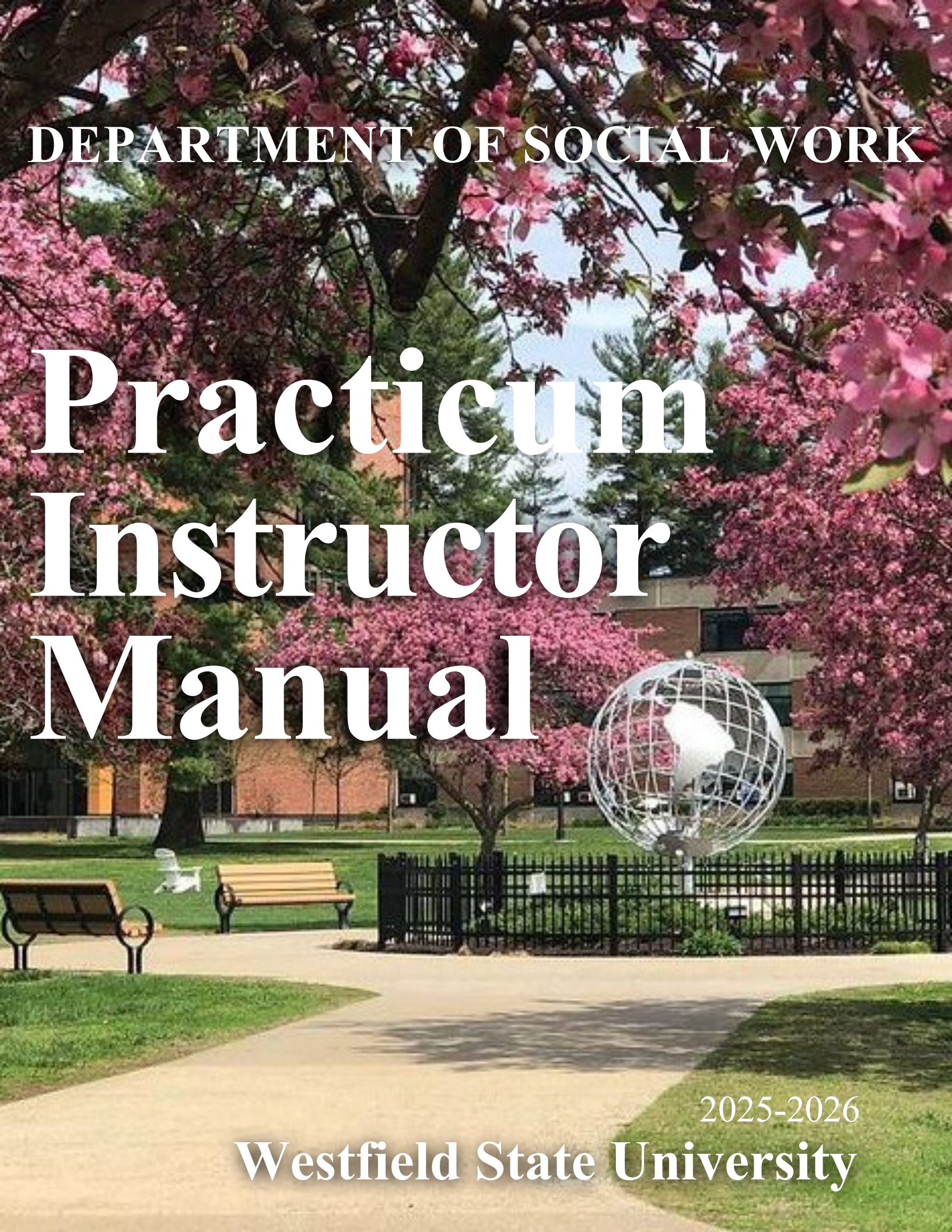


A vibrant campus scene featuring pink cherry blossoms in the foreground and background. A large, white, wireframe globe sculpture stands on a pedestal in the middle ground. In the background, a brick building is visible. A paved walkway leads through a green lawn with wooden benches and a black metal fence.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Practicum Instructor Manual

2025-2026

Westfield State University

Practicum Education Program Staff Contact Information

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“Social work competence is the ability to integrate and apply social work knowledge, values, and skills to practice situations in a purposeful, intentional, and professional manner to promote human and community well-being”.

