

## *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 Learning Agreement, the practicum learning opportunities and activities should also be discussed.

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

Students may email or call potential practicum sites; however, email is preferred by most field instructors. Be sure to include the following information when contacting an agency:

- Your name
- Name of your school (UMSL)
- Number of hours needed
- Time frame (ex. Summer and Fall 2013 or just 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.

**\*Please see attached script for calling and emailing\***

### **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!**)

What skills or knowledge do you bring?

What do you want to learn?

Why are you going into social work?

What are UMSL's practicum requirements?

What are your career goals?

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

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

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?

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

Describe your ideal work environment and your ideal supervisor.

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?  
How do students function in the organization as a whole?  
How would you describe a typical work day?  
What will be my main focus if chosen for position?  
How would I be trained or introduced to the practicum?  
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.)?

**\*\*\*\*\*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 other 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?  
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?