Letter to Field Instructors

Dear Field Instructor,

We hope you are doing well and caring for yourself during the uncertainty and disruption caused by COVID-19. We instituted a pause on field attendance during Spring Break so that we could take the time to develop a plan for your students’ successful completion of spring field. We apologize for the quick notifications and rapid changes of direction, but this event has required daily updates and decisions.

After much deliberation, the College of Social Work administration has made a final decision to suspend student in-person attendance at field agencies for the remainder of the spring semester. We understand that this decision will be disappointing and frustrating for some of you. We are all saddened by this situation, and by the necessity to take this action. The decision was made with concern to protect students, your agency’s clients and staff, and to participate ethically in a public health response to a highly contagious and dangerous illness. Many of your agencies had already decided to move to remote operations and/or to end student placements. The University has made a decision to move all possible personnel to telecommuting and remote work activities to decrease exposure on the UT campus. Students will not be allowed to complete any additional field assignments or activities onsite at agencies.

We want you to know how deeply we appreciate you and your organization for providing such critical and wonderful learning opportunities for our students. We know that you have invested a great deal in their professional development. All of our field coordinators are in the midst of placement planning for summer and fall, and we hope that you will be open to considering our students. If you are able to do so, we are fully supportive of students completing their placement interviews with you by phone, Zoom, or any other videoconferencing technology that you may use in your agency.

Our college has both BSSW and MSSW students at different points in their programs of study. The field faculty have developed a list of requirements for completion of spring field for each level of student along with a step-by-step procedure. We have sent all of that information to the students and are happy to send it to you upon request. We just didn’t want to overload you with documents to review.

We have included in the procedures the requirement that students work with you to finalize their placement activities in a professional manner. We share your concern for the impact on your clients during this stressful time and we want students to be able to appropriately communicate and terminate with clients, if possible. We also expect that students, if possible, will complete and close out any projects that they have been completing for the agency. We know that students may be experiencing some grief about ending their time at the agency, and we hope you can help them find ways to say their good-byes and end professionally.

In developing the plan, we have been attentive to compliance with our accreditation standards and also to the requirement that students demonstrate all competencies addressed in the learning plan. Our college curriculum actually requires more field hours than are required by the accreditation standards of The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). We have decreased requirements for field hours for spring in alignment with accreditation standards. Students will refer to the Requirements for Completion of Spring Field to clarify how many hours they must document to finish spring field.
Students who have not yet completed all hours and activities will need to complete and submit a **Field Plan for Remote Learning Activities** to their Field Coordinators. They will need your approval of their plan to complete activities remotely.

Please note that, if students choose to volunteer at your agency site, they will not be able to count those hours or activities toward field requirements. They will not be considered as students for those activities and will not be covered by the UT professional liability insurance. Also, if students are also employees at your agency, they will need to complete field activities away from the agency.

Please be assured that your Field Coordinators, Field Liaisons, and I are all ready and available to support you as you navigate this process. Do not hesitate to contact us with questions, concerns, or ideas. We have a wealth of information about alternate learning activities if that would be helpful to you. Please let us know if you want this information.

In the meantime, take care, be well, and keep in touch.

All the best,

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