Evaluation of Practice
(Points – Refer to last section of this document)

Social work has historically focused primarily on the delivery of services.   Often there was no evidence to prove that the interventions were successful and sustaining. Over the last several decades social work practice has evolved considerably. Since social service programs are heavily funded by public resources, the gatekeepers of public monies (e.g. local government, legislature, congress, etc.) have required organizations funded by public dollars to prove that their services are successful.

With this evolution, social service programs have had to restructure many aspects of their services to insure that their interventions are based on empirical evidence indicating that the services provided are successful. With empirical based practice methods, social workers use research and outcome measurement practice and problem solving tools where data is collected systematically. They specify problems, as well as monitor the interventions, techniques, and outcomes in measurable terms and systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions used.

Summary of Evaluation of Practice Assignment:
It is recommended that all social work students have experience doing an evaluation of social work practice. Evaluation of practice exercises described here are educational assignments and are **not** research projects in the sense that data is **not** being gathered for publication or other public dissemination purposes.

Any project that gathers data about human subjects with the intent of publicizing the results of data analysis (through publication or other forms of public presentation) constitutes a research project. No such research can be conducted without obtaining prior approval from the Helen Bader School of Social Welfare.

1. Practice evaluations may focus on agency clients or consumers (individuals, families, or groups), on agency programs, or on other units of attention such as staff, communities, or population sub-groups. The target of practice evaluation may be a client problem (e.g. increase the number of days a student attends school), a client strength (e.g. maintain high level of school attendance), a program goal (e.g. 80% of agency clients will follow through with referrals), or some other measurable aspect of practice deemed important by the student and the Field Instructor. Many students will elect to evaluate their practice with an individual client or client system (e.g. family) using a single system design, but students are encouraged to consider evaluating other units, such as programs.

2. Data collection may include one or more:

   - standardized questionnaires (e.g. the Parent-Child Relationship Index)
   - self-report tools such as self-anchored scales and logs

- field notes or other ways of recording activity and impressions in action research
- behavioral observations used in session
- parent, or teacher rating scales
- archival data such as probation reports, employment records, school reports, or medical records, etc.

The choice of which goals or problems to measure in a given evaluation and how to measure them are the responsibility of the Field Instructor and student. The assigned Faculty Field Liaison is available to consult with students on their designs and measures.

3. Students should attempt to utilize graphs and other data charts to provide a visual summary of their findings.

<u>Outline of Project:</u>

For practice evaluation with **single systems or clients:**

1. Describe the subject.
2. What was the client/consumer problem or goal you measured in this case?
3. How did you measure the goal (procedures used, operational definition, frequency)?
4. Intervention(s) you used and when used (be specific).
5. Findings and implications (charts and graphs can be used to demonstrate the findings.)

For practice evaluation with clients or consumers, considered using a **group design.**

1. Describe the sample.
2. What was the outcome indicator you measured in this case?
3. How did you measure the outcome (procedures used, operational definition, frequency)?
4. Intervention(s) you used and when used (provide details of the intervention)
5. Findings (chart or table is appropriate) and implications.

For practice evaluation with **programs** (outcome evaluation):

1. Describe the program.
2. What was the program goal or objective measured?
3. How did you measure the goal or objective (procedures used, operational definition, frequency)?
4. Program description (how the program is supposed to achieve the goal)?

5.   Findings (chart or table are appropriate) and implications.

For practice evaluation with **participatory groups** (action-oriented evaluation):

1.   Describe the group.
2.   What problem or situation became the focus of intervention?
3.   What indicators of problem resolution emerged from the interaction with consumers, participants, or community members?
4.   What actions were taken?
5.   What happened (narrative, chart, or table are appropriate) and what are the implications?

Procedure for Evaluation of Practice Assignment

An Evaluation of Practice assignment is considered a *major* <u>**substantive**</u> assignment, which can be completed in place of the required five assignments for the semester and is **only** permitted in the last semester of the field placement.

1. Discuss the details of the *Evaluation of Practice* assignment with your Field Instructor.

2. Once agreement is made on the details of the assignment, the student should complete the Learning Plan including an outline of the details of the assignment.

3. <u>The assigned Faculty Liaison also needs to approve the assignment by signing off on the Learning Plan.</u>   If the Faculty Liaison does not approve the proposed assignment, the student will be required to complete the five minor assignments or develop a proposal that meets the criteria of a *major* <u>**substantive**</u> assignment.