

PART ONE:

THE STUDENT GUIDE

TO

THE HUMAN SERVICES

PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE

INTRODUCTION

What is the Practicum?

The practicum experience in Human Services at Bunker Hill Community College is the final phase of your educational experience in the Associate of Science Degree plan. The practicum gives you a chance to try out all the concepts that you have been learning in classes over the last several semesters. The practicum is an experience which allows you to "practice" your new profession in a safe and secure way.

The security of this practice is possible because so many persons will be helping you to do your very best job of helping those in need of social services. The first person helping you is the faculty assigned to your practicum course from Bunker Hill. They will be the persons responsible for seeing that your experience is interesting, fulfilling, and challenging. You will be expected to do things that you have never done before. While this may be a bit anxiety producing, the faculty supervisors will help you to see that you can be a successful human services worker bringing strengths-based social service to those whom you are to serve.

The second contact person to help you complete a successful practicum experience is the supervisor assigned to you at the agency where you are placed to do your practicum work. This person is usually a supervisor of other workers in the agency in which you work. Sometimes, he/she is the director of the agency and is helpful to you even though he/she is not working in your particular office every minute you are there. This is especially true if you are completing a practicum experience in a "work-site" location where you are already employed.

The third persons to help might surprise you. The other students in the practicum experience will prove very helpful to you in understanding what is happening in your agency and how to interpret and cope with the activities and expectations put upon you.

Needless to say, the experience is full of excitement, anxiety, and learning. You will have a good time during this period and be able to say at the end that you truly do know what is required to be a professional human service worker.

Why is the Practicum Done This Way?

The practicum is designed as the last part of the associate degree program, to be taken during the last two semesters of your work. You must start the practicum in the fall semester and finish it during the spring semester.

Beginning in the spring of 2011, prior to enrolling in HSV 120-121, all students hoping to enter the practicum in the fall will complete HSV 116. This is a pre-practicum field experience to get you ready for HSV 120-121 in the fall. You must pass HSV 116 with a C grade or better to move on to the practicum experiences. [Note: Prior to spring semester 2011, all students will complete three practicum courses--fall, spring and summer session A].

The two practicum courses, HSV 120-121, must be taken in sequence and consecutively. This is so for several reasons.

First, the curriculum has been modeled from the Family Development Credentialing Program (FDC), a strengths-based human services program from Cornell University. Several aspects of education and experience relating to direct-line human service workers will be completed in this part of the course. An accompanying set of seminars is a required part of the practicum work. These focus on several important aspects of doing human service work such as goal setting, agency differences, ethics, supervisory activities, integration of processes, reporting, and professional development.

Secondly, the Associate of Science Degree in Human Services is an academic degree as well as a vocational program. We want you not only to be able to go to work in high quality social service agencies, but we want you to be able to have many choices for your future. With the additional credits received in your associate degree, this is possible. You can transfer on to get more college level training, you can choose from several other subject areas and complete a Bachelor's degree at a four-year college, or you can move forward in your professional career, usually receiving better pay and benefits because of your level of education. Some colleges do not require a practicum at all, others do the field work early in the program to get you used to doing work in human services, and still others only require a fraction of the practice hours BHCC does. Because our work is structured as an experience that meets the FDC requirements and other national guidelines as well as being seen as the best possible in human services practice for students, you will have a much better set of credentials for getting a good job

when you graduate.

Why is the Practicum Important for Your Future?

The practicum is very important for your future. That is why we do everything we can at BHCC to see that you can complete the experience without a lot of undue hassle. There are several reasons your future depends on a successful practicum experience.

First, by doing the practicum, you will be able to try out your ideas under the guidance of a supervising faculty and an agency staff member. This gives you several months to see what is required for this kind of work and to have constant feedback as to what is working and what might be improved.

Second, in the practicum experience you will be attending a weekly class led by the faculty members assigned from BHCC. The faculty members will help you and other members of the practicum class understand the workings of the agency, the activity of direct-line workers at an agency, and the complex work of social service in communities. Rarely, except in this kind of practicum experience, is this kind of support available to you in the human services agency.

Third, your practicum experience will count as experience not only for FDC, but also, as a part of your formal resume when you begin to look for a job. Whether you go on to get more credit at a four-year college, or you stay on as an employee in a social service agency, the practicum serves as a work experience, just like a paid job. This is invaluable to your growth as a professional in the field.

Fourth, your practicum experience requires that you create a portfolio to document your work in the agency. This portfolio will include written journals, photographs, goal planning for those you are serving, an agency analysis, an ethics consideration, and more. This portfolio can be used when interviewing for a job or when applying for additional educational experiences or credentials.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

What is the Process and Why is it Important?

The Department of Early Childhood, Education, and Human Services requires a formal application process for all practicum activities done by students majoring in one of the areas within the department. The process is important as it allows the members of the Department to

assure that students are following their degree plans and continuing the required activities for graduation. Additionally, placements are required for all practicums and must be arranged a semester ahead of time to assure that the student's needs are met appropriately. This means that an application process must be completed the semester before enrolling in the practicum course so that placement is assured and can begin at the first of the semester, assuring enough time to finish all the hours required. Group meetings for potential practicum students are held each semester to explain the process and to take applications. See the Department Chair for more information on these meetings.

Procedures Required for a Successful Practicum

The procedures which must be followed to begin a successful practicum are fairly simple, but they must be followed carefully to assure enrollment in the course. They include several steps.

The semester before you expect to do the practicum:

(1) Beginning spring 2011, you must complete HSV 116, the pre-practicum and Field Experience course with a grade of C or better to be eligible for HSV 120-121.

