

Guidelines for Social Work Placements in Private Practice

**Victorian Universities
Field Education
Network (VUFEN)**

June 2024



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, waterways and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

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Background

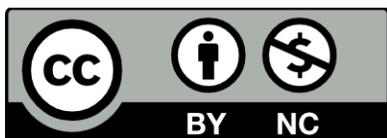
The private practice arena is a growing field of practice in social work. Social work membership of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) now consists of many private practitioners and given the current growth in private practice social work via the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and Medicare, this growth is likely to continue and burgeon over the coming years. This provides an opportunity for social work Higher Education Providers (HEPs) to explore social work student placements in an area of practice that is relatively new to the placement space.

A review of current information and documents on websites of key professional bodies and stakeholders, including the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), Tertiary Education and Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA), Allied Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and Medicare, revealed that there is limited guidance around the scope and nature of work that social work students can undertake when providing services in fee for service (private practice) agencies.

Considering this growing field of practice, and the requirement to provide student social workers with experience in the private practice context, these guidelines have been developed to support private sector social workers, agencies and universities to provide quality social work student placements and build workforce capacity within this space.

The development of the Guidelines was a collaboration with the Victorian Universities Field Education Network (VUFEN), private practice social workers and social work graduates who formed the Reference Group for this project. Consultation occurred with private practice agencies, interested social workers, students and members of VUFEN to develop draft Guidelines. After an initial pilot period, private practice social workers, social work students and VUFEN members were invited to participate in an evaluation that further informed the development of the Guidelines.

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Private Practice Placements Guidelines

The VUFEN is a group made up of social work field education representatives from Victorian Higher Education Providers (HEPs). Our purpose is to collectively progress and innovate social work field education throughout Victoria.

These guidelines are underpinned by the professional values, principles, and ethics as outlined in the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) Code of Ethics (2020); specifically respect for persons, social justice, and professional integrity, as well as the AASW Practice Standards (2023). These Guidelines are intended to guide the learning experience and development of social work students, however, at the core of all social work is the professional responsibility to the people we work with, and as such consent and collaboration with service users is fundamental to any social work placement.

Definitions used in these Guidelines.

Private Practice/Fee for Service: These terms encompass a wide range of service provision models and organisational structures, for example single practitioners through to larger agencies that employ several staff from varying professions. In essence, the focus is on service provision where clients are billed directly or indirectly for the services provided to them. This might include counselling, NDIS providers, Mental Health Social Workers in private practice, Rehabilitation Providers (Transport Accident Commission, WorkCover), Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), critical incident debriefing or support, consultancy, training. For the purposes of these Guidelines, we will use the term “private practice”.

Client/service user/participant: This might include individual clients as well as clients attending group sessions.

Social work supervisor/Social Work Field Educator: Field Educators (FE) are qualified social workers with a minimum of two years (FTE) post-qualifying practice experience and eligible for membership of the AASW.

Task supervisor/co-supervisor (non-social work qualified): A supervisor within the agency, who may not be a qualified Social Worker with two or more years’ experience.

Field Education Liaison Officer (FELO): variously referred to as a University liaison, tutor or liaison person, the FELO is appointed by the university and oversees the progress of the placement. They are the first point of contact for the student and supervisor during placement.

Higher Education Provider: Higher Education Provider (HEP) refers to the institution delivering the accredited social work course. This may be a university or a private tertiary education provider. HEP and University are used interchangeably in these guidelines.

Placement: At the time of writing these Guidelines social work students are required to undertake 1000 hours of placement in their degree. Placements are usually undertaken as two 500-hour placements across the final two years of a student's degree. For the purposes of this document, when we refer to placement, we are referring to a 500-hour placement.

Introduction

Having social work student placements in private practice offers a valuable opportunity for students to gain real-world experience and enhance their communication and counselling skills. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that hosting student placements in private practice involves a significant amount of unpaid work for clinicians and practice owners. Existing private practitioners have commonly provided feedback about limited opportunities for training aspiring private practitioners in the field. Social work student placements can address this gap by providing a well-structured training program that prepares students for the private practice sector.

