


Social Work Assistant Program Program Guide

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Program Guide Content

The information found in this guide was developed to provide students and faculty with consistent guidelines and rules for the program. These guidelines are used for all students at all campus locations, adopting the college-wide policy and procedure standards. Any COTC college policy supersedes this program level guideline unless indicated otherwise.

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Professional Standards and Expectations

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1.0 Professional Standards & Expectations

Overview

It is important to be aware that the program prepares students to assist people who may be experiencing a variety of challenges, difficulties and disabilities. This degree includes an academic and demonstration of skill component along with practicum experiences. Recognizing that academic, interpersonal skills and integrity are needed to be successful in this program and the social work and human services profession, we are providing you with this document which provides details about the different qualities and standards of behavior that are expected of students in this program and by the Ethical Standards put forth by the Council for Standards in Human Services Education. ([National Organization for Human Services](#)). You will be required to meet the standards and expectations that are determined necessary to effectively work in social work and human services. Throughout your participation in this program each of the following three essential qualities will be a focus for learning, growth, and evaluation:

- I. Acquisition of Knowledge
- II. Demonstration of Skills
- III. Personal and Professional Integrity

Since the above qualities and behaviors have been identified as essential to effectively working with others, you will have many opportunities to demonstrate the behaviors, skills and knowledge with your peers, and faculty members, in and out of the classroom, as well as with clients and co-workers at your practicum placement sites.

We recognize that some people who enter the field are in recovery from chemical dependency addiction and/or may have their own mental health issues. These issues will not necessarily negatively impact a student's participation in this program. However, it is important that there be continued recovery, emotional stability, and management of one's illness in order to provide effective services to clients and to protect clients from potential harm.

Students who have a history of past criminal activity and/or incarceration are not automatically excluded from working in the field, however, some restrictions will apply depending on the specifics of the crime and the agencies' policies. Curriculum in SWA-100 includes acknowledging the understanding of the criminal background restrictions.

Please be aware that should there be concerns about your performance or behavior, the appropriate faculty/administrator will communicate with you. If a Professional Commitment Agreement is deemed necessary, the procedure in the Program Guide will be followed.

To assist in your successful professional career, we encourage students to self-identify any of the above-mentioned barriers to the appropriate faculty/administration.

Essential Qualities of a Human Service Professional

The following *essential* qualities have been identified and reflect the Ethical Standards put forth by the [Council of Standards in Human Services](#) (NOHS). The descriptions and lists provided serve

as examples of these qualities, or lack thereof, and are not all-inclusive. Should there be concerns about your performance or behavior, the appropriate faculty/administrator will communicate with you. If a Professional Commitment Agreement is deemed necessary, the procedure in the Program Guide will be followed. Students are also expected to abide by the COTC Code of Student Conduct found in Appendix A of the [Student Handbook](#), which includes Academic and Classroom Conduct standards.

I. ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE (NOHS Ethical Standard Responsibility to Clients, Responsibility to Public & Society, Responsibility to the Profession; CSHSE Standards 11-19)

The body of knowledge that has been identified as important and essential for persons working in the various areas of Social Work and Human Services is included in the content of each of the technical courses. In addition, each practicum site also offers important information that is essential for working effectively in the agency. A student must be able to demonstrate the ability to apply the knowledge learned in the classroom to the practicum setting.

The inability to translate knowledge to classroom assignments, exams and practicum evaluations will earn the student a failing grade.

Required knowledge includes but are not limited to the following:

A. Understanding the Social Work and Human Services Body of Knowledge

1. Uses a framework of historical data to assess conditions in the field.
2. Understands the context in which the profession evolved, projects and shapes trends and outcomes.
3. Identifies human conditions, social problems, and multi-dimensional systems that provide the focus for the social work and human services professional.
4. Understands interpersonal, group leadership, and case management skills in helping relationships.
5. Understands professional ethical standards and responsibility for professional growth.

B. Academic Performance

1. Students must earn a minimum of a "C" (2.00) or better in all courses on the Social Work Assistant plan of study. Should a student earn less than a "C" (2.00), they must repeat the course and earn at least a "C" (2.00) in order to graduate from the program.

II. DEMONSTRATION OF SKILLS (NOHS Ethical Standard Responsibility to Clients, Responsibility to Public & Society; CSHSE Standards 12 - 20)

Students are required throughout the program to translate their learned knowledge into skills. Students practice these skills through classroom activities and in their practicum placement experiences.

The inability to demonstrate effective skills in assignments or at the practicum placement site may earn the student a failing grade.

