

Prevention of racism and discrimination during placements

Background : The School of Social Work adheres to the University of Ottawa policy on harassment and discrimination (see the bachelor's and master's placement guides, available on the school website). This brochure is meant to discuss specific issues of racism and discrimination that can arise during placements, as well as to clarify the procedures and resources available when students experience incidents that could hinder their learning or well-being.

Here are some definitions taken (with one exception) from the Ontario Human Rights Commission's "Glossary of human rights terms"¹:

Discrimination:

"treating someone unfairly by either imposing a burden on them, or denying them a privilege, benefit or opportunity enjoyed by others, because of their race, citizenship, family status, disability, sex or other personal characteristics."

Stereotype:

"incorrect assumption based on things like race, colour, ethnic origin, place of origin, religion, etc. Stereotyping typically involves attributing the same characteristics to all members of a group regardless of their individual differences. It is often based on misconceptions, incomplete information and/or false generalizations."

Systemic discrimination:

"patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that are part of the social or administrative structures of an organization, and which create or perpetuate a position of relative disadvantage for groups identified under the *Human Rights Code*."

Racism:


"a belief that one group is superior or inferior to others. Racism can be openly displayed in racial jokes, slurs or hate crimes. It can also be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, people don't even realize they have these beliefs. Instead, they are assumptions that have evolved over time and have become part of systems and institutions."

¹ Ontario Human Rights Commission. "Glossary of human rights terms." <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/teaching-human-rights-ontario-guide-ontario-schools/appendix-1-glossary-human-rights-terms>. Accessed May 10, 2021.

Microaggressions :

“A term used to refer to brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural or environmental indignities. Comments can be intentional, unintentional or subtle, but they communicate hostile, derogatory, prejudicial slights towards a person or a group who is marginalized and may create a negative environment and potential adverse health outcomes.” (Ontario Centres for Learning, Research and Innovation in Long-Term Care, 2020)²

Examples of microaggressions:

- Insensitive comments that are disrespectful of one’s racial identity, including positive comments that reinforce stereotypes: “You speak French well, with no accent”; “You must be good at math”; “Where do you really come from?”
 - Using pejorative terms while saying that it’s a joke; denigrating the person
 - Invalidating a person’s thoughts or feelings: not using the person’s name while using those of the other people present; touching the person’s hair; avoiding sitting next to a person
-  As microaggressions often occur in everyday interaction, **they can have an impact on students**. They might withdraw to their office, engage in avoidance or want to quit the placement. These behaviours and comments can come from employers, managers, work colleagues, supervisors, volunteers and clients of the organization.

² Ontario Centres for Learning, Research and Innovation in Long-Term Care. 2020. “Embracing Diversity: A Toolkit for Supporting Inclusion in Long-Term Care Homes.” <https://clri-ltc.ca/files/2020/03/Glossary-of-Diversity-Terminology.pdf>. Accessed May 10, 2021.



We strongly encourage supervisors to discuss workplace policies related to these issues with students **from the start of the placement**, along with organizational procedures should an incident occur. That way, students know the procedures to follow and whom to speak to.



As well, it is important that supervisors be **alert and vigilant regarding certain signs and discuss issues of equity, diversity and inclusion, as well as unconscious bias**, during interventions and supervision sessions. Having these discussions enables students to feel a sense of trust and security (Taylor, 2006).³



It is also important to **include an objective about reflecting on anti-racism in the learning contract**. One of the learning objectives in social work training is to “[d]evelop the knowledge and skills required to recognize and resist all forms of racism, particularly anti-Indigenous, anti-Black and anti-Asian racism, with attention to issues of power and positionality.” (Canadian Association for Social Work Education, 2021, p. 16)⁴



³ Taylor et al. 2006. “Integrating Diversity Dimensions in Supervision: Perspectives of Ethnic Minority AAMFT Approved Supervisors.” *The Clinical Supervisor*, Vol. 25(1/2), 3-21.

