



# FACT SHEET

## INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

### Synopsis

The Transforming the Field Education Landscape (TFEL) partnership conducted a nationwide study to identify innovative, promising, and wise practices in social work field education in Canada. This fact sheet summarizes the innovative practices identified in the Prairie provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. The focus is on five key themes that were highlighted in the findings.

### INTRODUCTION

Innovative practices are defined as cutting edge practices that have not yet been tested in some areas, but have the potential to enhance field education while addressing existing challenges. Such practices include:

- The use of virtual technology (i.e Zoom) for meetings and information exchange.
- More flexible field placement options (i.e virtual placements, self-directed education).
- Creating additional macro-level placement options.
- Encouraging risk taking within practicum placements to broaden the conventional definition of social work.

### OBJECTIVE

To identify innovative practices that have the capacity to expand, improve, and develop the field education landscape in the Prairie region.

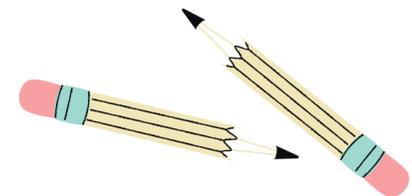
### METHODOLOGY

Between July and December of 2020, 35 semi-structured interviews were conducted with field educators in the Prairie region. A purposive sampling approach was used to recruit key personnel involved in social work field education in Prairie provinces and to capture a variety of perspectives. Interviews were conducted online via Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

### FINDINGS

Five key themes were identified:

1. Technology
2. Flexible options
3. Creativity
4. Macro-level placements
5. Taking risks



### KEY THEMES

#### Technology

Technological innovations in field education



#### Flexible Options

Variety in field education options to meet diverse needs



#### Creativity

Creative ways of implementing and encouraging change



#### Macro-level Placements

More support for macro-level placements



#### Taking Risks

Taking risks that support innovative practices



### CONCLUSION

Social work is currently in a state of crisis, and more needs to be done to address the sustainability of quality field education practice. Innovative practices were identified as one important aspect that could improve the current state of social work field education. Out of 19 innovative practice codes identified in the Prairie Region report, five were recognized as key themes that can be adopted in social work education.

To find out more, visit: <https://tfelproject.com/>



## QUOTES

### Technology

"Right now, we've actually seen things like Zoom [and] Microsoft Teams to be able to be the way that we connect right? [...] The students are really eager, and they're interested in that, and [...] we're here to help them achieve their learning goals."

"I was not a fan of video platform meetings initially. Now I kind of like in it! You know, I found that we've been having some town hall meetings with students. Checking in, how you doing, never been able to do that before. Orientation--it used to cost us some money to rent a hall to accommodate all the field instructors and students. Now we just do it online. So, I'm learning some stuff that way about virtual. And the last time we met with all the students we're talking about how we kind of look at this, but what kind of skills, gifts are coming out of this pandemic?"

### Creativity

"I think in terms of thinking outside the box or being creative and innovative in our field practicums maybe there [are] opportunities to do more work with those agencies maybe considered more non-traditional social work agencies where maybe they don't have on the ground social work supervision, but they are amazing opportunities for our students."

### Flexible Options

"I think organizations need to be more flexible and offer more placements to students."

"There may be [some] possibilities only available over summer months or even certain times of the year, but it's very intense, so may be some flexibility for some students to do that too. If the placement wants to have it."

### Macro-level Placements

"Another promising practice too, is to have students involved in projects or in events. And I think that if we expand our notion of like what a practicum should look like and what skills get developed, it means we don't just focus on micro skills. We also need to think about what happens at a community level and what also happens at a macro level."

### Taking Risks

"I think in order to innovate, you have to kind of think outside the box. And think being creative and [...] being willing to kind of take those risks and see what can come about and [...] trust in the process, like trusting that like the different stakeholders have skills and have abilities[...]."

"We need to set aside the existing models of field education because they've [...] only served us so far. And it's my opinion only my opinion that they perpetuate the status quo of what society thinks social work does and does not do and which comes to mind is bus tickets, working in kitchens, taking kids away from families. And we need to let it's time to let go of that."

#### All 19 innovative practice codes:

1. Art and creative approaches
2. Create resources
3. Creativity
4. Field coordinator as teaching role
5. Field Instructor credentialization
6. Flexible options
7. Green social work
8. Incentivize field supervision
9. International practicum
10. Macro level placements
11. Paying students during practicum
12. Research activities
13. Role-playing
14. Rotational placements
15. Self-directed practicum
16. Sustainability
17. Taking risks
18. Technology
19. Virtual skill development