(2) You must meet personally with the Department chair or the faculty supervisor for the practicum course. You must fill out a set of paperwork for the Department application for practicum enrollment. Following your receipt of a letter inviting you to an orientation about the practicum, you will be able to meet with Department chair and will fill out the form during this meeting.

(3) During the application process, you will be required to provide the college with permission to submit to a Criminal Offense Records Investigation, a CORI, done to assure that you are legally able to work in social services. This process is handled confidentially through the Department Chair and Dean's Office. A CORI pinpoints any legal issues which you might have with a conviction of a crime making it impossible to do work in social services. If you are concerned about this process, please see the Department Chair as soon as possible.

(4) Meet with the Human Services Program Coordinator to clarify your placement site preferences. If you are employed at an agency, you will need to get permission to use this site for your experience. If you are not employed, talk to the Coordinator about the sites which we use for placement and feel reassured that your particular needs will be

met. BHCC approves work and placement sites. Permission of the Department chair and the faculty supervisor is required for all placement sites. Under no circumstances is the student able to arrange his/her own placement site without Departmental permission.

(5) Because the practicum courses require permission of the Department chair before enrolling, get a signed "Permission to Enroll in Coursework" form from the Department Chair. Enrollment Services will not enroll you in the course without this permission. (See appendix for sample form).

After the practicum experience begins, you must:

(6) Attend the classes and seminars and begin to work at your agency placement within the first few weeks of the semester. [The next section of this guide will detail placement sites for you.]

(7) Complete all assignments made in the FDC class and seminars and design a portfolio of your work, showing competency in all required areas (see appendix for sample syllabus and list of course competencies).

Student Selection for Practicum Enrollment

Students must meet the following requirements to be assigned a practicum site placement.

(1) Reach a minimum of a 2.25 **cumulative** grade point average in the semester before application. (Those students with a GPA between 2.0-2.25 will be accepted on a probationary basis ONLY pending outcomes of final grades prior to fall practicum enrollment. If the student's GPA falls below 2.0, students must wait until the cumulative GPA is raised to be considered for practicum enrollment.)

(2) Complete at least 30 hours of requirements in the A.S. degree program prior to enrollment in the practicum.

(3) Complete, at a minimum, PSY 101, HSV 101, HSV 112, PSY 115, HSV 116 (beginning Spring 2011), ENG 111, and ENG 112 with a grade of "C" or better prior to enrollment.

(4) Pass all HSV and PSY courses taken with a grade of "C" or better.

(5) Follow the Department application procedures, including giving permission for a CORI, in a timely manner and no later than the end of spring semester prior to fall enrollment, and be approved for practicum by the Department's chair or practicum committee.

Acceptance to the Human Services Program does not insure a

practicum placement for a student. Anytime a student is judged by his/her instructor to be a danger to him or herself, to agency participants, to other students, or other professionals, before placement or while in a practicum, that instructor may temporarily delay or terminate the student's practicum experience, pending careful review by the appropriate team headed by the department chair. Further action, up to, and including withdrawal from the course or dismissal from the program will be determined by the review team in consultation with the Division Dean and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs. Students will have the right to appeal the decision through the college's established grievance procedures.

Student Responsibilities

Students have several responsibilities once they have made application to the practicum and been accepted for enrollment. In addition to the activities delineated above, three other duties are required. First, the student must be able to work a total of 300 hours over a two-semester period (approximately 25 weeks). This will involve about 12 hours per week in your agency site. Hours are arranged according to agency and student's schedules and have considerable flexibility.

Second, the student must be able to work in the agency as arranged in a responsible, dependable manner. The practicum experience is usually an unpaid work experience, but this fact does not mean that the student is not expected to be as dependable as a paid worker. All the rules of paid employment apply and excessive absenteeism or other unacceptable behaviors will not be tolerated. Unprofessional behavior may result in termination of the student's experience.

Third, the student must also be willing to follow all the procedures and policies set down by the agency, regardless of his/her own feelings or judgments about the practices. The agencies used for placements are professional sites and are able to set policy for the participants whom they serve. Some agencies require other procedures and forms be filed by students before placement. These might include a more thorough medical report or an additional criminal records check done by the state. These policies are routine for some agencies and should not cause the student alarm. Most importantly, students are required to follow all agency rules and to maintain a professional demeanor at all times.

Finally, there are two types of placements: those known as "student-only" sites and those serving "employee-students". For those that are working as a student in a site and are not being paid, no other work requirements beyond the practicum course expectations need to be met. The student who is also employed by the agency (for pay) must not only complete the practicum requirements but must also continue to follow the work responsibilities for his/her employer. Every effort will be made to keep conflicts between these two sets of expectations to a minimum. However, as delineated under the "Week-to-Week" section in this guide, employee-students are expected to do more than just their everyday activities required for employment in order to fulfill the practicum requirements. A completed portfolio, with assignments for FDC and the seminars, showing competency in all areas is required by all students.

Potential Problems.....Being Prepared

The best way to avoid problems is to be prepared and to take steps to prevent undue hassles from occurring. Three areas often lead to difficulties for students.

(1) Time. Students frequently feel that the multiple hours required per week is overwhelming and they have difficulty getting all their studies done. It might be useful to take a lighter course load the final three semesters when you do your practicum. It is definitely helpful to do this if you have other responsibilities such as other paid employment or family responsibilities.

(2) Energy. Students often feel very tired during the first few weeks of the practicum. This is usually because the new experience causes a lot of anxiety and makes you feel tired. Plan on getting plenty of rest and eat sensibly as you start your new assignment. You will feel much better once you get used to the new routine.

(3) Attitude. Students are usually very excited about doing the practicum experience. However, occasionally a student looks at it as unnecessary. This attitude leads only to a negative experience. If you enter the experience sure that you will not learn a thing, you probably will not learn much (nor will you pass the course). A positive, optimistic attitude is a fine habit to cultivate. For the practicum experience, it is essential. Not everything in human services is pleasant and when you are learning and practicing, this attitude will take you a long way towards a successful experience.

