

Green Care Farms (GCF)

Milton Ontario

Year 2 Practicum

Spring/Summer 2024

Please provide a description of the practicum site and student activities:

Green Care Farms (GCF) is the first operational care farm in Canada that provides services to people with dementia. Our mission is to provide outdoor programs on farms for people with dementia to have responsibilities, purpose, and belonging. Our vision is a green care farm in every community in Canada. There are very few dedicated outdoor environments for people with dementia in Canada, despite thousands of care farms located in Europe, and ample research existing on the benefits of nature-based interventions for people with dementia. Research suggests that programs like Green Care Farms: 1) Increase cognitive functioning and slow cognitive decline, 2) Enhance physical activity and reduce fall incidents, 3) Promote emotional and psychological well being, and reduce depression, stress and agitation, and 4) Decrease social isolation and promote a sense of belonging and satisfaction. GCF also provides respite to care partners as they receive a five-hour block of respite.

GCF is committed to address the social stigma and limitations that often accompany a dementia diagnosis with a progressive model of supportive, nature-based care. Through building awareness and education, we are building an inclusive and empowering narrative for people with dementia and their care partners. As a company, we also wish to support local agricultural communities, engage in organic farming practices, and bolster access to fresh produce for people with dementia, their families, and the broader community by donating excess produce to members and the Food for Life food bank.

Green Care Farms is a burgeoning social enterprise. Our initial program site operates on a half-acre plot of leased land from Andrews Farm (165-acre farm) in Milton, ON. We have completed two seasons to-date and for the upcoming year, we are focusing on building capacity and on making our program and site more accessible, welcoming, and comfortable for our members, their care partners, staff, volunteers, and other visitors.

A prospective student would support Green Care Farms in both direct and indirect social work practice. This is a unique opportunity for a student to contribute directly to the development of a social enterprise founded by social workers. Our client program runs on Mondays, so for direct client engagement in program, a student would need to be available on Mondays. Otherwise, direct engagement would take place in the form of assessment, intake and program counselling for clients and families entering the program. A social work student would be a critical point of contact for families and community organizations to build awareness of the care farming model. The student would support community engagement initiatives and aid in facilitating Community Days for volunteers to work on the Sensory Garden. There will be a focus on business model development from a community-based initiative perspective, our student would serve as a community ambassador for this work. A student's ability to provide information, resources and referrals to our client population will be important. The right person will thrive alongside our team.

Practicum Requirements:

- Police Reference/Vulnerable Sector Check
- Driver's License
- Use of Own Car (to get to placement only)
- Comfort working with the population being served
- Comprehensive report writing and documentation
- Evening attendance (optional, to attend Green Care Farms core team meetings, biweekly on Thursdays)
- Weekend attendance (for occasional Community Days)
- Interest in working with people with dementia; experience is preferred.

Fields(s) of study for this Practicum:

- Social Work in Gerontology
- Human Services Management & Leadership

Does your practicum require any previous experience? If yes, please specify.

Interest in working with people with dementia; experience is preferred.

Please indicate whether this practicum will be in-person, remote or hybrid.

Hybrid.

Please indicate whether this practicum will involve direct work or a mix of direct and indirect.

Mix of direct and indirect.

Number of practicums offered?

1; if there were 2 interested students who were well suited for the program, that would be considered.

Field Instructor(s) name and credentials:

Rebekah Churchyard; BA, BSW, MSW, PMP

CEO and Founder of Green Care Farms

When would you like to receive student applications? As soon as possible, first come, first serve.

Do you require a resume? Or resume and cover letter? Resume and cover letter – must indicate interest and/or experience in gerontology, social enterprise and personally ability to initiate work.

Accessibility Considerations:

- Will the student have access to a private space for notes or computer use? Yes << They will need their own computer.
- Are there breaks between clients/patients/meetings? Sometimes
- Is the practicum considered fast-paced? Medium

- Is there a high noise level in the practicum? Medium << Depends on activity on the farm.
- Is the site wheelchair accessible? No
- What are the physical demands of the practicum? YES, an ideal student in this program would like gardening and being outdoors. Your engagement with people with dementia will have a physical element as the program is centred around gardening and farming.
- Are there any other accessibility considerations that potential applicants with disabilities should be aware of? YES, our primary activity as a program is running a scheduled day in a farm setting. This is primarily outdoors, exposed to the elements and often with uneven terrain.

Students registered with University of Toronto Accessibility Services may receive appropriate accommodations for practicum settings. To register: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/accessibility-services/> or call 416-978-8060

If you are interested in this practicum, please send a cover letter and resume to miri.ben.dat@utoronto.ca by 5 pm on February 27, 2024. Applications will be forwarded on to the site.