

Criminal Records and Disclosure to Potential Field Placements

Portland State University's School of Social Work takes seriously the need to protect the public, as well as to provide appropriate opportunities to individuals wishing to enter the social work profession who have criminal records. We are committed to assuring that individuals who might pose a threat to any client group or practice setting be prevented from causing harm. We are also committed to the value and belief that any particular arrest or criminal conviction history is not in and of itself indicative of a person's readiness or potential to enter into and contribute to the social work profession.

In the event a criminal conviction becomes known to the School, the student will be required to meet with a field team member or DO site coordinator, to discuss their criminal record and possible implications for field placement and career. In some instances, the Director of Field Education (or their designee) and/or the BSW or MSW Program Director, Online MSW Program Coordinator or DO Program Coordinator (or their designee) will participate in that meeting. The student will be invited to provide additional information about the context of the offense and any mitigating circumstances. The student may need to provide documentation of the completion of follow-up activities, including documentation of the court judgment, verification of completion of sentence or mandated treatment, completion of probation order, etc. The student will be advised that they have an ethical and professional responsibility to share information regarding their criminal background with a potential field instructor or appropriate agency representative. The student will be asked to sign a Release of Information form to allow the field team to share pertinent information with a potential placement during the process of identifying a tentative field placement site for the student.

Students are not legally required to report a criminal conviction that has been dismissed or expunged from their record. However, because there may be ethical considerations and/or unanticipated complications, students with expunged conviction records may find it helpful to talk with the Director or Assistant Director of Field Education. Distance Option students are encouraged to begin with their site coordinator. Students may also find it useful to contact Student Legal Services for information and assistance related to criminal convictions and whether/how certain convictions can be expunged.

The School may require a student to complete a background check through CertifiedBackground.com to verify their background. The School is entitled to rely on the accuracy of information provided by CertifiedBackground.com. In the event a student disputes information contained in a background check, the student shall be responsible for providing evidence satisfactory to the School that the criminal information is in error.

In making a decision about suitability for a social work field placement and career, the following will be considered:

- 1) The nature of the crime(s) disclosed by the applicant and/or discovered through the background check;
- 2) Any false statement made by the student related to their criminal history;
- 3) The relevancy, if any, of the crime(s) or the false statement(s) to a field placement and career in social work;

4) Intervening circumstances relevant to social work field placement and career. Intervening circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- The passage of time since the commission of the crime;
- The age of the subject individual at the time of the crime;
- The likelihood of a repetition of offenses or of the commission of another crime;
- The subsequent commission of another relevant crime;
- Whether the conviction was set aside and the legal effect of setting aside the conviction; and
- Relevant references and recommendations.

The Director of Field Education, or designee (a field coordinator or DO site coordinator), will communicate relevant information, including the criminal record, to the potential field instructor and the assigned faculty advisor/liaison. In collaboration with agency personnel at the potential field site, the field instructor or designated agency representative will make the final determination as to whether the conviction will prevent the student from being placed in that particular agency setting.

The School of Social Work makes no presumptive judgments regarding the criminal history of a student and potential field placements. This policy is intended to ensure that the School of Social Work field team will make a reasonable effort to identify a suitable field agency that will provide a placement for a student with a criminal record. Students need to know that in fulfilling this effort, certain types of criminal convictions may result in some agencies declining to offer them a field placement. In some instances it may not be possible for the field team to find a placement willing to accept the student. In such a case it is likely that the student will be unable to complete the BSW or MSW program. If placement is not possible, the student will be referred for a retention review (see BSW or MSW Program Handbook).

Students are required to notify the Director of Field Education about any arrest or conviction for criminal activity that occurs subsequent to their most recent field application and/or background check. Students may be required to complete an additional background check. If a student is suspected to have made a false statement regarding their background information, it will be treated as a possible violation of the Portland State University Student Conduct Code and will be referred to the Office of the Dean of Student Life (See BSW or MSW Program Handbook). If a student refuses to or fails to comply with the School's background check procedures or to cooperate with any necessary follow up, they will be informed via certified mail that they are not eligible to be placed in a field placement and therefore their admission to the BSW or MSW Program will be rescinded.

Pre-Placement Conditions and Requirements

Background checks are now required by most agencies that serve as field placement sites for social work students. A student who wishes to be placed in an agency that requires a background check will need to complete a background check as a condition of being placed. Some agencies prefer that students use the agency's background check procedure (students may be expected to pay for the check) while other agencies expect students to use the School's procedure. Students will be informed if they must have a background check and will receive instructions.

The School of Social Work has contracted with CertifiedBackground.com, a division of Castle Branch, Inc. to provide background checks, HIPAA and OSHA trainings, 10 panel drug screening

and the Medical Document Manager on behalf of agencies providing field placements for our students. CertifiedBackground.com provides applicant-funded packages.

To initiate a background check using the School's procedure, the student will visit the CertifiedBackground.com website; select the "Student" tab, then enter the School's code (OT51) as well as their personal and payment information. Students will be responsible for covering the cost of the background check purchased through Certifiedbackground.com. Within 48 hours of a background check being ordered, the student and the School's authorized contacts will be able to access the results electronically.

In addition, students interning in settings including, but not limited to, ambulatory care settings, clinics, hospitals, hospice, residential care facilities, long term or skilled nursing facilities are required by law ([OAR 409-030-0100 to 409-030-0250](#)) to comply with, and provide documentation of to the School, specific immunizations, screenings and trainings. All students who will be interning in a healthcare setting are required to purchase a Medical Document Manager tool through Certifiedbackground.com by entering the School's code (OT51im), where they will upload all of the required documentation. Additionally, students may be responsible for covering the cost of the immunizations, screenings and trainings.