PLACEMENT SITES FOR THE PRACTICUM

Where are the Sites and How are They Chosen?

The placement sites which are used are chosen on the basis of three major factors. First is quality of agency activity. It is important that you experience what good human service work can be like. But, not all agencies are perfect, of course. As a matter of fact, the department is interested in realistic social service work as well as quality activity. Faculty supervisors are experienced professionals in the field, also, and realize that the world of social services operates in a larger, more complex world with political, economic, and social forces influencing it. These forces do not allow for the kinds of quality which we would like to see in every agency, every day. However, we strive to have you placed in programs which are doing the best care under the most realistic circumstances. The classes and seminars are used to talk about some of these realistic situations so that you can learn how to deal with these as you move into paid employment.

Secondly, the placement is based on geographic location. Faculty are limited in time just as you are. We try to find sites which are in a convenient location, especially close to Bunker Hill. Sometimes it is possible to use a locale close to your home. We also must have agency locations which are accessible by T or bus for the convenience of students.

Third, the placement is based on experience with the agency. We have been using some programs for a number of years as practicum sites. These programs share our values as a training program and work well with our students. Others understand Family Development and support its work. We add new programs regularly and are open to working with any quality agency in the area.

The number of placement sites needed each semester varies enormously. This is highly dependent on the fact that many students are already working in human services and will use an employee site for their practicum experience. Some semesters we use very few student-only sites; other semesters, we use only these. Employee sites must agree to meet all the same requirements for supervision of the student, so there is little difference between these two kinds of sites other than the fact that the student has already gotten paid employment prior to enrolling in the practicum.

Placements are only done in agency-based programs. The kinds of

participants in the agency can vary greatly. These may include family and children's services, adolescent services, community-focused (homelessness, health care, addiction, or other similar issues), or gerontology services.

How Do I Secure My Site Placement?

If you do not have an employee site, you will work with the Human Services Program Coordinator to find a placement prior to the meeting of the first class. This is because the agencies which we contract with often have many demands for internship placements making it a competitive process. Therefore, it is essential for the student and Coordinator to work together during spring semester to arrange sites and get placements ready before beginning fall semester.

An extensive data base of appropriate sites has been developed by the Coordinator. You will work directly with her to secure your site and will be required to have an updated, appropriate resume to take to your potential site interviews and be approved for placement in an agency before the end of June.

This process is sometimes anxiety producing for students. You must be active in your search for a site and work closely with the Coordinator to secure the site. Every effort is made to make a good match with the student, attempting to assure that a good supervisory fit will occur. Be assured that your needs will be met and the experience will be positive, but you must be actively involved in the process.

Pre-practicum Interviews

Prior to placement, the student is given the name of the agency and its director, or other contact person. The faculty supervisor has often cleared potential places prior to referring specific students with specific agencies. The student contacts this person for a personal interview to discuss the possibilities of placement in the agency. (See appendix for sample form).

The agency and its director or representative has the right to deny a student placement in the agency. This may be due to any number of reasons. Some of these may have to do with the student, but often denial for placement after initial agreement with the faculty supervisor occurs because of staffing changes at the agency or other agency upheavals (director leaving, funding difficulties, etc.). Students need not feel upset or rejected if this occurs. The procedures for finding

an alternative placement are begun immediately and the student's needs will be met quickly and appropriately.

Differences between Employee and Student-Only Sites

As mentioned above, the differences between these two kinds of sites are minimal. The college asks that employee sites be of quality, be convenient geographically, and be willing to work with the college in providing a quality experience. Agencies must fill out all the same paper work and supervise the student appropriately.

One difference does exist around student evaluation in employee sites. This involves evaluation. Due to the employer/employee relationship and the colleges hesitancy to interfere in this relationship, the student's supervisor at the worksite (also the employment supervisor) is expected to be regularly supervising the student based on employment expectations. These are often different from the expectations for beginning students. For this reason, a midterm conference report is to be filed with the faculty supervisor during the semester, but other employee supervision activities are not reported to the college. This practice aids in avoiding conflicts between the expectations of the faculty supervisor and the employer. Students who are employees must first meet all their employer's requirements, of course, but, also the practicum requirements. In contrast, those in a student-only site must meet the practicum requirements while being careful to follow all the agency's rules. In cases of poor or negligent practice in employee sites, a conference will be held with the student to discuss possible changes.

Agency Supervisory Responsibility

The agency is required to provide a supervisor for the student to help the student understand the role of the worker, the activities which occur each day, and other workings of the agency. This role is in addition to the other duties of the staff member so it is limited in its scope. In no way is the agency supervisor to become the exclusive mentor to the student. While the student is learning in the worksite with the help of the supervisor and all others at the agency, the student is solely responsible for his/her behavior and practice. A formal learning plan is developed to clarify student goals and supervisory expectations. (See appendix for a copy of this plan).

The agency supervisor is asked to be in phone or email contact

with the faculty supervisor for informal interchanges as to the progress being made by the student. Additionally, the agency supervisor is asked to contact the faculty supervisor if the student has been absent for more than several days, has been absent for any period of time without making contact to the agency, or is performing in the agency and classroom in any way that is deemed inappropriate.

The agency supervisor is required to participate in a midterm conference with the student. Information from this conference is passed on to the faculty supervisor. This report is then used by the faculty supervisor to develop plans with the student for the final practicum experience with specifics such as to the student's strengths in the agency, areas of concern which need more practice, and specific next steps for the student.

