

Tips for a Field Placement Interview

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

A. Preparing for the Interview

You may want to do some research about the agency prior to the interview. Most agencies have a web page where you can learn about the agency's mission and program(s). Talk with other students and community professionals to learn about their perception of the agency. You should also take a copy of your resume with you to the interview. Have a friend and/or instructor look it over for you.

Spend some time clarifying your career goals. This will enable you to answer the interviewer's question: what would you like to be doing five years from now? Talk with another student who has completed, or is in the process of completing, their internship. Find out from the student's perspective the strengths and challenges of their field experience. What did they like about field, what didn't they like? Meet with the placement assistant to discuss your educational and career goals. Do *not* set up an interview until you have received a referral from the placement assistant. Remember to "dress for success."

B. Act Professionally

Treat it as a job interview. Dress like you would for a job interview and arrive 15 minutes early. Bring a copy of your résumé. You can get assistance with your résumé at the Career Services Office.

C. Practice Interviewing

- Create a good first impression. Introduce yourself and establish rapport with the interviewer.
- Prepare concrete examples of your strengths and experiences to showcase your skills.
- Practice out loud in front of a mirror or with a friend.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

A. Questions You May Be Asked

- Tell me about yourself. What do you believe you will contribute to this agency?
- Why are you interested in this placement, and what educational opportunities would you like to see?
- What previous experience do you have that qualifies you for this internship and that makes you a competitive candidate here?
- What is your understanding of our work and our mission? How does that fit with your interests?
- What do you feel are your greatest strengths and challenges?
- What type of people appeal most/least to you as potential clients?
- What are your long-term career goals and what would you like to be doing 5 years from now?
- Tell me about any social work-related volunteer or employment experience you may have.

B. Questions for the Interviewer

- Will your agency request a background check? Are fingerprints, a drug screen, a TB test, or any other health tests required? Will I be responsible for obtaining these and covering the costs?
- What are the dress code expectations for interns? (*piercings, tattoos, etc.*)
- What days and hours will I be expected to do my field placement?
- What population will I be working with?
- What tasks will I be expected to perform? What experiences can I expect to have?
- Will I be expected to travel offsite? How often? Will I need to use my own car?
- Are students reimbursed for mileage to cover community-based services provided by student? Is parking available? Is there a fee? Any other anticipated expenses?
- Am I expected to work on WSU scheduled holidays and breaks? How will the student's workload be covered during the holiday break?
- If I miss a scheduled field day, will I be allowed to make up the hours? If so, when?
- Who will be my immediate supervisor assigning tasks? Will this person approve my field hours, and will they provide LMSW supervision of at least one hour, one time per week?
- Are there opportunities for association, consultation, or networking with professionals or other agencies in the field?
- What experiences, skills, and characteristics does your agency look for?
- Is there a work station set aside for students? Will I need to bring my laptop?
- Be sure to mention or ask about any personal restrictions and/or constraints you might have that could impact the work to be performed.
- What are the safety issues associated with the placement? Does the agency provide crisis intervention training?
- What resources are available to students: number of professional staff; what other professional disciplines are there in the agency; availability of support staff; workload of professional social workers; workload of field instructor etc.

C. Clarification About Acceptance

- Ask how and when you will be contacted regarding the acceptance decision. (Some agencies will inform WSU, who will in turn inform students.)
- Ask about how to accept their offer. If accepted, when should you notify them of your final decision? (*Once you accept, do not continue to look at other agencies*).

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

A. Follow Up

Write a thank you note or send an email to your interviewer and all others involved in your interview process. After the agency has given an offer, you **MUST** notify your field instructor of your final decision.

B. Additional Resources

Check the agency website for information. A Google search can generally lead you to more information. Read any news articles about the agency that you can find. Treat the interview as you would any other job interview, and remember that it is an important part of your professional degree.