



## Human Services Department Practicum Manual

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***This manual has been developed for Human Services students, SVC staff, and representatives of community agencies who supervise field work practicums for students enrolled in the Skagit Valley College Human Services program.***

***It is the intent of this manual to serve as a general guide to the Human Services practicum experience.***

***It is our hope that this information will support the success of each practicum placement for community agencies and for students enrolled in a Human Service practicum.***

Consistent with ATA degree requirements, students in the Human Services program participate in a Cooperative Education (Co-op) program where they apply classroom knowledge and theory to practical work situations.

In the Human Services Department this supervised work experience is called the Human Services ***“Practicum”***. As part of the ATA degree requirement, students complete a total of 15 credits (450 work hours) of supervised work experience through placements in community agencies. Often the practicum experience begins during the student’s third quarter of study. Practicum sites must be approved by Human Service Department faculty.

Students can take between one (1) and four (4) credits hours a quarter in practicum (HSERV 199). For each credit hour the student must spend 30 clock hours in a supervised work setting. Students enrolled in a practicum must concurrently enroll in the practicum seminar (HSERV 200) which meets once each week during the quarter. The practicum seminar offers students the opportunity to discuss issues that arise in their work place experience. The practicum seminars, and mandatory weekly journaling, assist Human Services faculty in supporting students and monitoring their progress in their field placements.

## Overview of the Human Services Program at Skagit Valley College

The mission of the Human Services Program is to prepare students to enhance human well being and help meet the basic human needs of individuals, families and communities.

The Human Services program prepares students for entry-level work in a broad range of human services agencies. Typical jobs include support counselors, chemical dependency counselors, residential treatment workers, case managers, and community outreach staff.

The Human Services program includes classroom training in interpersonal communications, counseling, ethics, case management, human development, psychopathology, crisis intervention, chemical dependency, and practicum (work-based experience) in human service agencies. Many courses are offered sequentially and students are expected to take courses in sequence.

The Human Services program has a core set of courses that all students must complete to earn an ATA (Associates in Technical Arts) degree in either the **Generalist** or **Chemical Dependency** emphasis. In their second quarter students may determine which emphasis they will pursue.

An emphasis within the **Generalist** track is broad-based and prepares students for entry level employment in mental health, child welfare, juvenile justice, and poverty reduction programs. Students completing a program within the Generalist emphasis have been successfully employed in a very wide range of community social service agencies.

An emphasis in the **Chemical Dependency** concentration is specifically directed toward meeting Washington State eligibility requirements for Chemical Dependency Professionals (CDPs). While there are a number of additional requirements that must be met to be certified as a CD, completion of this concentration satisfies all State academic course requirements.

There is significant overlap between the **Generalist** and **Chemical Dependency** concentrations and many students choose to take courses that will satisfy both sets of requirements.

## Overview of the Human Services Practicum

The practicum **“work-site based learning”** is central to the Human Services academic curriculum. It is through the practicum that students integrate their “classroom” and “real world” learning experiences by completing a total of 15 credits (450 work hours) of supervised work-site training.

Students enrolling in Practicum (HSERV 199) may be required by agencies and/or the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) to apply for registration as counselor trainees. Such registration includes filling out a disclosure statement and may include a criminal background check. Students should submit this application while enrolled in HSERV 198. Passing HSERV 101 and HSERV 198 with grades of C or better is a prerequisite for enrollment in the Practicum portion of the program.

## Summary of Practicum Requirements

The practicum field placement is the opportunity for the student to put into action the skills and knowledge developed through Human Services course work. Field placement provides relevant experience to complement classroom learning and helps the student prepare for employment. The practicum provides students with essential knowledge that can only be gained “on the job”. The practicum experience also provides the environment for students to practice “professional behavior” and to learn about the organizational dynamics of community agencies. Practicum requirements include the following:

### **Prerequisites and Enrollment in both HSERV 199 and HSERV 200**

The practicum is a requirement for all Human Services students seeking a degree. Students must complete 15 credits or 450 hours (each credit requires 30 hours) of approved field placement work.

Students must successfully complete *HSERV 101, Introduction to Human Services* and *HSERV 198, Pre-Practicum Seminar* prior to enrolling in *HSERV 199* and *HSERV 200*.

Students initiating their practicum experience, *HSERV 199*, must concurrently enroll in *HSERV 200: Practicum Seminar*.

### **Evaluation and Grading**

Each student placement requires permission of the Department Chairs. Credits and grades in HSERV 199 are based on job hours worked; work experiences completed; the reports from a faculty site visit; completion of learning objectives; meeting submission time lines for all paperwork; completion of a work site journal, and satisfactorily meeting quality standards for all work submitted.

