Practicum Prep & Questions: Information for BSW/MSW students

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

You may want to do some research about the agency prior to the interview. Most agencies have a web page where you can learn about the agency’s mission and program(s). Talk with other students and community professionals to learn about their perception of the agency. You should also prepare a resume to take with you to the interview. Have a friend and/or instructor look it over for you. Spend some time clarifying your career goals. This will enable you to answer the interviewer’s question: what would you like to be doing five years from now? Talk with another student who has completed or is in the process of completing their practicum. Find out from the student’s perspective the strengths and challenges of their field experience. What did they like about field what they didn’t like. Meet with the field coordinator to discuss your educational and career goals. Do not set up an interview until after you have met with the field coordinator. Remember to “dress for success.”

WHAT TO ASK THE FIELD INSTRUCTOR

- Find out about the philosophy of the agency:
- Field instructor’s years of experience as a field instructor; Professional qualification of field instructor.
- The role of social work in the agency.
- The role of students in the agency. Ask: “What do you consider to be ideal experiences for students in this setting?”
- “How do you orient new students?”
- “How do you supervise students?” (What is field instructor’s style of supervision?)
- “Tell me about projects other student have done at this agency. How do you evaluate students? What kinds of results do you look for a student to produce?”

SOME NUTS AND BOLTS TYPE OF QUESTIONS

- What resources are available to students: number of professional staff; what other professional disciplines are there in the agency; availability of support staff; workload of professional social workers; workload of field instructor etc.
- Are there any training resources at the agency: staff trainings; audio/video equipment, library facilities; one-way mirror etc.
- Student office space; telephone/computer; parking.
- Are students reimbursed for mileage to cover community-based services provided by student? Any other anticipated expenses?
- Will a student have to undergo any special pre-practicum screening? For example background check, physical screening, fingerprint screening, etc.
- Hours of service. Is the field instructor familiar with the university’s academic calendar? Does the winter break pose a challenge for the agency? How will the student’s workload be covered during the winter break, which is typically four weeks long?
Do you need flexible field hours? Can the field instructor accommodate your needs and still provide appropriate supervision?

What are the safety issues associated with the placement? Does the agency provide crisis intervention training?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR A FIELD PLACEMENT

1. Are there any special requirements you need to fulfill for the agency, and are there any costs related to those requirements? (i.e. finger printing, medical screening, background check, etc.)
2. What is the agency's scope of service?
3. What is the environment like at your agency? Is there space available for students? (Desk, chairs, etc.)
4. Is there support staff? What is appropriate for an student to ask the support staff to do?
5. How would you describe your supervisory style?
6. What is a typical day at your agency?
7. What service(s) does your agency provide?
8. What exposure do you have to work with individuals, families, groups, community, etc?
9. Does your agency hire BSW students?
10. Does your agency provide a paid practicum?

WHAT QUESTIONS TO EXPECT FROM THE FIELD INSTRUCTOR

- May I see your resume/student profile?
- Why are you interested in this practicum?
- What do you believe qualifies you for this practicum?
- What do you believe you will contribute to this agency?
- Tell me about any social work-related volunteer or employment experience you may have.
- Describe your educational goals.
- What would you like to be doing five years from now?
- What do you feel are your greatest strengths and challenges?
- What type of people appeal most/least to you as potential clients?
- Do you have any special needs, what type of accommodation? (ADA)