DEVELOPING THE LEARNING CONTRACT

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, CHICO
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

PURPOSE OF THE LEARNING CONTRACT

- Establishes objectives for the students
  - Feasible
  - Attainable
- Serves as a tool to identify
  - What the student will learn
  - What activities will be a part of the placement experience

PURPOSE…

- Collaborative effort between the student, agency field instructor, and faculty field liaison
- To be considered a working document and guide for supervision throughout the academic year
- Made up of three components:
  - Learning goals – where they are going
  - Learning tasks – how they will get there
  - Timeframe for accomplishing the tasks – which semester (fall, spring, or both) do you want the student to complete the task

HOW TO BEGIN

- Planning should begin during the first 2 weeks of the placement
- Things to consider:
  - Student's goals
  - Student's experience level (employment, volunteering)
  - Student's learning style
  - Student's strengths, limitations, motivations, and interests

LEARNING CONTRACT PROCESS

- Student drafts the initial contract, consideration should be given to trying to tie class assignments into the learning tasks as appropriate (for example: research a specific service delivery model, legislation that has impacted service delivery, etc.)
- Agency field instructor (AFI) reviews the draft, makes changes, additions
- Student submits draft learning contract to faculty field liaison, makes changes, additions
- Student enters final version of learning contract into online field placement system CalState S4

PREPARING THE LEARNING CONTRACT

- Each student is expected to formulate specific goals in 9 competency areas (within each area consider 3-5 learning tasks that address three areas)
  - Agency Services
  - Personal Development
  - Professional Development
- Within each competency area, the student is expected to list specific goals and ways to achieve them
  - Agency Services

AGENCY LEARNING GOALS

- This area pertains to the nature of the fieldwork agency in which the student is based
- Consideration should be given to tasks that help the student learn the following:
  - Services and programs the agency provides
  - Agency history, philosophy, structure, and funding
  - Nature of the client population
  - Agency policies and procedures
  - Application of the generalist method to specific cases/assignments (micro, mezzo, macro)
  - Agency decision-making processes

PERSONAL LEARNING GOALS

- Pertains to the student's uniqueness as an individual and changes they would like to make to help them in the role of a practicing social worker
- Considerations should be given to tasks that will help students identify the following:
  - The differences between personal and professional boundaries
  - Personal blocks to effective social work practice
  - Self-awareness in relation to human diversity (cultural and lifestyle differences, disadvantaged groups, women's issues, etc.)
  - Personal values that help or may hinder effective practice
  - Assessing and recognizing impact of secondary trauma

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING GOALS

- Pertain to theory, methods, and skills common to the work of a professional social worker that may be learned in the current placement but applicable in other social work agencies as well
- Considerations should be given to the following:
  - Development of skills and knowledge bases necessary to perform the role of a social worker in your agency
  - Accountability to client systems (maintaining confidentiality, keeping appointments, following through on plans, etc.)
  - Learning to work as part of a Team with agency staff
  - Identification of client concerns/problems
  - Communication and interviewing skills
  - Problem-solving process
  - Diversity
  - Community resources and making referrals
  - Social work practice methods (establishing relationships, collecting data, making assessments, intervention, evaluation, and termination)
  - Integrating and applying academic knowledge and theory to actual social work situations

CLIENT SYSTEMS – MICRO, MEZZO, MACRO

- It is acknowledged that each agency varies in its ability to provide the student with equal experiences with all client systems
- Example of each:
  - Micro
    - Case Management
    - Individual Counseling
    - Advocacy/brokering
  - Mezzo
    - Attend team or multidisciplinary meetings
    - Attend support, educational or recreational/socialization groups
    - Make home visits and participate in family interviews
  - Macro
    - Identify specific techniques or agency's administrative decision making
    - Write a letter to the editor regarding an issue
    - Attend a board meeting

LEARNING GOALS

- Please note – it may be appropriate for certain strategies and evidence of accomplishments to fit in more than one goal
- The Learning Contract worksheet is located in Blackboard and the final Learning Contract form is located in CalState S4

- CSU, Chico School of Social Work wants to thank Salisbury University for their contributions to the development of this power point