

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

### What is the difference between “Practicum” and “Internship Placement”?

- The “Practicum” refers to the total educational experience, consisting of both a weekly integrative Foundation/Advanced seminar, an internship placement, and for the BSW students a capstone.
- “Internship Placement” is the location at which you are doing your internship.

### When do I complete my Practicum Internship?

- Students complete their practicum internship during the Senior year starting at the beginning of the fall semester through the end of the Spring semester in the same site.
- Applications begin in the fall; the Practicum Team starts seeking placements in the Spring/Summer.
- Students who return incomplete practicum applications and/or do not actively collaborate with Practicum Education staff may risk delayed entrance into the internship and subsequent delay in completing Practicum requirements.
- **IMPORTANT:** Advance discussion with employers, family, and other support systems to consider adjustments to schedules and responsibilities is often very helpful in facilitating a successful practicum placement experience. Your education is a time commitment, and it is important to be prepared to be successful.

### How many hours are required?

- BSW placements are a total of 480 hours; 240 hours per semester; this includes up to 18.75 hours each semester for capstone and up to 18.75 hours for active participation in the weekly integrative practicum seminar.

- **Please note all MA School-Based social work internships require 450 hours to be completed.**

**What characterizes a BSW practicum education program?**

- BSW Foundation internships are first-year practicum courses that address generalist practice skills.

**What type of placement settings are available?**

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|---|----------------------|
| --Inpatient/outpatient clinical support | --School social work |
| --Community Based Programs              | --Hospital Settings  |
| --Corrections/Criminal Justice          | --Housing Programs   |
| --Child Protection Agency               | --Homeless shelters  |
| --Substance Use Treatment programs      | --Case Management    |
| --Domestic Violence Support Programs    | --Nursing Homes      |
| --Residential Programs                  | --Hospice Programs   |
| --Veterans Support Services             | --Public Assistance  |
| --Early Childhood Education             | --Public Welfare     |

**Can I choose my internship placement?**

- Identifying an Internship Placement is done in collaboration with the Practicum Education team. The Practicum team will review your interests from your application and possibly set up a time to meet to identify your interests.
- A student, SHOULD ALWAYS, coordinate, contact, or arrange their internship placement with the Practicum Team. Several factors go into identifying an appropriate placement opportunity, and the Practicum Team’s input and decision are essential to this. It is important that a student understand that the Practicum Education Program staff make final decisions regarding internship placement assignments and those decisions are based on many variables.
- There are occasions where new Agency Affiliations can be created, however, this does take time, and depending on when identified, can impact internship start times.

## **What is the Weekly Integrative Practicum Seminar?**

- This seminar provides students with an opportunity to discuss and compare internship placement experiences, learn from and teach each other, examine personal values and ethical issues in social work practice, and further integrate knowledge and experience through structured assignments, activities, and group processes, which will be connected to assignments in other courses.
- The overall goal of the practicum seminars is to help students make connections between their academic work in social work and their internship experiences.
- In addition, by bringing students together from many different internship settings, the seminars offer an opportunity to broaden each student's exposure to social work career opportunities through the sharing of experiences and ideas in the seminar sessions.
- Students attend this seminar synchronously (either through Zoom or in person as circumstances allow) weekly and remain in the same seminar section during the entire placement (both semesters). The instructor for the Practicum Seminar is also the student's faculty liaison for the practicum placement, conducting site visits and serving as the primary contact between the social work program and the internship instructor for the site.

## **Are there any paid internships?**

- Typically, we do not have paid internships available for students.
- While we wish we consistently had this option, it simply is not available for to everyone.
- In the 2023-2024 school year, we secured one grant (EOHHS) that offers funding for students in public sector internship placements. The grant provides students with a paid internship opportunity.

**\*\*PAID INTERNSHIPS ARE NOT GUARANTEED**

## **\*\*GRANT OPPORTUNITIES CHANGE YEAR TO YEAR**

### **What are the Supervision Requirements?**

- At the BSW Level, any BSW/MSW from an accredited institution, licensure is not required but preferred.
- Our program requires supervisors to have at least two years of post-degree-related work experience.

