of students in employment-based settings is determined on a case-by-case basis. In some cases, the student's regular work supervisor may also serve as the practicum instructor. In other cases, the student's practicum hours may be supervised by someone who is not their regular work supervisor. In both cases, the practicum instructor must meet the usual requirements of practicum instruction (i.e., someone who holds an MSW degree with at least 2 years of post-graduate experience in the practicum of social work).
- 5.) The hours credited toward practicum placement may be the same as or different from the student's employment hours. In both cases, the practicum instruction hours must be approved in advance, outlined in the student learning contract, and recorded in ELC.
- 6.) Assignment to all practicum placements remains solely the province of the program's practicum director.
- 7.) Students who choose to complete their practicum experience in an employment-based setting do so understanding that there may be additional challenges and responsibilities related to linking their practicum experience with their place of employment.

Procedures For Practicum Placements in Employment Settings

Per UCCS policy, a student who is in a practicum placement in the same location as the individual's place of employment must develop a plan for ensuring the number of hours, tasks performed, and learning experience have clear links to the social work competencies and corresponding behaviors. Documentation of this plan must be submitted to the BSW/MSW Practicum Director in writing prior to approval of the practicum placement.

The BSW/MSW Practicum Director has the sole discretion to approve or deny the request. Should the request be denied, students must follow the grievance procedures outlined in the student handbook.

Non-Match Acceptance Policy and Procedures

The UCCS Department of Social Work understands that, from time to time, students may not receive acceptance from agencies following their interview. Denial may be due to a lack of capacity at the agency following multiple student interviews or a general lack of fit between student and agency.

If a student does not receive acceptance from the matched practicum agency following their interview, the student will have the opportunity to be matched with, and interview with, another agency.

Students who do not receive a match acceptance should schedule a post-interview advising appointment with their Practicum Director (BSW or MSW) prior to receiving another potential match. This advising appointment allows the student the opportunity to reflect and process the interview experience, as well as discuss the student's interview strengths and areas for growth.

If a student interviews with 3 potential agencies and does not receive match acceptance after each of the 3 interviews, the student must schedule an appointment with their Practicum Director and their Program Director. Students should note that following this appointment, it may be recommended that the student wait to enroll in the practicum placement course until the following year.

Out-of-State and International Practicum Placements

The UCCS MSW and BSW programs are designed to meet the needs of Colorado-based students, and the first year of practicum for each program must be completed in Colorado. However, it is recognized that there are special circumstances in which students may need an out-of-state or international placement. When such cases occur, the student will meet with the BSW or MSW Practicum Education Director to determine the most appropriate placement option. Of note, the UCCS MSW and BSW programs cannot guarantee an out-of-state or international Practicum placement. In such cases, the onus is on the student to help locate and secure a placement that meets the UCCS guidelines. All out-of-state and international practicum sites and practicum instructors will be required to meet the same requirements outlined for Colorado practicum sites and practicum instructors. If an appropriate out-of-state or international practicum placement cannot be secured, the student will be expected to complete their placement in Colorado. When out-of-state or international placement can be secured, the student, the practicum site, and the Practicum Instructor will work with the BSW or MSW Practicum Director to ensure seminar instruction and all other practicum requirements are fulfilled throughout the placement. Students who anticipate completing their practicum placements out-of-state are encouraged to contact the practicum director as early as possible and by May 1st to allow sufficient time for planning.

The criteria for out-of-state and international practicum placements include, but are not limited to:

1. The student must demonstrate an appropriate reason for an out-of-state or international practicum placement. An example of an appropriate reason is permanent change of station for an active duty servicemember and their family.
2. The student must be in good academic standing.
3. The students must be able to attend scheduled practice seminar sessions.
4. The student must use the practicum management software, ELC, to report hours and monitor completion of the practicum contract.
5. The practicum site must be visited and monitored virtually by the Practicum Liaison, Practicum Seminar Instructor, or Practicum Director.

Online and Remote Placements

Online and remote placements may be allowed but must meet all stated criteria for practicum agencies and settings. Online and remote placements must demonstrate to the Practicum Director that the agency/setting is able to meet all stated criteria and provide an appropriate learning experience for the student with a qualified supervisor. Students completing an online or remote placement must meet the same criteria as for out-of-state and international placements.

PRACTICUM COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Practicum Placement Hours

Both the BSW and the MSW programs have strict policies regarding the minimum number of hours students must complete in the practicum setting. Students must complete the requisite hours to be eligible for graduation.

BSW Practicum Placement Hours

The UCCS BSW program requires that students complete a minimum of 400 clock hours in practicum placement. The semester requirements are as follows: 200 hours in SOWK 4111 and 200 hours in SOWK 4112. All practicum hours are signed off by the practicum instructor and verified by the BSW Practicum Director.

MSW Practicum Placement Hours

The UCCS MSW program requires that students complete a minimum of 900 clock hours in practicum placement: 400 hours in generalist practicum, and 500 hours in specialized practicum. The semester requirements are as follows: 200 hours in SOWK 5111, 200 hours in SOWK 5112, 250 hours in SOWK 6111 and 250 hours in SOWK 6112. All practicum hours are signed off by the practicum instructor and verified by the MSW Practicum Director.

