

LEARNING PLANS

Why Have Learning Plans?

The learning plan is a guide that directs and monitors the student's learning and the field instructor's teaching.

It is used to define:

- what the student needs and wants to learn
- what learning activities (strategies) will be used to achieve the learning objectives
- how the student, field instructor and (sometimes) the seminar leader will monitor and evaluate the student's accomplishments
- the roles and responsibilities of all the people, including the student, involved in the student's learning
- the instructional/supervisory meeting times and process of instruction/supervision a process to deal with renegotiation of the plan, conflicts and evaluations

What Is A Learning Plan?

It is a negotiated agreement between the student and the field instructor and the seminar leader that sets out the process and content of student learning. It can include learning objectives, specific learning strategies/activities and methods of evaluation. It also can include roles and responsibilities of all people involved in the teaching and learning experience

How Do I Prepare?

Field instructors can prepare for negotiating a learning plan by:

- reviewing the course objectives for SW 3D06/3DD6 or SW 4D06 /4DD6
- reviewing the School of Social Work's expectations for field instructors and field settings
- considering what learning opportunities exist in the field setting
- considering and preparing colleagues who might be involved in the student's learning
- reviewing personal expectations of the student and yourself
- considering how to communicate your teaching style and expectations
- arriving at a mind set that allows for negotiation

Students can prepare for negotiating a learning plan by:

- reviewing the course objectives for SW 3D06/3DD6 or SW 4D06 /4DD6
- reviewing the program's evaluation form to determine what criteria will be used to evaluate your performance
- completing a self assessment to consider what you need and want to learn and how you want to learn
- reflecting on learning style (do I learn best by observing? Doing? Reading and thinking?)
- considering your expectations for a field instructor and how to state them
- considering how you communicate, deal with authority, engage in self directed learning, deal with feedback, cope with conflict
- consult with appropriate faculty, mentors and other students arriving at a mind set that allows for negotiation

What Is A Learning Objective?

A learning objective is a statement of what needs to be learned. It is helpful to develop it in specific terms so that the student and field instructor can identify when it has been met. For example, "I want to learn how policies affect service consumers" is a great goal but broad and non-specific.

It would be helpful to break the goal into at least two objectives:

"I want to learn the hospital's policy on Living Wills"

" I want to discuss a Living Will with one patient"

What Is a Learning Strategy?

A learning strategy is a plan to meet a specific learning objective. It must be based on what is realistic. This includes what learning opportunities are available at the setting, access to resources, and whether the strategy can be implemented within the time constraints of the placement. It is also negotiated around the skill level of the student and the field instructor. (For example, it may not be appropriate for the student in the above situation to discuss a living will with a patient but the student may have the opportunity to observe a staff member carrying out this task). Some people make the learning strategies very specific. Dates are assigned for task completion.

For example:

- a) I will read the hospital's policy on Living Wills by October 1.
I will review two journal articles regarding Living Wills by October 1
We will discuss my understanding of the policy and how staff members discuss it with patients at our supervisory session on October 5.
- b) I will observe a staff member discussing a Living Will by November 1.
- c) You (the field instructor) will assign me a patient that will be facing issues related to this policy and we will discuss how I will talk with this patient about the policy.
By the middle of December I will have interviewed a patient, discussed quality of life issues and the policy on Living Wills. I will discuss this interview with the field instructor.

An important consideration when negotiating learning strategies is to consider if this strategy is the most beneficial to the student and is relevant to their learning. To use an extreme example, one might be able to rationalize that making coffee is one strategy to meet the learning objective of developing positive work relationships with colleagues but it is not relevant to learning and not very beneficial to the student.

How Do We Evaluate the Learning?

A learning contract usually will give the student and the field instructor a sense of accomplishment. If a student and a field instructor can identify specific behaviours that indicate that a learning objective has been met, both feel confident that the student has learned. Evaluation methods should contain how the student will be evaluated and who will be

consulted. The amount of detail included varies.

Following the above example:

- a) (The field instructor) will ask questions about the policy and my understanding of its implementation on Oct. 5
- b) The field instructor will review with me what I observed the staff member doing when (s)he discussed the policy with the patient. I will discuss my understanding of the interview, the patient's needs and the policy.
- c) The field instructor will review the process of the discussion with the patient I interviewed and give me feedback on how well I communicated the policy. The field instructor will ask staff if the patient has made any reference to Living Wills since the discussion and if so, how well they understand the policy.