Benefits of hosting social work students for placements

Hosting a social work student:

- Assists in the development of the social work profession, continuing to develop knowledge around the role of social work in the private sector whilst adding to workforce development in this sector.
- Breaks down the stigma of help seeking activities
- Increases client access to services by offering free or low-cost services to clients, reducing wait times.
- Develops supervisors' practice by reflecting on current practice and rationalising practice choices.
- Provides practitioners with a direct link to contemporary social work curricula and the opportunity to remain in touch with the evolution of social work education and the profession.
- Develops supervision skills through access to professional development supervision workshops which can transfer to improved supervision of social work staff.
- Enables professional development opportunities through universities including events, clinical educator training and university activities.
- Increases access to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for maintaining mental health social work accreditation.
- Provides recruitment opportunities of diverse range of highly trained new graduate social workers who often obtain employment with organisations where they have completed a placement.

Who can be a supervisor?

Social workers who meet the Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (ASWEAS) definition of 'Field Educator' can supervise social work student placements:

“The Field Educator will be the primary supervisor of the student during the placement with direct responsibility for the assessment of the learning outcomes from the experience... Field Educators will be

qualified social workers with a minimum of two years (FTE) post-qualifying practice experience and eligible for membership of the AASW” (AASW, 2021, p.12).

Where no social workers are available in the host agency, the student’s university will appoint an external field educator who will work in conjunction with an agency co-supervisor to support the student placement. An agency co-supervisor is not required to meet the ASWEAS definition of field educator, however, will be an experienced human service worker, with the skills, time and commitment to support a social work student on placement (see “Task Supervisor” in above definitions).

What can you expect from the University?

Under AASW accreditation guidelines, Higher Education Providers (HEPS) are required to allocate a Field Education Liaison Officer (FELO) to oversee and support each placement (see AASW website for further information <https://www.aasw.asn.au/>). **In relation to placements in private practice, ideally the FELO will be familiar with the context of practice.** The FELO provides support to both the student and the Field Educator and is expected to meet with the student and supervisor(s) at least twice during placement. **The FELO is the first point of contact for the student and supervisor if they have any questions or concerns about the progress of placement.**

HEPs are also required to provide a Field Education Manual to students, supervisors and FELOs that provides information about placement expectations, including roles and responsibilities, attendance and assessment requirements. **The Field Education Manual should be read in conjunction with these Guidelines.**

Additional support may be offered and is dependent on the university, for example, some HEPs offer annual field education briefing sessions or professional development opportunities for supervisors.

Universities may structure additional check ins with new providers.

Determining your capacity to host a student.

The following points will assist you to determine your capacity to support students and provide them with an appropriate learning environment throughout their placement.

Private practice placement providers are expected to:

- Provide appropriate orientation to students including site orientation, Occupational Health and Safety and Emergency policies /procedures and IT support/access.

- Provide a workspace (e.g. desk, chair) for the student and access to a computer.
- Provide care and support beyond the supervision requirements, for example, negotiate concerns or difficulties in the practice setting.
- Provide opportunities to observe and assess student's practice with clients.
- **Be aware of, and prepared for, supervision requirements:**
 - Identify suitable staff who can facilitate student learning in the fee-for-service context.
 - Supervision of social work specific skills must be provided by a qualified social worker with two years post qualifying experience.
 - Enable supervisors to access training and resources on the facilitation of learning, provision of feedback and assessment of students in practice. Universities will provide support, education and training on assessment using the Learning Plan and feedback requirements.
 - Enable supervisors to have adequate time in their own schedule to supervise and support the student and to make informed decisions about a student's competency.
 - Select appropriate clients for the student to work with, recognising that the supervisor and agency maintain responsibility for the practice provided by the student.
 - It is recommended that the student be provided with a small caseload of clients; this could include 1:1 work, group work or community work. The number of cases allocated to a students should depend on:
 - Student and supervisor expectations
 - Student competence
 - Placement attendance time fractions, that is, the number of clients should be pro-rata for part time students
 - While it is not essential to have only one supervisor, students must be aware of who the field educator is and therefore who to go to with questions on a day-to-day basis. The field educator should also be responsible for assessing the student.
 - Where a supervisor is part time and the student is fulltime, provision needs to be made for a task supervisor who is responsible for the student on a day- to-day basis
 - To provide students with the opportunity to be practically involved and have hands-on practice in managing service users as appropriate and under supervision. The placement is not usually primarily observational unless previously agreed to but should include some observational experience.
 - Be aware of the time commitment required throughout placement, including:
 - Time to orientate the student to the agency (dependent on agency)
 - 1.5 hours of supervision each week (5 days) of placement
 - Between 2 to 4 hours of attendance at meetings with the University representative (liaison)

