

APPENDIX C: Students with a Felony Conviction

Students in the St. Augustine College BSW program are prepared for generalist social work practice. As part of the program, students complete a field practicum (internship) under formal supervision in a social service agency. Some of these agencies require that student interns undergo a formal background check before being accepted as interns. A felony conviction for which the sentence has been served does not need to be a barrier to completing a BSW internship or a future career in social work. In some cases, rehabilitative programs may have provided valuable life experience that will transfer to social work practice. For many, rehabilitation experience has resulted in increased skills and empathy for others and the motivation to extend the learning from life experience and rehabilitation to others.

However, a student with a felony conviction may find that the social work field opportunities are limited. For example, social workers often serve vulnerable populations, and therefore social service agencies have a responsibility to minimize the risk of harm for these populations. This may result in policies that include not hiring persons with a felony conviction. Some states may also refuse to license, as a social worker, those graduates with some types of felony convictions. Additionally, being convicted of a felony while being a student at St. Augustine may affect a student's ability to start the field practicum, secure a field placement, or in some cases, graduate from the BSW program.

Students are encouraged to inform the BSW field director, the BSW program's chair, and potential field practicum sites if they have been convicted of a felony. The BSW program may be requested to let potential field practicum sites know that a potential intern has a past felony conviction and the conviction's nature so that appropriate internship activities can be planned and protection of vulnerable individuals assured. This honesty may decrease the number and kinds of field opportunities students can do in the field practicum.

A student's disclosure of a felony conviction will be kept confidential. However, depending on the field placement, St. Augustine may be required to share the information with the internship agency. Before SAC sharing any information regarding a felony conviction with outside agencies, a release of information must be signed by the student allowing the school to share the information.

Evidence of the nature of the charges should be provided to the BSW program at the time of program

application and before field placement to advise the student appropriately regarding field placement agencies and career options. Suppose felony charges occur while the student is in the BSW program. In that case, the student must provide evidence about the nature of the charges immediately and may be suspended from the BSW program until the information is received to assure safety.

The social work program will make every effort to help students select and obtain a field placement to complete the BSW program. However, the program cannot guarantee a field placement for students with a felony conviction. The BSW program will provide support to the student while she/he is searching for a field placement. It is the student's responsibility to locate an appropriate field placement and seek out the BSW program's support while finding a field placement. Students cannot get a BSW degree without completing the required field practicum.

Students who have had past felony convictions are advised to seek legal help to have their felony record expunged if possible because of the barrier it can create.

BSW Restrictions

- Students who are awaiting trial for a felony charge, and those currently serving time under house arrest for a felony, are not eligible to start the field practicum until the trial is completed or the sentence is served. The court provides documentation of fulfillment of the sentence. It may be difficult for students convicted of a felony to locate internships that will accept them. See expungement of records above. Faculty will provide reasonable assistance; however, they cannot guarantee a field placement to finish the BSW program.

- The student must grant permission to the school to receive copies showing the nature of the charges and parole terms for students still mandated to see a parole officer for a felony charge.

The Social Work Department can request a release of information form.

- Because all St. Augustine College sites offer childcare, individuals that are registered as sex offenders will not be admitted into the program.

Please check the box that best answers each statement below:

I have been convicted of a felony.

Yes No

I am currently involved in a case where felony charges have been brought against me.

Yes No

I have been convicted of a crime that requires that I be registered as a sex offender.

Yes No

Your signature below indicates that you understand and agree to the above policy regarding students with a felony conviction.

Student signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Name Printed: _____

Student ID: _____