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK
PRACTICUM EDUCATION
PROGRAM**

Overview

Social Work Practicum(s) at a Glance

A BRIEF SUMMARY:

Criteria	BSW	MSW Foundation	MSW Advanced
Practicum Placement Hour & Assignment Requirements:			
Total hour requirement for academic year	400	400	500
Total hour requirement per semester	200	200	250
Total number of process recordings due per semester	3	4	5
Weekly Integrative Practicum Seminar course per semester <i>(included in total hours)</i>	18.75	26.25	26.25
Supervision/Practicum Instructor Requirements:			
BSW or MSW from accredited school of Social Work	✓		
MSW from an accredited school of Social Work		✓	✓
Minimum 2 years post-degree Social Work experience	✓	✓	✓
Licensure requirement MA LCSW or LICSW <i>(or equivalent in another state)</i>	Preferred	Preferred	✓
LICSW Preferred			✓
Min. 1 hour/week supervision w/ primary supervisor	✓	✓	✓
1 additional hour/week task-oriented or group supervision	✓	✓	✓
Social Work Practice Focus:			
Generalist foundation competencies	✓	✓	
Advanced clinical competencies			✓
Focus on generalist Social Work services and settings	✓	✓	
Focus on clinical Social Work services and settings			✓
Miscellaneous:			
IPT online access for all required practicum documents	✓	✓	✓
Westfield Campus	✓	✓	✓
Faculty Liaison Support throughout placement	✓	✓	✓
Weekly Integrative Practicum Seminar Course <i>(student course in conjunction with field placement)</i>	Synchronous	Synchronous	Asynchronous
Site Visit per semester	✓	✓	✓
Free CEUs for Practicum Instructors	✓	✓	✓
Employment-Based Practicum Placement Option	✓	✓	✓

MSW Advanced Practicum

A BRIEF SUMMARY:

Clinical Social Work Practice Focus:

- ☐ Builds on a generalist practice foundation and provides in-depth *clinical* experience.
- ☐ Includes opportunities to practice assessment, diagnosis, treatment (*including but not limited to, counseling and psychotherapy, family therapy, group work, play therapy, etc.*), client-centered advocacy, interdisciplinary teams, supervision, consultation, and evaluation.
- ☐ Placements may include mental health and addictions programs, schools, family service and child protective agencies, medical settings, forensic settings, and other settings where clinical social work services are provided.
- ☐ Some advanced placements reflect WSU program additional focus on clinical work with children and families, but are often with a different client population, particularly if the student's foundation practicum placement was child and family focused.
 - Employment-Based Practicum Placement may be developed within certain guidelines and an additional approval process.

Practicum Includes:

- ☐ Minimum of 500 hours total (*250 minimum per semester for two full semesters*).
- ☐ Hours include:
 - Practicum Placement:
 - Students work in collaboration with the placement site to determine weekly schedule and to be available for daytime meetings and trainings as required by the agency.
 - Weekly Integrative Practicum Seminar:
 - Asynchronous with WSU clinical practice course instructors.
 - Provides students with the opportunities to discuss and compare practicum experiences, learn from and teach each other, examine personal values and ethical issues in social work practice, and further integrate knowledge and experience through structured assignments and activities.
 - Full participation in the Weekly Integrative Seminar may provide up to 52.5 hours of the total 500 practicum hours (26.25 hours per semester).

Supervision Requirement:

- ☐ Master's Degree in Social Work (MSW) from an accredited school of social work and a minimum of two years post-MSW experience.
 - Licensure requirement MA LCSW or LICSW (*or equivalent in another state*).
 - LICSW *preferred* for advanced placement.
- ☐ Minimum of 1 hour/week of individual, face-to-face, student/client-focused supervision with primary supervisor.
- ☐ 1 additional hour/week of task-oriented and/or group supervision that may or may not be provided by primary supervisor.

MSW Foundation Practicum

A BRIEF SUMMARY:

Generalist Social Work Practice Focus:

- ☐ Opportunity to practice and demonstrate mastery of the competency-based knowledge, values, and skills learned in the classroom through supervised practice with actual clients in a social service environment.
- ☐ Begin to develop a professional identity as a social worker.
- ☐ Placements may include schools, family service and child protective agencies, mental health and addictions programs, and other settings where generalist social work services are provided.
 - Employment-Based Practicum Placement may be developed within certain guidelines and an additional approval process.

Practicum Includes:

- ☐ Minimum of 400 hours total (*200 minimum per semester for two full semesters*).
- ☐ Hours include:
 - Practicum Placement:
 - Students work in collaboration with the placement site to determine weekly schedule and to be available for daytime meetings and trainings as required by the agency.
 - Weekly Integrative Field Seminar:
 - Synchronous with WSU clinical practice course instructors.
 - Provides students with the opportunities to discuss and compare practicum experiences, learn from and teach each other, examine personal values and ethical issues in social work practice, and further integrate knowledge and experience through structured assignments and activities.
 - Full participation in the Weekly Integrative Seminar may provide up to 52.5 hours of the total 400 practicum hours (26.25 hours per semester).

