

# Practicum • Part I

## DEVELOPING A PRACTICUM

Programs of study can often be augmented by a practicum in the field. A practicum can provide the student with the opportunity for professional skill development and experience to supplement coursework. The practicum also might begin the complex networking necessary for finding employment after program completion. In this vein, a guide to seeking practicum possibilities has been provided.

### **Preliminary Preparations**

**What type of practicum do you want?** Seriously consider your interests and expectations for a possible practicum. Do background research on areas of interest. Talk with other students who have completed their practicum experiences.

**Supplement your core curriculum** with specific courses that relate to your choice of practicum experience. For example, if you want to work in business and industry, include in your program courses as electives from the College of Business.

**Develop and update your resume on a regular basis.**

**Explore already established practicum opportunities.** Contact the undergraduate community practicum coordinator for information about sites used by the department's undergraduate students.

**To create your own practicum site,** the following steps are recommended:

**Develop a support system within the department.** Discuss your ideas and interests with your advisor or others on staff who might be able to guide you or make suggestions.

**Develop a list of specific experiences that you feel should be included in the practicum.** For example, what types of clients would you like to work with during practicum? What specific skills would you want to develop?

**List businesses or organizations where this type of practicum might be a possibility.** Research or volunteer experience done earlier might yield specific information along these lines. Visit job fairs (there's a social service-specific fair held at UT during fall semester each year). Reading professional journals and other current relevant materials (newspapers, magazines, etc.) also might be helpful.

**Establish a contact person within the organizations.** Professional groups and other agencies (such as United Way) often publish directories that list names and work addresses of program

personnel. Using relevant directories (often available in either hardcopy or Internet versions) can often provide current names and position titles.

**Make an appointment to meet with the contact person.**

**Draw up a draft contract of mutual responsibilities between you and the agency.** If the appointment proves successful and mutual interest is shown, the contract should help to solidify expectations for both parties.

**When agreement is reached, establish a final written contract between the program or organization and the Child and Family Studies Department** and provide copies to the site supervisor, your major professor, and be sure to retain one for yourself.

**When your final decision is made** by at least April 30th for a fall practicum or November 30th for a spring practicum. Also, provide your major professor with general information about the agency and terms of your practicum so he/she can write to the agency and send a packet of materials.

**When registering for the practicum term:**

**Be sure to pay the professional liability insurance fee** through the CHE Business Office.

**Check to make sure that you get (and stay!) registered** for CFS 564 and/or 565: Practicum in Family Studies.

**Be prepared to meet health requirements** such as TB tests, physical exams or background checks that an agency may require before or during your practicum.

# Setting Up Your Community Practicum

## Initial Contact With the Agency

Usually the practicum student will initiate the first inquiries with potential placement sites.

## Steps to Follow Before Appointments

**Carefully consider all agencies** you're interested in:

**Check** with the faculty supervisor to see if the agency meets the criteria of an acceptable placement site (see p. 3).

**Become informed** about the agency and its activities before you have an appointment with the agency contact person, possibly stopping by ahead of time to pick up fliers on the agency, or making a visit to the agency, etc.

**Anticipate goals you want to achieve** while serving the practicum; be ready to answer such a question if asked.

**Complete your resume** and leave a copy during your visit to the agency.

## Call for Appointments

Make it very clear as to whether you are:

Calling to get acquainted with them as a possible practicum site, yet still exploring other places, or

Calling for an interview to be definitely considered as an applicant for a practicum position (if doing this, you are creating expectations that if they say YES, you would accept-if not, make it clear you're exploring possibilities).

## During the Interview

Take with you a copy of your resume to leave with the agency.

Realize that this is like a job interview; they may be evaluating you as much as you are evaluating them.

If asked what the university expects of them:

Summarize the practicum characteristics and objectives

State that the only paperwork required is completion of the 2-page Intern Evaluation that will be sent in a packet or delivered by you.

Give the agency representative the appropriate name of your major professor.