

## **Indiana University School of Social Work**

### **Process for International Field Practicum**

#### **Program Information**

Indiana University School of Social Work provides MSW students with opportunities to complete concentration practicum abroad. International practica develop students' cultural competency and experiences that will assist students in working abroad, as well as working with immigrants and refugees in the United States in many settings. It is the intent of Indiana University School of Social Work that students experience personal and professional growth that will likely increase their knowledge of international relations, and concern for different cultures. Past students who did concentration placements abroad, reported that they made a group of friends outside of the United States of America.

#### **Basic Description of the Program**

Indiana University School of Social Work (IUSSW) requires two different professional internship placements for completion of the MSW Degree. Since 1979 the School has made available the option for approximately 1-5 students annually to complete their second (termed Concentration level) placement in various international settings which meet IUSSW standards for placements.

IUSSW has relationships with agencies in several countries, placements are individually developed. Students register for IUSSW courses S651-52 (4 and 5 credits, respectively) for a total of nine graduate credits. Students are in the international placement 4 or 5 days per week for a total of 16 or 20 weeks. It is often an advantage to stay 20 weeks instead of 16 due to the time often needed for the student's life and cultural adjustments. The receiving practicum site personnel usually assist in arranging housing for the student.

We ask the agency/university to sign our attached affiliation agreement. IUSSW carries a student malpractice insurance policy through the National Association of Social Workers which includes students in international placements.

#### **Program Rationale**

This program offers IUSSW students in the MSW program, the opportunity to live in and develop practice skills in the context of another social welfare system and culture. Through immersion in another culture and social services delivery system, students can critically examine the social welfare organizational structures in operation in the United States, understand the importance of history and culture in the development of social welfare systems, and compare and contrast structures and programs. This experience provides students with the opportunity to explore and to challenge their own cultural egocentrism.

We require students that study abroad to share their knowledge and experience by making a presentation to the IU School of Social Work faculty, staff, and students upon their return.

## **Application Information**

### **Eligibility and Pre-requisites**

*Students must meet the following criteria:*

- Be in the second year concentration of the MSW Program
- Be in good standing in the School
- Minimum 3.25 cumulative GPA
- Have received a 5 or above on each practice behavior in the 555 Intermediate Practicum I Learning Evaluation Tool.
- Develop a plan with the MSW Field Coordinator and Advisor for meeting all required courses
- Submit a petition for an international placement using guidelines attached to the MSW Field Coordinator with copies to the student's Academic Advisor and Field Coordinator. Be willing to sign Indiana University's Agreement for International Study (visit the Office of International Affairs website).

### **Process**

International placements are completed during the concentration year and collaborate with other universities, and/or with a non-government organization (NGO).

To begin the process, student will make an appointment to meet with Field Coordinator for International placements to explore the possibility of concentration placements abroad.

The student must submit an international practicum petition and required supporting documents, six months in advance, requesting to complete an international practicum placement overseas. Field Coordinator will review the entire application and with the Director's approval of the petition, explore appropriate placement possibilities. Once a site is identified the student and Field Coordinator confirm the placement. It is IUSSW experience that some overseas agencies expect the student to pay a fee for supervision.

If the international placement process is unsuccessful, the Field Coordinator works with the student to identify a domestic practicum placement that meets the student's learning needs.

### **Academic**

Typically students complete an international practicum during a 4-5 month period (block placements). It involves students working fulltime at an agency with their main focus being on developing professional skills through practicum work at the agency. Although students may leave some time for traveling and sightseeing, they are encouraged to keep in mind their commitment to focus on learning through work abroad, rather than a vacation abroad.

At the International placement agency students complete the requirements for 651-652 Social Work Practicum II and III, for 4 and 5 credits, respectively. These are professional practice courses. The course syllabi are contained in the MSW Field Manual which is sent to the receiving organization and field instructor. Students are required to meet weekly for a minimum of one hour with their field instructor for educational supervision/tutoring. The field instructor and student prepare a written

Learning Evaluation Tool, a midpoint evaluation, and a final evaluation using the protocols in the School's MSW Field Manual.

The grading process in international placements is the same for all placements; the field instructor recommends a grade to the faculty field liaison that has responsibility for assigning a grade of Satisfactory or Fail.

The IUSSW faculty liaison maintains contact with the student and field instructor through at least one planned contact per semester to discuss student progress through the review of a submitted Learning Evaluation Tool, midpoint evaluation, and final evaluation. At times, the faculty field liaison may make an on-site visit.

### **Pre-departure Orientation**

Several activities occur for pre-departure and on-site orientations. These include:

1. Student and Field Coordinator for International placements identify relevant cultural and historical information about the county and social welfare system; 1-2 sessions to review this material
2. Review and completion of the materials needed by the Office of International Studies including Study Abroad Agreement, health insurance, and various other health and contact information forms.
3. Visit to campus Office of International Studies to provide them with copies of the materials and obtain any new "student aboard" information available.
4. Discussion of anticipated costs and a budget for the experience, money management system abroad, housing while abroad, travel arrangements, passport and visas needed.
5. At least one telephone conference is held with the Field Coordinator, the student, and the receiving field instructor in the social services agency (or university social work program) prior to departure to learn what arrangements have been made for the student's housing and to discuss mutual concerns, and the student's questions.
6. An informal meeting between graduates who recently completed an international placement and the prospective international students is usually arranged.
7. Discussion of field course requirements, form and frequency student is to communicate with faculty field liaison; required assignments, etc.
8. Discussion of how student usually approaches new situations and how that pattern can be helpful, unhelpful in a study abroad situation; discussion of the student's goals, apprehensions and anticipation.

Once the student is on-site, the field instructor is responsible for arranging an appropriate orientation to the placement setting which includes the following:

1. Physical aspects of the agency; service purposes, program and goals, administrative, organizational policies and procedures including safety and risk management; and historical development of the organization;
2. Opportunities to meet staff in order to understand their professional roles and relationships within the organization;

3. Observations of client service within the organization; accompanying and/or “shadowing” professional staff;
4. Information about the client populations served by the agency;
5. Orientation to the role of the professional and student in the organization, including normative behavior in relation to dress, safety procedures, and professional relationships;
6. Orientation to the range of value and ethical issues frequently encountered in professional practice in the organization.

### **Student Budget**

Since costs vary widely according to practicum site, the student budget is worked out on an individual basis with estimates shaped by current air fares, cost of living in the host country, recent student experience in similar accommodations in the same location and fluctuations in the currency exchange rates. The Office of Student Financial Aid works with students who qualify for financial aid loans to incorporate the international budget into the financial aid package. **Program Support**

The Wallace International Scholarship is available to students and provides modest amounts. Students may apply by requesting a form from the Field Coordinator.