TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE COMPETENCY-BASED FIELD LEARNING CONTRACTS

Students and Field Instructors

As you are aware, the recently-revised Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), resulted in new field placement Learning Contracts and Evaluation Forms.

The new forms list both the required Program Competency and the Practice Behavior which correlates to successful achievement of the competency. The only information required of the student, with input from the field placement site task supervisor and/or field instructor, are the actual tasks and activities available within the field placement site that the student will complete and/or participate in to demonstrate the practice behavior.

Hence, the “Placement Specific Learning Activities and Assignments”, should be concise, action statements, which describe observable behaviors and activities of the student. It is these same observable tasks, behaviors and activities that serve as the basis for the evaluation ratings by the Field Instructor at mid-term and completion of the placement.

Basic Guidelines:

1) Learning Contract information must be typed, not handwritten. Placement Team’s signatures are the only items which may be handwritten

2) Every Practice Behavior must have at least one Placement Learning Activity or Assignment, but you may use the same activity/task for more than one Practice Behavior, if it is broad enough to cover additional practice behaviors.

3) Before you begin writing your Learning Contract, think back to what you know about the field site as far as services provided, the day to day activities that you will be doing in placement, etc. Make a list of the activities, starting from the first few days of orientation and getting to know the agency/program, to later in the placement when you will be attending meetings, meeting clients, shadowing other workers, interviewing the agency director, learning about all of the internal policies for students and staff, as well as the ones which pertain to service delivery, etc. These are all tasks/activities that will apply to the practice behaviors in the learning contract.

4) As you review the practice behaviors, ask the question, “What does this look like? For example, in the last section of the learning contract, under EP 2.1.10a.2a “Use the following elements of positive helping relationships to engage clients: Empathy”. What does “empathy” look like, i.e. how would your field instructor know you were expressing empathy toward your client, if s/he were observing you?”

5) Remember as you write your learning contract that it is a “working document”, and that tasks can be added or removed if circumstances and opportunities in the placement site change. However, each practice behavior still must have a minimum of one activity/task listed, there can be no blank boxes.

The next two pages contain some examples of appropriate and not appropriate Learning Activities and Assignments

<u>MSW Generalist Learning Contract (same guidelines apply to the MSW Advanced Learning Contracts</u>

Practice Behaviors (formerly known as Learning Tasks)	Placement Specific Learning Activities and Assignments
1. Advocate for client access to the services of social work; **Q. What does this look like in this site? What does one need to know in order to advocate for access to services?** **Q. Is it observable? What "evidence" is there that I know how to do this?**	**A. Will review and update existing Resource Directory, or will develop Resource Directory** **Or will review client/records to determine status of referrals made, conduct follow-up calls to client to determine if service rec'd, etc.** **Or will answer Information and Referral Line for _____ hours and track referrals to other programs.** **Not** **Will advocate for client's access to services-(restating the practice behavior does not provide an observable behavior which can be evaluated) OR simply putting the word "Yes" in this block as a response to the practice behavior**
2. Practice personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual professional development	**Hints-Journals, Reflective Learning Assignments, supervision sessions, etc.**
3. Attend to professional roles and boundaries	**Hint-Code of Ethics, dual relationships……**
4. Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication	**Hint: Dress code, email rules, social networking site rules,**
5. Engage in career-long learning	**Hint: research on topics pertinent to placement, attend continuing education events, agency trainings, etc.**
6. Use supervision and consultation.	**Hint: How do you prepare for a supervision session, what is your supervisory meeting schedule, etc.**

Some areas which present challenges to students and field instructors alike

EP 2.1.6 Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.

Practice Behaviors	Placement Specific Learning Activities and Assignments
1. Use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry;	**Hint: Think back to your SOWK513 class**
2. Evaluate (determine the value of) research studies; and	**Hint: Are there any articles on Ebscohost about programs or clients like the ones at your field site? If not, why not?**

3. Apply research evidence to practice situations.	**Why does the agency/program or facility provide the types of services they do, in the specific ways that they do? What evidence is the intervention, program, etc. based upon**

d) Evaluation

Practice Behaviors	Placement Specific Learning Activities and Assignments
1. Describe and analyze an agency's efforts to evaluate services and programs;	**Hint: How does agency know that its programs are working, or not? What kind of reports do they have to send to funders?** **NOT** **Field Site does not do any sort of research (if agency receives funding from local, state, federal or private entities, they have to provide some sort of data or outcome reports.**
2. Monitor client progress throughout intervention; and	**Hint: How does agency "follow" or document client progress?** **Reviewing case notes, process recordings, etc. will give you this information**
3. Evaluate the outcome of interventions in practice.	**Hint: How does agency know when client can be released from program, or when they have met treatment goals? Reviewing this information in a file or report will give you the answer as to whether or not the intervention worked.**

<u>Evaluation</u>

Note: Unlike the prior Field Evaluation Process, there are two versions of the Field Evaluation Instrument, a Student Version and Field Instructor Version, and for BSW Students, a third, Field Liaison, Version. All three versions of the Evaluation Forms must be completed, signed by the appropriate party or parties, and the originals submitted to the Faculty Field Liaison by the scheduled deadline.

- Review the evaluation form rating criteria to be aware of what a rating of 1 or 2 means, vs. 3 or above. Be honest in your ratings, and base it upon what you have observed/experienced in the placement (students) or in the student as s/he has moved through the placement activities (Task Supervisor or Field Instructor)

- It is ok for students to not be at a 3-5 rating at mid-term, as the field placement may be the first experience or opportunity they have had to apply the information they have acquired in the classroom.

- Please note that there is not an option to rate a practice behavior as "N/O (No Opportunity to Observe), or "N/A" (Not Applicable) as the expectation is that all of the basic and advanced competencies and related practice behaviors are available at the primary field site. If a student has not had the opportunity to conduct a specific activity or task related to the practice behavior, then the rating must be a "1" or a "2", and the student and field instructor must discuss and develop a time line and plan of action to rectify this issue prior to the completion of the final field evaluation.