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NEXUS
THE PRACTICUM NEWSLETTER



Field Education in the Global Arena

Many students are attracted to the Masters of Social Work (MSW) program at the Brown School because of its versatile curriculum and its promotion of and connection to international field placements. This article profiles four MSW students who completed their required field placements outside of the United States. From refugee camps in Kenya to a health clinic in Haiti, these students have engaged in and learned from movements of social change in the global arena.

Fighting Childhood Malnutrition in Haiti

Student: Grace A. Snell, MSW '08

Location: Haiti

Agency: Meds and Food for Kids

Type: Research

During her first year in the MSW program, Grace Snell was a research assistant; at the time, she may have been unaware that the in-depth interviews that she conducted in St. Louis would prepare her for future interviews with impoverished women and children in Cap Haitien, Haiti.

It was during this first year of study that Snell connected with a St. Louis-based non-profit, Meds and Foods for Kids



IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Field Education in the Global Arena
- 1 New Associate Director Joins the Office of Field Education
- 2 Ethical Dilemma/Response
- 3 Field Instructor/Student Relationship Statement of Guiding Principles

- 4 Ethical Response/Spring '07

Special Pullout

Certification Required for New Field Instructors

Calendar

Supervision Tips: Student Supervision Form

Frequently Asked Questions by New Field Instructors

(MFK). MFK is committed to fighting malnutrition among Haitian children through its creation and distribution of a fortified peanut-butter paste called Ready to Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF). In her conversations with the agency, Snell learned that the staff knew very little about what happened to RUTF recipients once they left the health clinic. Identifying a needed and innovative research opportunity, Snell proposed an eight-week research project, Haiti-based, that purposed to identify factors affecting recipient RUTF consumption.

continued on page 2

New Associate Director Joins the Office of Field Education

Diane Beckerle O'Brien, MSW, LCSW, ACSW, recently joined the Office of Field Education as the associate director of field education. Prior to coming to Brown, Diane was a lecturer in the University of Missouri-St. Louis School of Social Work and the interim director of the School's gerontology programs. A Brown School alum and former field instructor, she has supervised more than 30 students. She also has worked for the Brown School as a part-time advisor and/or adjunct professor. Diane has maintained strong ties with local universities and community organizations, particularly those serving older adults. She enjoys working with students, assisting them in the field placement process, and learning about their impressive accomplishments. She looks forward to site visits where she can connect (and reconnect) with our committed colleagues in the field. When on campus, please stop by her office to say hello.

Field Education in the Global Arena (con't)

Dr. Patricia Wolff, founder of MFK, agreed to supervise the project and so a few months ago, Snell embarked on a most difficult and rewarding journey. She was able to lead an exploratory research project and use the data collected to inform service delivery and outcomes around childhood malnutrition in the Western Hemisphere's poorest country, and

ETHICAL DILEMMA/RESPONSE

We invite you to share this case example with your student in one of your weekly supervision sessions.

A social worker in a long-term-care facility for elderly people frequently does collateral work with family members of residents. Last year she worked with the adult children of a terminally ill patient about financial arrangements. She referred the son to a private social work practitioner to work on his issues of grief and loss and unresolved anger toward siblings. The social worker from the residential care facility and the son later encountered each other at a museum-sponsored class. They had coffee following the last class session and talked about happenings since the elderly client died. Soon thereafter, they pursued other social contact, which eventually evolved into a romance and sexual intimacy. 1.09a,b,c; 1.01; 1.06a,b,c,d

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RESPONSE:

This case provides an example of a potentially serious conflict of interest. Although the social worker has not become socially and sexually involved with a primary client, having referred the primary client's son to another practitioner, there is clear potential for a conflict of interest, because the son had been part of the client system. The man is a former client in one respect, in that he has been referred to another provider. As a matter of principle, the social worker has an obligation not to enter into a sexual relationship with a current or former client, or a client's relative, because of the potential harm to the client. The social worker's intimate relationship with the patient's son could interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgment if there were to be ongoing service needs. Should the social worker and the son remain involved, the social worker could, in principle, benefit directly from decisions that a patient and family made with respect to the financial issues the social worker discussed with family members. This is a potential conflict of interest.

