1. **What is the purpose of professional development hours? Why do we have to do them?**

   As social workers we must engage in a process of lifelong learning. Although you will be required after graduation to complete a minimum number of hours to maintain your licensure, we believe that one of the hallmarks of a true professional is that the practitioner goes beyond the minimum, is actively curious, and is always seeking to expand areas of professional growth. We at MSASS are very aware that learning takes place in many venues, not just in the classroom or in the field. By requiring that you engage in professional development each semester as part of your field, we are encouraging you to develop the habit of lifelong learning.

2. **How do professional development hours relate to field hours?**

   Professional development hours are part of your required field hours; they are not additional hours. In Field 401A you are required to complete 176 hours of field, 12 of which must be professional development hours. In the remaining field periods, Field 502A, 503A, and 504A, you are required to complete 336 hours of field, 36 of which must be professional development hours.

3. **What kinds of activities/learning opportunities count as professional development?**

   There are a broad range of activities that can be counted. The Office of Field Education wishes to encourage you to participate in activities that have a group interactive component and so limits eligible hours to the following areas:

   - The learning goals connect to content areas which are salient to what a professional social worker must know, do, or believe. The content area does not need to relate directly to your current field placement but must have a direct relationship to social work.
   - The learning activities must occur in a “group” setting and must include the opportunity for discussion or engagement with the instructor(s) and/or other participants.
   - A special exception is made to allow students to receive credit for a limited number of professional development hours for activities related to holding leadership positions in LINK or the Mandel Council.
4. What are specific examples of things that “count”?

The following are activities in which students have participated for their professional development:

- Seminars sponsored at MSASS, Case, or other community venues, e.g.
  - Brown bag talks
  - Distinguished Contributor series
  - Grand rounds in a hospital
  - A professional conference, seminar or staff training.
  - Sessions sponsored by community agencies, e.g. pre-service training for foster or adoptive parents, first aid or CPR training, computer training course.
  - Support groups for issues related to those typically dealt with by social workers (e.g. 12 step groups, caregivers support groups, single parent support group).
  - Any session sponsored by the Office of Continuing Education

- Online courses in which there is the opportunity for real time interaction or discussion with the instructor and participants.
- Participating in an audio or video conference in which there is the opportunity to participate in discussion or ask questions in real time

5. What are examples of activities that do not count?

- Activities that are engaged in alone or that are discussed at a later date with a field instructor. For example:
  - Reading a book or article
  - Watching a video or DVD
  - Researching a topic online
  - Reviewing material online that does not provide the opportunity for real time discussion even if there is a “test” at the end.
  - Your own personal work with a therapist or counselor
  - Activities where the content is not related directly to the social work profession. They may be helpful to your ability to function as a professional but would not count as professional development For example:
    - Taking a knitting, crocheting, or aerobics class for stress management.
    - Attending a religious service for a faith that is different than your own or eating at an ethnic restaurant to raise your cultural awareness.
    - Travel to or from a professional development activity even if you discuss the content with colleagues during the trip.
    - Field conference
    - Staff or unit meetings in your agency
6. What if my field instructor wants me to go to a training? Does that count as both professional development and my regular field hours?

No, going to training as part of field can count as either professional development or regular field but not both.

7. If the professional development hours are part of field, should I be able to take time off from my field placement to attend a colloquium or session?

Generally, yes. You must always consult with your Field Instructor if you are going to be away from your agency during regularly scheduled time to be sure that your absence will not interfere with the completion of a required task or keeping a professional appointment. You may take time from your agency placement to attend a special workshop or lecture but only the time in attendance counts. Travel time does not count.

8. Does the professional development have to relate to my current field placement?

No. You may be a CY&F student who wants to attend a gerontology lecture, or a direct practice student who wants to attend a session on grant writing. We encourage you to explore areas beyond your current placement and concentration.

9. How do I document my professional development hours in my learning contract and on my time sheet(s)?

Unless you are an officer or in a leadership position for LINK or the Mandel Council (see below), you should have a general statement in your learning contract related to completion of professional development hours. There is a task under the World of Work ability in both the foundation and advanced contract that allows you to do this. It is also important to include a discussion of your plans for professional development during your field conference to be sure that you don’t get caught at the last minute without plans for getting in your hours.

You should document your professional development hours in two places. They should be documented on your professional development log that you turn in at the end of the field period and on your monthly time sheet for field. (Remember, they are part of your field requirement).

Unless required by your field instructor, you do not need to turn in additional documentation of having participated in a professional development activity such as a training certificate or copy of handouts. However, your Field Instructor or Field Advisor may ask you to document these hours at her/his discretion.
10. How can Mandel Council, LINK or other community activities leadership count toward professional development?

If you are an officer or in another position of leadership in LINK or on the Council, you may count up to 6 hours per month of your work for your organization towards professional development as long as you also have this work included in your Learning Contract and approved by your Field Instructor. You cannot count attendance at LINK or Mandel Council sponsored activities such as a fund raising dinner or meetings as professional development. If you were active in preparing for the event you can count up to six hours of time per month of preparation time as professional development.

11. What if my field instructor or I have further questions?

Please discuss them with your Field Advisor. Note that for unusual situations, Field Advisors may seek consultation from her/his colleagues to make sure that the answer you are given will be consistent for all MSASS students.