



University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

# ***Field Education Program***

## Field Instructor Training Module Three

1. Practicum Supervision: Phase One
  - a. [Work Expectations](#)
  - b. [Professional Etiquette](#)
  - c. [Teaching/Learning Style](#)
  - d. [Various Teaching Tools](#)
  - e. [Characteristics of Adult Learners](#)

## PRACTICUM SUPERVISION

*If there is a frank discussion at the beginning of the practicum about the mutual responsibilities of the Field Instructor and the Student, conflicts are less likely to develop at a later time. The initial meeting with a student is the time for the Field Instructor to structure the supervisory relationship by sharing with the student their specialized approaches, supervisory styles, and expectations (Wilson, 1981).*

### Work Expectations

**Work expectations for student interns are different from an employee.** We expect employees to come to us with a certain set of knowledge, skills, and abilities. We cannot make this assumption with student interns. Never assume the student will understand or know what to do, how to act, or how to handle a specific situation. We should expect students to be willing to learn. We should be prepared to help them acquire and build on knowledge and skills that lead to becoming a professional.

#### **Issues to address with the student in the initial supervision meeting (s):**

- **Time Management**--Students should be informed of the expectations related to time management. The field instructor sets the work schedule including arrival and leaving time, duration of lunch and breaks, and scheduled time off.
- **Dress Code**--Students should be informed of the agency dress code policy expectations during their interview and orientation to the agency. If the dress code is casual (identify what casual means) at the agency, students should be informed of when they are expected to dress in business attire, for example: meetings outside of the agency, court attendance, etc.
- **Telephone Protocol**--Field Instructors or an agency representative should train students on proper telephone protocol for the agency. This should include proper greeting when answering the phone, when and how to take messages, and rules regarding personal telephone use.
- **Use of Shared Space**--If the student is sharing office space with the field instructor, another employee, or student intern, guidelines should be established to avoid conflicts over office supplies, office equipment, and use of space for client meetings. For example, if clients will be seen in the shared space a schedule may need to be developed to avoid violation of client's confidentiality.

- **Use of Agency Supplies**--Student should be made aware of guidelines regarding use of agency supplies.
- **Workplace Visitors**--Students should be told the agency's policy regarding workplace visitors. If students have a friend or family member coming to the agency, should this person check in or sign in, receive a visitors tag, remain in the waiting area or lobby, not be in the presence of clients, etc.
- **Procedures for Calling Off Work**--The student is expected to follow the rules and policies of the agency related to calling off due to illness or emergency.
- **Where to Keep Personal Belongings**--Students should be advised as to whether or not they can bring personal belongings to the agency and if so, where those personal belongings should be stored. Students should also be made aware of agency policy regarding personal loss of belongings due to theft, property damage, or other factors, including actions committed by a client.
- **Student Responsibilities**--Field Instructors are responsible for clarifying the student's role at the agency with the student, clients, and co-workers so that everyone involved is fully aware of the student's role(s) and responsibilities. This will prevent misunderstanding and miscommunication related to the student's day-to-day tasks and activities during the practicum period.

### **Professional Etiquette**

- Professional etiquette involves such issues as dress and grooming, attendance, behavior and attitude, use of time, quality of work, adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics, and identity with social work as a profession.
- Make sure the student intern is aware of how you would like for them to conduct themselves when interacting with you, other agency personnel, clients, and agency collaterals.
- Inform students of any "unwritten" rules that apply at your agency.
- Give the student immediate constructive feedback if they say or do something that is inappropriate. Failure to provide immediate feedback and clear expectations may result in continued difficulties for the student and the Field Instructor, and may result in undue harm to a client. For example, if a student is dressed inappropriately during counseling sessions with a client, that should be addressed with the student by the Field Instructor immediately with clearly stated expectations for the student to follow.

## Teaching/Learning Style

*Teaching approaches are based on what we think we need in order to learn, therefore, your approach to your student may be based on your learning style. Learning style describes a student in terms of those educational conditions under which he or she is most likely to learn. (Hunt, 1987).*

- It is essential for the practicum to offer learning choices and design opportunities to assist the student in active learning.
- Prior to the student's arrival, examine the various kinds of learning experiences available in the setting which would help the student achieve his/her objective. (Wilson, 1981).
- Identification of "Preferred Learning Styles" occurs through reflecting on past experiences and recalling what was effective and what was not effective. It is important to work with students to identify what they know about their own learning styles.
- Knowledge of learning styles can help you and your student construct the best possible educational environment.
- You may begin the internship with an authority-oriented, formal, and teacher directed approach and end with the student engaged in a self-directed, experiential, problem-solving approach.

## Various Teaching Tools

The following are various tools that can be utilized to teach students with different learning styles:

- Read/Research- thorough reading and understanding of the literature
- Observe/Shadow Field Instructor and other agency personnel
- Meet and Interview other agency personnel
- Discussions with field-instructor on a daily/weekly basis about observations, activities, clients, etc.
- Collaborate with Field Instructor, other interns, other agency personnel
- Co-facilitate groups with Field Instructor, other interns, other agency personnel
- Role-Play with Field Instructor

- Journaling
- Simulated Experiences
- Recording: process, summary, audio/video of client interventions
- Verbal presentations of newly acquired information or client cases at agency staffings

### **Characteristics of Adult Learners**

- Social Work students are adults
  - They learn differently from children and adolescents.
- Adults learn by doing
  - Adults tend to be active learners who enjoy task oriented activities with visible results. Start with the simple and gradually increase to more complex situations and experiences. Student's sense of mastery over a relatively small arena will give them confidence to apply their skills to broader horizons.
- Most adults have some un-learning to do
  - This is particularly true of adults who have work experience and have been trained or socialized to a certain approach or way of operating in the work environment.
- Mature adults with significant life experience are usually rather independent
  - Adult learners, after orientation and training, are usually capable of working on their own. They are also more likely to experience transference and counter transference during their field practicum.
- Adults need to participate in structuring their learning experiences
  - Field Instructors must structure learning experiences with input from the student to insure the learning experience meets the learning needs of the student, and to make sure expectations are clear to all parties involved.
- Adult learners often harbor seemingly inappropriate insecurities
  - Some adults who return to school experience anxiety related to their knowledge and skill level. Many of them feel inadequate or unprepared to re-enter the workforce or to enter the social work profession.
- Most learners acquire new skills by first copying others or following instructions blindly. Totally new skills often are learned initially by rote.

- External stressors that have nothing to do with field placement can affect responsiveness to learning
- Students are impacted by life circumstances, such as parenting, maintaining employment, and family issues that continue to demand their time and attention despite the fact that they are also full-time students.
- Erratic or unexplainable student behavior may be the result of issues unrelated to the internship. Any concerns should be addressed with the student immediately and a plan formulated to support the student in resolving the issue(s) to prevent further impact on the internship experience. The Field Education Liaison should be contacted to help mediate the situation if a student's personal circumstances are interfering with the learning process during the internship.

Hunt, D. E. (1987). *Beginning with ourselves in practice, theory and human affairs*. Cambridge MA: Brookline Books

Wilson, S. (1981). *Field instruction: Techniques for supervisors*. New York: Free Press.