GETTING STARTED IN PRACTICUM I (HSV 120)

Work Schedules and Supervisory Consent

At the pre-practicum interview it will determine if the placement is acceptable both to the student and the agency director. At this time, the student will have the agency director or a representative complete the "Student Practicum Work Schedule and Work Supervisor" Form. (See appendix for a sample form). This sets the specific hours which the student will be expected to work and the name of the person who will be supervising the student.

It is up to the student and the agency staff to agree to a schedule which will allow the student the maximum work experience over the two semester practicum experience (approximately 25 weeks). Flexibility of hours can be built into the schedule and may have to be changed due to changes in the student's or agency's needs. However, to assure continuity of care, the schedule needs to be set down in writing and agreed to by both parties and then kept with a minimum number of changes over the two practicum periods. Students should complete about 12 hours per week so as to complete the 300 hours over two semesters as required. Hours used for planning and special training events planned by the agency in which the student might be allowed to participate can be counted as a part of the student's scheduled hours. Working hours go beyond just meeting with client participants in the agency. Both of these activities--planning and training-- are seen as an appropriate use of work time and are a part of the student's commitment to the agency's

overall workings.

Students are to keep their work hours on the "Student Practicum Log Form" which is turned in during each seminar along with journal entries for the biweekly period. (See appendix for these sample forms). These hours are kept by the student on an honor system. Students are expected to be honest about their work hours and do not need supervisory verification for their work time. If evidence develops which indicates that a student is unable to handle this logging with integrity, the faculty supervisor, with aid from the placement site, will develop an alternative method for the student's logging.

Work Expectations

During the work experiences in the practicum, the student is considered to be an entry level employee and is to participate in the routines which are set down naturally by the agency in the service of client participants in that agency. Special changes are not required of the agency to accommodate the college or the student.

Participation in the practicum experience is seen as a growing process over the three semesters. The student will gain skill and knowledge in several kinds of activities. These will include observing conferences with participants; helping with record keeping; participating in planning and implementing goals for participants; writing a short and long term plans; and working directly to access resources for the participants and/or their families.

General competencies in working with client participants are provided as a guideline only (see appendix for these standards) and are not to be considered the "be all and end all" of the experience. The student should progress in knowledge, training and skill development with a positive attitude and an understanding of the human services as a future career throughout the practicum experiences. Because students differ greatly in their prior experiences, practicum experiences will be developed around individual student needs and interests rather than having all students do the same "activity" each week in all agencies.

Student Feelings

Students often have a mix of feelings during the practicum experience. The primary feelings are three.

The first of these is excitement. This is due to the feeling that you have finally arrived at the end point. You actually get to try out

the ideas you have been talking about so long in class. And you get to work with real people and solve real problems. That is exciting.

The second feeling is fear. So you now get to work with real problems. Maybe you won't do it right. Maybe the people won't like you. Maybe you won't like them. Lots of things can go wrong and you probably won't know how to do anything. What if the agency staff doesn't pay attention to you? All these fears, any many others, are based primarily on irrational thinking. Most of these never really occur. The staff is interested in having you help them with the serving of clients in their agencies. And, while the staff will be very busy, they will welcome you as they would any other staff person in the agency. So, while fear is normal to feel, don't allow yourself to get too anxious.

The third feeling is ambivalence. You will be excited and fearful at the same time. And, you will be unsure as to your role in the agency. The student role is a strange place to be in human services. You are a worker, but you are not really one yet. You know a lot from your classes, sometimes more than the staff supervising you, but you are not with any authority to act decisively yet. This causes feeling of uncertainty. What is your role and how do you play it out? Remember, your role is of an entry level employee. You are starting at the agency just as if it were a job. You have three primary duties: figure out how the agency works with its client participants and follow their lead; fit into the routines and model after the staff as they work with the participants; and reflect on your skills and feelings and ask questions so that you can grow and develop in your role as a human services worker.

Fitting in with Your Agency and Service Team

Every agency is a little different in its routines and procedures in caring for its client participants. One of your first duties is to understand the policies of the program. During your initial week at the agency, get a copy of the parent and/or employee handbooks which explains to clients the expectations for services at the agency. Read this thoroughly so that you know what is expected.

Learn the work schedule early in your experience. Don't just focus on what happens when you are there, but figure out how the whole day goes, so that you can understand the concept of quality service and how it is carried out.

Next, talk to your supervisor every week. Ask lots of questions and get as much information about the agency, its activities and plans, and the persons being served as you possibly can. This will help you feel a part of the program and a member of the team. It will help the program see you as interested and involved. Finally, take the initiative to participate fully.

Family Development Program (FDC) and Other Seminar Activity

The class will follow the FDC curriculum and other seminar activities over the two semesters. This will require several hours each week for participation in the required training.

The FDC curriculum requires students to complete "Activities to Extend Learning" (AEL) for each of the ten chapters in the curriculum. This means 30 of these activities will be completed. Most of these will be done as a choice by the student from those possible in the text.

The FDC curriculum also requires the completion of one skills practice for each of the ten chapters. Students will pick an appropriate practice and actively involve themselves in "doing" the assignment as required.

Finally, the FDC curriculum requires the completion of a Participant Development Plan done with one client participant over a period of time. These plans set goals with the participant and help the student experience the ways in which human service workers help participants identify strengths and find appropriate resources to move toward greater self-reliance.

The AELs, the skills practices, and the participant development plans are written, reflected upon, and reviewed by the professors in the course. Finally, these are readied for the portfolio and become a part of the portfolio submitted for final review and approval for passage of the course.

In addition to the FDC work done in the practicum, the class also has a series of seminars meeting regularly to discuss the activities which have been going on in the agency and to further your understanding of selected topics of interest. In addition to seminar assignments, students will share the workings of their agencies so that you can get a broad idea of what is happening in many different sites.

