

How to develop a Concentration (SW584 or 586) Learning Plan: A Guide for Students

Why are Learning Plans Required?

The goal of the learning plan is to develop measurable learning activities that will show that the student has met all competencies in the field placement. The Council on Social Work Education Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (CSWE EPAS) establishes guidelines/standards for preparing students to graduate from social work programs. MSSW students across the country in accredited programs are required to achieve these standards, which will prepare them for ethical practice as a MSSW.

The Learning Plan is a guide to lay out and then monitor the student's learning in the field placement. The learning plan is developed jointly by the Field Instructor and student, with support from the Field Faculty Liaison if needed. The learning plan helps students and their Field Instructor identify:

- What the MSSW student needs and wants to learn
- What the Field Instructor will be teaching the MSSW student
- What assignments/tasks at the agency will help the student to meet learning goals
- How the student learning will be monitored and evaluated
- Expectations, learning and teaching/supervisory styles, strengths and challenges, and how to manage conflict.

What Can I do to Prepare for Developing the Learning Plan?

- Please read this entire document before getting started.
- Review the Example Concentration Learning Plan Assignments document (there is one for Organizational Leadership and Clinical Practice).
- Review the 584/586 syllabus, paying special attention to the Competencies and Practice Behaviors.
- Review the instructions within the Learning Plan in IPT.

Steps in Developing the Learning Plan:

1. Conceptualize "The Big Picture":

Think of the learning plan as your road map for field. You are responsible for initiating collaboration with your Field Instructor in development of the Learning Plan. Review this document and the Example Concentration Learning Plan Assignments document to help get started. Work together to identify:

- The competencies, practice behaviors and populated assignments listed on the plan
- Expectations of the UT College of Social Work MSSW program
- Goals the agency/field instructor has for you: what do they want to see you learn/achieve?
- Goals you have for yourself during your placement: what do you hope to learn? What skills do you hope to gain?

- Actual learning opportunities available at the placement--What programs/activities can you be involved in at the agency?

2. Develop Activities with your Field Instructor:

Using these instructions and the Example Concentration Learning Plan Assignments as a guide, you and your Field Instructor can develop a list of potential tasks and activities for inclusion in the learning plan. Be sure to do this early enough so there is time for review/revision!

1. You are required to develop one assignment per practice behavior. Use the Learning Plan example assignments document as a tool to help you think about the options. We ask that you not copy and paste these, but really think about how to adjust these to fit with opportunities your agency.
2. As you develop this plan, be sure you are considering the following:
 - Which competency and practice behavior you are addressing
 - Specific tasks and activities/timeframe. You need to be able to achieve competence on this assignment within the semester.
 - Evaluation (How will you know you have successfully completed the goal?)
3. Enter the plan into Intern Placement Tracking IPT):
 - Go into your IPT account and open the Learning Plan for the current semester.
 - Under the column "Learning Plan Assignments," you will enter your second assignment for each practice behavior.
 - Entering the learning plan is YOUR (the student's) responsibility.
4. Draft Review: You and your agency Field Instructor should review the draft of the learning plan before you submit it for review. The Field Instructor may give feedback and suggest edits.
5. Revise the Plan: Using the input obtained from the review, make any recommended changes.
6. Submit the Plan: You and your Field Instructor must sign off on the Learning Plan in IPT under "Learning Plan Signatures" by the due date. Once this is submitted, the Field Faculty Liaison will review the plan and provide feedback/suggested revisions if needed.
7. Integration Stage - Regularly integrate your learning agreement into your supervisory session as a checklist for progress and evaluation. As tasks are completed, you should enter the evidence that you have completed your plan into the "Evidence of Completion" column in IPT. This helps you and your Agency Field Instructor to keep track of your progress and helps with the end of semester evaluation. AGAIN, you should be filling in your Learning Plan as you go. Do NOT wait until the mid-semester to start adding your evidence of plan completion.