Supervision Requirement:

- ☐ Master's Degree in Social Work (MSW) from an accredited school of social work and a minimum of two years post-MSW experience.
 - Licensure *preferred* MA LCSW or LICSW (*or equivalent in another state*).
- ☐ Minimum of 1 hour/week of individual, face-to-face, student/client-focused supervision with primary supervisor.
- ☐ 1 additional hour/week of task-oriented and/or group supervision that may or may not be provided by primary supervisor.

BSW Practicum

A BRIEF SUMMARY:

Generalist Social Work Practice Focus:

- ☐ Opportunity to practice and demonstrate mastery of the competency-based knowledge, values, and skills learned in the classroom through supervised practice with actual clients in a social service environment.
- ☐ Begin to develop a professional identity as a social worker.
- ☐ Placements may include schools, family service and child protective agencies, mental health and addictions programs, and other settings where generalist social work services are provided.
 - Employment-Based Practicum Placement may be developed within certain guidelines and an additional approval process.

Practicum Includes:

- ☐ Minimum of 400 hours total (*200 minimum per semester for two full semesters*).
- ☐ Hours include:
 - Practicum Placement:
 - Students work in collaboration with the placement site to determine weekly schedule and to be available for daytime meetings and trainings as required by the agency.
 - Weekly Integrative Practicum Seminar:
 - Synchronous with WSU clinical practice course instructors.
 - Provides students with the opportunities to discuss and compare practicum experiences, learn from and teach each other, examine personal values and ethical issues in social work practice, and further integrate knowledge and experience through structured assignments and activities.
 - Full participation in the Weekly Integrative Seminar may provide up to 37.5 hours of the total 400 practicum hours (18.75 hours per semester).

Supervision Requirement:

- ☐ Bachelors or Master's Degree in Social Work (BSW or MSW) from an accredited school of social work and a minimum of two years post-degree social work experience.
- ☐ Minimum of 1 hour/week of individual, face-to-face, student/client-focused supervision with primary supervisor.
- ☐ 1 additional hour/week of task-oriented and/or group supervision that may or may not be provided by primary supervisor.

Practicum Education Calendar

Fall 2025 – Spring 2026

ACADEMIC YEAR VIEW:

Please refer to specific course syllabus for field-related course assignments and other due dates

Fall 2025:

☐ September 3	Classes Begin
☐ October 15	Learning Agreement Due
☐ October 13	Indigenous Peoples' Day – No Classes
☐ October – November	Practicum Site Visits by Faculty Liaisons
☐ November 11	Veteran's Day – No Classes
☐ November 26 – 28	Thanksgiving Recess (begins 12:30pm 11/26; no classes 11/27, 11/28)
☐ December 1	Classes Resume
☐ December 5	Practicum Placement Evaluations & Fall Timesheets Due
☐ December 12	Classes End for the Semester

Spring 2026:

☐ January 20	Classes Begin
☐ Week of January 19	Students Continue in Practicum Placements <i>(note: most students continue in practicum placement during some portion of the semester break as negotiated and determined in individual placements)</i>
☐ February 16	President's Day – No Classes
☐ March 16 – 20	Spring Break – No Classes <i>(note: most students continue in practicum placement during some portion of the spring break as negotiated and determined in individual placements)</i>
☐ March 23	Classes Resume
☐ March – April	Practicum Site Visits by Faculty Liaisons
☐ April 20	Patriot's Day – No Classes
☐ May 1	Practicum Placement Evaluations & Spring Timesheet Due
☐ Week of May 1	Target for Completing Practicum Placement

Practicum Education Materials

A BRIEF SUMMARY:

In addition to materials within the Practicum Instructor Manual, our Practicum Education Program maintains a web page within the larger WSU Social Work Department website. The web page may be accessed at:

- ☐ <https://www.westfield.ma.edu/academics/social-work-department/practicum-education>
- ☐ Please utilize this website for direct links to most practicum-related materials and in-depth information regarding practicum policies, procedures and training videos.

Examples of materials available on this site include:

- ☐ Student Applications Process
 - Student Application for Employment-Based Practicum
 - Student Practicum Flyer
- ☐ Practicum Education Manual
- ☐ FAQ Practicum Education
- ☐ Learning Agreement Guides
- ☐ IPT / Troubleshooting Powerpoint

TROUBLESHOOTING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

IF issues in placement arise:

1. First, address concerns directly with student with feedback they can implement
2. Always communicate with the faculty liaison
 - To document concerns
 - To collaborate to problem solve
3. Address directly with student in supervision providing actionable-steps
4. Address concerns in a site visit or other meeting with faculty liaison
5. Implement plans of action with a follow up date
6. Faculty Liaison will determine when best to incorporate Practicum Department or Director

We do request prior to any possible termination these steps have been taken.