Required skills include but are not limited to the following:

A. Direct Practice Skills

1. Determines appropriate responses to human needs based on an understanding of the structure and dynamics of individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and society.
2. Assesses the needs of clients and client groups.
3. Plans programs and interventions to assist clients and client groups in promoting optimal functioning, growth, and goal attainment.
4. Evaluates outcomes and adjusts the plan to both an individual client and program level.
5. Serves as a change agent by applying core knowledge, theory, skills, and values to provide direct services and interventions to clients and client groups.

B. Information Management

1. Appropriately integrates and uses information such as client data, statistical information, and record keeping.
2. Manages information including obtaining, organizing, analyzing, evaluating and disseminating information.
3. Provides administrative support (indirect service) for the effective delivery of direct services to clients or client groups through a holistic approach.

C. Practicum Experience

1. Draws from a knowledge base integrating classroom learning with supervised practicum experiences in a social work and human services setting.

III. PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY (NOHS Ethical Standards Responsibility to Self, Responsibility to Profession; CSHSE Standards 5, 18 - 20)

Students are aware of and abide by the [NOHS Ethical Standards](#). Students are also expected to abide to the COTC Code of Student Conduct found in Appendix A of the [Student Handbook](#), and the Program Guide. Students' behavior inside and outside of the academic setting adheres to the highest standards of personal and professional integrity.

Required qualities include but are not limited to the following:

A. Professional Integrity

1. ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS (NOHS Ethical Standards 10, 11, 16)
 - a. Demonstrates sensitivity when working with diverse populations.
 - b. Aware of social justice issues and advocates for the needs of individuals, groups, and communities.
2. INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION (NOHS Ethical Standards 19, 20, 21)
 - a. Creates genuine and empathic relationships with others.
 - b. Actively collaborates and coordinates with other professionals when appropriate.
3. RESPONSIBILITY (NOHS Ethical Standard 26, 27, 28)
 - a. Adheres to program policies, COTC Code of Student Conduct, and NOHS Ethical Standards.
 - b. Shows professional qualities in the classroom and practicum sites.

- c. Seeks appropriate consultation and supervision with decision-making in the classroom and practicum site.

B. Personal Integrity

1. EMOTIONAL STABILITY (NOHS Ethical Standard 35)
 - a. Strives to develop and maintain healthy personal growth to ensure the capability of giving optimal services to clients.
 - b. Actively seeks appropriate professional services when experiencing personal issues.
 - c. Communicates to Social Work Assistant faculty identified or potential barriers to program completion.
2. SELF-AWARENESS AND MATURITY (NOHS Ethical Standard 35)
 - a. Aware of own behavior, values, and attitudes and how they may impact others.
 - b. Recognizes and maintains appropriate professional boundaries.

Should there be concerns about your performance or behavior, the appropriate faculty/administrator will communicate with you. If a Professional Commitment Agreement is deemed necessary, the procedure in the Program Guide will be followed.

Professional Standards and Expectations
References

National Organization for Human Services. (2015). *Ethical Standards for Human Service Professionals*. Melbourne, Fla. Retrieved from:
<http://www.nationalhumanservices.org/ethical-standards-for-hs-professionals>

Council for Standards in Human Services Education (2013). *National Standards for Associate Degree in Human Services Revised 2013*. Alexandria, VA. Retrieved from: cshse.org/standards.html

COTC Code of Student Conduct found in the Student Handbook, Appendix A. Retrieved from:
<http://www.cotc.edu/life>

Professional Conduct Agreement Procedure

Should there be concerns about your performance or behavior, the appropriate faculty/administrator will communicate with you. If a Professional Commitment Agreement is deemed necessary, this procedure will be followed.

Resources: Professional Conduct Agreement.

Procedures:

1. Upon initial identification of a concern, the student will be communicated to by the appropriate faculty/administrator with the procedure requirements.
2. A Committee will be formed to review concerns related to the individual student's situation. The Committee will consist of program full-time faculty members, program director, but may include other COTC faculty members (adjunct or full-time) and/or community agency members.
3. Upon review of the concerns the Committee will make recommendations that could include:
 - a. Verbal communication with the student identifying concern and gathering additional information.
 - b. Observation of the concern with a future conversation with the Committee.
 - c. Development of a Professional Conduct Agreement.
4. If needed, the committee will develop a Professional Conduct Agreement with the student outlining acceptable behavior modifications. Examples of activities the Committee may require on the part of the student include mandatory personal counseling and/or additional coursework in specified areas such as ethics, conflict management, anger control management, etc.
5. The completed Professional Conduct Agreement will be copied for all parties involved and the original kept in the student record.
6. The Committee may recommend the dismissal of the student from the program without further review. Depending on the nature of the behavior/incident, the student may be additionally referred to the Office of Student Life for review under the Code of Student Conduct.