- Development of the learning tasks with the student at the commencement of placement and comments and review reports at mid placement and at the end of placement, approximately 3-5 hours.
 - Additional time to provide support to the student may be required if a student is not performing at the required level at mid placement.
- Offer regular significant opportunities for students to demonstrate their practice skills and service user management. For example, the ability to engage and assess and/or develop an intervention plan. Students may have their own small caseload, and this can be supplemented with activities that provide them with significant opportunities for learning if necessary
- Support students to reach entry-level competency in the following domains of practice as contained in the AASW Practice Standards (2023).
 - Standard 1: Social workers conduct themselves according to the values, principles and guidelines of the AASW Code of Ethics 2020.
 - Standard 2: Social workers practice in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to support their priorities and aspirations.
 - Standard 3: Social workers advocate for policy initiatives and approaches to practice aimed at achieving fair and equitable access for people to social, health, economic, environmental and political resources.
 - Standard 4: Social workers practice respectfully and inclusively with regard to culture and diversity.
 - Standard 5: Social workers practice within a professional knowledge framework informed by a critical understanding of contemporary social work theory and research.
 - Standard 6: Social workers make professional decisions on the basis of a holistic assessment of the needs, strengths, goals and preferences of people.
 - Standard 7: Social workers actively contribute to strengthening and promoting the identity and standing of the profession.
 - Standard 8: Social workers build and strengthen their practice through regular structured supervision from social work qualified supervisors.
 - Standard 9: Social workers monitor their skills, knowledge, and expertise to maintain, improve and broaden their professional development.

Note: The above Standards guide the assessment documents HEPs will provide students and field educators with at the beginning of placement.

- Support students to be assessed against these areas by providing opportunities to learn and demonstrate these skills. This includes the development of relevant learning activities that form part of the students learning plan (see examples of placement activities on page 18). There are various ways students can achieve this and University Field Education staff can support you to develop strategies that suit your practice if required. Typically, at the end of a placement, students

would be able to work with a variety of service users with relatively uncomplicated needs, such that in collaboration with the client, the client's major problems are identified, major goals established, and actions are completed safely and effectively within a reasonable time frame. While achieving this, the student is aware of their limitations and knows when to seek assistance.

- **Supervisors play a role to:**
 - Assess students' performance and provide feedback.
 - Developing social work identity.
 - Provide regular, timely, specific and constructive feedback.
 - Provide assessment and feedback at the mid-point and end of placement.
 - Minimise expectations of travel between sites if required and if required, students are to be remunerated for travel.
 - Engage with the University to understand processes and requirements.
 - Negotiate any adjustments to placement contact hours.
 - Be available for day-to-day incidental conversations.
- Discuss contact hours with the university when discussing the placement opportunity. Work patterns may vary in a private practice setting and it may be necessary to have students engaged outside of standard hours. Variations are best planned in advance to ensure the correct match of students to the practice service needs, including the learning styles of the student. The preplacement interview provides an opportunity for the structure of placement to be discussed.

Requirements for private practice placements to assist universities and agencies when discussing and setting up placements.

- Seeking consent from clients for a social work student to work with them, needs to be upfront as per the AASW [Code of Ethics 5. Standards of Ethical Conduct: Working with Service Users](#)
- Balance is needed between billable activities and non-billable activities (see Case Study examples)
- Placement learning time needs to be structured into the placement.
- Clients may not be able to be 'billed' for services provided by students under government schemes such as the NDIS**. **The onus is on individual businesses to ensure they are complying with current billing regulations/legislation.**

**Within the NDIS the supervisor can claim the relevant professional rate from the NDIS to create and supervise an appropriate program to be delivered by the student, with the participant's consent. (see NDIS website <https://www.ndis.gov.au/providers/working-provider/allied-health-providers/allied-health-practitioner-students-and-provisional-psychologists>). The service agreement between the provider and the participant should document this consent, and how the arrangement can result in additional flexibility (e.g. lower hourly rate or additional hours of service) for the participant.

