SUGGESTIONS FOR MACRO ASSIGNMENTS IN FIELD PLACEMENTS

Introduction

All human service agencies can provide management, community organization and policy relevant assignments for practicum students. The key to creating these sorts of assignments is keeping in mind that the focus of intervention or the target system should be larger than an individual or a family (e.g. an organization, interorganizational system, neighborhood community, the state, etc.). Some assignments will overlap management and community organizing work and will also include a group experience, because typically community practice involves bringing people together to carry out some sort of task. So, for example, an assignment that involves a student in program development, such as working with a Committee of Parents to develop a Parenting Education program, involves work with a task group, recruiting and motivating community residents or agency clients, and enhancing the services aspect of the agency.

The above example also calls attention to one of the common differences between macro work and clinical work, namely that the people one works with are usually functioning in the capacity of citizens or organizational staff members and not as clients who have come into the agency seeking help of some kind. Although the individuals one works with may also exhibit personal and interpersonal problems, the aim of the work is not therapy or treatment, but system intervention.

Some principles of macro assignments to keep in mind

- Assignments should be sufficiently challenging to warrant the attention of a graduate student. For example, a practicum assignment that asks the student to develop a community resource manual may be useful as a way of getting to learn about resources, but normally does not require graduate level skills and knowledge to execute. If the assignment also involved developing and negotiating collaborative agreements with some specific group of community agencies, the assignment *could* become quite challenging and provide a useful learning experience.

- The student needs to be given responsibility for doing something, not just observing.

- Community organization assignments should usually require the student to organize people into a collective body or to work with an already organized collective body. This could include organizing and/or working with a planning group, a steering committee, a task force, a social action group, an interorganizational body such as a coalition, etc. There was a student whose community organization assignment was supposed to be setting up an Eating Together Program for a group of senior citizens in a particular neighborhood. He went about looking for possible sites and made a lot of contacts, all of which happened to have been unsuccessful. While this project sounds like a community organization assignment, the way it was carried out was not. The student operated alone, did all the work himself. If he had organized a group of senior citizens and involved them in helping to find a site that would have been more appropriate as a CO assignment and

maybe it might have also been more successful.

- Just as with clinical work, macro assignments need to be carried out consciously and deliberately. This means that the worker's interventions should involve the collection of appropriate information (study), assessment of the task and challenges, development of goals and strategies, interventions to reach one's goals, and evaluation of performance afterwards. Every meeting that a student attends as part of a macro assignment should require the student to prepare appropriately with task and process goals, should require the student to play a role that involves trying to accomplish those goals and objectives, and should become the basis for supervision and/or process recording, to assess the interventions, etc.

- Clinical concepts and macro concepts are often interchangeable and can be used well in field instruction around macro assignments. For example, concepts like resistance, crisis intervention and management, building on strengths, visualization or imaging, assertiveness, etc. are not owned by anyone discipline.

- A student should be able to complete an assignment in the appropriate time frame or if an assignment is more complex, it should be able to be picked up and carried on by another staff person after the student has finished his or her tasks.

Macro Assignment Suggestions & Ideas

Community Organization

- Developing and staffing a "steering committee" to develop or plan a program or special project of some sort (e.g. a mentoring program for children). Members of the committee would involve community leaders, parents, and others with knowledge or expertise. For some programs, say a mentoring program, it is conceivable that a steering committee could expand and become the board of new agency in the future.

- Recruiting and/or working with an existing committee to plan and carry out some sort of fund-raising event (e.g. an agency phonathon, a neighborhood carnival, a spaghetti dinner, etc.).
- Recruiting and/or working with an existing committee to carry out an agency food drive for a homeless shelter, or a neighborhood food drive, etc.

- Organizing a group of clients or local residents to address a problem or condition in 2 the community or in another institution that they are concerned about (e.g. a school detention policy, or the lack of playground equipment, or the lack of access to a social security office for senior citizens in the community, etc.).