Program Guidelines

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2.0 Grade of “C” or better Standard

Social Work Assistant students must have a grade of “C” (2.00) or better in all courses on the plan of study in order to graduate from the program. This became effective with the plan of study catalog 2010. Students on previous plans of study must follow the guidelines as referred to on that specific catalog year plan of study.

Resources: SWA requirements, CDCA requirements, Transfer agreement requirements.

3.0 Notification of registration/licensure and employment requirements as relates to criminal backgrounds

Students will be notified of the State of Ohio laws and regulations regarding criminal backgrounds in Social Work and Human Services professions and potential barriers with applications for registry/licensure and employment.

Resources: Statement from Ohio Counselor, Social Worker and Marriage and Family Therapists regarding Criminal Convictions, Statement from Ohio Chemical Dependency Professionals Board, Ohio Senate Bills 160 and 38 as well as House Bill 190 set forth requirements for criminal background checks for many types of employers in Ohio. The Ohio Revised Code outlines exact requirements for particular types of employment. Many agencies that serve minors, the elderly, and individuals with developmental disabilities are covered by these laws. Students will receive a document outlining specific charges that would prevent employment with an agency affiliated with Ohio Department of Job & Family Services, County Boards of Developmental Disabilities, agencies that provide direct care to older adults, and agencies billing Medicaid for services.

Procedures:

1. In SWA-100 Principles of Social Work and SWA-131 Case Management in Social Work Assistant courses students will be educated on the laws and regulations related to the profession and criminal backgrounds.
2. Students will be required to electronically sign a written notice indicating their awareness of these laws and regulations.
4. All electronic signatures will be kept in the student record.

4.0 Use of Social Networking Sites

The Social Work Assistant Program recognizes that social networking websites and applications are an important means of communication. The use of technology can be a valuable search tool for students and faculty when used appropriately. The expectation is that these resources will not be used in client

areas, but will be utilized in classrooms or conference rooms under the supervision and guidance of the course instructors and practicum supervisors.

Unfortunately, the use of technology has been shown to create potential liability for the student, faculty, and the college. Posting certain information is illegal, and violation of existing statutes and administrative regulations may expose the offender to criminal and civil liability. The following actions are strictly forbidden:

- Students may not post or communicate any client-related information or information which may potentially identify a particular client. Removal of the client's name does not solve this problem – inclusion of gender, age, race, diagnosis, etc. may still allow the reader to recognize the identity of a specific individual. Violation of this requirement may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the program, as well as other liability for violation of HIPPA (the Health Insurance Privacy and Portability Act of 1996).
- Students may not post or communicate private academic information about another student, including but not limited to grades, narrative evaluations, or adverse academic actions.

Any student or faculty member who is aware of the use of social networking sites for any of the above-prohibited purposes is required to report the misuse. Failure to report is a violation of the college's *Code of Student Conduct*, item O, and may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the program.

- In addition to the absolute prohibitions listed above, the actions listed below are **strongly discouraged**. Concerns may be referred to the Office of Student Life.
 - Display of vulgar language.
 - Display of language or photographs that imply disrespect for any individual or group because of race, age, color, sex, national origin, physical or mental disability, or religion.
 - Posting of inflammatory or unflattering material regarding a fellow student, faculty member, or administrator.

When using social networking websites, students and faculty are strongly encouraged to use a personal e-mail address as their primary means of communication, rather than their college-provided email. Students and faculty are expected to maintain professional standards of behavior at all times.

5.0 Credit for Prior Learning and Work Experience

Social Work Assistant students may submit an application for prior learning and work experience for credit equivalency for courses and/or practicum. If the criteria are met, students will only be granted approval for one practicum experience. Students may not be given approval for both Practicum I and II. Students must have worked a minimum of 140 hours to be considered.

Resources:

The Practicum experience is the avenue for determining skill competency and must occur for degree completion.

The State of Ohio, Counselor, Social Worker, Marriage and Family Therapist board requires a practicum experience for eligibility for the SWA.

The Council for Standards in Human Services Education requires a practicum experience for students in an accredited program.

