

Summary of Practicum Experience: Briefly describe the agency setting and the population served by the agency. Provide a short overview of your role within that setting.

Beyond Housing/Neighborhood Housing Services (BH/NHS) is a newly-founded organization created from the merger of two independent organizations, Beyond Housing and Neighborhood Housing Services of St. Louis. The two organizations have combined their services to provide comprehensive housing services for the city of St. Louis. Beyond Housing primarily provides services for low-income families in not only affordable rental housing but also life skills, community building and other support services. Neighborhood Housing Services supports home ownership through down-payment assistance for first-time buyers, home-buyer education and credit counseling, home improvement loan services and community development in an effort to strengthen the communities in which clients are purchasing their homes. The combination of these two organizations makes for a dynamic, complete center for housing services.

As a practicum student I will be initially involved with the Home Ownership Purchase Services, working out of the NHS office doing intake, counseling and education of clients in the process of purchasing a home utilizing the services provided. I will also be involved through BH/NHS with the community building activities conducted through town meetings, after school programs and volunteer clean-up efforts organized in the targeted communities. The combination of working individually with clients and also on the community level doing strategic community strengthening activities will provide a comprehensive learning experience for me regarding communication and interaction involved with organization and community level social work.

Learning Objectives

1. The student will integrate theoretical knowledge about organizations, management, and leadership into practice and apply related skills in the practicum setting.

Activities: I will participate in tracking clients through the organization, starting with an intake assessment and ending with the closing. In addition, I will participate in the education of clients in the form of individual counseling and also in a classroom. My involvement with a variety of activities within the organization will expose me to the multiple individuals who are in a position of leadership.

Evaluation: My task supervisor will observe and critique my tracking activities and will also observe my operations within the educational process. This will be an ongoing, developing process as I learn, become familiar and comfortable within the organization.

Learning Outcome: Acquire an understanding of all levels of staff at Beyond Housing/Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) and their roles within the organization through working side by side with several individuals within the organization. This will lead to an increased effectiveness within the facility for further activities during this practicum.

2. The student will integrate theoretical knowledge about communities into practice and apply related skills in the practicum setting.

Activities: I will be involved with the NeighborWorks 2000 system dealing with neighborhood needs such as home improvement and home ownership, community development and the annual Block-Aid volunteer event. NHS is also involved with efforts to target the Hispanic community in St Louis with regards to housing concerns, and I will be involved with those assessments and activities.

Evaluation: Verbal discussion with supervisors at weekly meetings as to my progress within these activities.

Learning Outcome: Increased understanding of interactions between the organization and surrounding communities in which they are involved in improvement efforts. The student will be better able to effectively assess the needs of the communities and their residents with regards to housing and community issues.

3. The student will apply knowledge of social and economic policies relevant to the practicum setting.

Activities: I will be involved with investigating and evaluating city ordinances and regulations currently in place that inhibit the activities of Beyond Housing/NHS. The

organization has an active committee dealing with these issues and I will become involved in that as well.

Evaluation: Written description of my findings regarding ordinances and policies, and verbal discussion with supervisors as to my activities with the committee.

Learning Outcome: I will acquire a more complete understanding of the interaction between public policy and regulation and this organization and the work that they do.

4. The Student will understand and apply values and ethics relevant to social work practice in the practicum agency.

Activities: I will be involved in individual counseling of clients and also community outreach activities, both of which involve the display of the organizations' and my own values and ethics in practice as a helping professional.

Evaluation: Visual supervision of my activities by my supervisor, as well as verbal discussion of any issues that may arise. Any documentation or written components to these activities will be evaluated as well.

Learning Outcome: Student will have a clear understanding of ethics relevant to social work and will effectively communicate them through discussion with staff and supervisor, as well as interact effectively with clients.

5. The student will understand the impact of race, class, gender, religion, age, physical/mental ability, sexual orientation and ethnicity on practice and how one's own values and biases affect leadership and management in the practicum agency.

Activities: As part of my practicum I will be conducting intake interviews with prospective clients. The aspect(s) of them or their lives that are diverse will become apparent here, and it will be part of my responsibility to evaluate those issues and appropriately respond to and direct the client in dealing with those issues.

Evaluation: Verbal discussion with supervisors of interactions with clients, and any questions or issues that may come up for me personally. Evaluation of any written component of the intake assessments by my supervisors.

Learning Outcome: Student will acquire an understanding of the impact of biases on service delivery and leadership in an agency setting and how to effectively overcome these obstacles

6. The student will learn to evaluate social work practice in organizations and communities. This objective will be completed in conjunction with SW 6400 during the Fall/Winter (circle one) semester of 2009.