Advanced Standing students are eligible for Specialization Practicum Placement after providing proof of 400 hours of Practicum education completed in their BSW program. Students who do not have the requisite number of Practicum hours will not be admitted to the ASP, Advanced Standing Program, but will be considered for the traditional MSW program.

Structure of Practicum Education Hours

- Students begin their practicum placements in August of the academic year in which they are eligible.
- BSW students must complete at least 400 hours in their practicum placement in their senior year.
- Year 1 (Generalist) MSW students must complete a minimum of 400 hours in their practicum placement.
- Year 2 (Specialized and Advanced Standing) MSW students must complete a minimum of 500 hours in their practicum placement.

Student Learning Contract

As part of their practicum placements, students are expected to work collaboratively with their Practicum Instructor to develop a behaviorally specific learning agreement based on their level in the social work program (BSW, MSW Generalist, MSW Specialist). The learning agreement promotes adult learning and is the blueprint for students to develop and demonstrate social work practice behaviors and competencies.

Learning plans outline the specific competencies and practice behaviors students are expected to develop over the course of their Practicum. Students and agency Practicum Instructors should discuss specific learning opportunities, tasks, and assignments available to the student in the agency and document these in the learning plan, which are completed in ELC and due by the 4th session of the Practicum Education Seminar Course. Learning activities should be personalized to student interest, skill level, and to opportunities available in the agency setting. Learning plans will be reviewed by Faculty Practicum Liaisons and/or the Practicum Education Director to ensure appropriateness, mutual understanding, and expected outcomes.

It is recommended that students and Practicum Instructors regularly review the Learning Plan as part of their weekly supervision meetings. Practicum Instructors are encouraged to monitor student progress toward development of competencies and are expected to provide constructive feedback to support student learning and professional growth.

At the end of the Fall Semester, students and Practicum Instructors are expected to review the student's progress toward goals outlined in the learning agreement and evaluate progress toward development and mastery of social work practice behaviors and competencies. Students and Practicum Instructors will update the learning plan and learning activities to ensure competencies are met by the end of the Spring Semester.

Evaluation Guidelines

An evaluation tool is used at the end of each semester to measure the student's performance related to each of the nine social work competencies. The evaluation tool used for the mid-year evaluation is an informal process to measure the student's and the Practicum Instructor's assessment of the student's progress toward proficiency in each competency. Evaluations occur at the end of Practicum practice in SOWK 4111, SOWK 5111, and SOWK 6111.

The end-of-year evaluation is a formal process and serves as the primary assessment instrument for practicum. During this process, the Practicum Instructor assigns the student with a numerical value indicating the student's mastery of specified competencies and practice behaviors. The end-of-year evaluation occurs at the end of Practicum practice in SOWK 4112, SOWK 5112, and SOWK 6112. The faculty member instructing the respective practicum placement course has the final responsibility for assigning a letter grade to each student in the course.

Students are also asked to complete an online assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning experiences and supervision provided at their agency. Students will be provided with a link to complete this assessment online at the end of the student's practicum placement.

Monitoring and Evaluating Student Learning

Student learning is evaluated through a triangulated method that includes the instructor of record for the section of practicum placement the student is enrolled in, the practicum instructor, and the student. In the Practicum seminar, students complete a practicum learning contract, practicum logs, and process recordings that are evaluated by both the practicum seminar professor and the Practicum instructor. Practicum Instructors complete a mid-term evaluation and end of the semester evaluation that the student is offered a chance to provide additional feedback and is shared with the professor of the practicum seminar.

A Practicum Education Director or Practicum Liaison will meet with each Practicum Instructor and student at least twice during the academic year. During these meetings, the Practicum Educational Director and Practicum Liaison will assess how the student has built upon the competencies via discussion and reviewing the completed evaluations. If the student does not complete the assignments from practicum seminar or the Practicum Instructor does not complete the evaluation, the student will not be able to pass practicum which could prevent movement from generalized practicum to specialized practicum or delay graduation.

The criteria for evaluating student learning congruent with the social work competencies includes, but is

not limited to:

1. Successful completion of tasks and experiences outlined in the learning contract
2. Meeting the time recording requirements for the respective courses (200 hours per course for the 2 Generalist practicum courses and 250 hours per course for the 2 specialized practice practicum courses (MSW) 400 generalist hours (BSW)). Hours completed are logged by the students in ELC and confirmed by both the practicum instructor and practicum faculty for the section of practicum the student is enrolled in.
3. Recording knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes related to the practicum experience in the practicum logs and practicum assessments
4. Achieving passing scores on course assignments
5. A completed practicum evaluation by the Practicum Instructor and student.