## **The Process of Obtaining an Acceptable Practicum Site**

Students are responsible for locating and obtaining an acceptable practicum site. A student enrolled in HSERV 199 is required to initiate a search for, and secure, a practicum with an appropriate agency. The investigative process is part of the expected learning experience. Students are encouraged to carefully consider what types of skills or experiences they wish to develop or acquire and to consider how any specific agency placement might benefit their professional development.

Numerous and diverse opportunities exist among the human service agencies in our region. It is not unusual for SVC students to locate practicum placements in Whatcom, Island, or Snohomish counties. Assistance in locating possible agency practicums is available from a variety of sources including (but not limited to):

- Agency presentations in classes and classroom discussions
- Fellow and former Human Service students
- Job listings posted in the SVC Counseling and Career Center
- Informational interviews with community organizations
- Conversations with advisors and Human Services instructors

Ultimately it is the student's responsibility to obtain a practicum with a human services agency or organization that is willing and able to provide consistent supervision and appropriate learning activities. Students are encouraged to complete informational interviews with prospective agencies prior to committing to a practicum placement.

### **Can a Job Where A Student is Employed Serve as a Practicum Site?**

If the student is employed at an agency where the practicum occurs, this employment does not change or reduce any practicum obligations. Similarly, if a student is accruing internship hours at a practicum site, this does not change SVC Cooperative Education or Human Service Department practicum standards or obligations. It is thus recommended that the agency and the student give separate consideration to the Human Service practicum and its specific requirements.

## **Practicum Documentation Requirements**

The timely completion of all paperwork and documentation requirements is a key student practicum responsibility. Human Service practicums must meet and conform to all standards of the SVC *Cooperative Education Department*. *Documentation forms* to be used have been developed by Cooperative Education and their use is mandatory. It is the student's responsibility to insure

that all forms are completed and signed, as required, by the agency staff person providing direct student supervision. **All necessary Cooperative Education forms are available on this website.**

(1) Cooperative Education ***Applied Skills Learning Contract***

The ***Applied Skills Learning Contract*** serves as the overall summary agreement between the College, the Agency, and the student. Once the student and the agency have reached an agreement regarding the practicum field placement, students are required to develop and submit an *Applied Skills Learning Contract* to their Human Services faculty advisor. This, and all other practicum documentation, is maintained in a Department student practicum file.

While it is the responsibility of the student to develop and submit the *Applied Skills Learning Contract*, this document (and the *Cooperative Education Learning Objectives* form) should be completed in consultation with the agency on-site supervisor. These agreements need to be signed by the student, the work-site supervisor, and the Human Service Faculty advisor (sponsor).

The *Applied Skills Learning Contract* will contain contact information on both the student and the agency. It will also provide the practicum job title and a summary description of duties to be undertaken by the student. All Human Services practicum students will be enrolled in the 30 Hours/Credit Option and the start date of their practicum and the number of credits for which they are enrolled should be specified.

(2) Cooperative Education ***Learning Objectives***

The *Applied Skills Learning Contract* should be accompanied by the development of the student learning objectives. A specific form for these objectives has been developed. Practicum students must list a minimum of two objectives plus an additional objective for each credit for which the student is registered (**e.g. 1 credit = 3 objectives; 2 credits = 4 objectives; 3 credits = 5 objectives and 4 credits = 6 objectives**).

It is important to note that each learning objective is to be written as a ***goal-statement*** identifying what skills or classroom knowledge the student hopes to demonstrate through the work-based learning experience.

Each objective developed by the student should identify: (1) ***What*** specific job-related skill the student wishes to demonstrate or learn, (2) ***How*** that objective will be accomplished, and (3) how the student will know ***when*** each objective will be accomplished. Additional information on the development of student practicum objectives is included on the attached forms.

Objectives should be developed in consultation with the agency site supervisor. Learning Objectives are agreed to by the student, the agency supervisor, and the faculty advisor. All three parties sign the *Learning Objectives* form.

Learning objectives need to be carefully written with specific activities constructed to enable the student to meet the objectives. Students (rather than their Agency supervisor) are responsible for the development of the objectives. It is an expected part of the learning process that students develop the skill of writing learning objectives. It is recommended that students prepare their proposed objectives in written draft form and meet with their agency supervisor to discuss the objectives. Once there is agreement, the student should complete the *Learning Objectives* form, sign it, have the Agency supervisor sign it, and submit it to the student's faculty advisor for signature. Once signed by the faculty advisor the document becomes a valid contract for credit.

