



SAFETY POLICY

**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK
(EMPOWERED AUTONOMOUS)
NIRMALA NIKETAN, MUMBAI
EDITED 2023-2024**

**CREATING SAFE SPACES
FOR ALL**

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I.SAFETY POLICY

1. Relevance

The College is committed to the realization of its enshrined mission of building a new social order based on human dignity and social justice through its educational programmes, which have two equally important components: academic inputs and Fieldwork practice. To ensure the safety of its student interns who are placed with a variety of organizations for Fieldwork, the College has

As practicum experiences are an important part of the social work curriculum, schools of social work are responsible for ensuring that social work students are educated about concepts and techniques related to safety and supervised in safe environments. Social work safety should be part of the curriculum/training of field practicum instructors. Schools should place students in settings with sound safety policies and procedures that should be reviewed with students in school and the placement setting. Professional safety should be part of the school and organisation orientations. Students with safety concerns about their placements must be provided with support until the safety concerns have abated. If the concerns are not adequately addressed, the student must be offered an alternative placement.

*National Association of Social Workers. (2008).
Code of ethics of the National Association of Social
Workers. Washington, DC:*

framed a **Safety Policy**. The College proposes to submit a guideline to all the concerned stakeholders, organization directors, Supervisors, Faculty Members, Instructors, Fieldwork Coordinators, and the Principal.

Social Work organizations, Governmental or Non-Governmental, work with people in communities or groups and provide services for various social groups in an increasingly complex social environment. Such situations can sometimes pose risk factors, which may be perceived by the practitioner as unsafe, insecure, and prone to violence and abuse. Hence it is imperative to recognize this and put in place certain checks and balances.

Academicians and practitioners strongly believe that every Social Work intern has the Right to Fieldwork Practice in a safe and conducive environment, and it is the joint responsibility of the college and the collaborating organization to create such an atmosphere of safety and security for the young entrants to the profession as trainees. It is also incumbent on the students to report to the concerned authorities regarding their safety and to seek timely assistance from competent authorities or personnel who are responsible at the organization or College level. While assessing the potential risk factors associated with a specific assignment and taking appropriate precautions, social workers should also refrain from projecting this helping profession as an inherently dangerous one. The College of Social Work is responsible for ensuring that Social work students are educated about concepts and techniques related to safety, as well as supervised in safe environments.

2. Goals

The Safety Policy addresses safety within the context of social work practice. Ideally, the purported goals behind formulating these guidelines are to ensure that the Field placement organizations partner with the institution to enhance student social worker safety. The specific goals of the guidelines are:

- 2.1. To inform social worker students, Field Instructors, organization personnel, and Field Contacts about the importance of student social worker safety in the organization and the fieldwork
- 2.2. To promote students' right to work in environments that promote safety
- 2.3. To ensure that students who have safety concerns about their placements have a mechanism by which their concerns are addressed.

3. Role of the Fieldwork Committee

- 3.1. To provide students with an overview of safety in the field through the Integrative Field Seminar, with a discussion of safety issues in the community.
- 3.2. To conduct a workshop for students on knowledge and skills that promote safe social work practice, health precautions, and protocols appropriate for the setting.
- 3.3. To orient students regarding safe accommodation arrangements to ensure their safety
- 3.4. To orient the students on the redressal mechanisms to address safety concerns.
- 3.5. To initiate efforts to address students' safety concerns by contacting the student's Faculty Advisor and, in consultation with the Field Instructor and Fieldwork organization, developing a safety plan.

4. Role of the Fieldwork Instructor/Faculty Advisor

- 4.1. It is the responsibility of the Field Work Instructor to give orientation to the students regarding the safety concerns that they may encounter during the Fieldwork exposure
- 4.1. The Faculty Advisor will be responsible for communicating the safety procedures and guidelines to the Organization Director, Field Contact, or the concerned staff in the organization.
- 4.2. In the event of any critical incident in the field, it is the responsibility of the Faculty Advisor to ensure that adequate steps are initiated to address the issue.

5. Role of the Fieldwork Organizations

- 5.1. Fieldwork Organisations should take possible steps to create an environment of overall well-being, safety, and security. However, the onus is also on the students to stay safe and to help maintain a safe environment for themselves and others, exercising their judgment and maturity. The Field Instructor and student should discuss issues related to safety measures in the organization or field setting.
- 5.2. Harassment by organization staff or colleagues, and students must also be reported immediately in a **separate proforma** to the Field Instructor, Faculty Advisor and the Field Work Coordinator. If the complaint is about Sexual Harassment, it must be registered with the Internal Complaints Committee.
- 1.3 Students must be oriented to conduct a risk assessment before being sent on home visits/community visits during disaster interventions/internships/ camps.
- 1.4 In case of critical incidents in the field, the organization personnel [Field Contact /Field Instructor] must ask the student to submit an incident report and keep the Faculty Advisor and the Field Work Coordinator informed about the same.
- 1.5. To ensure that females are not sent alone in the community or for home visits, female students should be accompanied either by a co-fieldwork partner or by organization personnel, preferably a female.
- 1.6. Students are advised to refrain from making visits to clients' homes alone except with the accompaniment of organization staff or with other students.
- 5.7 For students placed in rural organizations or while going on a rural field visit, the organization should provide safe accommodation. *It is preferable to make accommodation arrangements separately for male and female students.*

2. Procedures to be adopted by students for reporting critical incidents in the field

To most effectively protect the safety needs of students in field placements, the following steps should be observed by the student interns when their safety has been compromised.