Practicum Documentation System – IPT

A BRIEF SUMMARY:

IPT:

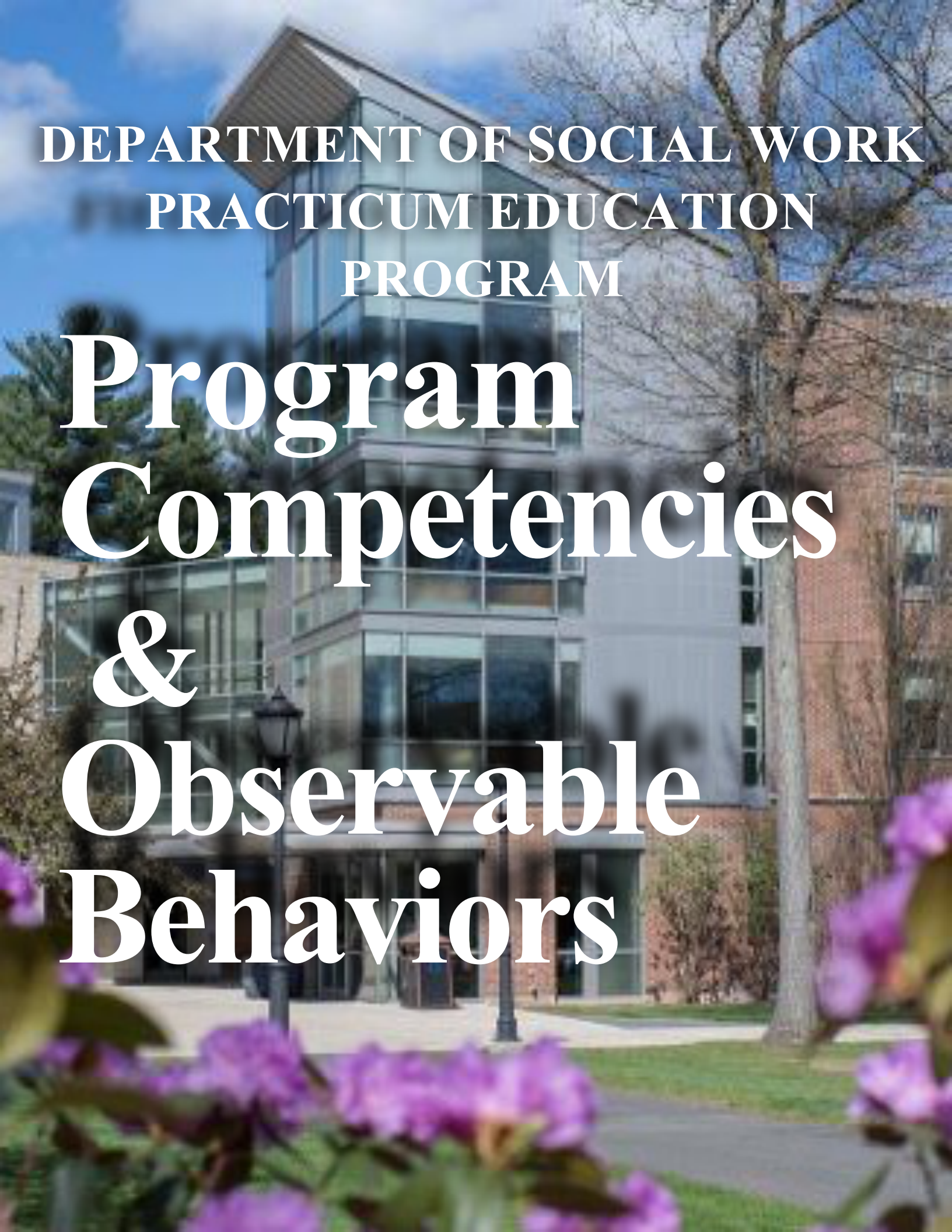
- ☐ www.runipt.com
- ☐ IPT stands for *Intern Placement Tracking*
- ☐ Our web-based system for students, practicum instructors, and faculty liaisons
- ☐ Easy access and completion of all practicum-related documentation
- ☐ “Student-driven”
 - Practicum instructors receive an email notification anytime a document is ready for review/signature

Information and Documentation all in one place:

