



Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., Governor  
James W. Payne, Director

**Indiana Department of Child Services**  
Room E306 – MS47  
302 W. Washington Street  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2739

317-232-4705  
FAX: 317-232-4490

[www.in.gov/dcs](http://www.in.gov/dcs)

**Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 800-800-5556**

October 1, 2011

To: Regional Managers  
Directors, Local Offices, Department of Child Services  
Directors, Licensed Child Placing Agencies  
Supervisor, Department of Child Services

From: James W. Payne, Director  
Katie Rounds, Deputy Chief of Staff  
Dave Judkins, Deputy Director of Field Operations  
M.B. Lippold, Deputy Director of Staff Development

Subject: IV-E MSW Program Expectations  
DCS-11-09

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) is committed to partnering with families and communities to provide safe, nurturing, and stable homes for children under DCS care and supervision. In fulfilling the value that “we believe in personal accountability for outcomes, including one's growth and development,” we are pleased to announce the employment-based practicum guidelines for the IV-E Master of Social Work (MSW) Child Welfare Scholars.

This administrative letter outlines the guidelines for DCS employees who participate in the IV-E MSW employment-based practica and the importance of joint planning between the School of Social Work, the student, and the DCS local office.

Below is a summary of the policy that is effective October 1, 2011.

All IV-E MSW Child Welfare Scholar Students who participate in IV-E employment-based practica will be limited to counting 16 hours per week of employment-based work towards the employee's work hours. DCS work completed as part of the employee's practicum will be counted toward the student's work hours. However, some work required for the practicum cannot be counted towards the employee's work hours, including but not limited to the following:

1. Practicum seminar;



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2. Field instruction;
3. Process recording;
4. Preparation of the Learning Evaluation Tool (LET) (previously referred to as the Learning Plan);
5. Reflection papers or other assignments for seminar; and
6. Reading and research (such as literature reviews).

Any exceptions will be made by DCS, in conjunction with the Field Coordinator, after consideration of DCS local office needs, university requirements, and/or student schedules.

Work that is part of or outside of the student's current workload can be considered for inclusion in the practicum assignments. However, this work must be evaluated for potential new learning and approved by the School of Social Work.

Joint planning between the School of Social Work, the student, and the DCS local office is required:

1. When a student decides which concentration area course work they will take, and
2. When planning the concentration year practicum.

Concentration planning should begin in the second year of the program and consist of the following:

1. A meeting including:
  - a. The student,
  - b. His or her supervisor, and/or
  - c. The DCS Local Office Director or Regional Manager, and
  - d. The Student Coordinator for the Child Welfare Scholars program, if necessary;
2. Discussion regarding:
  - a. The student's desired concentration choice,
  - b. The types of activities needed for the concentration practicum learning agreement, and
  - c. The DCS local office's ability to support court work and practicum activities needed to meet the school's requirement.
3. A written record of the meeting signed by the Regional Manager indicating his or her support of the plan.
4. A written record must be completed and returned to the Student Coordinator prior to the student beginning concentration level course work.

Employment Based Practicum planning must occur prior to the approval of the Employment-Based Practicum petition, which must consist of the following:

1. A meeting including:
  - a. The student,



- b. His or her supervisor, and/or
  - c. DCS Local Office Director or Regional Manager, and
  - d. Child Welfare Scholars Field Coordinator.
2. Discussion regarding:
    - a. Projects and activities available to the student for inclusion in the practicum,
    - b. Review of potential scheduling issues, and
    - c. Any DCS local office issues that might impact the student's ability to meet the practicum requirements.

### **Child Welfare Concentration**

DCS employees whose concentration is Child Welfare and who work primarily with children and families, may need to be reassigned to another unit during the course of the practicum. One example might be moving the employee from an assessment position to an ongoing position. When available, employees could be assigned to a specialized unit. In DCS local offices without specialized units, a student may be assigned a number of cases with specific concerns during the practicum period. Examples might include:

1. Sexual abuse;
2. Adoption;
3. Engaging fathers;
4. Independent Living (IL) youth;
5. Foster families;
6. Kinship placements;
7. Working with children of incarcerated parents; and
8. Targeted work with high risk placement disruptions.

Students will be asked to demonstrate advanced skills and the work they do with families is likely to look different than what is done by others in the office including more advanced assessments, more face-to-face contact, more focused interventions.

It is also likely that part of the student's practicum assignments will fall outside of his or her current workload. Examples include:

1. Permanency Options Pilot;
2. Developing foster parent support groups;
3. Participating in Regional Service Councils;
4. Participating on Fatality Review Groups; and
5. Other activities as approved by the school and DCS.

### **Leadership Concentration**

DCS employees that participate in Leadership Concentration will have opportunities for development and practice to demonstrate advanced competency in working in administrative



positions in the child welfare system. The following options should be considered to maximize the amount of practicum work that can fit into the employee's normal workload:

1. Whether it is necessary to assign the student to another work area for the duration of his or her practicum to allow the employee to have opportunities for new learning;
2. Whether there are opportunities to allow the employee to be involved with responsibilities that are not typically in his or her purview.

The student's practicum assignments should fall outside of his or her current workload.

### **Field Instruction/Supervision**

The Council on Social Work Education requires that students in employment-based practicum placements have a field instructor who differs from his or her work supervisor. The field instructor will ensure that all activities in the practicum are clearly defined as learning opportunities for the student. The field instructor will collaborate with the employee's supervisor to provide feedback to the employee that meets the educational needs of the school and work performance of DCS. Communication between the student, field instructor, and supervisor must:

1. Occur every other month;
2. Include discussion regarding the delineation of roles; and
3. Clearly spell out the student's Employment-based Practicum Petition.

Updates will be made to the DCS Policy Manual to reflect these changes. If you have any questions regarding the information presented in this administrative letter, please address them to the DCS policy mailbox at [DCSPolicy@dcs.in.gov](mailto:DCSPolicy@dcs.in.gov).

Sincerely,

James W. Payne, Director  
Department of Child Services



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