The seminar discussion is a confidential, professional set of activities. We will talk about agency activity and sometimes personnel activities. These are topics, along with others, which help you to

understand most how human services works and what might be going on in the agency. We will do a lot of reflection on your skill in dealing with the demands of the practicum and how you are feeling about the job and yourself. Because often these feelings and information are private, as professionals we will be responsible for keeping the information discussed in the classes and seminar confidential.

WEEK-TO-WEEK WORK AT THE AGENCY

The Emergent Curriculum and Individual Needs

Because the programs in which you are practicing are so very different, and because student skills and interest are highly varied at the end of the degree program, the curriculum in the practicum experience is emergent in nature. This means that the practicum does not have a set week-by-week expectation to be fulfilled, but this is set down as we go, based on individual student needs and agency workings. For example, one student is just beginning to have a first-time experience with family and children in need of service. Another, who is an employee in homeless shelters working at an employee site, has had many experiences in finding resources for participants and understands them more thoroughly. The demands of the practicum would be structured differently for each of these students. These expectations are set down in the FDC choices and in the seminar sessions as well as during individual conferences with students. A syllabus is developed and is given to the agency supervisor so that he/she might work directly with the student on assignments. (See appendix for a sample student syllabus). Students work on showing competency in several areas and documenting this competence through a series of portfolio items collected and turned in at the end of the practicum experience.

Activities in the Agency

During your weeks in the agency, you will be doing a number of activities with the client participants. The first of these might involve routines, those activities done daily to ready the office for working with participants. You can fit into these immediately. Figure out who does what and when and begin to take part.

Other activities will involve activities in planning, implementing and evaluating service provisions for client participants. After the first few weeks of observing and working with more routine activity, you

should begin to participate in the planning and implementation of the services for client participants. First, see if you can be a part of the activity planning process with the service team. Second, begin to volunteer to do some of the work, yourself. By the end of the first semester, you should be participating in several of these a week. The planning can be done as a team, but you should feel comfortable in understanding what is being done, why, and how it will be evaluated.

Additionally, you will be given assignments asking you to reflect on the many experiences you are having in your agency. These assignments are varied and require personal reflection about your interactions and feelings about working in the agency and with the clients. These reflectives cannot be done as "academic" thinking assignments only, but require personal reflection about your feelings and reactions to human services work.

Mid Practicum Evaluations

As outlined above, the faculty and agency supervisor provide feedback to the student at the end of the first semester to discuss plans for plans during the final practicum experience. (This is in addition to the ongoing feedback given by the professors throughout the semesters.) These are informal discussions and should not be intimidating to the student. The students are asked to contribute by reflecting on their strengths in the agency, the areas in which they feel comfortable, and the places where they wish to accomplish more. An evaluative summary is written by the agency and the faculty supervisor along with a midterm checklist of student skills. (See appendix for sample forms).

FINAL PRACTICUM EXPECTATIONS (HSV 121)

Placement Continuations....Why the Same Place?

Placements are continued in the following semester at the same agency site, if at all possible. This is useful for two reasons. First, it takes a student several weeks to get oriented to the placement site and moving to a new one will only require that this adjustment be done all over again. The loss of time would take away from other more important learning opportunities.

Secondly, when a student stays in a placement for more than one semester, it allows the student to delve more deeply into the workings

of the agency and to understand the service delivery and staff in greater depth. This is most beneficial to the student in moving towards paid employment.

Sometimes students desire to work in a different group of client participants within the same agency. If this is desired by the student, acceptable to the agency, and approved by the faculty supervisor, the change may begin after the hours are completed for the first practicum (150 hours).

Field Based Competencies

During the final semester the competencies used in the beginning of the practicum experiences will be expanded to include additional skills and experiences. (See appendix for competencies). The competencies and their applications are included in the appendix. They include skills in participant empowerment and assessment; communication, collaboration, and facilitation of services; service networking, advocacy, and support services; crisis intervention and documentation and professionalism and organizational involvement with "best practices." The student is not expected to be thoroughly competent in all areas, but to have a beginning working knowledge and skill development in a majority of these areas. Those persons with more initial experience and in an employee site practicum experience will be expected to have more skill development in more areas than those who are beginners.

Agency Roles

A second area of exploration will be the area of agency function and roles used in working in an agency. Using a number of materials provided by the faculty in the seminar, the student will analyze the agency. Some of these will include supervision and its use; ethics, integrative process in human services, and reporting and documentation of work done. Additionally, the student will reflect on his/her own areas of interest in service duties and analyze the roles in which there is expertise already. Specific direct service roles to be examined.

Reflections on Yourself as a Human Service Worker

A third area of development throughout the practicum involves the student's reflections on oneself as a human service worker. The entire practicum experience will be one of examination and discussion to

determine what is being learned by the student, what others know about the student's skills, and what is still to be discovered.

Final Evaluations and Conferences

A final evaluation will be held with the faculty supervisors to assess the learning experience of each individual student. The faculty members and the student will both do evaluations and discuss the learning and growth of the student throughout both practicum experiences. (See appendix for sample forms). The completed portfolio, evidencing competency in all areas, will be due at this time.

Student Evaluation of Field Work Experiences

During the final seminar meeting and conference time, the student will be asked to complete a critique of the practicum experience, for the department and the college's Office of Academic Affairs. These are used to assure that the experience is meeting the needs of the students and the program.

NEXT STEPS

Graduation

Graduation should follow the semester of or very shortly after the completion of the practicum experience. Sometimes students must complete a final semester of work following the practicum experiences, but there is rarely a reason for doing more than one semester if the practicum is taken as prescribed. Applications for graduation are done through the Enrollment Services and Academic Records Offices in the Department of Student Affairs. Graduation applications are done in February for students in the spring or in October for those graduating in December.

