

Acknowledgement of Risks in the Field Practicum

This document is designed to inform you of the potential risks associated with the field practicum, which is required for graduation. It is the Social Work Program's belief that you have a right to be informed of some of the risks associated with this aspect of your educational and professional preparation and that with proper knowledge and preparation, risks can be minimized.

1. **Liability insurance.** It is mandatory that students carry professional liability insurance. Coverage is available through membership in the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). Membership applications are available through the Social Work Program secretary. Because of the time required for processing membership's applications, it is recommended that students join NASW during the first or second semester of their junior year.

An important aspect of professional practice is knowing the limits of your knowledge and skills and avoiding situations that are not within your area of competence. Whenever you have a question about the handling of a particular case and whether or not a given intervention is appropriate, see your Field Instructor.

2. **Automobile liability insurance.** If you will be using your personal vehicle in the field, it is recommended that you check with your insurance company for a clear understanding of your coverage. Ask specifically what coverage you have if something happens while transporting a client. The Social Work Program recommends that you not use your personal vehicle to transport clients. If clients are to be transported, an agency vehicle should be used.
3. **TB Skin Test (PPD-S).** TB has seen an increase in recent years. If you anticipate a field practicum setting that serves populations at risk for TB, it is recommended that you take this test prior to entering the field. Some settings may actually require this test.
4. **Client office visits.** Sometimes you may have a client in your office that becomes agitated or hostile. It is important that you discuss such matters with your Field Instructor early in your practicum to be informed of agency policy and recommended courses of action should such an event happen.
5. **Institutional setting.** Mental health and correctional institutional settings serve a client population whose behavior may be unpredictable. It is important that you learn strategies for handling clients whose behavior become threatening. Whenever you feel uncomfortable with a client, inform your supervisor. It is acceptable to have your supervisor or another staff person accompany you when visiting such clients.
6. **Home Visits.** It is not uncommon for social workers in a variety of social service settings to conduct home visits. Such visits do expose you to risks. It is important that all home visits be made with the full knowledge of your Field Instructor including time of departure, time of return, other activities while on the trip, etc. Do not conduct a home visit when you feel uncomfortable or threatened in the situation. Return to the agency and report your experiences to your supervisor. Beware of dogs or other household pets that might be a threat. Do not make a visit when the presence of alcohol is detected. It may be appropriate for you to make visits accompanied by your supervisor. Do not take risks. Know who to call or what steps to take if you should experience a vehicle breakdown.

7. **After hours meetings.** Some social service settings have activities that occur beyond normal office hours. Be aware of the location or neighborhood where such activities take place, note street lighting, open spaces, shrubs, and other growth that might impair vision. It is suggested that you always be accompanied by your supervisor or someone else when going to your car after dark. Don't take risks.

8. **Hepatitis-B Vaccine.** If you anticipate a placement setting where there is the chance of being exposed to blood-borne pathogens, it is recommended that you get this vaccination. This involves a series of three injections over a 6 month time period of time. The second injection is given 1 month following the first with the third coming 5 months later. Given the time requirements for this protection, it is important that you begin immunizations at a time that would give you protection by the time you enter the field. Consultation with the school nurse or personal physician is advised.

I have read the above, and understand that the field practicum does present some risks not all of which have been named. I also understand that prudent choices and exercising caution can minimize these risks. I further recognize that it is my responsibility to become informed of agency policy and practices regarding the above situations.

Student Signature

Date

Field Coordinator Signature

Date