- 6.1. Immediately notify the concerned [Field Contact, Field Instructor, Faculty Advisor] of the incident, indicating what happened, who was involved, and the type of injury sustained (if any).
- 6.2. If medical attention or police involvement is needed, the student should notify the concerned [Field Contact, Field Instructor, Faculty Advisor] to obtain the needed services.

- 6.3 The student should submit a written incident report to the organization and the Field Work Coordinator, which will briefly **detail the particulars of the incident, including what happened, where, when, and who was involved.**
- 6.4 In case of Sexual Harassment, the Internal Complaints Committee could be contacted.

7 Role of the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) to address issues related to Sexual Harassment.

In pursuance of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013 and the Rules framed thereunder, an appropriate complaint mechanism, the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC), has been created by the College. The Institution has constituted an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) for redressal of sexual harassment complaints. The ICC is responsible for time-bound redressal of the complaint made by the aggrieved female employees/students of the College as per the PoSH Policy of the College. All investigations about such complaints are carried out by this committee. The ICC is responsible for investigating every formal written complaint of sexual harassment, taking appropriate remedial measures to respond to any substantiated allegations of sexual harassment, and informing the respondent within seven days of receiving a complaint in writing that a complaint has been received. The respondent will have an opportunity to respond to the complaint in writing within ten days thereafter.

8 Non-negotiable is regarded as a serious violation of guidelines.

Ragging and sexual harassment – causing, creating, abetting, encouraging, or instigating are strictly prohibited by law, and the College will abide by the University Grants Commission regulations prescribed for this, including the requirements of reporting to the regulatory authorities. Indulging in the consumption, storage, selling, and distribution of alcohol, narcotics, and other legally banned substances and engaging in any kind of rude and disrespectful, inappropriate behaviour under the influence of alcohol or otherwise is prohibited.

9. Safety Guidelines for Students

Responsibilities of the student for their safety

- 9.1 It is the responsibility of the students to keep the Field Instructor/Field Contact informed about their whereabouts during Fieldwork.
- 9.2. It is expected that students proceed to go home/hostel immediately after their Fieldwork of the day is over.

- 9.3. It is the responsibility of the students to discuss it with the Faculty Advisor/Field Instructor beforehand if the Fieldwork timing on a particular day is going to go beyond the usual Fieldwork hours.
- 9.4. If students decide to go somewhere for a reason other than Fieldwork after Fieldwork hours, then the student has the sole responsibility for their safety.

10. Safety Guidelines During Travel for Fieldwork Activities

- 10.1. Adequate, safe travel plans imply selecting a conducive time for travelling.
- 10.2. If travelling late at night for field-related activities, it is advisable to travel with the Fieldwork partner or organization staff. If not feasible, the student must ensure that sufficient safety concerns are addressed.
- 10.3. In case during travel to or from the Fieldwork organization, the student encounters a situation of unforeseen possible risk, the student should contact the Field Contact, Field Instructor, and Faculty Advisor before taking any action. In case such a contact is not feasible, the student should not take any action that the student feels poses a risk to safety and return to a safe place.

11. Safety Guidelines for Home Visits

- 11.1. On an initial home visit, it is often advisable to go with a Fieldwork partner or organization staff.
- 11.2. Before making a home visit, the student should discuss any issues related to safety with the Faculty Advisor/Field Instructor and Field Contact.
- 11.3. If the student feels unsafe upon arrival or at any time during the visit, the student should immediately get in touch with the Faculty Advisor/Field Instructor and Field Contact.

12. Some indicative areas of risk assessment during Home visits include

- 12.1. Has the student completed and provided the exact address of all the scheduled visits?
- 12.2. Does the neighbourhood pose risks for violence?
- 12.3. Is the visit [Home visit or any official visit] scheduled at a time of day that is riskier than other times?
- 12.4. If the student is making a home visit, who is likely to be in the client's home during the visit?

13. Safety issues while working with clients

- 13.1. Students must consult the organization's Field Contact regarding the handling of specific situations that have the potential to threaten personal safety.
- 13.2. Student-interns, Field Instructors, and Field Contacts need to discuss and plan for situations in which a student may have contact with the following clients who are intoxicated, high on drugs or in withdrawal, have neurological problems, or for other reasons have difficulty dealing with overwhelming emotions or with impulse control.
- 13.3. If the students are assigned the task of visiting another organization or another department at the organization or if they are making a home visit, students are instructed to inform the organization staff about the details, and preferably, a movement register should also be maintained.

14. Recommendations concerning the necessary protocols to be followed in ensuring the safety and well-being of students during On-Job Training/ Internship, [Ref: Case No ICC Proceedings 01072019]

- 14.1. The **On-Job Training/ Internship** organization should be notified of the Safety Policy of the College.
- 14.2. The safety risk assessment of the place of work and stay needs to be done before the organization for **On-Job Training/ Internship** is finalized. [*What are the activities involved during On-Job Training/ Internship; explanation of the process used to ensure that safe accommodation has been chosen; arrangements for safe travel from the point of arrival to accommodation and of day-to-day travel during stay; provision of emergency numbers in case of emergency; knowledge of safety policies and measures adopted by On-Job Training/ Internship organization and so on*]
- 14.3. An orientation on the safety policy of the *On-Job Training/ Internship* organization should be given to students on arrival.
- 14.4. Under no circumstances should the student be sent alone for field visits/home visits during On-Job Training/ Internship/Camps. All visits should be led by a Field Contact/Animator in the Field.
- 14.5. Emergency numbers must be notified to all students before the On-Job Training/ Internship commences by the host organization.

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