**MSW SPECIALIZED PRACTICE YEAR PRACTICUM APPLICATION**

University of Vermont

Graduate Social Work Program

**Primary Objectives of Specialized Practice MSW Year (SPMSW) Practicum Education**

Your SPMSW placement must have learning opportunities that will enable you to meet the Specialized Practice Year’s transformative social work objectives by the year’s end. This means that your placement must provide the opportunity for advanced and transformative social work practice—greater autonomy as well as increased depth and breadth of content as compared to your FMSW practicum experience. You can find the course objectives in the course syllabus (SWSS 6890), under the “Syllabi” tab, as well as the advanced practice behaviors associated with these objectives in the SPMSW Ending Evaluation (under the “Students” tab in “Evaluations”). Both documents can be found on the Department of Social Work’s Practicum Education Resource [website](https://www.uvm.edu/cess/socialwork/resources-social-work-students-field-instructors-and-supervisors).

**Matching Process:**

Once you turn in this application, you will meet individually with the Practicum Education Coordinator (or their designee) where together you will identify placements potentially of interest to you. Once you have been approved for an interview for these placements, the Practicum Education Coordinator will provide you with contact information for these Practicum Instructors, with whom you will then connect to schedule interviews in the hopes of a placement “offer.” Once a mutually agreed-upon placement decision has been reached (the Practicum Instructor has confirmed their interest and intent to supervise you, and you have accepted this offer), you will write a Letter of Confirmation to formalize your intent to complete your internship at that particular site. A sample letter of confirmation can be found on the Department of Social Work Practicum Education Resources [website](https://www.uvm.edu/cess/socialwork/resources-social-work-students-field-instructors-and-supervisors) under “Students/Applications” or in the Practicum Education manual. **It is recommended that students write thank you notes to the Practicum Instructors or other agency personnel who took time to meet with them.**

**The goal is for you to confirm a placement by April 15 in order for you to begin accruing hours with the start of Fall classes in late August.**

**Hours**

Getting a graduate degree in Social Work requires extensive time in practicum in order to earn credit. Social work faculty in BSW and MSW programs across the world understand the commitment this requires from students. Therefore, we suggest students begin thinking and planning ahead of time about the demands of the addition of **15-16 hours/week** to students’ academic schedules required for successful completion of their practicum, which is 450 hours by the end of the school year.

Specialized Practice Year Practicum (SWSS 6890) is a year-long academic course (September through May) and therefore the student’s “time in the course” typically looks and feels different from a traditionally structured class taken on campus. When students start in the Fall semester, they remain in the same placement until the end of the academic year (the completion of the Spring semester). This means that there is no “course ending” in December or “course beginning” in January (though students are expected to completed all Fall semester assignments by the end of classes in December, and Spring semester assignments by the end of classes in May; see the course syllabus on the UVM Department of Social Work Practicum Education Resources [website](https://www.uvm.edu/cess/socialwork/resources-social-work-students-field-instructors-and-supervisors) under the “Syllabi” tab).

To manage the required hours and course length, students and Practicum Instructors are expected to work together to set both a weekly schedule and a broader one for the full academic year. The weekly schedule reflects which days of the week and what hours the student is expected to be in the placement, including supervisory meetings and regularly scheduled agency meetings students are expected to attend (e.g., staff or treatment team meetings, etc.). The full academic year schedule reflects which weeks the student will begin, end, and have planned time away from the work.

Because each agency has unique needs, provides unique services, and has unique hours of service delivery, these scheduling agreements will differ from student to student. Above all, the most important scheduling decisions consider the professional manner in which students begin, take time away from, and put closure to their practicum experiences. In other words, the relationship with and services to those who receive support from a student’s placement agency (“clients”) must always be a priority. Practically speaking, this means a student should not assume that they have no placement responsibilities during school breaks (especially the longer winter break) unless this agreement has been *explicitly* made during the negotiated scheduling process. The scheduling process is a required component of the co-creation, by students and Practicum Instructors, of the Learning Agreement (contract) assignment for the year., and its Spring revision, the Learning Agreement Addendum.

