

## *Office of Field Education Practicum Interview Tips*

The process of interviewing for a practicum is similar to applying for a job. Students are expected to dress professionally and share a resume with a potential field instructor. To maximize the selection process and increase the chances of an excellent learning opportunity, the Office of Field Education recommends students arrange three to five interviews. During the practicum interview, the student should be prepared to demonstrate basic knowledge about the agency services and clientele. The student should also be prepared to discuss academic and work experiences, strengths and weaknesses and career goals. In preparation for completing the required ELA, the practicum learning opportunities and activities should also be discussed. Students with a BSW may discuss the breadth and level of practice experience they are seeking, given their previous practicum experience.

### **Tips when making initial contact with agencies:**

Students may email or call potential practicum sites; however, email is usually best.

Be sure to include the following information when contacting an agency:

Your name

Name of your school (UMSL)

Type of practicum desired (ex. MSW foundation, MSW concentration, etc)

Number of hours needed

Time frame (ex. Fall 2013 semester)

Contact information (phone, email address, best time to contact)

Attach resume to the email (offer to email resume if calling)

Include a brief statement of why you are interested in that particular agency (ex. I want to work with children in foster care)

If there is no response from the agency after one week, follow up with a phone call

If there is no response within 2 days after the phone call, follow up with a second email

If there is no response after the second email, remove the agency from your list of potential sites

### **When preparing for interviews, student should be prepared to answer the following types of questions:**

Why are you interested in the agency? (**Important: Do your research – know the agency!**)

Why are you interested in your particular concentration?

What skills or knowledge do you bring?

What do you want to learn?

What are UMSL's practicum/internship requirements?

What are your career goals?

What would those who know you well say challenges or disappoints you?

In a past job, practicum or internship, what did you enjoy most and in what ways were you successful?

In a past job, practicum or internship, what did you dislike, find frustrating or fail to achieve?

What previous community, work, or volunteer experiences might suggest that you are ready for this position?

Tell me about a specific instance when you've demonstrated a particular skill. (Don't generalize.)

Tell me about an instance when you responded to a crisis.

Tell me about an instance when you were responsible for meeting a project deadline, but had to rely on others to complete part of the project.

Tell me about a time you had to handle multiple responsibilities. How did you organize those responsibilities?

Give me an example of a project/situation that demanded attention to details. How did you handle the details?

Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult person. How did you handle the situation?

What steps would you take...?

What would you do if...?

What would you say if a client...?

What knowledge or skill development would you need in order to do...?

How do you plan to keep your supervisor informed of your progress and concerns?

Describe your ideal work environment and your ideal supervisor.

When do you do your best work: when you start, change, or finish something?

What unique experience or qualifications separate you from other candidates?

Why should I hire you?

**Students should feel free to ask the following types of questions:**

What do you enjoy about your work in this organization?

What skills and knowledge do you have to offer a practicum student?

What is the extent of supervision time you are able to commit to a student?

What are some positive experiences you've had with students in the past?

What are some negative experiences you've had with students in the past?

What level of independence is expected of your students?

How do students function in the organization as a whole?

If other students are at this site, what are expectations about students working together?

How do you use the practicum learning agreement to structure the student's experience?

How would you describe a typical work day?

What will be my main focus when hired (chosen for position)?

How would I be trained or introduced to the job (practicum)?

How would you differentiate your agency from other agencies?

Does your agency provide services to its clients based on evidence-based practice?

What are some of the safety protocols (i.e., emergency procedures, building and office security, management of violent clients, home visits, etc.)?

**In preparation for interviews, be prepared to respond to these common requirements:**

Submission of a current resume and/or student application

Knowledge of agency and its policies

Professionalism (behavior, attitude, communication style, and ability to follow protocol, dress)

Availability to be interviewed by an individual or a group

Active role in the interview process

Demonstration of good written and verbal communication skills

Completion of agency training

Willingness to learn and grow; identification of learning style

Ability to organize time for efficiency and timeliness on projects

Willingness to assist with special projects

Preparation of talking points on education, work, or volunteer experiences

Completion of a progress report or journal about your experience

**\*\*\*\*\*FOLLOW UP ALL INTERVIEWS WITH A THANK -YOU NOTE!\*\*\*\*\*  
IT MAY SET YOU APART FROM OTHER APPLICANTS!**

**When an offer of a practicum opportunity is made and accepted, please notify the other agency professionals at the sites where you interviewed of your decision. Extending this professional courtesy will be appreciated by both the agency professional and fellow students.**

**Upon completion of the practicum, a field instructor might ask the following questions of the student:**

What did you enjoy most about your experience at the agency?

What frustrated you most during your experience?

Revised 3/2013

What has been the most important thing you have learned here?

Overall, how would you describe your practicum experience?

What suggestions do you have for improving the learning experience for students?

What suggestions do you have for improving this agency?