### **Can students transport clients during their internship?**

- No, they cannot.
- Students are not covered under the Commonwealth's self-insurance policy maintained by Westfield State University for the transportation of clients in their own vehicles or for driving agency-owned vehicles. Standard, personal automobile insurance policies also do not typically cover the transportation of clients in one's own vehicle. Thus, *students are not permitted to transport clients in their own vehicles, nor should they be asked to transport clients in agency vehicles unaccompanied or as the driver of the agency vehicle unless the agency specifically provides insurance that will cover the student under these circumstances.* If students accompany clients in an agency vehicle driven by an agency employee, an additional agency employee, who is the responsible party, should accompany them both.

### **I completed an interview for one site, but I saw another that interested me. I'd like to wait to interview with the other site before I make a decision, can I do that?**

- The Practicum Education Team recommends against this; waiting and interviewing with multiple sites could result in the loss of availability of a previously offered internship and is all-around problematic when identifying internships for all students.

## **Where are placements located and how far will I have to travel for my placement?**

- Students should expect to complete their internship placements in a location that is ***within no more than a 60-mile radius of Westfield State University***. It is crucial that students understand this does not mean that the Practicum Education Program can develop a placement in every location that is within a 60-mile radius. The Social Work Department has affiliation agreements with over two hundred field placement sites within this geographic area and continues to develop additional sites each year. While some students complete placements within a short distance from their home, other students will need to commute to access specific kinds of settings that are not available closer to home or WSU.

## **What if I have a documented disability and expect to request reasonable accommodations in my internship placement?**

- You must contact the Banacos Academic Center on Campus to determine potential specific internship accommodations for that documented disability before the internship placement process can proceed. Written specifics of those potential accommodations must be provided to the Practicum Education Staff by Banacos Academic Center before your field placement process. It is very useful to create a collaborative process between the Practicum Program, the Banacos Academic Center, and the student, particularly since possible internship placement sites will require clarity of reasonable accommodations that are being requested as part of the interview and decision process. *It is important to note that accommodations in the classroom may not be accommodated by an internship placement agency.*

### **Can I do my internship placement at my place of employment?**

- Students can request to complete their internship placements at their place of employment. There are specific requirements, including an additional application for an employment-based placement. These requirements can be found in the BSW Practicum Education Manual.

### **I must work and can't get time off. Can I do my placement in the evening and on weekends?**

- There are a *very* limited number of placements that include *some* hours in the evening and/or on weekends and, like other placements, these change from year to year. Your BSW class schedule for the senior year is designed so you are in class on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This schedule intentionally leaves Monday, Wednesday, and Friday open for you to complete your internship hours during business hours.

### **Do I stay in my practicum placement during the break between the fall and spring semesters?**

- Students are expected to negotiate practicum placement hours during the semester break directly with their practicum instructor and in consideration of client and internship site policies and obligations. Students are encouraged to collaborate with their faculty practicum liaison regarding any uncertainty about internship placement during the semester break.

### **I saw something in the Practicum Manual about “readiness for practicum” .... what does that mean?**

- Students in the BSW Program will generally be considered to be ready to enter practicum at the scheduled time for their chosen sequence of study. The social work faculty recognizes that all students come to the internship experience with some areas of

strength and some areas that need further development. Students are not expected (and should not expect) to be expert practitioners at the beginning, or at the end, of their internship placement experiences. However, it is the responsibility of the Social Work Department, the Practicum Education Program, and each student in the program to make sure that students do not enter their practicum until they have achieved the level of knowledge and skill that is required for the protection and promotion of client, agency, and student well-being. For this reason, the Practicum Education Program may, upon occasion, recommend that a student delay entering into the practicum education portion of the BSW Program. The Practicum Education Manual discusses in detail the potential reasons and circumstances that may result in a student not entering the internship at a particular time in their education.

**I have some concerns about immunizations and/or drug tests. Will that keep me from getting an internship placement?**

- Many organizations require students to provide proof of immunizations (including COVID-19 vaccination) and additional requirements regarding medical clearances and/or drug screens before acceptance. Your internship application will ask you about these kinds of situations and it is crucial that you work closely with the Practicum Education Program and that you understand some placements may not be available.

**I still have questions after reading this FAQ document. What should I do?**

- Much more detail is available in our Practicum Education Manual. You are expected to review this manual in full before applying for practicum and throughout your participation in an internship. You can also view the Practicum Application and Employment-Based Practicum Application at the same site. Please note that these

documents and manuals are updated at least annually, so you are advised to always ensure that you are reviewing the most recent version (all versions are dated).

The link is: <https://www.westfield.ma.edu/academics/social-work-department/field-education>

**You are always welcome to be in touch with a member of the Field Education Staff:**

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