- Private practitioners may choose to charge a fee (separate to ‘billing’ as above) for a service delivered by a student.
- Supervision arrangements need to be considered to ensure students are provided with the minimum requirement of supervision. This could include providing a combination of 1:1 and group supervision/supervision unit (within and/or across practices).
- Consideration needs to be given to whether the capacity of the agency and supervisor is best suited to hosting a first placement student or a final placement student.

How could a student play a role in your practice/agency?

There are different models of student placements in private practice. Below are examples that may work in your practice.

- **Shared working:** This co-working model is where the student completes components of assessments and interventions with/for practitioners. The client session is shared from the start, with the student engagement of the client increasing over time.
- **Shared-care progressing to student-led:** The student gradually manages the session over the placement with the later weeks mostly student-led (while still fully supervised). This may begin as observation of practitioner with a client and progress to shared-care then to student-led.
- **Student clinic:** A practice may set a specific time of the day or week where clients can be assessed and treated by students for a free or a reduced rate. In this model, some private practices actively utilise the whole year and source students from several universities to enable a continuous stream of patients to see students. This tends to be larger providers who have developed a model that works for them.
- **Student project such as research, policy, community development, evaluation, group development or health promotion placement:** Students can undertake activities that are not necessarily client related, however that still require the development and use of social work skills and knowledge as per the standards noted above.

It is possible for a student to concurrently see clients and have a small project task to undertake when their supervisor is away, sick or unavailable.

The following model is suggested for placement structure and tasks

To ensure a comprehensive learning experience, a four-phase approach for the placement is suggested:

- **Pre-Placement Phase:** In this phase the agency determines their capacity to host a student on placement. This may include reviewing staff ability to commit time to the student, assessing if there is physical space for the student, discussions with the university about systems, processes and timelines, briefing other staff in the agency about the social work student placement commencing, completing required university documentation offering the placement, and attending university training/briefing sessions.

This phase also includes interviewing the student. The interview is a good opportunity to find out about the students learning style and interests, their ability to work autonomously, to discuss the flexibility of work hours/patterns (if applicable), to provide an overview of the private practice context and how this might differ from other human service organisations, and to discuss tasks the student may be involved in.

- **Beginning Phase:** Orientation, induction, and training.

During this phase, students will undergo orientation to the organisation and receive training to familiarise themselves with the private practice setting. This could include shadowing counselling or other relevant sessions, engaging in role plays with other students, attending clinical skills groups, or any other relevant tasks associated with the focus of placement. Assessment for readiness is crucial and observing or recording sessions for field educators to review will provide valuable feedback for students' growth and development.

- **Middle Phase:** Skill development and practice.

In this phase, students will further develop their skills through active involvement in the service delivery process, which will depend on the focus of the placement, for example, client focused, counselling, community development, research or project work. Students will continue to engage in skill development initiated in the first phase and work closely with supervisors to enhance their competency.

It is important to note that student tasks and opportunities may change over the course of the placement. These changes can be reflected in the student's learning plan, and it may be helpful to discuss changes with the FELO.

- **End Phase:** Practical application with a small case load or further progress on project work.

Towards the end of the placement, students should have the opportunity to work with a small caseload of clients, offering short-term, brief intervention counselling (ideally around 5 sessions) or further opportunity to engage in project work. This practical experience will allow students to consolidate their skills and gain confidence in their theory and practice abilities.