- ☐ Contact information
- ☐ Websites
- ☐ Timesheets
- ☐ Learning Agreements
- ☐ Evaluations
- ☐ Access and information are secure, password-protected, and encrypted

IPT Training Document:

- ☐ Always available to view online on our WSU Social Work Practicum Education page at <https://www.westfield.ma.edu/academics/social-work-department/practicum-education>
- ☐ Includes actual screen shots and demonstrations of how to use each aspect of the system
 - Introduction to Timesheet and Activities
 - Introduction to Practicum Learning Agreement & Evaluation
 - Introduction to Site Visit Form



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK
PRACTICUM EDUCATION
PROGRAM

Program Competencies & Observable Behaviors

Learning Agreement – Key Points

A BRIEF SUMMARY:

☐ **What is a Learning Agreement?**

- Describes how the student will specifically develop and apply the required Social Work Competencies in *observable* ways within the internship setting and represents the student's specific objectives for the internship.

☐ **How/when is the Learning Agreement Developed?**

- Template provided in IPT
- Developed during the first month of the internship
- Collaborative Process:
 - Student – overall responsibility to initiate the process; strengths, abilities, interests, areas for professional growth
 - Practicum Instructor – opportunities at the agency; expectations of student; keep the agency mission, areas of service in mind; how will you observe the student doing this? (what will you see, hear, etc.)
 - Faculty Practicum Liaison - support Practicum Instructor and Student in operationalizing the competencies, final approval of the Agreement
 - Student, Practicum Instructor, and/or Faculty Practicum Liaison may write in the Learning Agreement
- Activities should be behaviorally specific
 - Helpful verbs may include: interview, read, observe, discuss, demonstrate, take initiative, utilize, attend, distinguish between, write
- How to Acknowledge the Learning Agreement is Complete?
 - Student first signs, then Practicum Instructor, then Faculty Practicum Liaison
- What Happens if the Learning Agreement Needs to be modified after it has been signed?
 - You may use the Spring Revisions Box or contact the Practicum Program swpracticumed@westfield.ma.edu and ask that signatures be removed – edit the form – re-sign

☐ **How is the Learning Agreement Used throughout the Internship?**

- This becomes the agreement about how and what the student is doing throughout the year, how the Social Work Competencies are being specifically met, and becomes the basis, the blueprint, for both the fall and spring semester evaluations.

“TELL ME AND I FORGET. TEACH ME AND I REMEMBER. INVOLVE ME AND I LEARN.”

Benjamin Franklin



Competency-Based Education

In 2008 CSWE adopted a competency-based education framework for its EPAS. As in related health and human service professions, the policy moved from a model of curriculum design focused on content (what students should be taught) and structure (the format and organization of educational components) to one focused on student learning outcomes. A competency-based approach refers to identifying and assessing what students demonstrate in practice. In social work this approach involves assessing students' ability to demonstrate the competencies identified in the educational policy.

Competency-based education rests upon a shared view of the nature of competence in professional practice. Social work competence is the ability to integrate and apply social work knowledge, values, and skills to practice situations in a purposeful, intentional, and professional manner to promote human and community well-being. EPAS recognizes a holistic view of competence; that is, the demonstration of competence is informed by knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes that include the social worker's critical thinking, affective reactions, and exercise of judgment in regard to unique practice situations. Overall professional competence is multi-dimensional and composed of interrelated competencies. An individual social worker's competence is seen as developmental and dynamic, changing over time in relation to continuous learning.

Competency-based education is an outcomes-oriented approach to curriculum design. The goal of the outcomes approach is to ensure that students are able to demonstrate the integration and application of the competencies in practice. In EPAS, social work practice competence consists of nine interrelated competencies and component behaviors that are comprised of knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes.

Using a curriculum design that begins with the outcomes, expressed as the expected competencies, programs develop the substantive content, pedagogical approach, and educational activities that provide learning opportunities for students to demonstrate the competencies.

Assessment of student learning outcomes is an essential component of competency-based education. Assessment provides evidence that students have demonstrated the level of competence necessary to enter professional practice, which in turn shows programs are successful in achieving their goals. Assessment information is used to improve the educational program and the methods used to assess student learning outcomes.

Programs assess students' demonstration of competence. The assessment methods used by programs gather data that serve as evidence of student learning outcomes and the demonstration of competence. Understanding social work practice is complex and multi-dimensional, the assessment methods used by programs and the data collected may vary by context.

“Social work competence is the ability to integrate and apply social work knowledge, values, and skills to practice situations in a purposeful, intentional, and professional manner to promote human and community well-being. “