As stated in the Bulletin description of the social work major under admission requirement, all students are required to complete a minimum of 100 hours of volunteer experience. At least 50 hours must be completed by the end of the semester of application to the BSW program. The remainder will be completed before enrolling for SWK321.

**Purpose**

This volunteer experience has several purposes. First, it provides each student with the opportunity to see first-hand the types of services, agencies, and experiences that may be part of being a social worker. Second, it allows students to directly test their interest in social work. Third, it provides experience for students as they advance through social work classes. And finally, a reference by the supervisor is required for admission, providing social work faculty valuable insight into the appropriateness of each student for the profession of social work.

**The volunteer experience must meet the following requirements:**

1. A volunteer placement form must be completed for proposed experiences, including a detailed description of the tasks that will be completed. This must be signed by the person who will be supervising and approved by the faculty advisor. Where there is a dual relationship between the supervisor and the student (such as a prior relationship or both are students), it is the responsibility of the student to check with the SW advisor about who will be the supervisor.

2. Acceptable sites provide social work related experiences in which a student will interact with client systems of the agency, which could include individuals, groups, families, organizations, or communities. Programs such as crisis lines or domestic violence shelters that provide skills training are particularly suitable. Other settings, such as nursing homes, Head Start, or Big Brothers/Big Sisters may be appropriate, depending on the tasks in which the student will engage. Activities such as coaching kids’ sports teams, doing community clean-up projects, and volunteering in fund raisers for a sorority or fraternity will typically not be acceptable.

3. Volunteer experiences must be approved to ensure they serve the intended purposes.

4. It may be possible for students who have extensive and relevant work experience to receive approval for that experience as a substitute for volunteering.

5. While it is helpful to have a single volunteer experience for the entire 100 hours, in some cases, this will not be possible. No more than two volunteer experiences can be counted toward the 100 hours, with at least 35 hours the shorter experience.

6. Service learning opportunities, such as alternative spring breaks or work trips, may be available through CMU or the social work program itself. Minimally, students will need to have access to a trip leader who is not a peer for the required reference. These will be evaluated on an individual basis.

Revised by Susan Grettenberger 10/2007