PRACTICUM EDUCATION POLICIES

Sick Time, Vacation Time, and Extended Absence During Practicum Placement

Students are not given sick time or vacation during the practicum placement. If a need to miss time at practicum placement arises, the student should coordinate this with their Practicum Instructor to ensure that they are able to meet their practicum hours requirement.

If a student misses one to three consecutive days at their practicum placement, then the student and practicum site must agree on arrangements for makeup of practicum time or any other absences. If a student misses over three consecutive days of their practicum placement, they must also notify their Practicum Faculty. In some circumstances, the practicum education completion date may be extended, depending upon the amount of time taken and the circumstances. This may impact the student's ability to graduate on time.

If a student has excessive absences or experiences an extended absence during their practicum placement due to illness or other life circumstances, the student may be required to terminate the placement and re-enroll during the next available semester. Practicum Faculty and the BSW/MSW Practicum Director may assist in the negotiation regarding how the student will make up time at the request of the student or the Practicum Instructor.

Students who negotiate a start date for their practicum placement that is later than that outlined by the Practicum Education Office should note that such an arrangement may impact their graduation date. Additionally, if a student has a disruption while in their practicum placement, which affects the completion date of their practicum education, the graduation date may be impacted. Students are encouraged to consult with their Practicum Faculty and BSW/MSW Practicum Director as to how these situations may impact their ability to graduate as planned.

Tracking Practicum Education Hours

Students will track their practicum hours in the Experiential Learning Center (ELC) practicum management software. The categories in this timesheet may be edited with approval from the agency Practicum Instructor, to ensure that the tracked activities accurately reflect the students' work at the agency. Students must follow the instructions provided in ELC and enter their time in the standardized format outlined in the ELC Learning Space.

In-Person Contact with Clients and Constituents

All generalist and specialized practice practicum experiences must include the demonstration of social work competencies through in-person contact, which refers to interpersonal interactions with clients, constituencies, and client systems, and may include the use of digital technologies. The UCCS Social Work Practicum Program does not utilize simulations or avatars, and students are expected to work collaboratively with their agency Practicum Instructor to develop a behaviorally specific learning plan based on their level in the social work program (BSW, MSW Generalist, MSW Specialist). The learning plan/contract promotes adult learning and is the blueprint for students to develop and demonstrate social work practice behaviors and competencies through contact with clients, constituents, and client systems. The learning plan/contract is used as a guide and an assessment tool.

Practicum Education Directors, Practicum Liaisons, Practicum Instructors, and Students use the learning plan/contract as a guide and an assessment tool. All parties are responsible to ensure the student experiences interpersonal interactions with clients, constituencies, and client systems, and may include the use of digital technologies. These experiences are documented in the Student Learning Plan/Contract and revisited as part of the evaluation process.

Students in the Military

Students who are in the military and are called to active duty, IDT, AT, ADT, TDY, or any other military-related activity that may lead to absence from the practicum placement, must inform the Practicum Education Office as soon as the student is made aware of the situation. The Practicum Education Office will work with the student, per the University guidelines. Please note that under these guidelines it is the student's responsibility to keep the Practicum Office informed of all military-related absences.

Professional Liability Insurance

Professional liability insurance is provided through the university while the student is enrolled in the practicum course. In rare cases, practicum sites may require students to purchase additional professional liability insurance. Common professional liability insurance carriers for social workers include NASW Assurance Services and American Professional Agency, although students may purchase liability insurance through any company of their choice if needed.

Confidentiality and the Use of Technology

All students must comply with relevant laws, regulations, ethical standards, and organizational policies to ensure the confidentiality of clients. Students and agencies are encouraged to utilize the standards outlined by the NASW in their [Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice](#) to inform use of technology.

While each agency should develop their own protocols around the use of technology and confidentiality, the following best practices should be followed by all students:

- Take reasonable steps to maintain appropriate boundaries when using personal phone numbers or other electronic communication. For example, consider temporarily hiding caller ID for outgoing calls.
- Position web cameras so that others can only see your face. All confidential data should be removed from camera view.
- Conduct all sensitive conversations in a private space. Be mindful of the potential for family members or bystanders to overhear any portion of your discussion.

STUDENT SAFETY

The UCCS Department of Social Work has adopted the following policies and procedures regarding the safety of MSW and BSW students in practicum placements. These policies were created recognizing that violence in the lives of clients and in the workplace can create potential dangers to professional social workers and students engaged in the study of the profession. While social workers and students in practicum placements may be more aware of safety issues related to certain settings or locations, we believe issues of safety are relevant in all communities and settings. Students are informed about this safety information in several different ways, including practicum and agency orientations. Students also participate in a review of the student safety plan during their practicum seminar. We urge social work students to become familiar with this policy regardless of the location of the practicum placement.

Discussing Student Safety

The criteria to ensure the safety of students in practicum sites is discussed in this subsection and includes agency protocols, security of belongings, safety issues related to working with clients, safety guidelines for office meetings, safety guidelines for travel by car, safety guidelines for travel as a pedestrian or on public transportation, safety guidelines for home visits, health safety, covid-19 safety.