More specific guidance (from the “Student Hours” policy on the UVM Department of Social Work Practicum Education Resources [website](https://www.uvm.edu/cess/socialwork/resources-social-work-students-field-instructors-and-supervisors)):

1. MSW students complete a minimum of 900 hours over two years, or 450 hours each academic year, in their placements between September and May of each respective academic year.
2. Some practicum sites may require more hours than our Practicum Education program’s minimum. In these cases, students must be made aware of this prior to accepting the placement.
3. Students schedule consistent blocks of time in their agency each week so as to complete their hours within 2-3 days.
4. Student hours reflect the “normal business hours” of the agency. *Evening and weekend hours are the exception*, not the rule, and must be approved by the placement Liaison and Practicum Education Coordinator. The rationale for this expectation is that the student’s experience as “member of the agency community” is significant to social work practice skill development. Therefore, it follows that if the student is not consistently interacting with other agency personnel within the agency culture, they miss out on integral learning opportunities.
5. Students either develop their own way to document their hours on a weekly basis or use an agency-defined process to do so. Regardless of the mechanism used, *it is students’ responsibility* to track the number of hours completed for the duration of their time in practicum.
6. Students make up any regularly scheduled time that they miss; there is no built-in allowance for sick or vacation time—students must complete the required hours regardless of the reason for missing. In case of illness or unavoidable absence, the student informs the agency as soon as possible. If the student has an absence of three or more consecutive days from placement, the student and Practicum Instructor immediately notify their placement Liaison. Unless otherwise approved by the Practicum Education Coordinator, students must make up any missed time within the same semester. If a student misses considerable lengths of time, they can make arrangements to make up time before the beginning of the next semester, but only as a result of a meeting that leads to a written plan and approval by the Practicum Instructor, Liaison and student.
7. There may be occasions when it is necessary for students to perform overtime work. When these situations do arise, students will plan for and take compensatory time off in a balanced and professional manner.
8. Any on-call or crisis duty must be pre-approved by the placement Liaison and the Practicum Education Coordinator. No student is to be on call during class time.
9. While occasionally there will be important learning opportunities related to placement that take place during a student’s regularly scheduled classes, students may not be required to miss class in order to attend placement-related meetings or events. Similarly, faculty of academic courses cannot “excuse” students from class for a practicum-related event or responsibility. If a student chooses to miss class for this reason, it is likely their attendance grade in that class will be negatively impacted.
10. Students complete their hours no later than the Friday after the last day of classes in May, and students are expected to be working in the agency at least until the last day of classes (also in May). If a student finds that they “have enough hours” and would like to end early, they must make a formal request which must then be approved by the Practicum Instructor and the placement Liaison. In other words, students may not “work ahead” of their approved schedule just so they can finish their placement weeks ahead of time.
11. That said, students should not be discouraged from working additional hours for the purposes of planning for unexpected absences; students should be aware that they may not need to use these hours for successful completion of their practicum. For example, some students choose to carry a balance of 15-20 hours throughout the year as a back-up, knowing (and accepting) that they may not ever need to use these hours.
12. Students may not count commuting time to/from their placement sites towards their overall required hours.

**COVID-19**

While all remote assignments do count towards students’ required practicum hours, students should assume their internships will be in-person unless otherwise noted and consequently will be required to adhere to their placement organization’s COVID safety precautions. **Students should make the Practicum Education Coordinator aware of any limitations to or concerns about providing in-person services due to COVID-19 at the time of their practicum application submission.**

