

California State University, Fresno
Department of Social Work Education

Legal and Ethical Issues Related to Field Placement Planning

There are legal and ethical guidelines that must be followed in planning field placements for all social work students. These guidelines are in place to insure that agency assignments for field placement conform with federal and state laws, agency policies and the NASW Code of Ethics. There are two primary areas to consider: 1) Conflict of Interest, and 2) History of Felony and/or Misdemeanor Conviction(s).

Please read the following information carefully.

Conflict of Interest

The NASW Code of Ethics states that “social workers should be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgment” (NASW, p. 9). As a social work student, it is considered to be a conflict of interest to engage in field placement in an agency where **you and/or a family member have been a CLIENT and/or an EMPLOYEE**. Thus, social work students may not be placed in an agency where they or a family member have worked, gone to school, or received services such as medical care, mental health services, employment assistance or child welfare services. Since the Department of Social Work Education does not specifically ask for such information, it is the responsibility of the social work student to inform the Field Coordinator/Assistant Field Coordinator and/or department chair of a potential conflict of interest **AND** to decline a placement in which there is a conflict of interest.

Students who interview and accept field placement in an agency where they have a conflict of interest **may be delayed in ability to enroll in field placement, receive a grade of No Credit for field, and/or be administratively dropped from the field placement program.**

Misdemeanor and/or Felony Conviction(s)

Field placements must be planned in accordance with state and federal laws and with consideration of field placement agency policies, including the best interests of consumers. Increasingly, human service agencies are requiring background checks, such as fingerprinting, to insure the suitability of interns for placement in their agencies. Students who have a history of arrest, criminal charges, misdemeanor and/or felony conviction(s) may encounter barriers in the field placement process.

Therefore:

- Students who have a history of arrest of criminal charges that did not lead to conviction(s) are advised to disclose this information to the Field Coordinator/Assistant Field Coordinator and/or department chair to avoid potential problems in the agency placement process.
- Students who have a history of “**job-related**” misdemeanor and/or felony conviction(s) are required to disclose this information to the Field Coordinator/Assistant Field Coordinator and/or department chair during the field placement planning interview unless the conviction(s) have been legally sealed, expunged or statutorily eradicated. Examples of “job-related” convictions would include, but not be limited to, child abuse, substance use/abuse/possession, theft, violent or potentially violent crimes such as domestic violence, assault, robbery, etc.

Students who fail to inform the Field Coordinator/Assistant Field Coordinator and/or department chair of required “job-related” misdemeanor and/or felony conviction(s) and the conviction(s) become(s) known to the department **may be administratively dropped from the social work program.**

I have carefully read and understand the above information and am/will be in compliance with these field placement planning policies.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Field Faculty: _____ Date: _____