Policy on Student Safety

The UCCS Department of Social Work is responsible for providing all students and faculty with general written information about safety in practicum placement.

The UCCS Department of Social Work expects each agency to be responsible for orienting practicum students to the safety policies and procedures of that agency and setting. Such orientation should include, but not be limited to, discussion of safety issues in the community, within the agency building(s), with clients prone to violent or unpredictable behavior, and about clients who may be sharing living quarters with persons prone to violent behavior, to the extent that such information is known. Security of personal belongings of the social work practicum placement student while at the agency should also be covered. Procedures for the student(s) to follow in the event of a safety or security problem should be reviewed at the beginning of the placement with ample opportunity for questions and discussion as needed.

UCCS Social Work students should not be required to engage or to remain in assignments or at placements in which they feel physically at risk. The UCCS Department of Social Work urges all agencies to make the same accommodation to ensure students' safety as they make for their own agency staff and in some situations the agency may need to make even greater accommodations for a student. If a student's concerns about safety interfere in whole or in part with the learning process, the faculty advisor BSW/MSW Practicum Director should be contacted by the Practicum Instructor to facilitate prompt exploration of the concerns and to seek a mutually satisfying resolution.

Guidelines for Student Safety in Practicum

The following are guidelines and suggestions that may be helpful to students, practicum instructors, and practicum faculty as they consider the site-specific safety issues in each practicum setting.

Knowing the Agency Protocol

It is important for students to know the practicum placement agency's safety and security protocol for office and home visits with clients prior to the start of the placement. If the agency does not have safety and security policies and/or procedures the practicum instructor and student should review and discuss any issues related to safety and security in the setting. UCCS Social Work students are urged to bring their questions and concerns to the practicum Instructor. Regular communication, particularly about safety concerns, is strongly encouraged.

Security of Belongings

All students in the practicum are expected to have a secure place to keep coats, handbags, cell phones, laptops, and other belongings while at placement. It is preferable that the space be one that can be locked, such as a filing cabinet or desk. Students should not leave handbags and other personal items visible and unattended, even in an office with the door closed. Valuables should not be brought to placement settings. Items of value should not be left in cars and should not be placed out of view just prior to leaving a vehicle. Neither the agency nor UCCS Social Work can be responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal items.

Safety Issues Related to Working with Clients

When working with clients, it is important to remember that the treatment process often makes people feel vulnerable and may challenge their usual coping mechanisms. With some people, this can contribute to problems with impulse control, and can raise issues of safety for the client, the social worker, the practicum placement student, and others.

There may be times when students work with individuals who have difficulty with reality testing, dealing with overwhelming emotions, and controlling their anger. Some of these clients may be prone to violence and may possess a weapon. Other clients may be intoxicated, under the influence of controlled substances, in withdrawal, or may have other medical or neurological disorders. Again, we urge all UCCS Social Work students to consult with their agency practicum instructors to adequately prepare for handling specific situations that are potentially difficult or threatening, such as medical emergencies, suicide or homicide risks, potential abuse of others, and the presence of weapons.

Meeting With Clients in the Office

If a student will be meeting with a client with whom the student does not feel safe, it is important for the student to discuss the situation promptly and fully with the agency practicum instructor. Based on the outcome of this discussion, there may be a decision that a student will not see the client or see the client under specific circumstances or controls. However, if it is decided that a student will see the client, several points should be considered. A client's mental status should be assessed. When considering the location of the meeting, important considerations include what physical objects are in the room, whether there is more than one exit, where exits are located, and where each person might sit. A practicum student should always maintain a clear path to exit a meeting space quickly if needed. It may also be helpful to include someone else in the meeting. Students must also be mindful of how clothing items such as necklaces, chains, and lanyards can increase risk. When discussing the time of the appointment, it can be helpful to think about the availability and proximity of other staff, and to establish a plan for backup and assistance if the client becomes agitated. A student should never see a potentially dangerous client alone without someone else in the agency knowing about the client and the appointment time and location. Students should keep practicum instructors and task managers informed about their agency schedules.

Traveling by Car

When a student is traveling by car to an agency or to home visits, it is advisable to review routes before driving to unfamiliar areas. In general, remember to be alert, and to lock doors and close windows. The student should tell someone where they are going and the expected amount of time they will be away from the office. The agency should have the student's cell phone number or other information on how to contact you in the event of an emergency.

Transporting Clients

Per University policy, students should not transport clients during their practicum placement. Students may accompany an agency employee but should not drive their vehicle or the agency's vehicle to transport clients.

Safety When Traveling as a Pedestrian or on Public Transportation

When traveling as a pedestrian or on public transportation, it is advisable that students know where they are going and the route by which they will travel. Students are encouraged to carry the least number of valuables with them as possible. Money, identification, keys, and other essentials might be carried in a pocket. If a handbag carried under the arm is grabbed, it is best to let go of it. It is helpful to dress in comfortable clothes that are loose-fitting, and to wear sturdy, flat-walking shoes. It is also helpful to be alert, and to walk with a purpose, as if one has a clear destination. One should maintain awareness of their surroundings and of people in the immediate area. The student should tell someone where they are going any time they travel for agency-related business.