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she was able to participate in the growth of a young organization started in St. Louis and sustained in Haiti.

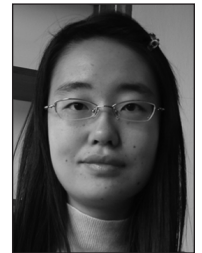
Professionally, Snell's time in Haiti allowed her to independently engage in applied research, to more fully understand the linkages between micro- and macro-social work practice, and most importantly, to play a significant role in a social entrepreneurial venture, which has garnered local, national and international acclaim for its efforts to provide transformative aid to some of the world's poorest children.

Advocating for Racial Minority Groups in Hong Kong

Student: Jing Li, MSW '08

Agency: Sheng Kung Hui Lady MacLehose Centre

Type: Clinical/Community Organizing



As Jing Li considered her options for her summer field placement, she was committed to match her field site with her summer course work. This past summer, Li was invited to participate in the second annual Brown School China Institute – an academic-intensive experience, focused around issues of social inclusion and poverty.

Her field placement search led to the discovery of the Sheng Kung Hui (SKH) Lady MacLehose Centre in Hong Kong. This agency aims to provide social service care to low-income communities in Hong Kong. In 2001 the agency expanded its outreach efforts to ethnic minorities in three of Hong Kong's urban districts. After connecting with the agency, Li decided that she would engage in the Centre's advocacy and direct service projects, which provide services to minority groups.

At the advocacy level, Li was able to participate in the Centre's political activity of supporting a newly proposed bill, which addresses various issues of racial discrimination; at the clinical level, Li was responsible for facilitating therapeutic groups for unemployed minority youth. Her work at the Centre connected Li to non-governmental and governmental entities, thereby providing her with a deep understanding of the social structures that are attempting to address the needs of Hong Kong's ethnic minorities.

As a Chinese citizen receiving an American university education, Li looked to her field placement in Hong Kong as a much-needed opportunity to practice the skills and knowledge she has learned in St. Louis within the Asian context and culture. As student who intends to return to her home country after graduation, Li stands out as an extraordinary example of an international student who is excited to use her graduate-level education as a vehicle for individual and community change among internationally diverse populations.

Field Instructor/Student Relationship Statement of Guiding Principles

Being a field instructor is much like being a supervisor or administrator who, when there's work to be done, will find competent people to complete the task in exchange for the opportunity to learn something new, hone a skill, build a professional network, etc. However, field instructors, unlike supervisors, add a layer of responsibility by committing themselves to the practicum students' learning process and professional development. Students assist with the specific tasks assigned and learn what it means to be a social worker. This added layer of responsibility is most successfully orchestrated by field instructors who are very conscientious about the learning process.

Suzanne LeLaurin, MSW, LCSW, senior vice-president for individuals and families at the International Institute, developed a "Statement of Guiding Principles" to clarify her approach to practica/internships. With a focus on her students' ultimate learning, she addresses her role as a field instructor, the role of the task instructor, development of the Educational Learning Agreement (ELA), practicum hours, weekly supervision, and availability outside of supervision in her Guiding Principles. A first year student who will be doing her foundation-level practicum with Suzanne found the principles reassuring, impressive, helpful, and clear. They set the tone for the type of field experience for which she hoped—one filled with personal and professional growth opportunities with a field instructor focused on her formation as a social worker.

Suzanne's Statement of Guiding Principles begins with NASW definitions of the field instructor and the task instructor and continues with an explanation of her specific role as the field instructor and sometimes the task instructor. She acknowledges the challenges when a task instructor is involved and clarifies to whom the student should go for guidance. She also emphasizes the need for issues related to professional social work be brought to the field instructor's attention as the field instructor for foundation-level students must have an MSW.

