

How to develop a Spring Generalist (SW544) Learning Plan: A Guide for Students

Why are the 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 Generalist Learning Plan Assignments document.
- Review the SW544 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 Generalist 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 Generalist 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 will have one pre-populated assignment for each practice behavior. Talk with your Field Instructor about what that pre-populated assignment will look like at your agency.

2. You are required to develop one additional assignment for four Practice Behaviors (PB):

- Competency 1, PB4;
- Competency 2, PB 2;
- Competency 7, PB1; and
- Competency 9, PB2.

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. Consider how you can use some of the Field Seminar readings and assignments in the development of your learning plan assignments.

3. 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 a 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. Your Skills Lab text may be an excellent resource.
- 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 Community? (Assessments, Social Summaries, Group Work, Family work, home visits, Advocacy, Writing a curriculum, developing a policy manual, etc.)
- What Social Worker **ROLES** will this setting engage me in? What will I learn?
- (Broker, Advocate, Investigator, Educator, Case Worker, Group Facilitator, Community Activist, 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 required to come to supervision with an agenda, ready to reflect on your own practice and to receive feedback.

When Developing Learning Plans, Think About... <i>Adapted from the "University of Alaska Fairbanks" Placement Learning Agreement Directions and Example and "Bemidji State University Guide for Developing an Internship Learning Goals Plan,"</i>	
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 Learning Plan with Evidence of Plan completion

COMPETENCY 2: Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic & Environmental Justice				
Practice Behaviors:	Learning Plan Assignment	Evidence of Plan Completion	Midterm Rating	Final Rating
<u>Practice Behavior 1</u> Advocate for human rights at the individual, family, group, organizational, and community system levels.	Identify a specific social, economic, racial and environmental justice issue related to the agency client population. Reflect on the impact this issue is having on the client population and discuss in supervision. (K, V, CAP)	Parents in our program identified concerns with discipline of their children with autism. I researched a) Knoxville Board of Education policy on school suspensions, b) Tennessee Code Title 49, Part 1: School Discipline Act and c) the US Individuals with Disability Education Act, and discussed how with agency advocacy team on 2/15. I discussed with my supervisor how critical parent engagement strategies are to support student outcomes.		
<u>Practice Behavior 2</u> Engage in practices that advance human rights to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice. (S, CAP)	1. Observe and engage in advocacy efforts to address oppressive structural barriers that impact the client population. (K, V, S) 2. Make your own assignment: Implement and evaluate a voter engagement strategy at the field agency.	1. I solicited feedback from program parents, who identified the need for more supports to help them advocate for their children. I partnered with Disability Rights Tennessee to organize a Parent Advocate training. Ten parents attended and evaluated the training on 3/7. My FI and I discussed how to make this an ongoing training for parents. 2. I reviewed the Voting is Social Work Materials, shared with our CEO & conducted a voter registration drive at our spring picnic and registered 20 new voters. I discussed this in supervision on 4.13 and identified ways this promotes social justice.		
<u>Practice Behavior 3</u> Demonstrate self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.	Identify and implement at least one specific strategy for uncovering one's own personal biases. Analyze the potential impact of the identified biases on professional practice with diverse clients and colleagues in the field setting. Identify and implement at least one specific strategy to manage the influence of a personal bias on professional practice. (V, CAP)	I completed an online implicit bias test and journaled my discoveries and ways this bias could impact my social work practice. I read The Inner Work of Racial Justice and incorporated this into my mindfulness practice. I discussed my findings in supervision on 1/27, reviewed and evaluated my strategies on 3/10. My FI and I discussed the need for all social workers to continually engage in self-reflection.		