Safety Guidelines for Home Visits

It is important that students familiarize themselves with the clients' file prior to the home visit. If there is a question of safety, students should plan accordingly with practicum instructors. It may be decided that meeting at a neutral place or going with another worker is the appropriate plan. Someone at the agency should always know the student's itinerary. It is helpful to stay alert and to think about what to wear, which room to meet in, and where to sit. If a student ever feels threatened at any point during the interview, they are encouraged to err on the side of caution and appropriately terminate the visit. If clients seem to feel threatened by the student entering their dwelling, the student should desist and not force the visit. If a student hears a heated argument from inside the house or apartment or observes other safety concerns, the student may decide to re-schedule the visit or call to assess the situation before entering the dwelling. A student should never see a potentially dangerous client alone without someone else in the agency knowing their location and schedule. In general, a cell phone is very useful for students doing home visits, and students are expected to follow all safety protocols outlined by the agency.

Health Safety

Students should be alerted to the existence of biohazards. They should receive training and information about how to protect themselves from infectious diseases and other potential hazards related to the setting, such as bed bugs in residential placements or UV exposure in placements with outdoor components.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the UCCS Department of Social Work followed local, state, public health, CSWE, and campus guidelines to ensure the safety of UCCS Social Work students on campus and in practicum. In the case of a resurgence of COVID-19, or of another pandemic or public health crisis, all related local, state, public health, CSWE, and campus guidelines will be followed to ensure the safety of UCCS social work students. Agencies are also expected to have safety plans in place and to share this information during the student's agency orientation. The [Interruption of Practicum Policy](#) outlines how the department will support students should an emergency or crisis occur requiring an interruption in placements.

Physical Restraints

The UCCS Department of Social Work recognizes that in some organizations the use of physical restraints is a necessary part of ensuring the safety of clients and staff. We encourage students to attend available training that allow them the opportunity to learn the proper use of restraints; however, students are not to participate directly in physically restraining clients. They may, however, be involved in verbal de-escalation, as appropriate.

Post-Incident Student Safety Procedures

If an incident occurs in which a student is personally threatened or hurt, it is the student's responsibility to notify the Practicum Instructor immediately. The Practicum Instructor, agency contact person, or agency director should then contact the BSW or MSW Practicum Director immediately to discuss what actions the agency and UCCS Social Work Department should take to ensure the student's physical and emotional well-being in the wake of the incident and moving forward.

The BSW or MSW Practicum Director will document the incident and the steps taken to address it and will meet with the student and faculty advisor to assess the student's readiness to return to the practicum and any other issues relevant to the situation. The BSW or MSW Practicum Director may alert the UCCS Department of Social Work Chair, College of Public Service Dean, or College of Public Service Associate Dean about incidents and concerns on an as-needed basis.

GUIDELINES REGARDING STUDENTS PERFORMING PRIVATE PRACTICE

Students and Private Practice

UCCS strongly discourages bachelors and masters-level students from engaging in private independent practice of psychotherapy or counseling concurrent with their social work education. Students who choose to practice psychotherapy with private clients during their social work education assume sole responsibility for the care and treatment of those clients. UCCS, its faculty, and staff, assume no responsibility for the care and treatment of students' private practice clients. This policy statement and guidelines are not meant to prohibit or restrict students from agency employment in social work, mental health, or related human service organizations during their graduate education.

Definition of Terms

As used here, "private independent practice" refers to the delivery of psychotherapeutic services by a mental health practitioner on a fee-for-service basis, independent of a UCCS-approved agency structure, whether practices as a sole endeavor or group enterprise, business partnership, or as an owner or employee of a professional service corporation. This includes private work done under the contract, auspices, and/or supervision of a psychotherapist or clinical social worker (whether licensed or unlicensed) in private practice.

Guidelines for Social Work Students Performing Private Practice

For those social work students who choose to see "private practice clients" while enrolled at UCCS, the following guidelines shall apply:

- The Colorado State Board of Social Work Examiners regulates the practice of social work, including prevention, assessment, diagnosis, and intervention with individual, family, group, organizational, and societal problems. In addition, the Colorado State Board of Registered Psychotherapists regulates the practice of psychotherapy by registered therapists. Students in private practice are expected to conform to all applicable Colorado laws and regulations [see C.R.S. 12-43-101 et seq.] and regulations of the Colorado State Board of Social Work Examiners and the Colorado State Board of Registered Psychotherapists. This includes registering in the Colorado database directory of registered psychotherapists, taking a jurisprudence examination or workshop, using a mandatory disclosure form with clients, and practicing only within their competency and training and within generally accepted standards of care. In addition, students are expected to practice according to the NASW Code of Ethics, and the clinical standards determined by the social work profession.
- The name of the University of Colorado Colorado Springs Social Work Program may not be stated in conjunction with "MSW candidate", "BSW candidate", "social work candidate", or "social work intern" for the purposes of representing a student's competence or qualifications to engage in private practice, in advertising, or recruiting private practice clients.
- Students are prohibited from using private practice clients to fulfill any UCCS academic course or practicum education assignment. Students' private practice may not be used as a work site or practicum placement setting. UCCS faculty, staff, and practicum instructors will not supervise, either voluntarily or on a fee-for-service basis, students' clinical work with private practice clients. Students are prohibited from transferring or referring clients seen in a practicum placement agency or setting to their own private practice.

