Social Work Field Instructor Training

Module One: The Mission of Field Education
Learning Objectives

1. To understand the need for field instructor training.
2. To understand the mission and purpose of field education.
3. To understand the importance of the field instructor in the professional development of students.
What is the Field Instructor Training Program?

• The Field Instructor Training Program (FITP) is designed to provide agency-based field instructors with the specialized knowledge and skills necessary for effective field supervision.

• Training is recommended for any social work practitioner providing supervision to social work students.

• This training program is also a good refresher for any seasoned field instructor.
Why is a Training Program necessary?

- The Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) refers to field education as “an integral component of social work education” and, in 2008, as the “signature pedagogy of social work education”.
- The EPAS mandate that social work programs provide a minimum of 400 hours of field education to baccalaureate students and 900 hours of field education to master’s students (CSWE, 2002).
- EPAS guidelines further mandate that social work programs provide both an orientation and field instruction training (CSWE, 2002).
Why, continued...

- Research indicates that specialized training is necessary for social workers acting as field instructors (Ellison, 1994; Fortune & Abramson, 1993; Knight, 2001; Livingston, Davidson & Marshack, 1989; Rogers & McDonald, 1995).

- Field supervision requires advanced training as it encompasses a teaching element. Being proficient with a social work skill does not indicate that a person knows how to teach that skill.

- Many studies have been conducted to identify the knowledge and skills necessary for effective field supervision. This self-study program will provide you with this information and allow you the opportunity to consult with your faculty field liaison.
How was this program developed?

- The curriculum is based on empirical data found in the social work literature regarding field supervision.
- Focus groups were conducted with both new and experienced field instructors across a variety of settings to identify their training needs.
- This information was compiled into the modules that comprise this training program.
- CSUF field education faculty have supplemented the CSWE modules with examples and data from experiences and feedback from seasoned field educators.
The Mission of Field Education

- Field education is the time when students get to learn by doing, under the supervision of an agency-based field instructor.
- In the field, the focus turns from the acquisition of knowledge to the application of knowledge.
Mission, continued...

- The goal of the field placement is for students to successfully integrate theory into practice, thus learning to serve clients effectively.

- Upon completion of the field placement, students should be ready to begin social work practice within an agency setting.
The Role of the Field Instructor

• Field Instructors are considered social work educators in the field and play an important role in the professional development of social work students.

• Research indicates that the supervisory style and characteristics of the field instructor have a significant impact on students’ overall evaluations of the instructor and the placement experience (Ellison, 1994; Fortune & Abramson, 1993; Fortune, McCarthy & Abramson, 2001; Knight, 2001; Lazar & Eisikovits, 1997).

• Furthermore, research indicates that the quality of the field instructor is the most significant factor affecting students’ satisfaction with the field placement (Fortune & Abramson, 1993).
Field Instruction Offers an Opportunity

• As a field instructor, you have the opportunity to significantly influence the education and training of a future social worker. This influence extends well beyond the student—it will influence all of the student’s future interactions with clients. Over a lifetime, that influence can spread to hundreds of people.

• The students you are supervising are the future of the social work profession. This means that you have the opportunity to play a role in shaping the future of social work practice and our profession.
The Field Instructor’s Challenge

• It is the role of the field instructor to assist students in applying the social work knowledge, values, and skills they have learned thus far to an agency setting. This involves creating learning opportunities for students to integrate theory and practice.

• The challenge for field instructors is to teach students how to practice social work, not how to do a particular job in your particular agency. It is easy to teach someone how to do a job. The purpose of field education is not for a student to learn how to work in your agency, as most students do not work in their field agency after graduation.
More on Challenge.....

• The role of the field instructor is to help students learn how to use social work skills effectively and how to use social work knowledge and values to inform their actions in meeting the needs of their clients. Students must learn how to engage a client, how to build rapport, how to set goals, how to develop tasks to reach those goals, and all of the other elements of effective and ethical social worker practice.
Challenge, continued....

• By the conclusion of the field placement, your student should be able to apply these abilities to any practice setting. If your student completes the placement knowing how to work in your agency, but has no understanding of how to use the knowledge, values, and skills necessary for effective practice, the student is no more prepared to begin social work practice than before the placement began.

• As a new field instructor, you should utilize the experience of other MSW field instructors in your agency, and/or the mentorship of the faculty field liaison in planning learning opportunities that ensure your student builds these skills over the time that they spend with you.
Creating a Vision

• As a field instructor, one of your first tasks should be to create a vision of the qualities and characteristics you would like your field student to have by the end of the placement.

• The immediate vision involves helping your student apply all of his or her knowledge to a practice setting.

• The larger vision is your role in the life and professional development of the student. This includes not only the life of the student, but also the lives and well-being of every client with whom this individual will come into contact.
Creating Your Own Vision

• In preparing for the written exercise for this module, reflect on your own student field placements and your field instructors: what were the characteristics that you most appreciated about your field experiences? What were some areas where you would have liked more mentorship? How did your student experience shape your social work practice today?
Assignment

- Using the form provided on the website with this module, prepare your own student vision. When completed, email it to the CSUF Director of Field Education: cford@fullerton.edu

- If you need any assistance, please call the field office at 714-278-8479
References

This module was taken in entirety from:

Books you may find helpful:


Available from: www.cswe.org