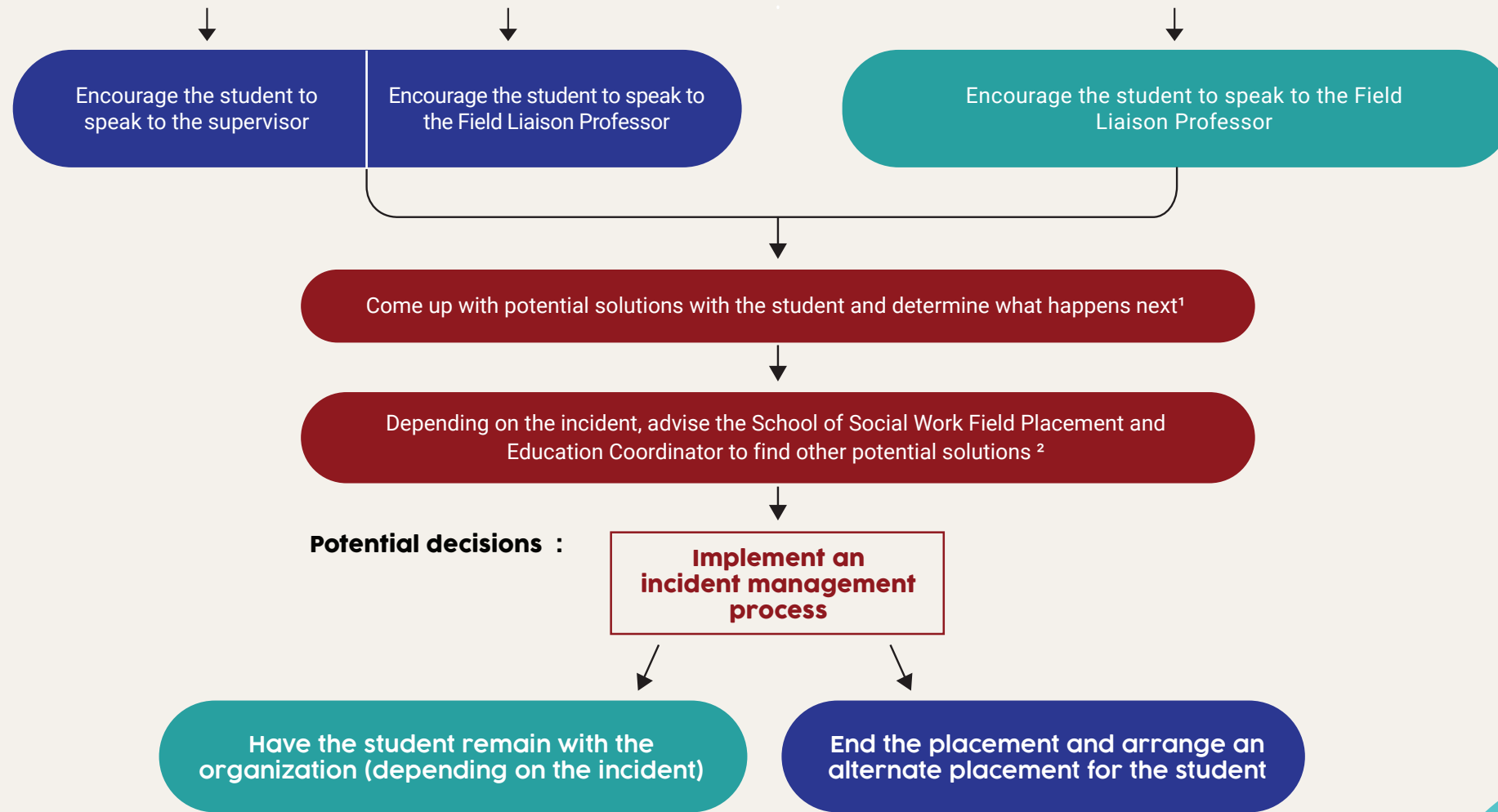
⁴ Canadian Association for Social Work Education. 2021. “Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards for Canadian Social Work Education.” <https://caswe-acfts.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/EPAS-2021-1.pdf>. Accessed May 10, 2021

Managing incidents of racism, discrimination or race-based microaggression during placements

When a student is a victim of or witness to an incident of racism, discrimination or race-based microaggression in the placement environment:

1. Incidents involving a client or member of the organization (employee, manager, volunteer, etc.)

2. Incidents involving the organization supervisor



¹ Other parties could be involved in the process (manager, organization's placement or human resources team).

² At any stage in the process, the Human Rights Office, the Student Rights Centre, a Faculty of Social Sciences wellness counsellor and/or the School of Social Work can advise, support and accompany the student.



It is important to inform the organization and the School of Social Work so they can offer proper support to the student, depending on the incident.



The student can decide at any time to make a complaint within the placement organization by contacting a member of the placement or human resources team, or the placement coordinator, to find out the process to follow.



A decision whether to end the placement is made by the Field Placement and Education Coordinator following a discussion with the student. The Field Placement and Education Coordinator should make no complaint to the placement organization against the wishes or without the consent of the student. The Field Placement and Education Coordinator can maintain collaboration with the organization, if the latter so wishes, to continue discussions on these issues and students needs.



If the student must withdraw from the placement, this must not have any impact on the placement grade. The Field Placement and Education Coordinator must try to find another placement setting as soon as possible so that the student can fulfil their objectives and placement hours.