



**Board of Accreditation (BOA)
Department of Social Work Accreditation (DOSWA)**

Virtual Visit Guidelines and Tips

The goal of conducting candidacy visits and reaffirmation site visits is to advance quality social work education through multi-phase regularly scheduled accreditation reviews. A virtual visit may be scheduled by the BOA in cases such as:

1. The program under review for candidacy or reaffirmation is categorized as online only. *Online-only programs are those that offer a sole online program option. Online program option is defined in policy [1.2.4 Program Changes](#) as a majority (51% or more) of the social work curriculum delivered online. Online-only programs may request an in-person visit in lieu of a virtual visit. Expectations are consistent for both in-person and virtual visit formats.*
2. Candidacy Visit (CV) 2 for all candidacy programs.
3. A modified site visit was issued by the BOA.
4. A manmade or natural disaster, or another public health emergency, prevents the onsite visit from occurring safely for all parties.
5. Other emergency or special circumstances at the discretion of the BOA.

Guidelines

1. **Visit Policies:** Policies are consistent for both in-person and virtual visit formats per the policies and procedures outlined in the [Accreditation Policy Handbook](#).
2. **Scheduling the Visit:** The program and visitor may jointly choose to schedule a typical full one-day visit or opt to complete the visit over two consecutive half-days. The visit must take place during usual program business hours (Monday – Friday) to ensure participation of all stakeholder groups.
3. **Technology:** The virtual visit must occur via an engaged and interactive videoconferencing format. Videoconferencing technology must allow real-time visual and audio participation by multiple participants simultaneously. The program selects the platform and serves as the host of all meetings. Test the technology prior to the meeting day. Provide videoconference link(s) with the visit schedule at least one (1) week prior to the visit
4. **Setting the Visit Schedule:**
 - a. Decide which program representative will host the videoconference meetings throughout the day.
 - b. Decide how all parties, such as president/chancellor, students, faculty, administrators, etc. will be included in the visit.

5. **Private Meetings:** The meetings must be conducted in private meeting rooms. Select a distraction-free and low-noise area to participate in the videoconference.
6. **Recording:** Recording the visit is not allowed by either party.

Tips for a Successful Virtual Visit

Before the Visit:

- The program arranges a series of videoconference meetings for each participant group rather than one long meeting. This allows both the visitor and participants to take scheduled breaks, reflect, and outline the visit report.
- If possible, password-protect the meeting in advance to ensure privacy.
- The program creates and shares a comprehensive agenda that includes the videoconference info as well as the names, credentials, and titles of program participants for each meeting centralized in the meeting schedule.
- The program may send calendar invites to the visitor and include the videoconference info as well as the names, credentials, and titles of program participants. When calendar scheduling be aware of time zone differences and prepare accordingly.
- Visitors and primary contacts may exchange cell/work phone numbers to text or call if there are any issues or technical problems.
- It is helpful for the visitor and primary contact to have two screens or two devices. One screen for viewing the participants and one screen to have the documents or visual aids open for reference. With two devices, one screen can be used to take notes and the other to be in continuous contact with the program and stakeholders.
- Independently, in advance of the visit, all parties should test the videoconference platform to avoid tech glitches; test their microphone, video, and enable a virtual background if desired. It is recommended to use the typical “travel” day before the visit to test the technology.
- When possible, use a device that places the camera in a stable location at eye level, to replicate in-person meeting dynamics.

During the Visit:

- All parties should enter the videoconference a few minutes early to avoid tech glitches, test microphone video, and turn on a virtual background if desired. It is also recommended to turn phones and/or computer notifications on silent while meetings are in session.

- If possible, lock the meeting once all participants have arrived to ensure privacy. To the extent possible, the program’s primary contact must limit participants to only those included on the agreed upon visit agenda.
- If the program plans to have multiple participants in the same location/room sharing a microphone, have a technology professional present to ensure the microphone picks up everyone well enough for the visitor to hear. Ensure only one individual speaks at a time, as simultaneous sounds (voices, laughter, etc.) do not translate through microphones; as such, it may be helpful to set some ground rules at the beginning of the meeting.
- For each meeting, the program should facilitate introductions. It may also be helpful to briefly state the focus of each meeting to remain on task.
- When the primary contact is not in a meeting, such as with students and/or community members, have a technology professional present to monitor and intervene if tech issues arise. There is no time in these meetings to troubleshoot.
- If there are multiple people joining from multiple locations, instruct all participants to mute their microphones until they are prepared to speak.
- The program may screen share documents/visual aids with the visitor and all participants during the visit that aid content discussions.
- Be present. Encourage participants to minimize potential distractions and avoid multi-tasking. It is helpful to keep your eyes focused on the screen, speak clearly, engage in discussions thoughtfully, use active listening, and avoid interrupting.
- It is recommended to limit use of the “chat box” to contribute substantively to the conversation. Engage verbally. Consider limiting the use of the chat box only to share visual aids that serve to deepen and enhance the discussion with the visitor and all participants.
- To build rapport and trust, it can be helpful to ask participants to identify a strength and an area for growth for the program.
- The program may appoint a facilitator for each meeting to help keep time, encourage relevant participants to speak, and redirect the conversation to the focus/topic as needed.
- To bridge a silence, consider posing a question directly to a relevant individual.