

# STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON CANADIAN SOCIAL WORK FIELD EDUCATION

VIRTUAL DIALOGUE CIRCLES REPORT 2021



## METHOD

Students registered in CASWE accredited undergraduate and graduate social work programs were invited to participate in a series of virtual dialogue circles (focus groups). Participants were organized into eight groups (via Zoom) and were invited to respond to a series of nine questions. The dialogue circles took place throughout July-November 2020, and were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

## PURPOSE

To capture student' perspectives on social work field education in Canada and to showcase its strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth and development rooted in students' experiences

## PARTICIPANTS

- Twenty-eight participants
  - 10 BSW students
  - 18 MSW students
- Participants from British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador

## KEY FINDINGS

**THE VALUE OF SELF-ADVOCACY:** Identified as a vital and effective strategy to managing the challenges of field education; important for voicing concerns, communicating goals and reaching out to supports.

**THE VALUE OF FIELD EDUCATION:** Identified as a critical component of social work education; allows students to gain tangible experience, meet career goals, supplement their coursework, and receive feedback and support through regular supervision. Students spoke to the importance of reaching out to supports to help manage the stress of field such as counselling and field supervisors.

**CHALLENGES WITH FIELD EDUCATION:** Difficulty with communication, difficulty meeting learning goals, desire for more support from field instructors, lack of clinical, policy and research placements, competitiveness of recruiting process, lack of financial compensation, stress and burnout, overburdened field coordinators.

**ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PRACTICE (AOP):** Challenges implementing AOP and decolonizing learning goals, desire for more incorporation of AOP into course curricula, students' experience discrimination and marginalization during placement, lack of consideration of Indigenous practices and ways of knowing, being and doing.

**COVID-19:** Created challenges, altered the future of field education, created new opportunities via virtual and remote work, initiated needed changes and sparked important reflections.

# Recommendations

## Five Key Recommendations



- Better collaboration between universities, students, field agencies, and policy makers
- Hire more staff/faculty to support students throughout their field education
- More financial support for students, including paid placements, workplace placements, etc.
- Enhancing the incorporation of anti-oppressive and anti-racist values into field education
- Continue exploring more flexible and non-traditional opportunities for field placements

***"We seek to encourage educators, administrators, and policymakers to incorporate student perspectives into their decision-making processes."***

TFEL | Virtual Dialogue Circles Report 2021

***"Addressing the current crisis in field education must be a collaborative process."***