**Transportation**

**Most placement sites require some form of transportation** not only to and from the site itself but may also require the use of a car during the work day. Our “Placement Location and Distance from Campus” policy (on the UVM Department of Social Work Practicum Education Resources [website](https://www.uvm.edu/cess/socialwork/resources-social-work-students-field-instructors-and-supervisors)) states that we will not place you more than 1 (one) hour of driving distance away from campus unless you request that. **Students should make the Practicum Education Coordinator aware of any preferences for, limitations to or concerns about transportation to/from your placement site at the time of their practicum application submission.** *Please note that without transportation, your options for placement will be extremely limited.*

**Criminal Records**

Students may be required by their placement agency to complete a criminal record or background check with both state and federal law enforcement. If requested to do so, students will need to complete this check in order to have their placement confirmed. Most agencies pay for this process, however some do not. If this is the case, the student will be expected to incur the expense.

It is quite possible that students who have a criminal record, will not be accepted for an internship with some, if not most, or even any, of our approved placements. Students who do have a record should talk with the Practicum Education Coordinator about this *as soon as they begin their practicum application process*. This allows the student to consider how they may ethically enter into the placement process regarding past convictions. Please note that **ALL students with a criminal record are required to discuss this with their matched placement personnel prior to accepting any placement offer**. Therefore, this must happen no later than April 15th of the Spring prior to Fall enrollment in SWSS 6890 Specialized Practice Year Practicum.

The Practicum Education Coordinator will make reasonable efforts to match the student successfully with a placement agency; however, the Department of Social Work cannot guarantee that students with a criminal record will be able to be matched with an agency and thus enroll in the required practicum course, which will prevent students from being able to finish their MSW degree.

**Resume**

*Please attach an up-to-date resume, including all social work-related employment, internship or volunteer experiences*. This resume will be sent ahead of time to potential Practicum Instructors. More specific guidance about the matching process can be found above, and resume requirements below.

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**Directions:** Please add your text to the gray boxes below.

[ ]  ***Please check this box to acknowledge you have read and fully understand the application text above in its entirety.* (Lingering questions can be directed to the Practicum Education Coordinator.)**

Name:

Address:

UVM Email:

Home Email:

Cell:

**Inquiry**

1. Please share your individual thread of inquiry/focus that you will be weaving into your Transformative Social Work concentration. Please include this even if you are still developing your ideas. (Please keep comments brief, 200 words max.)

1. Please share your ideal vision for a Specialized Practice Year placement. Include what you hope to learn, what kind of setting you would like to learn in, and/or with what population you would like to work. (You may also indicate here, with a brief explanation, if there are other factors that feel equally or more relevant to you, such as Practicum Instructor supervision style, work culture/environment, placement location, schedule, etc.).

**Note:** If students have specific ideas for agencies/organizations/programs they are interested in being placed in, please include these ideas here (even if you don’t believe UVM’s Department of Social Work has an existing relationship with this site).

Alternately, if students are interested in completing their practicum within an existing employment setting, please check this box and the Practicum Education Coordinator will follow up with you with a separate application for this purpose. [ ]

1. What is your transportation situation?

If you have a car, would you being willing to drive for practicum if needed?

[ ]  Yes [ ]  No

If yes, how far (e.g., miles/minutes/etc.)?

1. What special skills, talents, certifications/training, relevant life experience do you have that could aid in the placement matching process? Please list them briefly here.

1. Please list any specific concerns you might have (for example, criminal record, COVID risk, fields of practice or populations that might *not* be a good fit, etc.).

1. What other information would you want the Practicum Education Coordinator to consider when planning for your placement?

**Release of Information**

I agree that the information I provide in this application and my current resume is a true and accurate representation of myself and my experiences. This application and current resume may be shared as needed with UVM Social Work faculty and prospective Practicum Instructors to facilitate placement planning and matching.

Student Signature

Date

**Please attach a copy of your CURRENT RESUME (please send resume as a .docx or .pdf; file saved as “Lastname, Firstinitial. Resume”) and email this application to** **jsienkew@uvm.edu** **as soon as possible.**

**Thank you,**

**Jean Sienkewicz**

**Practicum Education Coordinator**

**jean.sienkewicz@uvm.edu**