

## SWK 3350 - Social Work Experience: Practice & Communication

Welcome to SWK 3350! This course is a requirement in the fall semester of your junior year in the BSSW program and must be taken alongside SWK 3410: Generalist Practice I.

Social Work Experience: Practice and Communication is a 3-credit course, where:

- 2 credits is allotted for the weekly class meetings, and
- 1 credit is allotted for the agency volunteer experience.

**You cannot pass this class without completing BOTH components of this course.**

### **Class Component:**

Your class requirements will involve 2 hours of interaction each week (on campus, online or in a hybrid format) to discuss readings and to integrate your coursework with your agency experience. The focus is to develop as a social work professional, including attending to professional roles and boundaries, examining your personal and professional values, developing effective communication skills in written, verbal and non-verbal mediums, demonstrating interpersonal skills, and practicing personal reflection. This course will be helpful in getting you ready for your senior year field internship.

### **Agency Volunteer Component:**

Through this course, you will have the opportunity to focus on these areas by completing **45 hours of volunteer service** in a community agency whose focus is providing human/social services.

Here are the requirements for the type of volunteer role you will need for this class:

- The 45 hours must last the duration of the semester (~3-4 hours per week). These hours must be distributed evenly throughout the 15 weeks.
- You must complete your volunteer hours in a community-based agency. Some of your assignments will involve examining your agency within the community context, so you must have access directly to agency functioning.
- The agency must be dedicated to providing human/social services.
- You must serve in a helping role allowing you to practice your developing social work skills. While many agencies will not allow you to work independently with clients, you should be in an agency that allows you to have direct contact with clients or communities through shadowing and observation at a minimum.
- You must be supervised by an agency staff person who can provide you with ongoing support and feedback on your performance. They must agree to complete one mid-semester and one end of semester evaluation of your performance (forms will be provided).

Here are some examples of what this volunteer role might look like.

- Serving as an advocate at a shelter, working on a crisis-call line, providing assistance to social workers in the field, helping in an after-school program, working in a homeless shelter,

providing educational workshops/outreach to clients, providing general milieu support to clients, observing and/or participating in groups, etc.

- There are many different types of settings you can volunteer in (e.g., Departments of Human Services, hospitals, schools, nonprofits), and many social issues and populations you may work with (e.g., adoptions, homelessness, substance abuse, developmental disabilities, domestic violence, youth development).
- Examples of volunteer opportunities that are **NOT acceptable** include: volunteering with an independent private therapist, working *only* with animals, providing childcare at church, solely being a one-on-one mentor in the community *with minimal agency contact*, one time fundraising events, coalition or board work that does not involve direct outreach activities to communities and/or persons, etc.

### **Locating an appropriate volunteer placement:**

There are several resources available to you in finding an appropriate volunteer role. We strongly recommend starting this process BEFORE the beginning of the semester. Ideally, you will have your volunteer role solidified by the time the fall semester begins.

Here are some ways to get started:

- MSU Denver's Classroom to Career (C2) Hub has a resource called [Career Link](#), which is a database of local organizations who are interested in working with MSU Denver students. Using this database is pretty user friendly, but the C2hub staff are also available to help you navigate this process should any questions emerge about how to use this resource: [internships@msudenver.edu](mailto:internships@msudenver.edu).
- You can use one of several local/national resources aimed at helping folks locate volunteer roles. Here are several great options:
  - Colorado Non-profit Association <https://www.coloradononprofits.org/>
  - Volunteer Match <https://www.volunteermatch.org/>
  - LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com>
  - Spark the Change CO <https://www.sparkthechangecolorado.org/>
- The Office of Field Education in the Department of Social Work will supply a list of organizations with whom we already partner who have indicated an interest in supporting a student in this course. You can find this list on the Canvas course shell for this course. This resource will not be available until the semester begins.
- Your employment may count towards your volunteer hours if they meet the outlined parameters for this course and are approved by your course instructor. If you think this might apply to your situation, make an appointment to meet with your instructor to discuss this arrangement early on- Career Link.

You must have your volunteer agency confirmed with your course instructor **by the date listed on the BSSW Program website**. It is strongly recommended that you solidify this placement before the beginning of the semester. This course has assignments throughout the class that involve your volunteer work. So in order to set yourself up for success in this class you **MUST** have a volunteer placement secured early as soon as possible.

Have fun exploring the many community agencies out there! If you need additional support after you have connected with the above resources, and have attempted to connect with several agencies, please contact your course instructor.