Roles of Field Instructor and Task Instructor

- *Field Instructor (FI)*: NASW defines educational supervision as "a learning alliance between the supervisor and supervisee in which the supervisee learns therapeutic skills while developing self-awareness at the same time." (Clinical Social Work Practice Update, 3 (2), June 2003). This definition clearly recognizes that you are a student, and my goal is to help you in three ways: (1) learn social work practice skills in the context of this agency, (2) help you identify professional strengths and areas for growth, and (3) help you identify next steps in professional development (e.g. future practica) or career choices.
- *Task Instructor (TI)*: This function is very similar to administrative supervisor when you are employed. Again, NASW offers this definition: "Administrative supervision is oriented towards an...organization's policy and public

accountability. The major responsibility...is to ensure that the work is performed." So your TI is responsible for assigning your work, explaining what needs to be done and helping you accomplish stated work objectives. While there is an inherent level of teaching in this role, the emphasis is more on accomplishing results for clients and the agency, not on professional development.

Development of ELA

Suzanne describes the development of the ELA as a "collaborative process among the field instructor, task instructor, and student insofar as tasks, evaluation, and learning outcomes." She continues to discuss with students their learning and her teaching preferences to further formulate the ELA. She makes her expectations very clear regarding the student's engagement in learning through experiential activities and debriefings and the student's responsibility to see that the School's requirements and deadlines are met.

Practicum hours

Suzanne clarifies how she expects students to complete and track their hours. She expects students to set their own schedules. She offers some suggestions of opportunities to attend meetings but understands the need for students to have to work around class schedules. She also allows some practicum hours (e.g., development of written materials, research) may be completed off-site. Tracking hours is up to the student.

Supervisory sessions

During weekly supervision, Suzanne expects the student to come prepared with questions and relays to students in her Guiding Principles that she prefers supervision discussions to "focus more on what you are learning rather than what you are doing. You should be prepared to relate what you are doing to what you have learned (or not learned) in the classroom." Before generally outlining the flow of work for the students' tenure at the site, she emphasizes the students' roles as students—they are there to learn! She sets the tone for an open learning environment:

"I hope you will feel safe enough with me to share your apprehensions, ethical dilemmas and any difficult subject you feel a need to discuss. And that includes any concerns you may have with me or the Institute—I am no more perfect than you are, and the Institute doesn't do everything right. In fact, some of my best growth as a social worker and teacher has come about because of my relationship with students. And some of the best organizational development here at the Institute has come about because students have shared their observations about weaknesses at the agency."

Availability Outside of Regular Supervision

Demonstrating her desire to assist in her students' learning, Suzanne includes additional information in her Guiding Principles regarding her availability outside of regular supervision. She encourages her students to contact her outside of regular supervision to discuss serious concerns or to "pop in" with quick questions. Acknowledging her "busyness," she states that she does not want this to hinder her students in approaching her.

Certification Required for New Field Instructors

Individuals interested in becoming a field instructor for students from the Brown School, University of Missouri-St. Louis, and St. Louis University, must complete a new Field Instructor Certification Program, according to Cynthia Williams, director of field education at the Brown School and member of the Collaborative Social Work Field Education Project.

"This educational series will offer information and support needed for new field instructors to provide a high quality learning experience for students and ensure a satisfactory experience for field instructors," says Williams. "The certification program is not required for field instructors who were approved prior to August, 2007 along with non-MSW task instructors."

The certification program consists of a half-day "Introduction to Field Instruction" session and five subsequent educational sessions. The program focuses on such topics as values and ethics and cultural competence as they relate to field education. After the completion of the introductory session, other sessions may be completed in any order.

