Module 2: Conducting a Successful Agency Orientation
Learning Objectives:

1. Increase understanding of the importance of the agency orientation
2. Become familiar with the elements of a successful agency orientation
3. Identify strategies to incorporate these elements into supervision
The Importance of an Effective Student Intern Orientation

- It sets the tone for a positive field experience
- It alleviates fear and anxiety, common emotions for students new to social work
- When a formal orientation is not provided, students waste agency time trying to find the information on their own, leaving less time for learning
- Students are made to feel welcome at the agency
Video: How Not to “Orientate”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vAq-_R-Eil
Research indicates that students benefit from agency orientation activities.

Students who participate early in the placement in activities that are designed to orient them to the agency report that these activities enhance their field experience (Knight, 2001).

Students who find the agency orientation helpful are more likely to believe their field instructor is helpful (Knight, 2001).

The majority of students who are given reading materials about their agency in the beginning of the placement report that these materials enhance their learning experience (Knight, 2001).

Students who have positive initial impressions of their field agencies have higher levels of overall satisfaction upon completion of the field placement (Fortune, 2001).
Plan before student arrives:

- Physical location – where will the student work?
- Communicate with other staff re: intern roles
- Ensure paperwork is taken care of before the orientation to maximize time
Consider Logistics

- Parking
- Identification badges or business cards
- Keys - to building, restrooms, desk
- IT Passwords
- Organizational Chart or Phone Tree
- Location of Forms and Charts
- Office Supplies
Conduct a Tour of the Agency

- This will help students become familiar with the physical location of the placement.

- Introduce students to important staff members as part of the tour. This should include administrative support, other social workers, and the director of the social service aspect of the agency.
Schedule a Series of Brief Presentations

- Ask other important staff members to give a brief presentation to the student regarding their roles in the agency.
- Possible presenters include the personnel director, program directors, and department heads.
Develop an Orientation Packet for Students

- Written materials assist students in learning about the agency and demonstrate that the field instructor had prepared for their arrival.
- The orientation packet should include important agency policies and procedures and any other information you believe will help your student understand the agency.
- If your agency has a new employee handbook, much of this information will be relevant to your student and should be provided.
- The orientation packet can also consist of selected readings addressing the practice of your agency and the client population.
- This information is necessary for competent and effective practice. Field instructors should not hesitate to assign readings or other tasks to students to prepare them for work in the agency.
Reflection Questions:

- How do you prepare your agency and/or staff for your students’ arrival?
- What do you provide that is a unique aspect of the orientation?
- Who is involved in developing the field orientation packet?
- Who is involved in the orientation?
- How long is your orientation?
Information to Include in the Agency Orientation

- Important Policies and Procedures
- Agency Description
- Identification (how will students be referred)
- Confidentiality
- Safety Issues
- Agency Jargon
- Making Referrals
- The Supervisory Relationship
- Providing a Safe Learning Environment
See APU Learning Agreement
http://www.apu.edu/bas/socialwork/msw/internship/#forms
p. 7 Agency Orientation Checklist
ORIENTATION CHECKLIST

Agency Overview

- Review agency vision and mission/purpose statement
- Tour of agency
- Introductions to colleagues, support staff, and administration
- Review organizational structure
- Review the role of the agency in relation to the community and its resources
- Review security and/or safety procedures and protocol

Agency Policies and Protocols

- Review office procedures, supplies, and provisions
- Review telephone and communication/computer utilization
- Review intake/admissions/eligibility policy and procedures
- Review internal communication
- Review parking details
- Review mileage policy
- Review agency, department, and/or unit meeting schedule
- Review client record/charting, policies and procedures
- Review forms for documentation/accountability
- Review regulations regarding confidentiality, release of information, etc.
- Review client fees/payment schedule
- Review client emergency protocol
- Review child or elder abuse reporting protocol
- Review work schedule, including lunch and breaks
- Review information/referral policy
- Review agency policy regarding harassment
- Review agency policy regarding discrimination
- Review agency policy regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Review agency policy regarding OSHA
- Review agency policy regarding HIPPA

Field Instructor/Student Responsibilities

- Review expectations for supervision and schedule
- Review educationally based recording schedule
- Review use of preceptor (if applicable)
- Review plan for diversity/multi-cultural experiences
- Review plan for monitoring of student hours (by both field instructor and student)
- Review agency training or staff development opportunities
- Review student’s personal safety issues and concerns and strategies to deal with them
Role Identification: Student Seen As a Learner or Employee?

Communicate to other staff members the role and purpose of your student.
Research on student satisfaction with field placements indicates that students want to feel like a part of the agency and want to be treated like a professional (Fortune & Abramson, 1993).

- Have support staff been informed of the students schedule and expected hours?
- Are students given the impression they need to generate billable hours, or that agency funding is dependent on their productivity?
- Is it understood that the student is not at the agency to make copies, file or run errands?
Orientation on Safety Issues

Consider, what are some of the risks a student may encounter in this setting and with this client population? *i.e. Do interns conduct home visits?*

- What protocols and emergency procedures do you have in place?
- How can you help the student understand agency protocols and have a plan of action should a crisis occur?
- Who can the student contact in an emergency if you are unavailable?
Components of Supportive Learning Environment

Build A FOUNDATION for a successful year by:

- Beginning with an effective orientation
- Formalize a supervision schedule
- Discuss hopes and expectations
- Provide specific expectations for field performance
- Refer to Learning Agreement to begin goal setting
- Give immediate feedback when possible
- Give positive as well as constructive feedback often
- Make a point of getting to know your student(s)
- Identify student strengths and challenges in learning
- Identify your student’s learning styles vs. your own
Conclusion

- This concludes the slides for this training module. In order to receive APU Field Instructor training hours credit, please close the power point and access the Module 2 Post Test on the [apu.edu/msw-training/home](http://apu.edu/msw-training/home) page. The post test will also ask for your contact information. In order to receive a training certificate for eight hours, all the Fall training modules must be completed.

- Please note CEUs are only offered for attending one of our live trainings.