- If a student receives a sustained violation of professional and ethical standards, legal violation, or judgment of professional misconduct or negligence which has occurred in the context of private psychotherapy practice, they shall notify the Social Work Program Chair within five (5) working days of the determination that the complaint has merit. In the event the Chair is absent or unavailable, the student shall notify their academic advisor and/or the relevant BSW or MSW Program Director.
- As defined here, a sustained violation is an allegation or complaint which has been duly investigated and been determined to have merit by a court of law, state regulatory body, agency or organization, or a professional association's ethics committee or peer review committee. Evidence that a violation has been sustained includes termination of employment by an agency for unprofessional and/or unethical behavior, malpractice suit, ethical sanctions imposed by a professional association (e.g., NASW) for unprofessional and/or unethical behavior, any judgment or disciplinary action taken by the State Board of Social Work Examiners or the State Board of Registered Psychotherapists, and conviction for violation of Colorado laws regarding the practice of mental health.

Note: The titles "social worker", "registered social worker", licensed social worker", "licensed clinical social worker", and "licensed independent social worker", and their abbreviations "RSW", "LSW", "LISW, and "LCSW", are legally restricted to only those persons who have successfully passed the state's licensing or registration process. The practice of psychotherapy by social workers is restricted to persons holding an LCSW, or an LSW who are being supervised by a LCSW.

RESOLVING PROBLEMS IN PRACTICUM

Process for Addressing Concerns

The practicum placement is an integral part of the student's educational experience and preparation for professional practice. Performance in the practicum is a critical indicator of readiness for professional practice and is a key element of the BSW/MSW program. It is important that concerns arising in the practicum placement be discussed early, and that feedback be given regularly.

Concerns related to practicum placements may be raised by students, practicum liaisons, practicum instructors, task managers, practicum faculty, other UCCS faculty, or the Practicum Education Program. A student should convey concerns related to practicum placement directly to their agency practicum instructors. If, for some reason, the student believes this is not possible, they may discuss the concerns with the practicum liaison or director instead. In many cases, the agency practicum instructor, practicum faculty, or practicum liaison may coach the student in resolving the problem. The practicum liaison will be responsible for monitoring the progress of any attempted resolutions. The agency practicum instructor should be the first to intervene when a student is experiencing problems in the practicum placement. If the issues are not resolved in a timely manner, or result in actual or potential harm, the agency practicum instructor must notify the practicum faculty. The practicum faculty must keep the Practicum Director apprised of the situation.

Whenever possible, the following steps should be taken to resolve problems in a practicum placement:

1. The student and/or the agency practicum instructor identifies the problem and attempts to resolve it by meeting together to discuss the problem and possible solutions.
2. If the problem is not resolved, the student and/or agency practicum instructor consult with the practicum faculty, and another attempt is made to resolve the problem.
3. If the problem is still not resolved, the practicum student, practicum instructor, and practicum faculty will meet to discuss a remediation plan at the agency level to address the problem. The remediation plan should be a comprehensive problem-solving plan of action, including specific time frames for resolution. Within a week following the meeting, the practicum faculty documents that plan and distributes it to the student, agency practicum instructor, BSW/MSW Practicum Director, and the student's academic adviser. A remediation plan at the agency level is required whenever a student is at risk of failing to meet the requirements related to a specific competency or competencies.
4. If necessary, additional meetings may occur involving the student and the Practicum Education Office and/or other UCCS faculty.
5. If it is determined at any point that the problem resolution requires that a student change practicum placement sites, the BSW/MSW Practicum Director will facilitate this process.
6. In a situation in which a student is perceived to have caused actual or potential harm to clients or client systems, the student may be immediately removed from the practicum placement upon the recommendation of the agency Practicum Instructor, the Practicum Faculty and/or the Practicum Director. If initiated by the agency, this action requires discussion with the Practicum Director. If such emergency action is required, the issue will be referred to the Program Retention Committee and the Termination of Enrollment Due to Ethical Breaches Policy will be followed.

7. At the initiation of a referral to the Program Retention Committee, a student may be withdrawn from the practicum placement.
8. If a student remains in practicum following a review by the Program Retention Committee, the student must complete their practicum placement in a pre-approved agency with an on-site MSW. The number of hours that may or may not be credited from the original practicum placement will be determined on an individual basis.
9. Continued lack of success in the practicum placement environment following multiple documented steps for remedial action may result in failure of the Practicum Seminar Course.