(3) Cooperative Education ***Student Self-Evaluation***

Each quarter the student will complete a self-evaluation of the student's learning experience. A self-explanatory form has been developed for this purpose and is attached.

(4) Cooperative Education ***Supervisor Evaluation***

Each quarter the student's agency supervisor will also complete an evaluation of the student's learning experience. A self explanatory two page form has been developed for this purpose and is attached. This form includes a performance evaluation check list as well as a section for the supervisor's comments on the Department's practicum program.

(5) Cooperative Education ***Timesheet***

As has been noted, for each hour of academic credit the student must complete 30 hours of supervised experience. This time must be carefully documented by the student. The Agency supervisor must approve the time sheet record before it can be submitted to Department facility. All hours for which the student has contracted must be documented and submitted on the designated *Timesheet* before the student can obtain credit for the practicum.

(6) ***Practicum Integration Paper***

Each quarter the student is required to develop and submit a two-page paper that summarizes the students learning experience in efforts to accomplish initially identified learning objectives. Each learning objective should be reviewed as to the degree it was accomplished. The student will also address those factors that influenced the accomplishment of objectives. The paper will also include a short introduction and summary conclusion.

The practicum student is responsible for all documentation. All documentation must be submitted prior to the end of the quarter if the student is to receive a grade for the course. The student is responsible for insuring that the **Learning Contract** and **Learning Objectives** forms are completed, signed, and turned in to Department faculty along with the **Student** and **Supervisor Evaluations** and the **Timesheet**. The student must also make sure that the agency supervisor has the appropriate evaluation form and that it is completed and reviewed with the student and, where possible, the faculty advisor.

### **The Agency Site Visit by the Student's Faculty Advisor**

Each quarter it is required that the student coordinate arrangements for a host agency site visit conducted by the student's faculty advisor. It is required that both the student and the appropriate agency supervisor be available to meet with Department faculty to review student progress in accomplishing identified learning objectives. Generally these meetings require approximately 30 minutes.

At this meeting the faculty member will solicit feedback from the agency as to the student's conduct and professionalism on the job, their dependability, and their reliability in performing assigned duties. The Department faculty will also seek to insure that the agency is providing appropriate supervision and direction. If necessary, the *Learning Contract* or *Learning Objectives* may be revised.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Human Service practicum experience is a partnership between the student, the agency supervisor, and the faculty advisor. Each of these parties has different roles and responsibilities.

The Human Services **student** is at the center of this learning partnership. It is the responsibility of the student to:

- (a) Locate an appropriate agency placement site.
- (b) Work with a specific agency supervisor to identify the details of the practicum assignment.
- (c) Insure that all paperwork, meetings, and reporting requirements are met in a timely and professional manner.
- (d) Conform to all appropriate agency and college rules and regulations.
- (e) Bring any problems or questions to the attention of the agency supervisor or faculty advisor as appropriate.

The student's **agency supervisor** is a qualified human services professional who is the student's primary resource with the agency. The agency supervisor will:

- (a) Review, negotiate, and approve the student's initial learning contract and learning objectives.
- (b) Work with the student to identify acceptable hours and work responsibilities.
- (c) Facilitate the student's professional connection with other agency staff, clients and community resources.
- (d) Support the completion of paperwork related to agency and school programs.
- (e) Be available to the student to provide supervision or evaluation.
- (f) Meet with program faculty at the time of the agency site visit.

It is also expected that the agency supervisor will bring any problems that can not be resolved with the student to the attention of the faculty advisor in a timely manner.

The SVC Human Services **faculty advisor** supports the integration of classroom instruction with agency-based, on-site learning. It is the responsibility of the faculty advisor to:

- (a) Prepare the student for a practicum experience through appropriate course work, consultation, and suggestions as to practicum possibilities.
- (b) Approve the student's practicum site selection.
- (c) Review and approve all practicum paperwork including the learning contract and learning objectives as submitted by the student.
- (d) Consult with the agency supervisor and student as requested in implementing practicum responsibilities.
- (e) Conduct an agency site visit to meet with the student and agency supervisor once each quarter.
- (f) Assign end-of-quarter grades based on the student's practicum performance.

**(g)** Assume a lead role in working with the student, agency supervisor, and other SVC staff as necessary in resolving any problems, dilemmas or conflicts that occur in the course of a student's practicum experience.

**The supportive working relationship that occurs between students, faculty, and community agency supervisors insure the success of this valuable component of the Human Services Program.**

Skagit Valley College provides a drug-free environment and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or age in its programs and employment.

**For further information:**

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