How Do I Negotiate the Roles and Responsibilities?

It is important that everyone know what is expected of them. It helps to discuss what each person expects from themselves and the other. To facilitate this, reviewing the school's definition of the respective roles and each person's expectation. This is where student and field instructor might discuss past experiences in learning situations, individual teaching & learning styles, strengths and challenges, and how to manage conflict.

It also helps to identify the dates and times of supervisory / instructional sessions, how long they will be and who prepares the agenda. It is important that the student negotiate what they are expected to bring to the conferences e.g. recordings, tapes, a demonstration of a specific procedure, a review of all cases, concerns, mistakes, observations etc. On a practical note, it is important to discuss placement hours, who keeps a record of them, what to do when unable to attend the placement and other relevant agency procedures.

Things to Keep in Mind:

- The field instructor/student learning relationship is very meaningful to the student and central to her/his learning. The learning plan allows for clarity in the relationship.
- There is considerable anxiety associated with learning.
- The field instructor must be mindful of her/his power
- Learning plans are negotiated
- Learning plans are evolving. As the student and field instructor get to work, they will need to modify the plan based on greater clarity of objectives, a greater understanding of the student's needs and learning style, a greater understanding of the field instructor's teaching style and a deeper recognition of the field setting's constraints and opportunities.
- Learning plans can be used to resolve conflicts, assess role functioning and to evaluate progress
- A learning plan can, perhaps should, and likely will, be renegotiated.

SAMPLE LEARNING PLAN

Student's name: J. M.
Faculty liaison: S.S.

Field instructor's name: M. G.
Field setting: Services to Older Adults

Placement days and hours: Mondays 9:00 - 5:00, Wednesday evenings 6:00-10:00
 Thursday mornings 9:00 - 11:00 for Team Meetings

Field instruction meetings: Monday 1:30 - 2:30 J.M. to prepare weekly agenda and bring material for discussion.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	LEARNING ACTIVITIES/ STRATEGIES	EVALUATION
<i>Normally there would be more objectives, strategies and evaluation methods This is a sample.</i>		
<p><i>KNOWLEDGE:</i> Understand the indicators of elder abuse</p>	<p>Read literature on elder abuse Contact the community task force on elder abuse</p>	<p>Present a 15 minute summary of the indicators of elder abuse and the current activities of the community task force . Ask field instructor and team members for feedback</p>
<p><i>SKILL:</i> Run a caregivers' support group</p>	<p>Read literature on support groups and caregiver issues. Develop a plan for group member recruitment. Facilitate a 6 week group.</p>	<p>Present proposal to field instructor on October 10. Run group in early November to mid December. Complete weekly group summaries. Field instructor will review and discuss. At end of group ask members to evaluate the group.</p>
<p><i>PROFESSIONAL/ PERSONAL</i> Explore fears of working with older adults who are cognitively impaired.</p>	<p>Do a journal entry exploring the origin of the fears. What they are and how this relates to my life.</p> <p>Work with an older adult who is cognitively impaired.</p> <p>Journal my reactions. What I learned about myself and ways that I managed my fears.</p>	<p>Talk to field instructor about personal biases. Discuss my actual work with the client. Field instructor will help me examine how my feelings affected my work and whether I began to manage my fears in a way that was helpful to my client</p>

EXPECTATIONS:

Field Instructor:

- ▶ will orient me to placement
- ▶ will explain organizational structure and mission
- ▶ will provide learning opportunities
- ▶ will meet weekly for field education meetings
- ▶ will provide feedback, ask questions and give suggestions
- ▶ will identify any concerns as soon as possible

Student:

- ▶ will attend placement at agreed upon days and hours
- ▶ will notify field instructor of any absences
- ▶ will follow agency policies
- ▶ will participate in learning
- ▶ will come prepared to field conferences
- ▶ will identify concerns as soon as possible
- ▶ will provide feedback to field instructor

If a conflict arises, we agree to try to identify it as early as possible. We will meet to talk about it and try to respectfully listen to each other. If unresolved, we will ask the seminar leader or a mutually agreed upon staff member to try to help us resolve it.

We will discuss changes to this plan as they arise. We will formally review the plan at our mid-term evaluation conference on December 12.

SIGNATURES: _____

DATE: _____