Placement timeline

	Stakeholder tasks		
Placement phase	Placement Agency / Field Ed / Supervisor	Student	University
Pre-placement Phase: Assessment and planning	<p>Agency assesses capacity to host including staff time, physical space, suitable placement tasks, briefing staff, completion of university documents. FE interviews nominated student(s), assessing student suitability and completes university documentation.</p> <p>The interview is a good opportunity to find out about the students learning style, their ability to work autonomously, to discuss the flexibility of work hours/patterns (if applicable) and to provide an overview of the private practice context and how this might differ from other human service contexts. Outline potential tasks and activities</p>	<p>Reviews goals and learning styles. Attends pre-placement interview. Drafts learning plan</p>	<p>Provides information regarding placement requirements to students and placement agencies. Nominates a student for each placement. Notifies students and FE regarding university liaison person.</p>

<p>Beginning Phase: Orientation, induction, and training</p>	<p>FE and others in the practice provide a structured orientation and training to enable the student to familiarise themselves with the private practice setting. This could include shadowing counselling /other relevant sessions, engaging in role plays with fellow students, attending clinical skills groups, visits to social workers in other agencies the practice has a relationship with, or undertaking other relevant tasks associated with the focus of placement.</p> <p>Assessment for readiness is crucial and observing/recording sessions for field educators to review will provide valuable feedback to enhance students' growth and development of their social work identity.</p> <p>Weekly formal supervision with FE and student commences in week 1 and continues weekly until the end of the placement.</p> <p>FE and task supervisor attend first liaison meeting with student and university representative.</p> <p>The FE should be more available for informal queries from the student in this phase.</p>	<p>Student engages in orientation activities and works with supervisor to complete their learning plan.</p> <p>Student engages in weekly formal supervision in week 1 and continues until the end of placement</p> <p>Student attends first placement meeting with university representative, FE and task supervisor.</p>	<p>Facilitates first placement meeting with student, FE and task supervisor. Provides feedback on learning plan.</p> <p>Has capacity to provide extra support if required</p>
<p>Middle Phase: Skill development and practice</p>	<p>FE and task supervisor/s provide increased opportunities for the student to demonstrate skills and knowledge. Examples include client</p>	<p>Student focuses on development of skills through active involvement in the service delivery process (depending on</p>	<p>Facilitates (mid) second placement meeting with student, FE and task supervisor. Marks and provides feedback on</p>

	<p>focused/counselling, community development, research or project activities. They will continue to engage in skill development.</p> <p>FE completes mid placement report.</p> <p>FE and task supervisor attend (mid) second liaison meeting with student and university representative</p>	<p>the focus of the placement). Works closely with supervisor/s to enhance their competency. Student completes mid placement activities and submits prior to mid-placement meeting.</p> <p>Student attends (mid) second placement meeting with university representative, FE and task supervisor.</p>	<p>submitted assessment activities.</p> <p>Has capacity to provide extra support if required.</p>
<p>End Phase: Practical application with a small case load or further progress on project work</p>	<p>Towards the end of the placement, students should have the opportunity to work with a small caseload of clients, offering short-term, brief intervention counselling (ideally around 5 sessions) OR further opportunity to engage in project work.</p> <p>F.E. completes end of placement report</p>	<p>Students have opportunities to consolidate their skills and gain confidence in their theory and practice abilities via increased independent level activities.</p> <p>Typically, a handover and/or a project presentation is conducted by the student.</p> <p>Completes university assessment activities and submits to university.</p>	<p>University representative contacts student and placement supervisor to ensure student is on track to meet requirements of the placement subject – format may depend on individual university. Completes assessment of submitted assessments. Provides opportunities for feedback re: student and placement processes.</p>

Examples of placement activities could include:

- Client intake
- Referrals
- Case notes
- Reporting documentation
- Clinical counselling
- Case management/support
- Case management (not billed).
- Assessments
- Advocacy such as client advocacy (for example, around client funding or employment)
- Shadowing other workers not just social workers – being exposed to the range of multidisciplinary practices.
- Contacting clients who are waiting for services (active hold or wait list management)
- Reviewing the organisation's intake forms and providing feedback (with a cultural diversity or accessibility lens).
- Background research work (for example, for NDIS, Medicare clients).
- Discussion about social work values and how these appear in this environment.
- Group work programs (under supervision) including co-facilitated groups/session.
- Developing and running group programs (free of charge). This can be connected with other student placements so that the groups can continue run over a longer period of time.
- Project work including quality assurance activities, key stakeholder meetings.
- Networking with agencies and with other students in private practice agencies.
- Exploring referral pathways.
- Building relationships with other organisations.
- Developing client resources.
- Health and wellbeing promotion activities, for example, R U OK? activities.
- Develop or update resources for the organisation.
- Audit policies such as Occupational Health and Safety or Rainbow Tick.
- Build capacity through application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to create a practice blog, websites, videos.
- Researching application of emerging technologies such as TikTok or other social media.
- Policy development and implementation.
- Community events and awareness raising campaigns.
- Gaining an understanding of the service systems.
- Sector advocacy as a profession (for example, around education about differences between roles of social work and psychology).

