



UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
School of Social Work

**THE AMERICAN WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA):**  
**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**  
**&**  
**Field Placement Case Studies**

*A Collaboration Between the Office of Field Instruction &  
the U-M Office of Institutional Equity*

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# *Introduction*

- ❖ The University is responsible for providing accommodations for qualified students with disabilities
- ❖ When academic programs require an internship for matriculation, the fieldwork site generally assumes responsibility for providing accommodations at their site
- ❖ The University has resources to provide guidance to the school and the fieldwork site to insure that our students with disabilities have the same opportunities as other students

# *Think Beyond the Label*



## *#1. Does the fieldwork site need to provide an accommodation for the interview?*

- ❖ Yes
- ❖ Fieldwork sites are required to provide a "reasonable accommodation" to enable the student to be considered for the placement
- ❖ A fieldwork site cannot refuse to interview a student because the student might require a reasonable accommodation to participate in the placement

***#2. The student has an observable disability.  
Can the fieldwork site ask medical questions  
during an interview?***

- ❖ No
- ❖ Interviewers cannot ask questions about a student's disability either because it is visible, or because the student has voluntarily disclosed a hidden disability
- ❖ It is appropriate to ask a student how they would perform a specific function, task or activity that is required for their field placement

### ***#3. When does a student have to tell a fieldwork site that they need an accommodation to participate in the placement?***

- ❖ The student should let the fieldwork site know as soon as they realize they will need a reasonable accommodation
- ❖ Fieldwork sites need advance notice to provide many accommodations
- ❖ Students who may need or request an accommodation should be referred to the U-M Office of Services for Students with Disabilities in order to be evaluated regarding the accommodations they may need in order to participate in the required field placement

# *Building awareness is the key*

- ❖ Determining the best time to tell a prospective fieldwork site about the need for a reasonable accommodation is a personal decision
- ❖ Sometimes students are not aware they may need a reasonable accommodation until they have more information about the placement, its requirements and the work environment
- ❖ Some students choose to inform a fieldwork site during the interview process after they better understand the field placement and its requirements

***#4. May a fieldwork site ask students during an interview whether they will need a reasonable accommodation to participate in field placement?***

- ❖ No
- ❖ Fieldwork sites cannot ask the general question as to whether a student would need a reasonable accommodation because the answer to this question is likely to reveal whether the student has a disability



## *#5. What questions can a fieldwork site ask a student during an interview?*

- ❖ Are you able to perform these tasks?
- ❖ Is there anything else you want to ask?
- ❖ Is there anything more you would like to tell me?
- ❖ Is there any reason you may not be able to perform these tasks as I have described them?

If a disability is observable and the interviewer has questions as to how the student will be able to perform an essential requirement of the placement experience, the student may be asked to describe how they would perform this function.

**#6. Can a fieldwork site refuse to offer a student a placement because s/he believes that the disability makes it unsafe for the person to perform the essential requirements of the position?**

- ❖ A fieldwork site cannot refuse to accept a student based on a slightly increased risk, speculation about future risk, or generalizations about the disability
- ❖ A fieldwork site can refuse to accept a student only if the disability poses a significant risk of substantial harm to themselves or others
- ❖ In either of the above situations, the fieldwork site should contact the Field Office right away to discuss the issues

# ADA CASE #1

- You have been providing supervision weekly for an Advanced Standing, IP student for about 10 weeks in the first term of placement. Your student is always on time and seems to talk freely during your session
- Over the course of the term you have developed concerns about the nature and quality of the student's work as well as what the student is learning. You have noticed the student's discussion about clients is lacking in detail that is important to a thorough assessment. You have also noted that you have repeated the same information about how to make a referral to a community agency that your agency routinely uses for client support
- You are coming to the conclusion that the student's performance, skill and knowledge development may not be meeting the expectations for a graduate level social work student
- ✓ What are the presenting issues?
- ✓ What are your concerns as the field instructor in this case?
- ✓ Are there any ADA guidelines that you should be aware of in managing this situation?
- ✓ Brainstorm potential approaches about how you would handle this

# ADA CASE #2

- You have had a student referred by the Field Office for a placement for the upcoming Fall term
  - After reviewing the student's resume and goal statement, you decide you would like to interview the student to see if the agency, you and the student would be a good fit/match
  - The student contacts you and sets up a time to meet at your agency office. Upon the student's arrival you learn that the student is visually impaired and is accompanied by a service animal
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- ✓ What are the presenting issues?
  - ✓ What are your concerns as the field instructor in this case?
  - ✓ Are there any ADA guidelines that you should be aware of in managing this situation?
  - ✓ Brainstorm potential approaches about how you would handle this

# Resources

## *OFFICE OF FIELD INSTRUCTION*

School of Social Work

1080 S. University Ave., Rm. 2712

Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1106

Web page: [www.ssw.umich.edu/programs/msw/ofi/](http://www.ssw.umich.edu/programs/msw/ofi/)

E-mail: [ssw.ofi@umich.edu](mailto:ssw.ofi@umich.edu)

Call: 734.764.5331

# Resources

## *SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES*

G-664 Haven Hall  
505 South State Street  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1045  
Phone: 734.763-3000  
TTY: 734.615-6921  
Fax: 734.936-3947  
Web page: <http://ssd.umich.edu>

# Resources

## *OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL EQUITY*

ADA Coordinator

2072 Administrative Services

1009 Greene Street

Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1432

Phone: 734.763-0235

TTY: 734.647-1388

Fax: 734.936-8894

Web page: <http://www.hr.umich.edu/oie>