

Thank you for contributing to the education of an MSW student from the University of Toronto - the social work professionals of tomorrow! Field education is cited by researchers, graduates and employers as the most impactful part of the social work program where: theory is integrated into practice; the field educator role-models evidence-based practice, self-reflection and social work ethics. We are pleased to acknowledge your agency's contribution and website link on our [Partners](#) website.

The Practicum Office encourages feedback from the multiple stakeholders involved in field education: field educators, students, faculty-field liaisons and education coordinators where applicable.

Students provide the Practicum Office with feedback on their field education and are informed that their aggregated responses will be shared with future field educators. We trust you will find the feedback below meaningful. Please do not hesitate to contact the Practicum Office or your faculty-field liaison for additional information and/or support.

In summary, students appreciate:

1. A practicum description on the database that accurately reflects the experience.

Students base their practicum interview selection and expectations on the database description you provided on the Practicum Administration System (PAS). Students value an accurate, current description that is reflective of the potential learning experience while appreciating dynamic opportunities to further develop social work competencies. Field instructors must advise of requirements, including onboarding, before practicum begins in order to schedule participation.

2. A field educator who has prepared for their student's arrival by:

- *Encouraging colleagues to engage students with relevant activities. Obtaining colleagues' input early can result in a supportive team that shares educational responsibilities.*
- *Arranging administrative details (secure e-mail, key / access, workspace, supplies, computer/Outlook access, phone extension for v-messages) to fulfill their responsibilities. Lack of technical supports challenges student learning, performance, effectiveness, and ultimately, client care*
- *Preparing readings / training material / resources and scheduling meaningful activities for the first few days to assist and engage the student with early navigation of unfamiliar territory, both physically and conceptually.*
- *Structuring a comprehensive orientation, including risk management, self-care resources and strategies, discussion of /access to charting forms, criteria and samples. Now more than ever, students expect at orientation a courageous discussion on integrating racial and diversity issues into social work dialogues and activities. A strong orientation will address facilitators and barriers to student learning and contributions.*

3. Protected weekly supervision to debrief, reflect, discuss and plan together.

The most common request from students is for more structured and scheduled supervision meetings with constructive feedback. Students need and expect your guidance and collaboration to ensure competencies are developed. Supervision can also be the forum to discuss self-care, the structure/type of the supervision itself and diversity issues. Field educators may progressively delegate supervision meeting tasks such as the agenda, meeting notes and researching supervision topics.

4. Multiple opportunities to observe, and be observed by, their field instructor.

Students requested more observation of and by their field educator with constructive feedback. Direct observation is the gold standard for basing an evaluation, complemented by audio/video recordings, reports and written and verbal debriefing.

5. Feeling part of, recognized and valued by the team, as well as supported by their field educator.

Students appreciate a field educator who:

- *creates a safe and welcoming environment*
- *is open, supportive, easy to bring questions or concerns to, and encourages them to seek out learning opportunities throughout the institution*
- *facilitates space within weekly supervision to talk about the intersections of identity -race, class and position as a student- in the practicum environment.*
- *intentionally facilitates shadowing others from diverse backgrounds and perspective.*
- *facilitates participation in administrative meetings, prefaced and followed by debriefing*
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Students appreciate being considered a valuable member of the team. Students are happy to contribute and expect challenges accompanied by support.

6. Acknowledging the Power Imbalance

Students appreciate when their field instructor acknowledges the power imbalance and respects professional boundaries in the student-field instructor relationship.

7. Inviting Diversity discussions in the Practicum

Students appreciate when their field instructor introduces and invites discussions regarding the role of diversity in the student-field instructor dynamic, the client-provider relationship and in larger systems that influence and impact the profession of social work. Students also report valuing learning from their peers.

Students are still reporting using their personal devices to schedule / contact clients. FIFSW instructs students not to use personal devices for client communication; boundary issues, stress and personal safety may be at risk when personal devices are used. In addition, a dedicated phone extension allows patients/families to leave voicemails. Otherwise, students cannot receive / check messages or even confirm appointments unless next to the phone

Visit <https://socialwork.utoronto.ca/practicum/> for more resources about field education. Come with your questions to the Professional Development sessions for field instructors: <https://socialwork.utoronto.ca/practicum/practicum-schedules/year-2/>

Was this information helpful? Please contact your faculty-field liaison with questions or recommendations for a successful practicum you wish to share.

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