Transcripts and Transfer Applications

Students will need official transcripts from the Registrar's office at the end of their degree. This is used for transfer and for job application. A nominal fee and short form is filed for the transcript. The process takes a few days so plan ahead.

Transcripts are needed for those who wish to transfer credit to another four-year college for further academic work. Students may discuss transfer with their faculty supervisor or other members of the department or college, particularly the Department of Career Services.

Several colleges, some public and several private colleges in the area specializing in social services, have been very interested in working with our students in transfer. After discussing your interests with your faculty supervisor, make an appointment at one or two colleges and discuss the process with the transfer officer at these universities. The faculty supervisor is available to help you with this process. Just ask for help.

Resumes and Work

Whether you are transferring or not, a good, impressive resume will help you in the future to secure employment. The Department of Career Services helps students to do professional resumes. All students should take advantage of this service. This is especially useful to those who are looking for work in the field after completing practicum assignments. The practicum experience and all other work experience, even that which did not have to do with human services, should be included on the resume. A completed resume is required for each portfolio.

Jobs in human services are plentiful. Jobs are often posted on the department bulletin board, the career services bulletin board, or in the Sunday paper of the local news. The other good source of job availability is the agency in which you do your practicum. Students are often hired for full-time jobs by their practicum agencies. Ask the director and your agency supervisor for job possibilities or for contacts at other agencies.

Professional Associations

During the final practicum, discussion will also center on professionalism in the field and your involvement in this set of activities. The Boston area has a very active and involved social service community providing many experiences in service delivery and advocacy. Working with professional organizations focused on specific areas of interest is a good way to get started in this area.

Other Areas of Work to be Explored

Sometimes a student comes to the end of the practicum and feels a need to explore another area of work. The areas involved in human services are rich with alternatives beyond the work you have done in your practicums. While many persons choose to work in only one area in

a variety of settings, others may wish to move on to dealing with areas of human services or social work in a broad number of settings, meeting many human needs. As you pursue employment and/or further education, remember there are a great many choices as you pursue your career goals in human services.

PART TWO:

OF PARTICULAR

INTEREST TO

AGENCY SUPERVISORS

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR PRACTICUM SITES

Human Services is the study of the profession of helping those in need of social services to meet a wide variety of human needs. The Human Services Program at Bunker Hill Community College is designed as a comprehensive career program for students interested in doing direct service work in human services agencies and programs .

Graduates are trained as assistance and paraprofessional in careers that direct the delivery of services to people. Many move on to roles in senior level positions in human service agencies. Careers in social welfare, mental health, community development, public administration, youth work, work with elders, family counseling, homemaking, or recreation in such institutions as community centers, neighborhood houses, recreational centers, hospitals, or social agency rehabilitation units are available.

The Student Guide to the Practicum Experience

Part One of this guide provides detailed information for students concerning their practicum experience. The supervisor at the agency site would be helped by reading over the student portion of this guide so as to become familiar with the student's responsibilities and department's expectations. In the interest of time, these portions will not be repeated here.

Making Plans to be a Practicum Site

Agencies often become practicum sites for a number of reasons. There are three main reasons for this interest. First is a need to contribute to the profession by helping to mentor new professionals in the field. A number of agencies have veteran staff who are highly skilled workers who add greatly to the knowledge base of our new staff.

A second reason for becoming a practicum site is the connection to the college and its program. Several of our placement sites have a long history with the college and the department. These programs feel a need to participate collaboratively in the ongoing work of the department. The college benefits, of course, through this collaborative effort, and the agency does both through exposure to faculty support and by participating in courses provided through vouchers.

A third reason is more closely connected to agency needs. An extra person in the agency is always a help. A trained person, one with

a lot of educational background in human service, is especially helpful. The agencies who have been placement sites find our students well trained and enthusiastic, plus well supervised. The combination of these traits provides a fine, extra (and very cost efficient!!) "staff member" to your agency for several months each year.

Becoming a practicum site is very easy. After initial contact to the department, a set of information is sent to you for your review. This material contains information about the program and about the practicum. Included in this is a written agreement which must be signed and returned to the department chair.

The written agreement delineates the expectations and duties of the college and the agency site and staff and is completed prior to student placement.

Program site responsibilities include statements regarding hours of availability and the number of student placements possible, a clarifying statement regarding students as unpaid workers (expect in employment sites), an understanding that students are not used as regular staff members, and a plan for supervision by a supervisor at the practicum site.

College responsibilities include clarification of faculty supervision, student qualifications for enrollment, clarification of procedures for student removal in case of serious problems in the student's performance of duties, and approval for carrying out CORI or other agency policies and procedures. (See appendix for sample agreement form).

GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH YOUR PRACTICUM STUDENT

Students for Practicum

The students in the program must meet a number of requirements before being accepted for the practicum experience. These are delineated in the student guide (part one) and will not be repeated here. However, you can expect your student to be in the final stages of the program and well developed in theory and practical knowledge of human services. Students differ considerably in knowledge, skill development, and maturity. Some have had considerable experience in the field. Other have had little. The faculty supervisor will be helpful in giving you further information about each of the students in your site.

Acceptance of Student for Placement

As outlined in the student guide, the student receives the practicum site assignment early in the process, prior to fall semester. During the pre-placement interview, the director, or the agency's representative, talks with the student about his/her interest in the field, in the practicum, and availability. If the interview goes well and the agency director and the student are both satisfied that the match is an appropriate one, the student will have the director sign the consent for supervision form and set up working hours with a time to begin.

In the unlikely event that there is a problem during the interview, the agency director and/or the student will get in contact with the faculty supervisor to either solve the problem or deny the placement and begin the placement process over for the student.