The program can be completed over a maximum of two years, and can be completed simultaneous to providing field instruction for social work students from the three St. Louis area programs. The Brown School and other members of the St. Louis Collaborative will continue to hold their annual spring and fall Field Instructor Orientation.

For more information about becoming a field instructor, certification, registration for upcoming sessions, and re-certification, contact Colleen Adams, School of Social Work, UM-St. Louis at 314/516-7665, emailing her at adamsmc@umsl.edu or on-line at: <http://www.umsl.edu/~fieldedu/> (click on "Events"). All events are offered free of charge.

Upcoming Sessions

New field instructors will have two years to complete the six sessions of the program to become certified. The series of topics will be repeated each year. Session #1 is required prior to the other five sessions. After completion of Session #1, the other sessions may be completed in any order.

2008 Schedule:

Session #1—Introduction to Field Instruction, January 11, 2008 12 noon–4 p.m. at SLU, Busch Student Center, Room 170.

Session #4—Cultural Competence, February 29, 2008, 9–12 noon, SLU, Busch Student Center, Room 107.

Session #5—Field Instructor as Teacher, Mentor, and Supervisor, April 11, 2008, 1–4 pm, UMSL, Student Millennium Center, Century Room 1.

Session #6—From Practicum Student to Professional Social Worker, June 13, 2008, 9–12 noon, WU, Goldfarb 132.

Registration

Pre-registration for all of the sessions is required. Registration can be completed by contacting Colleen Adams, School of Social Work, UM-St. Louis at 314/516-7665, emailing her at adamsmc@umsl.edu or on-line at: <http://www.umsl.edu/~fieldedu/> (click on "Events"). All events are offered free of charge.

Transition Period—Fall 2007

Starting in Fall 2007, those professional who were new to field instruction were required to work toward certification as a condition of their approval in order to take a student in the Fall 2007. Field Instructors in this situation attended Session #1 in September 2007 and are eligible to complete the program over a two-year period. After Fall 2007, field instructors must attend Session #1 in the semester prior to the semester in which they will supervise a student and may subsequently complete the program over a two-year period.

FIELD EDUCATION CALENDAR

February

19 Spring Educational Learning Agreements Due

March

14 Social Work Month

April

7 Mid-Semester Evaluation of Practicum Due
(Submit when student has completed half of the contracted hours for the semester.)

May

5 Final Evaluation of Practicum
(Submit when student has completed half of the contracted hours for the semester.)

16 Commencement Ceremony

SUPERVISION TIPS: STUDENT SUPERVISION FORM

During the mid-semester site visit with one of her Brown School students, Amy Bahn, MSW, LCSW, from Discovering Options shared with us the "Student Supervision Form" used by field instructors at Discovering Options to assist students in preparing for weekly supervision. Students are asked to comment on the following:

- Tasks completed this week
- Status on ongoing projects
- What went well for you this week?
- What challenges did you have this week?
- What ideas do you have for improving or dealing with these challenges?
- What were the results of your proposed changes or improvements from last week?

In addition to asking students to come to weekly supervision with their completed forms, the students are asked to bring documentation completed since last supervision and their timesheets.

Frequently Asked Questions by New Field Instructors

1. What is a field instructor?

A field instructor is a professional who has:

- Met the affiliation criteria (Please see Affiliation Criteria for each program)
- Attended the Field Instructor Certification Session #1 (Non-local field instructors may be waived from this requirement.)
- Completed or is concurrently completing the remaining five (5) certification sessions.

2. What are field instructor responsibilities?

- Orienting the students to the work, staff, clients and the organization
- Assisting the student in the preparation of the learning agreement
- Providing a minimum of one hour per week individualized supervision time
- Completing and reviewing the required evaluations with the student
- Submitting a Final Evaluation to the appropriate School each semester in a timely fashion
- Consulting with the student and student's advisor/liaison to review the progress of learning in the site visit
- Consulting with student's advisor/liaison or the Director of Field Education if a problem occurs in the practicum
- Maintaining updated agency/field instructor applications as required by the Offices of Field Education.

