

SMITH COLLEGE SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL WORK
Northampton, MA 01063

TO: Supervisors & Directors of Training
FROM: Carolyn du Bois, Director of Field Work
DATE: July 2008
RE: The essentials

Greetings!

We would like to thank all of you for the work you will soon be undertaking on behalf of our students in the field. The first weeks of placement are both critically important and challenging as you work to welcome, orient and assist students as they enter into new settings and learning experiences. We have enclosed materials and information you will need for the upcoming year and have highlighted in this letter several particularly important areas for your consideration as you plan for your students' internships. Please refer to your Guidelines for Field Practicum for more detailed information re: practicum expectations.

Advising & Support

Each student/supervisor pair is assigned a faculty field advisor who is a member either of our full time resident or our adjunct faculty. The faculty field advisor serves as a liaison between your agency and the school, as a consultant to the student's learning process, and is available to work with supervisors and students around any problems or concerns which may arise in the course of the internship. Students are in contact with their faculty field advisors on a monthly basis and submit several written assignments to the advisor during the year. The faculty field advisor will visit with you and your student at the agency in both the fall and the spring and will also be available to you as needed by phone throughout the year. Additionally, the Director of Field Work, Carolyn du Bois (413/585-7987), and the Associate Director of Field Work, Anthony Hill (413/585-3625), are available to you should you need or wish to be in touch. In order to be as responsive as possible to supervisors & students we have divided our responsibilities in half, with Anthony Hill serving as the field contact for all agencies in Canada, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire and New York and Carolyn du Bois for all other areas.

Caseload

Please keep in mind that we expect students by mid-October to have built to a full caseload of between 10-12 direct service hours a week, which can be spent in a range of activities including work with groups, individuals, families and as well as outreach, clinical case management and work in the milieu.

Student learning is greatly enhanced by experience with a diverse caseload and it is extremely important for our profession that we train students to work with a range of populations. We ask that you do whatever you can to give students the opportunity to work with a racially, ethnically, and socioculturally diverse caseload. The School is fortunate to have an increasing number of students of color in our program. There have been some instances in which students of color have been given almost exclusively clients of color, in part to serve the needs of the agency. Though all students should have clients of color, it is extremely important that our students of color have a diverse caseload. To give them almost exclusively clients of color, unless this reflects the composition of the community served, is to circumscribe their educational experience. We also ask that careful consideration be given when assigning cases in which a client's primary language is other than English, again so that assignments are made that serve the student's learning needs as well as whatever service needs the agency may have. We ask that all supervisors review with students in October and February the range and composition of the student's caseload. This will help supervisors hold an "overview" of the student's educational experiences and will also serve to help prepare for the two faculty field advisor's visits to the agency.

Intern Responsibilities

Students are expected to be in the agency 30 hours a week (not including lunch & breaks). If the student works extra hours, equivalent time should be taken off within a month; it may not be accrued and added to holiday or to the

Winter Break. Because of other work expected by Smith and because of the need of most students to be employed part time, it is very important that the agency abide by the 30-hour requirement. We ask supervisors to monitor with the students both formal and informal pressures which bear upon the student to be in the agency more than 30 hours. Each student is required to complete a minimum of two process recordings a week which should be read and responded to by the supervisor within the week in which they were completed. These process recordings serve to help students recall and reflect upon their work and provide important focus points for supervision. Students are asked to keep these process recordings in a portfolio that can be reviewed by the faculty field advisor at the fall and spring meetings.

Minimum Supervisory Expectations

The expectation of the School is that each intern will have a minimum of two hours of supervision weekly. These two hours are to be provided by the primary MSW supervisor and are hours that belong exclusively to each individual intern. This is essential, as our interns are not taking classes concurrently with their placements and therefore the clinical supervisor serves as the primary educator during the internship year. While we welcome adjunct and group supervisory experiences where they are available, these must be offered in addition to the required two hours of primary supervision. We have a very small number of agencies where the nature of the work calls for a slightly different supervisory model but these are exceptions that have been worked out on an individual basis with the School. Any proposed changes in supervisory assignments must be raised with the faculty field advisor.

Interim Progress Reports & Evaluations

You will find enclosed here the interim progress report form that is to be completed and returned to the School on October 10, 2008. This report provides the School with a brief overview of how the student is adjusting to the agency and progressing with the work. Please forward two copies of all reports to the Smith College School for Social Work, Department of Field Work. Please note that the learning objectives outlined in the appropriate first and second year section of the Guidelines provide the criteria for your mid- and end of year evaluations for your student; the format itself can be found in Appendix A of the Guidelines. Please note that these major evaluations are extremely important to the student's learning and should be completed and discussed with the student by the due date and forwarded to the School and the faculty field advisor. Please refer to the enclosed Calendar for important dates pertaining to the internship year, evaluation due dates, holidays, etc.

Student Employment

Because of increasingly serious financial concerns, many students are finding it necessary to work to supplement their financial awards and personal resources. The current cost of education at Smith College School for Social Work exceeds \$30,000 annually, including living expenses. Financial aid awards are limited, and most students need to work to help meet their expenses. The need to work is an issue not only for social work students, but for most students pursuing graduate education, and is a reality that we must accommodate if we are to maintain student enrollments at their current levels. If an intern finds it necessary to work, we encourage that he/she be supported in seeking employment and arranging a work schedule that will not infringe on agency performance. Where agency structure allows, we are supportive of a student's effort to arrange the 30 hours within a four-day work week (Please note that three day work weeks are not permitted given our wish for students to experience a close to fulltime immersion in the work of the agency).

Guidelines

The Guidelines for Field Practicum provide detailed information about the structure and specific learning objectives for the field placement. Please review them prior to the start of the training year and then retain your copy as new ones are not published every year.

As always, please feel free to contact the faculty field advisor assigned to your agency if you have any questions, comments or concerns. Your work in the field provides the core learning experiences for our students; we thank you for all that you offer and look forward to a mutually rewarding year.

SMITH COLLEGE SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL WORK

Northampton, MA 01063

Interim Progress Report

Due: October 10, 2008

Student: _____

Date: _____

Agency: _____

Supervisor's Signature

Student's Signature

**NOTE: PLEASE SEND TWO COPIES TO THE SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL WORK
FIELDWORK DEPARTMENT.**