



University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

# ***Field Education Program***

## Field Instructor Training Module Two

Orientation to the Agency

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## **Orientation to the Agency**

The orientation to the agency not only acquaints students with various services offered by the agency, community, and the range and scope of possible assignments, but allows for the student to understand the context for the way tasks are accomplished within the agency.

- **Prior to the intern's arrival:**

- Circulate a memo or email to agency staff introducing the intern prior to the start date
- Make a physical space available for the student. If the student shares a desk or office area with another staff member, arrange for a place for the student to keep their personal belongings, files, etc.
- If available, arrange for the intern to attend agency orientations. Many agencies or schools will have students attend "new employee" orientation. These orientations not only give students basic information on the organization, but provide a great opportunity for the interns to meet other new staff members.

- **Intern Packet: useful information about the agency**

Although we suggest students learn as much as possible about your agency prior to accepting the internship, an "Intern Informational Packet" provides a comprehensive look at the history, mission, goals, agency structure, and the simple mechanics of how your agency works. If your agency does not have an "intern packet" or "intern informational notebook", this is an ideal learning opportunity. Have your intern compile the information as part of their learning experience. Keep the information for future interns.

The informational packet should include:

- Agency mission statement/goals
- Annual report or School Report Card
- Brochures, public information literature on agency, recent news articles on agency
- Website
- Organizational chart
- Job descriptions for Social Workers
- "Agency terminology"
  - Don't assume that students know the acronyms used in the agency.
  - Provide a handout of agency terminology and their meaning.
- Paperwork/forms
- Procedures for clients/agency processes including procedures for intakes, referrals, etc.
- Confidentiality and Release of Information forms and procedures

- Calendar of events/staff meetings/in-service trainings/ agency group supervision (if available) etc.
- Funding mechanisms/fee scale (where applicable)
- Agency rules and regulations regarding transportation of clients
- A copy of the agency dress code
- Safety Plan - Is there a plan for safety of employees when facing physical threats, etc. Are their specific safety plans for situations such as fire, tornadoes etc.
- Provide various readings about the populations and setting

■ **Agency Tour – take your student on a tour of the building the first day**

- Tour the physical building and student’s working space. Inform students of rules around using various office spaces—scheduling counseling rooms, etc. If you are in a school, during your tour discuss the “universal school rules”. For example, what are the rules for students leaving the classroom, talking in the halls, etc.
- Introduce intern to all personnel, supervisory staff, secretarial staff and part-time staff.
- If appropriate, arrange for student to meet with various staff regarding his/her job responsibilities.
- If your agency has multiple programs, introduce the intern to the various program administrators and staff. Encourage the intern to arrange a meeting at another time to learn about the services.
- Formally introduce the student at agency staff meetings.
- Clerical staff can orient student to office procedures, policies and protocols.

■ **Topics for Discussion**

**This is covered in detail under Supervision:**

- Agency policies and procedures
- Agency rules on behavior and dress
- Characteristics of service populations and community
- Schedule regular supervision time – minimum one hour per week in addition to informal supervision
- Process and expectations of supervision
- Review with student SW course content
- Student’s goals and learning plan
- Role of the social worker within the agency and instruction for completing agency forms/ documentation
- Safety issues

- **Identify Initial Direct Practice Activities:** These activities provide an early opportunity for the intern to get a clear picture of the clients they will be working with.
  - Have the student:
    - Review case records—identify a variety of case files for the student to review.
    - Read agency information on intake process and observe staff completing an intake.
    - Arrange for the student to observe a group. The students can assist the group leader with preparing for the group.
    - Read about the agency’s assessment process and observe agency staff completing an assessment.
    - Attend meetings with clients/parents/agency staff
    - If applicable, have the student accompany staff completing home visits.
    - Agency Meetings
      - Attend staff, staff development, board, committee, department and team meetings

## **Orientation to the Community**

Because clients live in a greater context than just your agency, it is important that interns are aware of the greater community and the resources available. Orientation to the community should include the following as an integral part of the internship.

- Review Census data
- Contact and visit community agencies/groups that provide additional services to client population. For example: local food bank, KidCare Health Insurance representative, adult day care center, Community Service Center, Crisis Nursery, etc.
- If agency’s clientele does not have racial/cultural diversity, arrange visits to agencies which would encompass such populations so student would have exposure to delivery/ service issues to diverse groups
- Interns should attend at least one local interagency council meeting, regional prevention group, mental health board meeting, or other interagency meeting that gives the student insight into issues involving client needs and services
- Review relevant legislation
- Review grants and learn about funding agencies and grant applications

There are initial steps to orientating students to your agency. For some, the orientation to the community occurs throughout the internship. Studies have shown, most students feel orientation activities and supplemental readings are useful internship activities and help to engage the student in the learning process. (Knight, 2000).

### **Ideas to help intern feel like part of the agency**

In addition, the following simple ideas may help welcome your intern and make him/her feel like a part of your agency

- Meet with the student at the end of the day for the first week
- Have the student shadow you on various activities to help acclimate them to the situation
- Give the student an opportunity for client contact in the first week
- Provide the intern with his/her own office supplies
- On the first day, invite him/her to “lunch” so they do not feel so isolated

Knight, Carolyn (2000). Engaging the student in field instruction relationship: BSW and MSW student's views. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, Vol 20(3/4) pp. 173-201.