3. What are field instructor benefits?

Washington University:

- *Nexus, The Practicum Newsletter*, published bi-annually with information about educational and research efforts, faculty/agency news, activities and other matters of field-related interest (Field instructors are welcome to contribute to the publication.)
- Three units of CEUs' each academic year for active field instructors
- A limited number of tuition remissions for courses at the Brown School (Course descriptions and registration information may be obtained by calling the Brown School Registrar at 935-8647.)
- Access to both the Brown School Social Work Library and Olin Library (Library cards may be obtained after completion and submission of a library card application. Library cards will be issued by the Olin Library after September 20th for each academic year.
- Various workshops, colloquia and institutes at the Brown School
- Access to the Professional Development Series which include CEUs for a nominal fee

Saint Louis University:

- An e-newsletter issues three times a year
- Three units of CEUs for each semester of field instruction
- Tuition remission for a course (limited availability)
- Access to the Saint Louis University library system
- Opportunities to serve on various committees and boards within the School

University of Missouri-St. Louis

- Participation in Collaborative Social Work Field Education Events with cost paid by the UM-System

- Three units of CEUs for each semester of field instruction

4. When are field instructors eligible to redeem benefits?

- Field instructors are eligible to redeem benefits in the academic year in which they supervise a student.

5. How do I attract students to my agency?

- Brown School and UMSL host a Practicum Agency Fair every year, which provides an opportunity for agency field instructors and prospective students to meet and discuss potential learning opportunities.
- Flyers and brochures sent by agencies are posted for student review.
- Advertisements are sent to students via email, bulletin boards, webpages, and through Office of Field Education consultation.
- Updated Organizational/Field Instructor Applications are used by students to research potential practicum sites and to populate on-line searchable databases

6. What is the process of obtaining a practicum student?

All three programs follow a process of student self-selection. The selection process is as follows:

- Students consult with the Field Education staff, who are available to help them identify several opportunities that may meet their individual needs.
- Students research agencies by accessing the on-line searchable databases or by viewing the organizational and field instructor applications provided by the Office of Field Education.
- Students contact agency representatives to request an interview.

7. How is practica integrated into the curriculum?

- Field experiences compliment classroom instruction, and all levels of our core curriculum have practicum components.
- The Learning Agreements are constructed for the purpose of assuring the integration of classroom instruction and field instruction; each objective of the learning agreement reflects a curriculum component.
- The programs have required integrative seminars built into the curriculum to encourage integration and reflection about the field experiences.

8. What are the responsibilities of students in the field?

- Be prepared to actively participate in supervision sessions with field instructors
- Keep an ongoing Practicum Time Sheet of accumulated hours in the field
- Assume responsibility for all learning experiences agreed to in the learning agreement
- Communicate with the field instructor about his/her learning needs and interests, his/her conflicts regarding field instruction, and his/her struggles to develop as a professional social worker
- Fulfill all the obligations and expectations set forth in the Integrative Seminar syllabi and the Learning Agreement
- Participate in the evaluations of his/her performance
- Demonstrate awareness that he/she is a professional social worker and, as such, adheres to the profession's *Code of Ethics* in all aspects of the field experience
- Contact the Office of Field Education if problems arise in the field that may require clarification and resolution. Consult with the agency about safety and liability.
- Adhere to all policies and procedures of the organization

Response to Ethical Dilemma: Job Performance (Spring 2007 issue)

The social work supervisor, by attempting to be supportive of the supervisee, is neglecting the service needs of the clients of the supervisee. By delaying her evaluation of the social worker, the supervisor prevented the social worker from taking remedial action sooner and preserving her job. Social workers who have responsibility for evaluating others should do so in a fair and timely manner. In addition, if social workers have knowledge of a social work colleague's impairment, they should consult with that colleague and help him or her take action and seek help.

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