Students who wish to appeal against the decision to terminate must first write a letter of appeal to the BSW or MSW Program Director. If the dispute is not resolved by the Program Director, students may then write a letter of appeal to the Department Chair. If the dispute is not resolved by the Department Chair, BSW and MSW students must follow the UCCS procedures outlined by the [Dean of Students guide for Student Conduct](#).

If concerns arise related to an agency or practicum instructor, the Agency Problem Resolution Process will be followed.

Agency Problem Resolution Process

Difficulties or concerns can occasionally arise related to an agency or a practicum instructor that will be addressed directly by the UCCS Practicum Education Office because the issues are beyond the scope of what is deemed appropriate for a student to address with his/her/their agency practicum instructor or the agency without assistance. The practicum placement is an integral part of the student's educational experience and preparation for professional practice. The experience, training, and supervision provided by the practicum placement agencies are critical to this process. It is important that any concerns related to an agency's ability to provide a quality learning experience for a student, including appropriate levels of safety, are discussed and addressed, and that a plan for resolution of the concerns at the agency is mutually agreed upon by the practicum team and the agency, and implemented by the agency.

Concerns related to an agency may be raised by students, practicum liaisons, agency practicum instructors, the agency itself, or the Practicum Education Office. It is expected that students communicate any concerns they have directly to their practicum liaison. Once a concern has been raised, the Practicum Education Office will take steps to address and resolve. Concerns may become known because of a liaison's observation of the student and the practicum placement, a student's report of their experience while at the agency, because of others involved with the agency, or as a result of information shared by the student at the end of the year in the program evaluations they complete. Concerns may include inadequate supervision, inadequate or inappropriate tasks or responsibilities, safety concerns, microaggressions, or anything that is seriously impacting the student attaining their learning goals.

The goal of the Practicum Education Office is always to assess accurately and work collaboratively with the agency to resolve concerns, and in a fashion that maintains the quality of the professional relationship between the agency and UCCS.

The Practicum Education Office will take the following steps to resolve problems or concerns with a practicum agency:

1. Once a concern is brought to the attention of the Practicum Education Office, the designated practicum team member will consult with the faculty assigned to the student and other involved practicum members to get accurate and thorough information to assess the nature of the concern and what would be required for resolution. When appropriate, a student will be consulted.
2. If a student is currently at an agency, it will be determined whether the concern is serious enough to take immediate action.
3. If appropriate, the Practicum Faculty will have a discussion with members of the agency to work towards a solution of the problem or concern.
4. If, in consultation with the Practicum Education Office, it is deemed out of the scope of the Practicum Faculty's role due to the seriousness of the concerns, the BSW/MSW Practicum Director will develop a plan for addressing the concern which could include any or all of the following:
 - a. The BSW/MSW Practicum Director speaking with the appropriate individuals at the agency.
 - b. The BSW/MSW Practicum Director scheduling a meeting with the individuals at the agency, which may or may not include the liaison.
 - c. Temporarily changing the status of the agency to "under review" or "temporarily not accepting students", so there is opportunity to resolve the concern prior to placing another student with the practicum agency.
 - d. Assessing whether the concern is serious enough to warrant removing the student from the practicum placement because of safety concerns or significant compromises to the learning goals.
 - e. Assessing whether there has been a pattern of concerns at an agency with previous attempts to resolve.
5. A plan for resolution of the concern is to be mutually agreed upon by the agency and the Practicum Education Office and implemented by the agency. Specifics of this plan will be documented and distributed to all relevant parties. If resolution is reached, the agency will be made "active" as a potential placement for future students. Resolution plans could potentially include any of the following and/or any other adjustments that would respond to the presenting concerns:
 - a. Adjusting the supervisory plan to meet the needs of students and the requirements of UCCS Social Work.
 - b. Adjusting the tasks and responsibilities a student will be assigned in order to meet the expected competencies.
 - c. Reducing the number of students placed at an agency.
6. If a concern is unable to be resolved to the satisfaction of the practicum team, and the concerns would seriously impact the quality of the learning or safety of the student, the Practicum Directors may decide to "close" an agency for future students unless or until a satisfactory solution can be agreed upon. It will also be assessed whether further actions are necessary.
7. If necessary, additional meetings may also occur with the Practicum Director. Once a resolution has been reached, ongoing evaluation will occur to assess the efficacy of the plan. This will occur in consultation with the agency, the liaison, and the Practicum Education Director.

