ORIENTATION TO THE AGENCY

The School provides the student with a general orientation to the profession and to field education.

The agency is responsible for agency-based orientation, which typically occurs during the first week of field work. In general the orientation should consist of acquainting the student with the various services offered by the agency, and the range of scope of possible assignments. Planning for these assignments should begin right after the orientation period, and specific initial assignments should be identified. The student should use the orientation period to begin developing a written learning contract, which will serve as a guide for the current and subsequent terms of field work experience (see Appendices A and B).

The School’s rationale for the agency orientation to field instruction is twofold. First, before the student engages with clients, agency staff, communities, etc., s/he should have some knowledge of professional roles and relationships, the ethics of the profession, and the nature of service delivery systems, as well as some acquaintance with various theories of human behavior. Second, students are expected to gain knowledge about the range and type of specific agency services, agency structure and staff roles and responsibilities, as well as inter-agency and community relationships. A well-planned and organized orientation within the agency will not only provide information useful for student performance but will serve the agency by enhancing the potential for greater student productivity.

Agencies may wish to take different approaches to the agency orientation. One approach is to schedule various activities which could include reading reports and other agency documents, interviews, and observation within the agency and at other agencies and facilities. A somewhat richer approach is to schedule all of the above and to begin to introduce related tasks into the assignments. For example, a student who is scheduled to visit another agency may be asked to obtain information needed by the placement agency. Another student preparing to work with a client group may conduct initial interviews with prospective members.
SOME IDEAS FOR A WELL-PLANNED, COMPREHENSIVE PLACEMENT EXPERIENCE

• Initial Orientation Session for Students

• Intern Packet
  - useful information about the agency, personnel, helpful terminology, organizational chart, etc.
  - various readings about population, settings or other helpful “orienting” contextual information
  - special paperwork, forms

• Agency Tour
  - meet personnel, supervisory staff, secretarial staff, etc.
  - faculty tour and student’s space of their own
  - formally introduce student at agency staff meeting

• Inform intern of agency policies and procedures

• Supply student with some office supplies

• Arrange for lunch plans on the first day so student doesn’t feel isolated or alone

• Have the student “shadow” you on the first day or two (or at least for a few hours) to help acclimate them to the setting

• Give student an opportunity for client contact in the first two days

• Meet with student at the end of every day the first week

• Meet with the student both formally and informally the first week – plan on discussing at least one case to set the tone for supervision

• Plan regularly scheduled supervision blocks of time each week in addition to informal “chats”

• Allow for the student to take initiative for their own learning and plans for their time

• Help student to develop a “project” that they could accomplish over the course of the term
PREPARING STUDENTS FOR ORIENTATION TO FIELD PLACEMENT SITE

Micro Level of Orientation

1. Orientation Plan

2. Learning plan

3. Supervision
   - Learning styles
   - Supervisor role and style
   - Previous experiences with supervision
   - Weekly supervision times
   - Who sets agenda for supervision meetings
   - What is discussed in supervision
   - How to discuss goals, fears, issues, assignments
   - Integrating class and field
   - Evaluation of learning outcomes

4. Professional Behavior
   - Expectations
   - Agency boundaries: what’s okay to talk about; what’s not okay
   - Time off for illness, holidays
   - Make-up days

Mezzo Level of Orientation

1. Purpose, function, and structure of the agency/organization
   - Mission
   - Governance
   - Policies
   - Funding

2. Who’s Who
   - Organizational charts
   - Job descriptions
   - List of people to meet

3. Clients/Consumers/Constituents
   - Who they are
   - Service provision/delivery (what and how)
How they get connected
Intake process
Costs for services
Service outcomes/evaluation

4. Layout of agency/organization
   Tour of agency
   Student’s office, desk, phone, files, etc.
   Copy and fax machines
   Lunch/break room

5. Information flow
   Telephone
   Computer use/access
   Routing material
   Mail (in and out)
   Messages
   Meetings required

6. Documentation
   Format
   When and where
   Confidentiality issues
   Jargon, abbreviations
   Statistical records
   Forms

7. Confidentiality
   Interview locations
   Consent for release of information
   Confidential and privileged information
   Legal requirements to report; other legal parameters

8. Safety and Security Issues
   Office
   Home Visits
   Use of personal car

9. Resources
   For clients/consumers/constituents
   For students
   For staff
   Bibliography of important books and articles
   Internet availability
   Library journal access
   Cellular phones
Mileage and/or parking reimbursement
Stipend
Staff development
Additional learning opportunities

Macro Level of Orientation

1. The Community
   - Map of the community
   - History of the community
   - Strengths of the community
   - Major issues
   - Aspects of diversity
   - Community leadership

2. Social Service System
   - Visits to area agencies and organizations
   - Resource list of area agencies and organizations
   - How this agency/organization fits in with similar agencies/organizations elsewhere
   - How this agency/organization coordinates with other types of agencies/organizations
   - How this agency/organization partners with other agencies/organizations/groups
   - Coalitions/networking groups in the community
   - History/perceptions/strengths/limitations of agency/organization in the community

3. Social Policies
   - Local, state, federal government mandates or sanctions
   - Regulatory bodies
   - Regulatory processes
   - Legislation affecting clients/service provision and/or delivery