Once the placement has been set up and the student has begun work, the supervisor at the agency will be asked to work with the student to develop a student learning plan. This plan sets goals for the student and outlines the supervisory process for the semesters ahead. (See appendix for a sample of learning plan materials).

Student Schedules and Length of Practicum

The student and agency staff agree to a schedule which will allow the student the maximum work experience over the semester (approximately 13 weeks). Flexibility of hours can be built in to the schedule, but consistent hours need to be kept for the best practice with the clients served. Students should complete, at a minimum, 12 hours per week so as to be able to do a set of 150 hours per each semester. All hours must be completed before the end of the semester. Hours used for staff planning or other training activities can be counted as a part of the student's work time.

The practicum assignment lasts for two semesters for most students. A total of 300 hours is required. This would mean that a student coming to your program in mid September would continue until approximately early May (about 9 months due to several week of holiday break time in December and January). The student is instructed to advise the agency at least two weeks before the practicum will be completed so that the agency is prepared for the loss of the student in the agency.

ACTIVITY IN THE AGENCY

Working in the Agency

The student section of this guide details, in general, the student's responsibilities in the agency and will not be repeated here. The student is considered an entry level employee and is to be treated as such. Anything that an entry level employee would be asked to do should be a part of the student's activities.

Because human services work is highly varied, duties will be different for each student. Students are expected to be used as members of the staff, not just as clerical staff or runners for the agency. A list of program competencies is included in the appendix as well as field-based competencies and their application in the practicum. The faculty supervisor is applying these competencies to individual students and developing curriculum for students through the use of the Family Development curriculum and seminar assignments applying theory in human services to practice.

Students are expected to begin the practicum doing observation of the work and routines. After the first couple of weeks of observing, the student is to then begin to participate, first in more routine activities and then in actual program planning and implementation. The student should end the practicum having participated and/or supervised all the areas in the agency work. If you have a regular time in which you do planning and discussion of agency activities, invite your student to participate early on so that he/she might begin to have assigned responsibilities for carrying out some of the assignments.

Helping Students Feel Comfortable

The student guide details several of the feelings which students have during the practicum experience. The main feelings involve excitement, fear, and ambivalence about role in the agency. It would be helpful for you to read this section of the guide.

The primary role of the agency is to help the student feel a part of the work team as early as possible. This can happen if the student is encouraged, allowed, and actually given assignments in the agency. The students are encouraged to take the initiative to ask about doing things which must be done. Human Service work is often a fast and furious ball of energy. Something always needs to be done. Early on, point the student in the direction of what can be done and be pleased that someone

will help you out.

A second role of the agency is to answer the student's questions. Just like the client participants you serve, the student has a lot of questions about why things are done the way they are done. Answer them thoughtfully and with ease. The student is not asking questions to be critical of the agency, but to understand how best practice occurs.

Finally, don't be intimidated. The student is often exuberant in his/her new role. Just like a young child, just learning to do an new skill, the student tries very hard to please. Praise, recognition of work, and other positive feedback is very, very important. Sure, we realize that you are busy, but you wouldn't be too busy to give this care to the agency's clientele; the staff in the agency need it, too.

General Supervisory Responsibilities

Skill level and maturity of students differ greatly. Therefore, the agency staff and faculty supervisor will need to collaborate regularly to develop the practicum experience. The faculty supervisor is meeting with students regularly and giving them assignments. Question the student about these assignments. Finally, contact the faculty supervisor if you have any questions, particularly if a student's behavior is unclear.

A student is expected to behave just as any other employee would act while at the agency. Students are instructed to keep their own log sheet of time spent at the agency and do not need supervisory verification for this logging. However, if the student is not acting dependably in arriving or departing, is not contacting you concerning absenteeism, or is excessively missing agreed upon hours, doing other activities which are disruptive or inappropriate, please contact the faculty supervisor. This is necessary for adequate supervision and will be greatly appreciated.

Restrictions for Students

There are no actual legal restrictions for students. However, supervision is needed to assure competent work. This means that service must be given at all times under the direct supervision of another qualified staff member for all those students who are participating as students only, not "employee" placed students.

COORDINATING FACULTY AND AGENCY SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

Bunker Hill Faculty in Seminars and Conferences

As outlined earlier, the faculty supervisor meets with students regularly in seminars and after family development curriculum material are completed for conferences about assignments and skills practices. The student is communicating also through biweekly journaling about their experience.

Agency Supervisor in Weekly Meeting to Discuss Work, Include in Planning, and Assigning Activities

Once you have gotten to know your student in the first weeks, you will need to begin to encourage the student to actually participate in agency work, planning, and implementation. It is a good idea to include the student in any planning meetings which occur and to assign particular activities for the student to carry out.

There are three areas which can be a focus for every student. The first of these is taking part in routines. The daily activities involving the staff makes a good place for the student to begin participating in the agency. Give the student a copy of the staff, client or other handbooks used by the agency so that they might understand some of the policies surrounding these and other activities. Suggest certain kinds of activities which they might need to do to help the work team.

The second area of focus is the planning of services. Students often do not understand how services are carried out with the client participants actually get planned and then implemented. Have the student participate in the planning activities of the agency. Have him/her take an idea and develop at least one part for the client participant. Have him/her actually plan service implementation and carry it out. All of these steps can be done over the course of several months. By the beginning of the second practicum, the student should be doing activities regularly in the agency.

A third area which is helpful to students is a set time to meet with the student, usually weekly, to discuss any questions which he/she might have about the agency and its activities. This can be done informally and need not be very long. The student needs the feedback and a sense that his/her contribution in the agency is helpful. Because the students are usually beginners to the field, they often do not feel

that they can judge if they are doing well. Tell them and help them critique their work.

