



Payment for Placements
National Movement

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**SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS JOIN TOGETHER IN NATIONAL WEEK OF ACTION TO
PROTEST UNPAID PRACTICUMS**

Protests are being spearheaded by grassroots organization Payment for Placements

Social work students across the United States are joining a National Week of Action led by Payment for Placements (P4P), with the intention of bringing attention to unpaid internships in social work education. The P4P National Week of Action will run April 10–14, 2023.

P4P is a student-led movement calling for fair payment for the mandatory practicums which social work students must complete in order to graduate. Currently, undergraduates must work 400 hours to complete their field education, while graduate students are required to work at minimum 900 hours. For the majority of students, this labor is [entirely unpaid](#). P4P aims to make the field of social work equitable and accessible, citing the financial hardship and emotional distress experienced by students. Across the country, P4P chapters will be staging walkouts, holding rallies, and conducting social media and letter-writing campaigns to organize their student bodies and bring national awareness to the problems that unpaid field practicums cause for the profession.

“Right now, the current model calls for social work students to go to class and somehow pay living expenses, all while balancing a schedule that requires them to work for free for 20–40 hours per week. This is a structurally unjust and almost impossible model that discriminates against low-income students, and, disproportionately, students of color. This contributes to the fact that Black social workers carry [roughly](#) 50% more debt from social work education than white students,” said **Beth Wagner, an organizer with FED UP, a P4P chapter at the University of Texas, Austin**. “Saddling social work students with crushing debt and dangerous stress all while requiring them to work for free is harmful to their education, their wages, and their clients. The debate is over—it’s time for social work institutions to focus on solutions.”

Local P4P chapters aim to work with school administrators, local leaders, and state governments to develop solutions to this problem. As part of the Week of Action, P4P chapters are calling on the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) to meaningfully address the problem, with the goal of ending unpaid



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practicums in social work education. To date, the CSWE and NASW have declined to publicly support the movement.

"Social work students across the country know that unpaid field placements are a burden upon the entire social work profession," said **Elana Metz (Co-chair of P4P at San Diego State University and national P4P leader)**. "We're unable to bring our best selves to our studies because we have to balance our unpaid placements with classes and paid work. We skip meals. We drop out. We never enroll in the first place. Today, we're showing the CSWE and NASW that we're no longer accepting the status quo of unpaid field placements."

"As social workers, we are required to abide by the values outlined in our Code of Ethics, including service, social justice, self-care, and the dignity and worth of a person." said **Elise Colquitt, P4P UGA Co-Chair, and national P4P leader**. We are asking for the field of Social Work to extend these values to its very own students by reversing the status quo of unpaid fieldwork. We are ready to work with the CSWE and NASW to make these necessary changes to better align ourselves with the Code of Ethics and support Social Work students as they enter the field."

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P4P is a national effort organized in response to the challenging conditions of social work education. The organization began at University of Michigan, but has since expanded to over thirty chapters across the United States. Composed entirely of social work students ready to bring lasting change to the field, P4P members believe that required fieldwork should be compensated. It is our mission to advocate for funding solutions that can make social work education more equitable and accessible. You can learn more about the national movement by emailing p4p.national@gmail.com or following us [@p4pnational](https://www.instagram.com/p4pnational) on Instagram