The Benefits and Challenges of Non-traditional Field Placements in Social Work Education

Elena Delavega, PhD
Jeanine Claiborne, MSW
Susan Elswick EdD, LCSW
Steve Soifer, PhD

University of Memphis
Overview

• Participants will
  - learn about non-traditional social work field placements (NTSWFP) as implemented in a public urban university
  - explore the benefits and challenges of innovative NTSWFP
  - understand how to identify, create, and sustain effective NTSWFP
The Memphis Experience

• Extremely diverse placements
  - Museums
  - Libraries
  - Laundry Mats
  - Legal practices
  - Hospitals
  - Schools
  - Taxes
  - Research
  - Tutoring
The Pink Palace

Leading, teaching, researching, evaluating, interacting, intervening, integrating, ethics
Earned Income Tax Credit

- Tax training, preparation, and research
- Helping low-income people get the Earned Income Tax Credit
- Understanding barriers to tax credits
Theatre Memphis

- Non-profit
- Opportunity for people with every degree of talent to become part of the creative process
- After school programming
- Bully Prevention in Schools
Memphis Area Legal Services (MALS)

- Free legal assistance in civil (non criminal) matters
  - interdisciplinary model
  - Low-income and vulnerable populations
- Students at the PEAPS program and Housing Authority program
  - Support, referral, advocacy
  - Some direct therapy
  - Training/ education
Project: Motion

• Dance collaborative devoted to the creation and presentation of innovative, well-crafted dance works that inspire, stimulate and engage audiences on an intellectual, emotional and physical level.

• Educating Public on Dance Movement Therapy
Benefits of Non-Traditional Field Placements

• Broad skill set
• Development of critical thinking
• Enhanced community relationships
• Increased presence and visibility of SW
• Employability
Fundamental Questions

- Can non-traditional field placements adequately prepare students for social work practice?

- How does a program insure that a field placement meets all EPAS objectives?

- Key elements in formulating placements with high adherence to CSWE EPAS and competencies?
Fundamental Questions

• What are the most effective strategies in overseeing non-traditional placements?

• How do programs address challenges such as lack of field instructors with the proper credentials?

• Do the benefits outweigh the challenges?
Preparing MSW for Practice

- Increasing diversity of practice
- Transferrable skills
- Financial reasons
  - Jobs! Jobs! Jobs!
  - Diverse functions
  - Higher salaries
Adherence to EPAS

- Sample Learning Contract
  - Meeting all competencies
  - Interactive development of contract
    - Departmental involvement in every step

- Field Instructor, Field Liaison, & Task Instructor Training

- Supervision
Effective Supervision of Placement

• Connecting to Community Partners

• Supervision
  - Finding alternative supervisors
    • Within MSW program
    • In the community
Effective Supervision of Placement

- Documentation
  - Training on documentation needed
  - Supervision of documentation
  - Who is responsible when there are supervisors and task instructors?
Challenges of Non-Traditional Placements

- Finding adequate supervision
- Number of supervisors involved with student
- Documentation
- Oversight
- Meeting EPAS
Challenges of Non-Traditional Placements

• Field Seminar Assignments
  - Can fill gaps in program delivery in field
  - Other courses can provide supplemental material
    • Behavior Change Project
    • Policy Change Project
A Student’s Perspective

• Jeanine Claiborne, MSW
Do Benefits Outweigh Challenges of Non-Traditional Placements?

YES!!!!