- System advocacy (for example, working to improve referral pathways and treatment options for a client group).
- Writing grant proposals
- Creating blog posts
- Co-hosting a podcast
- Develop resources, for example a schedule of what a typical day looks like
- Learn about and assist with psychometric screening tools and other assessment screening tools
- Critical reflection activities

***A note on marketing, networking, entrepreneurship, and business practices**

While a private practice placement provides an opportunity for students to experience marketing and entrepreneurship firsthand, the placement focus should be on clinical reasoning skills and working hands-on service users (as above). Students should not be expected to source their own clients.

Case Study 1: Planning for a social work placement.

Angela is a social worker who works for a private practice agency. The agency provides counselling (both full-fee paying, and Medicare-rebated under Mental Health Plans) and also provides some services to NDIS participants.

Angela is an experienced social worker and would like to have a student on placement. She has raised this with her manager (the CEO/Director of the organisation), who has asked her to develop a plan for how the placement could work alongside the requirement for Angela to undertake a minimum number of billable/fee-paying activities per day.

In thinking about her workload and commitments, and the requirements of a social work student placement learning experience, Angela has developed the following plan. The student will undertake placement full-time in the agency. After an initial orientation, that includes some independent reading and on-line modules, the student will 'shadow' Angela and other staff in the organisation who are happy for this to occur. This 'shadowing' will require consent from each client. Once the student is familiar with the work undertaken at the agency, they will begin to co-facilitate sessions with Angela, with the clients' written permission, and ideally work towards taking on a small independent caseload. The work the student undertakes with clients may not be billable in the same way as the usual work of the agency and this will need to be aligned with the requirements of the funding regulators, for example, Medicare or NDIA. The work the student undertakes can be provided as an extra service available to clients that they are not billed for (for NDIS participants) or that they are charged a reduced fee for (for private paying clients). Written consent for the work undertaken by the social work student will be sought from each client.

The student activity then becomes an extra service that can be offered to clients and an opportunity for clients to receive some additional support.

Supervision would occur weekly for 1.5 hours, and this will be offset against time saved when the student is able to undertake some of the duties on behalf of Angela, for example, when appropriate making follow-up phone calls to services.

Case Study 2: Student Perspective

Ben is a social work student who undertakes his final placement with Angela at her private practice. Ben attends a pre-placement interview and agrees to full-time placement hours; this includes one evening until 8 pm each week and one Saturday morning each month. Ben appreciates the flexibility as it means he can pick his kids up from school most days.

Placement starts with Ben shadowing Angela and other staff in the agency to learn about their roles and how information is collected and shared. In supervision, Ben and Angela talk about social work and social work roles in the agency and how these are similar and different to other roles in the agency. Ben's initial activities include sitting in with client interviews and sessions (with clients' written permission), note taking, writing up case notes, assessments and intervention plans, and helping with case management activities such as making phone calls and appointments, outreach and peer support with clients and networking with other organisations.

Ben participates in the roster to answer the reception phone during lunch times and is able to screen calls, pass on messages, book appointments and complete client intake forms. As Ben builds his confidence and skills, he takes over Angela's reception roster, giving Angela this time back each week.

Part way through placement with clients' permission, Ben is assigned a small (3 clients) caseload. He works with these clients weekly for the remainder of placement, collaborating with them to explore their presenting issues, set goals and plans to achieve these. The clients can access this service with Ben at a reduced fee rate.

Ben visits other organisations that provide services to the client cohort and during supervision with Angela, he talks about his observations about accessibility, cultural safety and practice frameworks. With agreement from Angela, Ben hosts other students from his university to visit the practice and learn about the business model.

