

FULFILLING FIELD EXPERIENCE HOURS DURING CORONAVIRUS EVENT

- Current Commission on Accreditation (COA) interpretation of *Accreditation Standard 2.2.4* allows “in-person” contact to be accomplished through digital technologies.
- The required 400 hours of field experience for baccalaureate programs and the minimum of 900 hours for master’s programs in *Accreditation Standard 2.2.5* cannot be waived since they are related to licensing requirements in many states.

How does my program remain aligned with CSWE requirements when students are unable to practice onsite in their field settings due to a crisis?

Programs should decide how best to meet field education requirements in a manner that is appropriate for their students, their community, and their unique challenges. Accreditation standards require a minimum for field education 400 hours for baccalaureate programs and 900 hours for master’s programs (AS 2.2.5).

Field education programs must ensure that demonstration of social work competencies is through in-person contact, which refers to interpersonal interactions with clients and constituencies, and may include the use of digital technologies (AS 2.2.4, [2015 EPAS Interpretation Guide](#)). The EPAS allow for technology-based social work practice (e.g., telehealth, telework, phone contact with colleagues, clients, and constituents, remote access to platforms and projects, etc.).

Field agencies may work with students to allow/support telework. For example, can students do client case/paperwork on a secure server, call into meetings, work on projects from home, engage in professional development activities, and meet virtually with their field instructor? Of course, these ideas may not replace all field hours that may be missed due to a crisis, yet perhaps can serve close the gap. Such telework solutions can be temporary while the program convenes to develop longer term solutions.

Components of student field education can be temporarily facilitated via technology. Some programs have had students work on crisis response policies, procedures, notifications, and education (e.g., handouts, PowerPoints, webinars, PSAs, etc.) based on the crisis or natural/manmade disaster.

- For example, a field education program in Puerto Rico developed a list of crisis response tasks students could engage in specific to their agency regarding Hurricane Maria aftermath. This included a student at a mental health agency creating fliers with information about local services for basic needs and support groups offered to begin healing from traumatic experiences.
- Another example, during the Flint Water Crisis, students worked with local congregations to organize bottled water collection and distribution.
- In the case of a public health issue, for example, students may engage in number of activities including:
 - Help with public education about staying healthy
 - Connect clients to Medicaid/Medicare or other affordable healthcare plans
 - Propose revisions to agency policies and procedures about safety
 - Contact clients to inform them of any changes to regularly scheduled services
 - Create lists of referrals to other community resources their clients may need
 - Work on projects or plans for future events or initiatives
 - Engage in virtual professional development to assist them in their agency (e.g., webinars, DSM review, informational interviews with partner organizations, etc.)
 - Craft awareness efforts via placement’s social media accounts
 - Compose advocacy writings to elected officials about issues and legislation the agency is connected to/populations they serve

- Etc.

Note that simulated practice situations may supplement the student's education, but not replace required field experience hours (AS 2.2.5, [2015 EPAS Interpretation Guide](#)). In the classroom the program may consider a few extra touchpoints for simulating working with clients and constituents' groups to support (not replace) required field hours.

Ultimately it is the responsibility of social work programs in conjunction with their host institutions to make decisions and accommodations about risk management, safety, the educational experience of students, including field placements (AS 2.2.7).