

## Human Services Work-Based Learning Handbook

Work-Based Learning may take place in a wide variety of agencies and settings. The Human Services Program at Pitt Community College seeks to identify agencies whose missions and goals are consistent with the educational mission of the program and the College. Agencies may be selected because of the types of services they provide, the populations they serve, their ability to provide a meaningful work experience in human services, and a commitment to collaborating with the faculty coordinators in the attainment of student educational goals.

### I. Specific Responsibilities

- A. Students are required to attend a weekly seminar to help integrate classroom knowledge with their agency experiences through interaction and discussion with peers and faculty.
- B. Seminar Attendance Policy – Students are permitted 3 classes or 3 hours of missed class time. In the event the student experience extenuating circumstances, the faculty coordinator *may*, at his or her discretion, make exceptions to the attendance policy. Seminar sessions cannot be replicated, and therefore cannot be made up. Regular attendance is mandatory and absences or a pattern of tardiness will jeopardize the student's seminar grade and possibly result in the student being dropped from the seminar course *and* the WBL placement.
- C. Students are expected to review and adhere to all College, program, and agency policies and procedures.
- D. Students will maintain regular contact with the faculty coordinator regarding their placement, progress, and any concerns. The faculty coordinator will provide support and consultation to the student and the agency supervisor - serving as a mediator in the event of conflict between the student, the agency supervisor, the agency, the program, and/or the College.
- E. Students are required to inform the faculty coordinator of any significant changes, problems, or positive developments in the placement setting.

### II. Placement Eligibility

- A. Before a student is registered in WBL he/she must meet the following requirements:
  - 1. Successful completion of 12 semester hours in the HSE program.
  - 2. A minimum of a 2.0 GPA in the HSE program.
  - 3. Have approval of the appropriate faculty coordinator.
  - 4. Have met with faculty coordinator to discuss placement options and have confirmed placement.
  - 5. Provide a copy of a current TB test and Heptovac series or applicable waivers.

- B. Be aware that agencies have the right to require criminal background checks. PCC does not cover this expense. *Students who have pending criminal charges may not be eligible for placement until the semester after the disposition of the court matter*, at which time the student must confer with the faculty coordinator to determine eligibility status, based on disposition.
- C. Be aware that agencies have the right to conduct drug screen analysis on students prior to and during the WBL placement.
- D. Failure to consult with the faculty coordinator the semester *before* WBL enrollment will result in the student having to secure his or her own placement without assistance from the faculty coordinator. Placements are competitive and the likelihood of the student obtaining their first choice will be greatly diminished. Since placements are awarded on a competitive basis and are available to students throughout the county, plans must be made carefully and applications submitted early. Students should make alternative plans in case they do not qualify for or do not secure their first choice. The Humans Services Program does not guarantee placement.
- E. Provided students meet with the faculty coordinator the semester *before* their WBL placement, they will have the opportunity to discuss their learning goals, interests, and career objectives. Students should also be prepared to discuss any issues that could affect the appropriateness of a placement, or that may have the potential to affect their performance. Such issues may include but are not limited to—criminal history, physical or psychological health concerns, work/family or other personal obligations, etc. Every effort is made to match the student with a placement that meets his or her interests. Please be aware that there is no guarantee that students will be able to be placed in a specific agency or service area. It is the responsibility of the student to decline (or not select) a placement where a conflict of interest may exist. Students will be responsible for notifying their agency supervisor and faculty coordinator in the event a conflict of interest should arise during their placement.

Faculty coordinators *cannot* guarantee placements for students with a criminal history. Ability to secure a placement may vary depending on the number, year, and type of convictions. In the event an appropriate placement cannot be obtained due to criminal history or other personal and/or health issues, completion of the degree in Human Services *will not be possible*.

### III. Securing a Placement

- A. Once a student has met with their faculty coordinator they will be required to contact the placement agency (or agencies) to schedule an interview. The agency interview is a professional interview and students should prepare accordingly. Preparation for an interview should include but is not limited to—researching the agency and preparing appropriate questions; understanding the service area, clients, and services offered by the agency; preparing or obtaining any documentation required by the agency such as a resume, criminal background check, medical records, etc.; ensuring the ability to explain WBL requirements and expectations; and dressing appropriately.

- B. The disposition of the interview(s) needs to be communicated to the faculty coordinator immediately.
- C. After placement has been confirmed, the student may be registered by the faculty coordinator for WBL and corresponding seminar.

