We are excited to hear about your interest in pursuing social work as a profession and are eager to support you as you prepare for the field practicum, one of the most valuable components of your social work education.

The field practicum allows you to apply classroom learning in real-world settings under the supervision and mentorship of licensed master-level social workers. Through hands-on experience with clients, systems, and communities, you'll develop your professional skills and competencies. We encourage you to thoughtfully consider the time commitment required, especially when deciding between full-time and part-time pathways, as field education is a significant part of the program.

At Highlands University, we have partnerships with over 300 community agencies, and that number continues to grow with the expansion of the online program. Our dedicated field team will assist you in finding placement options that align with your professional goals, availability, and geographic location. However, it is ultimately your responsibility to plan how you will balance coursework, field hours, work obligations, and personal responsibilities throughout the program.

Field Preparation

Early in the program, students enroll in **SOWK 5240: Field Preparation (1 credit)**, which provides an orientation to field practicum expectations and focuses on professional development. This includes guidance on resume writing, interviewing, and understanding professional conduct in field settings. During this course, you'll begin working with your Field Coordinator to identify and secure your practicum placement in your home community.

Field Seminar

Students also take **SOWK 5510: Field Seminar (1 credit)** alongside their first practicum course (SOWK 5320**)**. This seminar helps bridge classroom learning with practicum experiences through weekly discussions, activity logs, and support in developing the Field Practicum Learning Contract**.** The seminar fosters self-reflection and helps students form their professional social work identity, with an emphasis on culturally competent practice, especially relevant to Hispanic and Native American populations in New Mexico and the Southwest**.**

Practicum Structure

Students complete two practicums across four practicum courses, each spanning one semester, for a total of 12 credits. The weekly time commitment ranges from 16 to 22 hours, depending on the term. Make sure to check your cohort course sequence. Practicums are typically completed in consecutive semesters, as outlined below.

- **Generalist Practicum (total hours: 448)—SOWK 5320 & 5340: Field Practicum 1 & 2**
  - Students complete practicum time in a weekly schedule of 4-hour blocks or more.
  - The first practicum will build upon foundational social work competencies, values, and skills as students explore and discover which area of social work interests them most.
- **Clinical Practicum (total hours: 480)—SOWK 6320 & 6340 Field Practicums 3 & 4**
  - Students complete practicum time in a weekly schedule of 4-hour blocks or more.
  - The second practicum centers on strengthening and applying advanced clinical practice techniques, in alignment

Employment-Based Practicums

Students may request to complete their practicum at their place of employment if the site is approved and specific criteria are met. Up to two practicums (UG & GR) may be completed in the workplace, provided that placements occur in different departments or under different supervisors. Approval from the Field Coordinator or Director is required.

CYFD Title IV-E Stipend Program

Students interested in child welfare may apply for the Title IV-E CYFD Stipend Program through the New Mexico Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD). Stipend applications and other field forms are available on the **NMHU Field Forms webpage** at https://fvssw.org/field-education-program/.

For complete details on field requirements, please refer to the **NMHU Field Education Policy & Procedure Manual**, which outlines policies and ensures compliance with Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) standards.