6.0 Use of Artificial Intelligence

In this program, we *may* utilize Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies, such as ChatGPT, as a supplementary tool in some of the courses to enhance the learning experience. Please note that while AI systems can provide valuable support, they have limitations. It is important to seek human guidance for complex or sensitive issues, and to exercise critical thinking and independent analysis. We will prioritize academic integrity, and it is essential that you understand the implications of plagiarism and academic misconduct when interacting with AI technologies. Inappropriate use of AI in this course (e.g., turning in AI-generated writing as your own) will not be tolerated. We are committed to protecting your privacy, and any data collected by AI systems will be securely stored and used solely for the purpose of improving the learning experience.

Practicum Guidelines

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6.0 Student request for practicum placement

Students must contact the Practicum Coordinator during the first four weeks of the semester prior to the semester in which the student intends to enroll in Practicum.

Students are required to meet with the practicum coordinator, sign all required documents in the Practicum Handbook and provide a copy of a BCI background check by week 11 of the semester prior to the requested practicum. Students not meeting these requirements are not guaranteed a practicum placement for the following semester.

Procedures:

1. The student must contact the Practicum Coordinator through email during the first four weeks of the semester prior to Practicum enrollment in order to initiate the practicum placement process.
2. The student must provide a copy of the BCI by Week 11 of the semester prior to Practicum enrollment.
3. Failure to meet these deadlines may jeopardize enrollment in Practicum for that requested semester.

7.0 Placing students in Practicum with criminal backgrounds

The Practicum Coordinator will make contacts with agencies that may potentially accept the student based upon previous experience with the agency or by recognizing state law requirements. The student may only contact new agencies for him/herself to assist with the process if the Practicum Coordinator is unsuccessful with the agencies with which COTC has a contract.

Resources: List of Prohibited Offenses. (This list is commonly adhered to by agencies providing services to children, the elderly, and individuals with developmental disabilities.)

Procedures:

1. Practicum Coordinator will contact potential agencies and advise them of the student's criminal background per the BCI check.
2. Practicum Coordinator will document contacts with agencies and their response to a request for placement.
3. If none of the contacted agencies are able to provide a placement for the student, the student will be notified.
4. Student will then have the opportunity to pursue a placement with alternative agencies on his/her own.
5. If the student is able to identify a potential agency that will provide placement after being made aware of the student's criminal background, the Practicum Coordinator will work with the student and Program Director to secure an Affiliation Agreement with that agency provided that the agency can adequately meet the Practicum Learning Objectives for the Social Work Assistant program.

8.0 Repeating the practicum experience at the same agency

Students may request an additional placement at the same agency at which they have been previously placed. Ideally, students will have different practicum experiences. However, at times when the learning experience is maximized by the extended two-semester placement, it is appropriate for this to take place.

Procedures:

1. Students notify the Practicum Coordinator of the intent to stay at the same agency during the planning stages prior to the next term.
2. The Student communicates with the agency to determine agreement.

9.0 Practicum at place of employment

Placement can occur at the student's place of employment if the job responsibilities differ from the student learner's role.

Procedures:

1. If the student requests practicum at the place of employment, the student will contact the practicum coordinator who will provide them with a form to complete. The form requires written documentation outlining the specific tasks of the student's employment and the specific tasks of their practicum placement. The statement will be signed by the student and their practicum site supervisor and given to the practicum coordinator prior to the first day of the practicum placement.
2. Ideally the job supervisor and the practicum site supervisor are two different people.
3. The student may not be paid for any practicum hours at the agency.
4. The Practicum Coordinator has the right to deny the request if there isn't adequate differentiation between the two roles or supervision.

Example of appropriate placement:

Student Job – Department of Job and Family Services, Office/secretarial support
Student Placement - Department of Job and Family Services, Children's Services
Division

10.0 Rolling over practicum hours between terms

Students may roll over up to 10 hours from a previous COTC Social Work Assistant practicum experience into the next practicum experience.

Procedures:

1. Students must keep track of the hours on the practicum time sheet. Hours to be rolled over should be kept on a separate timesheet
2. Hours are reviewed with the Practicum seminar instructor and the visiting site faculty member.
3. During the initial interview of the next practicum, the student must inform the site supervisor of the rollover hours that they are planning on using in place of hours at the site.
4. At the end of the practicum with the used rolled-over hours, the Practicum seminar instructor must ensure that the hours calculate correctly for the term.

11.0 Maximum practicum hours per week

Students may not exceed 20 hours a week at the practicum site, without permission from the Practicum Coordinator unless they are making up for previously missed hours or planning for upcoming missed hours and this plan has been approved by their site supervisor. It is required that the student be actively working hours at their practicum site for a minimum of 14 weeks in the semester (12 weeks for the summer semester).