Termination of Enrollment Due to Ethical Breaches

Students can be dismissed from the UCCS Department of Social Work for various infractions that constitute ethical breaches. These behaviors / choices can lead to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the program. The following list of behaviors presents some of the most important of these infractions but is not an exhaustive list:

1. Documented behavior that is inconsistent with the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers;
2. Documented problems in behavior or performance, which raise questions from the faculty or practicum instructor about the student's suitability for professional social work. The following list is not exhaustive:
 - a. Forced or coerced sexual behavior;
 - b. Sexual activity with clients including, but not limited to, kissing, fondling, or sexual intercourse;
 - c. Physical actions, such as hitting, spanking, or slapping, directed at clients, students, faculty, or staff;
 - d. Physical or emotional threats directed toward clients, students, faculty, or staff.
 - e. Acceptance of clients' gifts or money that are not considered standard payment for services received on behalf of the student's agency or practicum setting; students shall not ask for nor communicate an expectation of gifts from clients;
 - f. Illegal or unethical behavior that limits or takes away clients' rights, that results in financial, material, or emotional loss for clients, or that results in financial, material, or emotional gain for social work students; and
 - g. Sexual harassment.
3. Plagiarism, cheating, or any other form of academic dishonesty or disruption;
4. Failure of student to maintain a 3.0 GPA beyond one semester of academic probation; and
5. Failure to follow policies and rules as outlined in the UCCS Social Work Student Handbook or as outlined in the UCCS Social Work Practicum Handbook.

Concerns regarding unethical student behavior in the practicum placement will be addressed by the corresponding BSW or MSW Program Retention Committee. The Program Retention Committee will consist of 1) the student's advisor, 2) the BSW/MSW Practicum Director, and 3) the Practicum Faculty member teaching the practicum seminar course. A Practicum Liaison or Task Manager assigned to the student for supervision may also participate in the committee at the direction of the BSW/MSW Practicum Director.

The Program Retention Committee will review oral and written reports of the student's alleged unethical behavior. The student will also be given the opportunity to address the committee. The committee will then deliberate and decide whether to dismiss the student. If a decision is made to dismiss, the student will be given a letter explaining the rationale behind the decision. If a decision is made not to dismiss, a remediation plan will be drafted for the student outlining specific requirements that must be met for the student to continue in practicum.

Students who wish to appeal against the decision to terminate must first write a letter of appeal to the Department chair. If the dispute is not resolved by the Department chair, students must follow the Graduate School procedures outlined by the [Dean of Students guide for Student Conduct](#).

Interruption of Practicum Policy

The UCCS Department of Social Work has developed a plan to address temporary disruption to students' social work practicum placements due to national or local events such as communicable diseases, natural disasters, and/or civil unrest.

If students are advised by their agency, supervisor, UCCS, and/or government to not attend their practicum placement, or if safety concerns warrant a temporary disruption in practicum placement, students should immediately consult with both their Practicum Liaison and their Agency Practicum Instructor(s).

In efforts to fulfill the student's practicum hour requirements and educational competencies during temporary practicum placement stoppages, we may provide alternative Practicum learning activities that can be completed off site.

This policy is meant to address short-term practicum placement disruptions. If the practicum placement stoppage continues beyond a 30-day period, a review will be conducted by the Practicum Office to determine the most appropriate response to support students in completing their Practicum placement requirements.

Alternate Learning Activities

Agency Practicum Instructors and Agency Task Managers should assign students off-site alternative practicum learning activities that the student may complete in the event of a temporary practicum disruption. Examples of alternative practicum learning activities are listed below.

- **Supervision:** Weekly supervision using Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or other teleconferencing applications.
- **Meetings with individuals, families, and groups** utilizing teleconferencing applications that can be accessed via computer, tablet, and/or telephone; provided teleconferencing applications meet any agency requirements regarding HIPPA and/or confidentiality.
- **Agency Trainings:** develop trainings that will benefit the agency (e.g., self-care, ethics, etc.).
- **Groups/Workshops for Clients:** develop curriculum for future implementation with clients (e.g., life skills, grief, trauma, domestic violence, etc.).
- **Written Materials for Clients or Community:** develop handouts/flyers/brochures (e.g., explaining voting rights, informed consent policies, etc.).
- **Organizational Policy Review:** review agency policies with suggestions/recommendations where appropriate (e.g., safety policies, diversity policies, use of social media, utilization of technology, etc.).
- **Legislative Policy Review:** review relevant laws and policies impacting the population served by the agency (e.g., Indian Child Welfare Act, Emergency Mental Health Holds, Homeless Camping Ban, etc.) and provide a synopsis of key takeaways.
- **Advocacy Activities:** write a policy brief; write a letter to the editor about a policy issue impacting the agency; complete an analysis of a political candidates' plans for policy change; prepare key talking points on an issue that others may use; read the social work voting toolkit (<https://votingissocialwork.org/#>) and develop a plan for implementation within the agency.
- **Literature Review:** conduct a literature review on a specific topic relevant to practicum placement (e.g., effectiveness of an intervention, how interruption of services impacts mental health or economic stability, etc.).
- **Grants:** research potential grant opportunities and/or prepare aspects of the grant writing.

- **Community Networking/Resource Development:** teleconference with various service providers, participating in resource mapping, and developing a list of resources for clients with services offered, referral process, etc.
- **Complete Online Trainings:** complete assigned trainings and provide a certification of completion, a short, written reflection, and/or prepare a presentation to disseminate knowledge gained.

Practicum Instructors and Task Managers are encouraged to add additional activities and trainings to this list, as is relevant and appropriate for their agency, population, and setting. All activities should be pre-approved by the agency Practicum Instructor prior to the student beginning a task.