#### **IV. Changing a Placement**

- A. Students are *strongly discouraged* from changing their placement once the semester has begun. In the event the student experiences extenuating and unforeseen circumstances, which *may* necessitate a change in placement, the student *must* contact the faculty coordinator *prior* to speaking with the current agency supervisor or attempting to secure a new placement.
- B. In the event of a change in placement is made, students will be responsible for completing all documentation required by the College, the initial agency, and the new agency in order to facilitate the transition.
- C. Students should consider placement very carefully before committing to, and even more carefully before changing, a placement. Be aware that changing a placement mid-semester will likely result in the student falling behind in hours and having to complete more than the required minimum weekly hours in order to complete the required hours for the course.

#### **V. General Placement Expectations**

- A. Students are required to read and sign all documentation required by the College including but not limited to - Student Application, Waiver Form and Release of Liability, Work-Based Learning Agreement/Release Statement, Confidentiality Agreement Statement, etc.
- B. Students are required to read and abide by all codes of conduct including but not limited to - Pitt Community College Student Code of Conduct, agency codes of conduct, Ethical Standards of Human Services Professional, etc.
- C. Students are expected to be at their placements when the agency is open and appropriate supervisors are present. Students should use good judgement about traveling in poor weather or other conditions, and should never risk their health or safety. If the student feels that it would not be safe to travel, he or she should contact their agency supervisor prior to the start of the shift.
- D. Students are responsible for clearing *any* absences with their agency supervisors as soon as possible and *prior* to their scheduled work time.
- E. Students are responsible for alerting their agency supervisor as soon as possible and *prior* to their scheduled work times if they will be late.

- F. Holidays and Breaks--Agencies may operate on a different schedule from that of PCC. Students are required to notify their agency supervisor if they wish to take off time for college breaks such as fall break, spring break, recognized holiday, etc. in a timely manner in order to allow for appropriate coverage to be arranged by the agency, keeping in mind that the agency may not approve the leave. In this case, the student is expected to work as schedule. Students are **not required** to take off time for college breaks.
- G. Dress Code--Students are required to comply with the standards of professional dress and appearance appropriate to the work environment.

## **VI. Placement Problem-Solving Process**

Students are required to consult with the faculty coordinator when a problem or conflict presents, **prior to** making any decision which may affect their placement. The student and faculty coordinator will collaboratively decide how to address the conflict and the student is expected to follow through with the faculty coordinator's recommendation.

## **VII. Placement Termination**

- A. Students need to be aware that when a placement is terminated, there are often delays in interviewing and starting at a new agency.
- B. In the event a student is terminated from a placement, they **must** report this immediately to the faculty coordinator at which time the circumstances will be evaluated by the faculty coordinator and possibly other departmental WBL coordinators to determine disposition.
- C. Agencies have the right to terminate a student's placement if the agency determines that the student is not performing satisfactorily, is interfering with the Agency's operations, or may affect client services or safety.
- D. Students **may not** terminate a placement on their own, but must follow the problem solving process described above.
- E. Faculty coordinators reserve the right to **remove a student** from a placement if, in the opinion of the faculty, the student lacks the maturity, judgement, professionalism, or ability to function in the field of human services. If it is recommended that a student withdraw from the course, he/she cannot be readmitted during that semester. In the event of such a case the student must repeat the WBL placement **and** seminar. Some examples of reasons for removal from placement might include but are not limited to:
  - 1. Unprofessional behavior - the student is repeatedly late, absent from placement, does not give agency prior notification of absences, or exhibits inappropriate boundaries with clients and/or coworkers.
  - 2. Poor attitude to learning - the student is unable to utilize feedback, is persistently defensive, lacks self-awareness, or is unable to develop helping relationships.

3. Emotional or mental health or substance use issues - the student is experiencing difficulties which may affect the ability to perform consistently at his or her placement and/or have the potential to jeopardize client welfare. A pattern of such issues may indicate that it is not appropriate for the student to be in a placement at that time.

### **VIII. Work-Based Learning Seminar**

- A. Experiences in the world of practice become the testing ground for the skills, knowledge, and values learned in the classroom. The seminar assumes a critical role in the student's placement experience, focusing on the relationship between agency-based practice and the rest of the curriculum. This integrative seminar serves a variety of purposes, including the student development of professional orientation and role identification of potential conflicts between personal and professional values, recognition of possible obstacles to professional development, and the application of acquired knowledge, skills and intervention strategies. The seminar emphasizes what students learn from each other, and provides for peer group support. It offers an opportunity for discussing and attempting to resolve difficulties and conflicts.
- B. Students must maintain confidentiality about other students, clients, personal health information, and anything shared by any student in seminar.

### **IX. Student Progress**

Faculty coordinators will monitor progress and facilitate the teaching-learning process through student attendance and participation in seminar, periodic contact with agency supervisors, performance evaluations, and student completion of assignments and workbook.