12.0 Professional Conduct in Practicum

Any behaviors by the student that are considered Prohibited Conduct under the Professional Standards and Expectations and/or the COTC Code of Student Conduct may constitute the development of a Professional Conduct Agreement. Refer to Procedures on page 8.

Resources: Professional Conduct Agreement.

Procedures:

1. Should there be concerns about your performance or behavior, the appropriate faculty/administrator will communicate with you. If a Professional Conduct Agreement is deemed necessary, the procedure for the Professional Standards and Expectations will be followed.
2. The subsequent Practicum Site must be informed that the student has withdrawn, failed, and/or been dismissed from a previous Practicum Site and receive a copy of the Professional Conduct Agreement.
3. The Practicum Coordinator will work with the student with a Professional Conduct Agreement to make a reasonable attempt to place the student at a practicum site. Should a reasonable number of Practicum Sites be contacted and none be willing to supervise the student in a Practicum experience, the student will have to wait an unspecified amount of time until a site becomes available.

Program Guide Resource Links

[SWA requirements](#)

[CDCA requirements](#)

[Statement from Ohio Counselor, Social Worker, and Marriage and Family Therapist Board.](#)

[Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Prohibited Offenses Listing](#)

[NOHS Ethical Standards](#)

[CSHSE Accreditation Standards](#)

[COTC Student Code of Conduct](#)

Addendums

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SOCIAL WORK ASSISTANT PROGRAM

Criminal Background Acknowledgment Letter

Dear Student,

This letter is to provide you with information regarding Practicum and criminal background history. As part of the Social Work Assistant degree program, you are required to complete 2 semesters of practicum experience in the second year of your program. Prior to participating in the practicum, you are required to complete fingerprinting and a Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Background Check.

A history of charges on your BCI could be an obstacle to obtaining a practicum placement and/or getting state certification or licensure, which could prevent you from being hired in the field. Not all agencies, but many who serve children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities adhere to lists of exclusionary charges. If you have a legal history including one of these charges, you would be prohibited from employment or practicum at that particular agency. Additional Sources of Information:

- [Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Prohibitive Convictions](#)
- [Ohio Disqualifying Offenses Listing](#)

If you have a criminal history, you are encouraged to discuss your options with the practicum coordinator as soon as possible. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the practicum coordinator, Jennifer Army, at (740) 755-7703 or arny.2@mail.cotc.edu

By signing below, you are acknowledging that you have been provided with information regarding how past legal charges may affect your practicum placement in the Social Work Assistant program at COTC as well as your future eligibility for state certification or licensure and employment in the social work field.

(Student Signature)

(Date)

SOCIAL WORK ASSISTANT PROGRAM

Program Guide Review Confirmation

As a student pursuing education in the Social Work Assistant Program, I am aware of the need to maintain the professional integrity of this program and the Social Work Profession.

I am aware that I will be evaluated on an ongoing basis in the following essential qualities:

Acquisition of Knowledge
Demonstration of Skills
Personal and Professional Integrity

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Professional Standards & Expectations Policy, and Program Guide. I understand the expectations of this program. As a student, I understand that I am expected to view and read these documents and will be held to these standards.

I understand that the evaluation process occurs in the classroom, at practicum placement sites, during conferences with faculty, and during interaction with peers. Should there be concerns about my performance or behavior, the appropriate Social Work faculty/administrator will communicate with me. If a Professional Conduct Agreement is deemed necessary, the procedure in the Program Guide will be followed.

I am aware that a breach of the Professional Standards and Expectations Policy or the COTC Code of Student Conduct will result in the implementation of a Professional Conduct Agreement which will outline the required changes. Continued concern with student conduct may result in removal from the program.

Student Name (Print legibly)	Student Signature	Date

COTC Student ID Number

This form will be submitted

electronically in SWA-131.

SOCIAL WORK ASSISTANT PROGRAM
Professional Conduct Agreement

Date of Agreement:

Student Name:

Student_ID #:

This Professional Conduct Agreement has been developed with the above-named student due to a breach of the Professional Standards and Expectations.

In accordance with the Professional Standards and Expectations, found in the Program Guide, the following Professional Conduct Agreement clearly outlines the behaviors the student must successfully accomplish.

Identified Professional Conduct concern/s:

The student must successfully accomplish the following:

Signature of Student: _____ Date: _____

I understand that failure to comply with this agreement will result in a committee review or may result in my dismissal from the program. ____ (Student Initials)

Practicum Coordinator: _____ Date: _____

Other: _____ Date: _____

Referred to Office of Student Life for review under Code of Student Conduct Date: _____

Additional pages are attached.

This form will be stored in the Student Record.