Ben spends time reading and researching the theoretical tools used in the practice and finds a journal article about a group activity that has been successful with the client cohort. Ben discusses this with Angela, and they agree to develop a group work program building social skills. Ben presents the proposal at a team meeting, and they agree to trial this. Ben takes on the role of organising the group activity. This includes developing the group program, organising a room booking and organising transport for participants to attend. Ben demonstrates his communication and interpersonal skills when contacting each client, explaining the program and inviting participation. The initial group session is co-facilitated by Angela and Ben. Ben then facilitates fortnightly groups over a 6-week period, with pre and post

discussions with Angela. The group activity turns out to be an additional free service for clients to build social skills and a peer support network, which positively influences their therapeutic experience.

On completion of his placement, Ben feels that he has gained a wide range of knowledge and skills. He has developed his confidence and a clearer social work professional identity.

Case Study 3: Placement at a workplace rehabilitation agency

Danni is a manager at a multi-disciplinary work rehabilitation organisation. She is very interested in building up some social work expertise in her organisation, as her site has just one social worker. The agency has had students from several nearby universities. One university has allocated 2 final year students, who attend for 3 months full-time. Les, the social worker is the supervisor for both students.

The AASW requires Les to provide at least 1.5 hours formal supervision to the student per week. Les sees each student individually for 45 minutes each, and the 2 students will have group supervision together for another 45 minutes, which is allowable by the AASW. Voula, an exercise physiologist and Jackson, a psychologist, share responsibility for the students, acting as a contact point for day-to-day queries and tasks. These staff members are known as task supervisors. Les, Voula and Jackson attended a briefing session conducted by the University which outlined expectations, assessment requirements and what to do if things do not go to plan.

Les, Voula and Jackson have created an orientation program for the first 2 weeks the students are on placement, which covers health and safety, work systems/equipment, meetings with people they will encounter, and electronic links to context information eg funding and legislative background to the work.

As the organisation takes on mainly compensable clients, Danni has checked TAC and WorkCover requirements about student placements. The students act in a support role to Les and other rehabilitation team members. Activities are chosen to allow the students to apply their skills and knowledge such as:

- Seeing clients under supervision of an accredited practitioner
- Observing Les and other practitioners in the team
- Phoning clients, doctors and service providers to set up a case management meeting.
- Taking meeting minutes
- Drafting case notes
- Report writing
- Making client wellbeing check-ins between appointments with rehab team members.

Les has also set the students up with a group project – in this instance they are undertaking a client quality assurance activity.

In the past, social work students have undertaken the following activities:

- Review of agency policies in relation to clients with a vision impairment
- Researching and creating a resource for a specific client use, for example, a directory of local neighbourhood houses that offer computer courses.
- Researching and writing up a proposal to set up a network for social workers and psychologists working in the sector.

During the placement, the students have some written and oral activities set by the university which serve to prompt them to integrate their practical tasks with what they have learned in the classroom. Each student will be required to write a Learning Plan at the beginning of the placement, outlining their tasks and learning goals link to a broad set of graduate attributes The University allocates a staff member to meet with the supervisor, the task supervisors, and each student at specific points during the placement to check the students' progress. At the first liaison meeting, Les advised the University representative that he had observed one of the students was having difficulty following instructions. The University Liaison person, Les and the student have formulated some tasks to work on and assess progress in this skill area.

During the placement Les will write two progress reports for each student, in the middle and towards the end of the placement.

Relevant documents and websites

Australian Association of Social Workers, (2023). *Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (ASWEAS)* <https://aasw-prod.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/ASWEAS-March-2020-V2.1-updated-November-2021.pdf>

Australian Association of Social Workers, (2020). *Australian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics* <https://aasw-prod.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/AASW-Code-of-Ethics-2020.pdf>

NDIS <https://www.ndis.gov.au/providers/working-provider/allied-health-providers/allied-health-practitioner-students-and-provisional-psychologists>

University of Toronto, (no date), Date on practicums in private practice, *Field Instructions Standards* <https://socialwork.utoronto.ca/practicum/for-current-field-instructors/field-instruction-standards/>