Other Considerations for Developing the Concentration Learning Plan:

The process of developing a Learning Plan involves comparing your learning needs, goals and interests with the educational opportunities available to you in your placement. The agreement itself is focused on outcomes you are striving to achieve during your placement. It is essential that you familiarize yourself with the placement requirements and the agency's expectations of you. As a starting point, you may want to begin by considering the following:

- What **SKILLS** do I need to build on? Identify 5 – 10 social work skills, choosing 3-5 to build into your tasks.
- Is there a **THEORY** central to my placement work that I will need to learn? Discuss with your field instructor the theories and methodologies applied in your agency.
- What **SERVICES** will I offer to Individual Clients? Families? The agency? The Community? (Assessments, specific therapeutic modalities, group therapy, home visits, conducting a needs assessment, advocacy, grant-writing, developing a policy manual, etc.)
- What Social Worker **ROLES** will this setting engage me in? What will I learn?
- (Broker, Advocate, Educator, Clinician, Group Facilitator, Community Organizer, Grant Writer etc.)
- How can I best use **SUPERVISION** time? What areas can I further build on? What structure or tools will facilitate this: Agenda (required), Progress Recording? How can I best utilize my Field Instructor's Supervision time? Should I keep a notebook during the week of issues that come up? What suggestions does the supervisor have for you?
- What **ETHICAL** issues emerge for social workers practicing in this agency? Are there **POLICY** considerations/constraints the agency faces? How will the next legislative session impact this agency? Clients? Community? What are the opportunities for systems change? Advocacy?
- What **TOOLS** are available to me to maximize my learning experience? There are many learning tools and resources available to students such as process recording, studies, literature reviews, trainings, audio/video taping, clinical assessment tools and measures. You may even want to try to design your own measures to evaluate your own progress and learning gains this term.

REMINDER: Regular, weekly supervision is critical to your learning. You are to come to supervision with an agenda, ready to reflect on your own practice and to receive feedback. It is important to notify your liaison if you are not receiving regular supervision.

When Developing Learning Plan Assignments, Think About...

What do you want to learn at the field placement? What skills do you hope to gain?	How will you know that you achieved that learning goal? How will you measure what you learned?
Examples of ways you may identify your learning assignments:	Examples of ways you may measure your learning process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain competence in... • Increase knowledge of... • Develop skills in... • Research... • Analyze... • Present... • Assess... • Facilitate... • Engage... • Explore... • Implement... • Attend... • Observe... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision (documented on agenda) • Role plays • Discussions • Process recordings • Video or audio recordings • Case notes • Presentations • Debriefings • Development of documents • Journals or reflection papers • Observations • Facilitation

Example Concentration Learning Plan with Example assignments and Evidence of Plan Completion

CLINICAL PRACTICE COMPETENCY 5: Engage in Policy Practice				
Practice Behaviors:	Learning Plan Assignment (Please list at least one assignment per practice behavior)	Evidence of Plan Completion	Midterm Rating	Final Rating
<u>Practice Behavior 5.1</u> Critically analyze policies that impact the delivery of clinical services to ensure the advancement of human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.	Seek feedback from clients and the case management team to identify specific policies (agency, local, state, federal) that impact the agency and its clients. Summarize the findings and share with agency staff via an infographic or presentation.	Clients and case management team identified the cost of food in Nashville as a major issue and a cause of hunger among clients. I analyzed a bill to eliminate the TN food tax for political and economic feasibility, and shared findings in supervision on 1.24. I engaged with advocacy efforts to eliminate the food tax in the state of Tennessee and presented on this at a staff meeting on 3.5. I reflected on this in supervision on 3.23, and discussed how passage of this bill can advance human rights.		
<u>Practice Behavior 5.2</u> Advocate for socially just services and programs for clients through legislative advocacy, regulatory change, and within organizational policies.	Participate in a task force or coalition to address a social policy issue impacting agency clients (abuse/neglect, hunger, lack of mental health care, etc.). Present findings and actions in supervision.	Became an active member of the local Department of Health's Task Force on Adverse Childhood Experiences, serving as the advocacy subcommittee co-chair. This task force reviewed several policies and their impact on children, and we trained 25 nonprofit and local government leaders on these topics on 4.11. I shared successes and struggles with this process in supervision and proposed next steps on 4.17.		