EVALUATING THE STUDENT

Beginning Activities

Students are evaluated in the practicum on a continuum of development beginning from their level of skill on to the end of the practicum time. For those who are just beginning their work with human service agencies, the standard starts with observing agency activities and beginning to work with routines. For those who are more skilled, or even employed at the practicum site, the standard for activity is more difficult. While the supervisor at the agency does not do a formal evaluation, the first impressions are important to the faculty supervisor and these should be conveyed either by phone.

Midterm Conferences and Plans for Practicum II

Once the student has been in the site for several weeks and has begun to do both routine and classroom activities, you should begin to feel comfortable with the level of skill the student has. This observation and supervision of the student will lead to a more formal dialogue with the student to complete the required learning plan (see appendix for sample form). Once the plan is completed and student goals are clear, supervision can take place regularly around these expectations.

This set of activities will lead to a midterm conference at the end of the first practicum. (See appendix for sample of midterm conference report). During the midterm conference, you will be asked to sit with the student and any other person from the agency which you would like to involve, to informally discuss with the student's his/her progress. The topics for the conference will include a view of the strengths which the student came with, the areas where more work is needed, and a plan for the second practicum's work. The faculty supervisor will be doing a short feedback form once your information is received. During this time, the faculty member will be meeting with the student, also, to set goals for the final semester.

In addition to these two formal activities, the learning plan and the midterm conference, the supervisor will be contacted regularly by the Human Services Coordinator to discuss student work and activity. If

there are concerns about a student's performance, please contact the Human Services Coordinator to discuss these as soon as possible.

Faculty Supervisory Visits

The faculty member keeps a very close connection to students in practicum sites. While faculty do not do routine visits to agencies, supervisors are often intimidated by the faculty involvement in their agency. This is completely unnecessary. The faculty members are professional and have had experience with the ups and downs of human service work. They realize that the work does not always go as planned. Most have done direct line work themselves. The primary idea to understand the agency well to help the student see the realities of human service work and to assess how the student (and the agency staff) cope with life in social services, not that it is all perfect. It is most important for our students to understand the realistic issues with which you must cope daily so that they learn to model and do this well.

Final Evaluations

The student is evaluated at the end of each practicum and given a grade of either "P" (pass) or "F" (fail). This grade is not dependent on a complete set of activity which everyone must do, but is considered on an individual growth basis from the beginning of the practicum. The supervising teacher is not required to do anything to finally evaluate the student. The ongoing information which you provide to the faculty supervisor and the midterm conference materials serve as a basis of your views. For this reason it is important that you keep in touch with the faculty member and report any concerns you have immediately. Particularly if the student is not performing appropriately, call the faculty member as soon as possible. Students are encouraged to ask supervisors to write references for future job searches. These are not required, but are helpful if the agency supervisor wishes to aid the student.

Employee Practicum Evaluations--Why Different Expectation?

Those students who are in employee-sites are already under a set of standards developed for employment by their employer. Because of this, the student is to perform beyond these normal expectations and do more than the usual everyday work. All students complete a portfolio of their experiences (see student syllabus in appendix). A plan for

portfolio development is determined with the faculty supervisor and includes a family development plan of a client in the agency, a agency analysis, or professional activities highlighting an area of study which the student wishes to explore, and other assignments detailed earlier in this guide. The evaluative procedures for employee-students remains the same as others with this additional expectation added.

BHCC'S APPRECIATION OF AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Course Vouchers

Because we value your activity with the college, as a way of showing our appreciation to the agency, the college will provide one course voucher for each student that the agency supervises in the practicum experience. This voucher entitles the agency to send one person to enroll in any course offered at BHCC. The voucher covers all costs associated with one, three (3) credit course.

The course vouchers are submitted to the administrative offices at BHCC for approval during the early part of the summer for those programs which have served as placement sites during the last academic year. The vouchers are mailed to the agency, usually by late June, and are valid for any courses offered during the fall and spring semester of the next academic year. Vouchers are not replaceable and cannot be reissued if lost. Instructions for use accompany the mailing. Questions about the vouchers can be directed to the department chair.

Continuing Activity as a Practicum Site

The agency is welcome to continue its activity as a practicum site after the initial supervision is complete. The college has varying needs for practicum sites, so the continuation of a agency role depends completely on the number of students that we have needing sites. Sometimes we need many sites; other semesters, particularly if we have a number of employee students, we need only a few. The faculty supervisor will be in touch with you shortly before the semester begins to arrange for placements if these are needed.

The department is grateful to the agencies in the area for their help in training students. It is not possible to give students a realistic view of quality service without this connection and the agencies of the area are most appreciated.

APPENDIX

- A. Department Application for Practicum Enrollment
- B. Permission to Enroll Form for Enrollment Services
- C. Practicum Placement Site Assignment
- D. Work Schedules and Supervisory Consent Form
- E. Reflective Assignments
- F. Student Learning Plan
- G. Logging Hours Form
- H. Human Services Program Competencies
- I. Midterm Conference Form & Midterm Evaluation Form
- J. Field Based Course Competencies
- K. Final Evaluation Form
- L. Student Evaluation of Field Work Form
- M. Agency Agreement as Practicum Site
- N. Sample Student Syllabus
- O. Policy and Procedures for Practicum/Reapplication Procedures

[NOTE: THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN MATERIALS AND FORMS WHICH ARE USED WITH STUDENTS IN THE PRACTICUM AND SEMINAR CLASSES. THESE FORMS ARE PROVIDED HERE "FOR YOUR INFORMATION ONLY." THESE ARE NOT TO BE FILLED OUT OR TURNED IN FOR USE BY STUDENTS, SUPERVISORS, OR FACULTY. IF YOU DESIRE HELP IN COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS OR OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES DIRECTED BY THESE FORMS, CONTACT THE FACULTY SUPERVISOR FOR ASSISTANCE.]