

**INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES  
ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Policy Number: GA-14

Effective Date: February 1, 2023

Version: 2.0

**POLICY TITLE: MSW IV-E SCHOLARS EMPLOYMENT-BASED PRACTICUM**

**OVERVIEW:** The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) encourages and supports its staff to improve their education and employment status. It is important to exercise joint planning between the Title IV-E Academic Institution’s Social Work Program (Social Work Program), the student, and DCS when a staff member participates in an employment-based practicum. While education and furthering employment status is important, it is necessary to ensure employees are fulfilling their responsibility to clients served by DCS. The employment-based practicum must not conflict with DCS employment.

**I. DEFINITIONS**

- A. Agency-Based Field Instructor: This individual is a DCS employee who provides weekly field instruction and practice supervision to the Scholar at the Scholar’s placement site; assists with planning and approving of the learning activities; and evaluates the student’s performance and level of competency on behaviors related to the planned learning activities. This person must have a Master of Social Work (MSW) Degree with two (2) or more years of professional experience to serve in this role and meet the university criteria to serve in this capacity.
- B. Field Coordinator: The person at the Scholar’s university who works with the Scholar to locate and approve an appropriate field placement.
- C. Field Liaison: This individual is the practicum course instructor of record who serves as the point of contact between DCS and the university when issues arise in the field. The Field Liaison provides consultation to Agency-Based Field Instructors and the student to ensure integration between classroom knowledge and field practice. The Field Liaison oversees the progression of learning throughout the practicum, reviews and approves planned learning activities developed by the Scholar and Agency-Based Field Instructor, plans and facilitates routine seminars, and plans and facilitates course evaluations in conjunction with the student and Agency-Based Field Instructor to assign the course grade. The Field Liaison also addresses performance concerns and is the academic institutions point of contact.
- D. Off-Site Field Instructor: This individual provides educational supervision to the Scholar when there is not an Agency-Based Field Instructor available.
- E. Practicum: Educationally directed practice experience under the direct supervision of an approved Agency-Based Field Instructor or Off-Site Field Instructor, as required by the School of Social Work.
- F. Scholar: This individual is a DCS employee and a student who has been selected to participate in the Title IV-E Scholars program.

**II. REFERENCES**

- [Council on Social Work Education \(CSWE\)](#)
- [DCS Administrative Policies](#)
- [DCS Child Welfare Policies](#)

- [DCS Code of Conduct](#)
- [MSW Scholars Application Process](#)
- [National Association of Social Workers \(NASW\) Code of Ethics](#)

### **III. STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE**

- A. To qualify for the MSW Title IV-E Scholars Program, a DCS employee must:
  1. Be employed by DCS for a minimum of two (2) years;
  2. Have satisfactory performance appraisals; and
  3. Be accepted into a participating part-time evening MSW Program (see [MSW Scholars Application Process](#)).
  
- B. DCS staff will mentor the Scholar participating in an employment-based practicum and ensure the Scholar's educational needs are met without compromising the business needs of the work unit.
- C. All practicum activities performed must not interfere with DCS operations.
- D. Scholars are encouraged to observe, make suggestions, and participate in the decision-making process.
- E. Joint planning between the Social Work Program, the Scholar, and the Scholar's supervisor is required when:
  1. A Scholar requests to complete an employment-based practicum with the Social Work Program in the practicum planning process, and
  2. Learning activities are available at DCS that also satisfy the practicum course requirements and Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) competencies.
  
- F. Practicum planning should begin when the Scholar begins the Social Work Program. A meeting must be scheduled and include the:
  1. Scholar; and
  2. Field Coordinator, once assigned to work with the Scholar.
  
- G. Employment-based practicum planning must occur prior to the approval of the employment-based practicum process with the Social Work Program. A meeting must be held and include the:
  1. Scholar;
  2. Scholar's Supervisor;
  3. DCS Local Office Director (LOD), Regional Manager (RM), or Deputy Director; and
  4. Field Coordinator assigned to work with the IV-E Scholar.
  
- H. The Scholar's practicum assignments must satisfy CSWE competencies and be supported by the Social Work Program's curriculum and assessment process.

### **IV. PROCEDURE**

- A. The Scholar will follow the procedures as outlined by the School of Social Work MSW Program.
- B. The Scholar will:
  1. Submit practicum tasks to the School of Social Work for approval;

2. Work under the supervision of an Agency-Based Field Instructor or Off-Site Field Instructor;
  3. Perform practicum activities that do not adversely impact DCS operations;
  4. Discuss the following with the Field Coordinator during the practicum planning meeting:
    - a. The Scholar's desire to complete an employment-based practicum,
    - b. Learning activities needed to satisfy the practicum course requirements and CSWE competencies, and
    - c. The DCS office's ability to support the course work and practicum activities the Scholar needs to complete to meet the Social Work Program's requirements.
  5. Discuss the following with the Scholar's Supervisor, LOD or RM, and the Field Coordinator during the employment-based practicum planning meeting:
    - a. Projects and activities available to the Scholar that will be the focus of the practicum,
    - b. Potential scheduling issues, and
    - c. Any DCS operation issues that may impact the Scholar's ability to meet the practicum requirements.
- C. The DCS Agency-Based Field Instructor or Off-Site Field Instructor will:
1. Ensure practicum activities are clearly presented as learning opportunities for the Scholar;
  2. Ensure the Scholar is able to demonstrate the Scholar's knowledge of and ability to implement the Practice Model in the practicum activities;
  3. Collaborate with the Scholar's Supervisor to provide feedback to the Scholar;
  4. Communicate with the Scholar as follows:
    - a. Provide supervision to the Scholar for a minimum of one (1) hour per week to review and provide feedback on work performed and discuss the delineation of roles. This meeting may occur virtually or face-to-face,
    - b. Model professional behavior that is consistent with the [National Association of Social Workers \(NASW\) Code of Ethics](#),
    - c. Tailor learning tasks and activities to the Scholar's learning needs and ensure those tasks comply with the Scholar's learning needs, CSWE competencies, and the [DCS Code of Conduct](#),
    - d. Ensure the Scholar understands [DCS Administrative Policies](#) and [DCS Child Welfare Policies](#),
    - e. Facilitate the Scholar's understanding and adherence to responsible and ethical conduct,
    - f. Document any concerns related to the Scholar's practicum and share those concerns with the Field Liaison and Field Coordinator,
    - g. Attend and participate in the field orientation and in periodic trainings with other Field Instructors organized by the Social Work Program, and
    - h. Assess the Scholar's progress in achieving competency by evaluating and rating the learning activity outcomes of the Scholar's learning plan.

DATE: January 17, 2023

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