Introduction

A supervised field experience (FE) is a requirement for all MPH students in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics. The FE provides an opportunity for the student to gain valuable knowledge and experience in real life settings that would not normally be available in the classroom or through other course deliveries. The FE exposes students to practical learning environments, providing the skills and experience to work in public health positions in the real world. Generally the FE takes place in a health services or research organizations such as hospitals, clinics, state or county-level health departments, other public health programs, at University research projects, government agencies such as the CDC or NIH, etc. Field experiences are not typically permitted at the student’s current place of employment*. Within the department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics students should begin exploring their FE options with their Advisor. Students should attend the mandatory FE orientation and begin planning for the FE a minimum of one semester prior to enrollment in the FE course. Students may also contact the Departmental Academic Services Administrator (ASA), who serves as the FE Liaison between the faculty and the Field Placement Coordinator (FPC). The specific location of the field placement is to be agreed upon the student and his/her faculty advisor with the assistance of the COPH Field Placement Coordinator (FPC). Lists of past and currently available opportunities in the various program concentration areas can be found through the Field Experience website at: http://health.usf.edu/publichealth/academicaffairs/fe/, and in the ASA’s office. Students in Dual concentration areas need to ensure that their FE is relevant to both concentration areas and must have the approval of both area concentration advisors. Students in the dual Epidemiology and Global Health Practice MPH program must complete an International Field Experience (IFE). Students in any departmental program may choose to complete an IFE. Students who do elect the IFE must begin the discovery process and complete of additional paperwork at least one year prior to their FE enrollment. A guide for IFE can be found through the FE website at: http://health.usf.edu/publichealth/academicaffairs/fe/pdf/fieldguide.pdf.
Objectives of the Supervised Field Experience
Through student learning outside the confines of the University and being involved in Public Health areas throughout the area, state, country and world the FE will:

- provide the student with the opportunity to apply and present knowledge and skills gained through course and field work in a public health setting.
- expose the student to a broader range of public health activities;
- contribute to the student's professional education through assignments that are useful to the field organization and that refine the student's professional skills;
- assist students with identifying their own professional strengths and weaknesses and explore areas of knowledge for further study.
- create working relationships between the department and college with community and governmental agencies involved in public health.

Administrative Guidelines for the Supervised Field Experience
The field experience typically takes place after the student has completed at least 30 credit hours of the MPH program, including all core courses and the majority of the required concentration courses. The number of credit hours needed for the field experience is determined by the student's advisor after carefully reviewing the student's record and experience. Generally 3 credit hours is the minimum unless the student has extensive experience in the area of concentration. For each credit hour enrolled, the student is expected to spend a 45 contact hours working on the FE during the semester enrolled (a total of 135 hours for 3 credit hours). It is preferred that students spend a minimum of 12 weeks at the field placement site, although special arrangement can be made, with the approval of the student’s advisor, the FPC and the site supervisor to

A Supervised Field Experience Application and Agreement form must be submitted to the FPC in the Office of Academic Affairs (with a copy to the department Administrator) by the end of the first week of the semester in which the field experience is to occur. The agreement should specify the expectations for the student's participation (e.g., physical space requirements and availability for the student, special work conditions, hours of work, products, activities, travel).

For students doing a field placement in which a formal affiliation agreement between the College and the field agency is necessary, the affiliation agreement must be on file with the advisor, the FPC and the Office of Academic and Student Affairs within two weeks of the beginning of the semester in which the field experience takes place. Contact the FPC to determine if this form is necessary.
B. Responsibilities of the student

- Carefully assess academic preparation, experience, and professional development to identify areas to address in the field experience.

- Assume lead responsibility for identifying suitable field experience sites and supervisors. The FPC, the student’s advisors and the Departmental FE Liaison can often recommend sites based on the student’s goals and experience. The student should discuss these options with their advisor during the semester prior to the intended field experience enrollment.

- Submit a proposal for the field experience to the faculty advisor. The proposal should include the goals, objectives, and activities of the field experience and the responsibilities of the agency. The proposal must be developed jointly by the student, the advisor, and the site supervisor. This plan must be submitted to the FPC, with a copy to the ASA by the end of the first week of classes.

- Initiate the activities necessary for the completion of the Supervised Field Experience Application and Agreement, the agreement between the student, faculty advisor, site supervisor and FPC, and the affiliation agreement if necessary.

- Attend the Supervised Field Experience orientation program held prior to the beginning of the semester of planned enrolment in the course.

- Participate fully in the field opportunity, performing activities necessary to complete the field experience as defined in the proposal and agreements, as well as any additional opportunities that may be provided.

- Complete and submit all necessary assignments, on time, to the faculty advisor and FPC throughout the semester.

- Familiarize yourself and follow all rules, procedures, and customs of the field organization.

- Maintain regular communication with the faculty advisor.

- Provide appropriate feedback to the site supervisor, departmental advisor and FPC. College evaluation forms are available for this purpose.

- Put together a poster of FE duties and findings to present to the department faculty and other students during the departmental FE debriefing session, held near or during the final week of the semester.
B. Responsibilities of Faculty Advisor

- Assist the student in developing goals and outlining the educational and experiential objectives of the field experience.
- Assist the student in identifying suitable field sites and supervisors.
- Review and approve the prospective site and supervisor and the written proposal for the field experience.
- Respond to requests from the site supervisor for information about the placement experience and the student.
- Consult as necessary with the FPC to address issues relating to the field experience.
- Review the site supervisor’s evaluation of the student's work during the field experience.
- Evaluate the student's field experience assignments.
- Review student’s final FE presentation.

C. Responsibilities of the College Field Placement Coordinator

- Identification, recruitment and orientation of appropriate field placement sites / supervisors.
- Collaboration and communication with faculty advisors, with ASAs assistance if necessary, related to student needs and progress.
- Monitoring students during field experience as needed through site visits and email communications.
- Notification of faculty about students’ completion of all field experience requirements.
D. Responsibilities of the Agency / Site Supervisor

- Meet with student seeking placement within the agency, assist in developing field experience proposal, and approve the proposal.

- Provide a current resume or curriculum vitae to the FPC.

- Provide the student with a formal orientation to the agency.

- Provide direct supervision of the student and establish an ongoing regular reporting relationship with the student during the field experience.

- Provide resources necessary to a successful field experience, including office space, desk, supplies, and the opportunity to observe major agency functions.

- Be accessible to resolve issues or problems that may arise.

- Respond to the faculty advisor's requests for information regarding the student's performance and the status of the field experience.

- Provide to the FPC a written evaluation of the student's performance at the end of the field experience using the College’s standardized evaluation form. In the evaluation, an assessment of "Satisfactory" versus "Unsatisfactory" performance should be made.

It is through the Field Experience that program specific skills and practice can come together to provide students with a unique and effective practical experience. The goal of the FE is to provide our students with the training necessary to successfully participate in the public health workforce. We accomplish this through the FE through the integration of classroom lessons, practical examples and program coursework, into real-world problem solving. The Field Experience is not only a benefit to the students but also provides relevant feedback from public health employers, to the department as to unique skills and abilities that students need to effectively play a part in their chosen area of Public Health.

*Any student participating in a Field Experience within their place of employment must be approved to work beyond their normal duties and assist on a project other than that for which they are employed.*