- Organizing and recruiting a legislative advocacy group who would mobilize support, prepare and provide testimony on a bill, and lobbying influential members **in** the state legislature or city or county council

- Organizing and working with a committee, to include residents, that develops and carries

out a needs assessment survey in a given neighborhood or community, or perhaps in a housing project. For example, if the agency was serving a senior citizen housing project, perhaps there would be concern with the number of seniors who seemed to have an alcohol abuse problem and the survey would seek to find out the extent of the problem and eventually develop services to deal with the problem.

- Developing and working with an interagency task force to coordinate a service that each agency is providing in some part, such as procedures for referral of children or families where child abuse is suspected.

- Developing and training a group of volunteers or community residents who can provide community education around some problem of concern such (e.g. teen pregnancy, the spread of HIV, smoking, drug abuse, etc.).

Management

- Staffing a committee to develop an assessment form for some service the agency is providing, or to carry out an assessment of that service.

- Helping the agency to develop a program or functional budget if it does not have one.

- Developing and carrying out a cost-benefit analysis of the agency's programs or some specific project.

- Doing some marketing research, such as the development and implementation of a client/consumer service satisfaction survey.

- Developing a management information system for some particular program or client population.

- Negotiating and finalizing a contract for a purchase of service.

- Staffing a board committee, such as a nominations committee or a program committee.

- Researching a variety of policy or program options and presenting these to a decision-making body.

- Planning and coordinating arrangements for implementing or starting a new program or project (e.g. a new transportation system for seniors to a respite care program that the agency has started).

- Supervising a group of volunteers who are providing a service or overseeing a project.

- Coordinating the efforts of a staff working group who are trying to respond to a new opportunity.

- Developing and writing a grant proposal.

- Participating in recruitment interviews for a staff position within the organization and offering opinions and suggestions regarding the hiring process.

- Interviewing the executive director of the organization about the most important principles and practices for successful management.

- Interviewing a representative of the United Way in the community about the dynamics and challenges of interagency planning.

- Arranging a panel discussion of three to five social service agency administrators in the community on a challenging theme related to human service management for a half-day interagency staff development workshop for supervisors and upper managers.

- Examining staff development opportunities, and if appropriate, developing a training program on a topic that staff have expressed a need for more information.

- Assessing and writing a report on the effectiveness of teamwork processes within the organization and presenting it to the management team with suggestions or recommendations for improvement.

- Analyzing the organization's performance management system, including forms and procedures for staff appraisal. If appropriate, developing more usable behavior-specific evaluation methods.

- Conducting a "marketing readiness" survey in the organization to assess employees' willingness and ability to engage in strategic marketing activities. If needed, developing a "marketing plan" to carry out marketing strategies.

Policy

State & Federal Policy

Identify a piece of legislation (at the state or federal level) that has been proposed or passed that may have an impact on clients served by your agency or resources for service delivery.

- Have students identify the legislation and create a one page fact sheet, describing the legislation and the benefits/consequences to share with staff at the agency
- Examine agency policies, and research whether it is congruent with potential legislation or legislation that created the need for the agency policy
- Consider identifying a legislative bill that will impact your client population and organize an agency wide advocacy campaign (write letters to legislators, consider how you might educate the community about the impact, etc.). The student could do a presentation for staff, clients, or the community at large.

- Students have an assignment in their policy class that asks them to analyze a policy and advocate for it. Ask the student to share with you and agency staff the policy they have chosen and their advocacy plan to help educate other staff about policy advocacy.

Budgetary Impacts

Explore learning tasks that might help a student understand the funding streams for your agency and how state and federal budgets impact direct services

- Consider having your student interview a member of your agency's administrative team that has knowledge about the budget to provide some basic understanding of how services are funded. Have them report back to you about the information that was presented to them.
- The policy analysis assignment in their policy class also requires them to look at how this policy will impact the budget. Ask them to share this part of their assignment and consider having them share with your agency staff if it is a policy that pertains to your agency.
- Consider providing the student with internship hours to attend Legislative Lobby Days in Sacramento in March. They could then come back and present to you and/or your staff about the legislative bills that they lobbied for and provide an overview of those pieces of legislation.
- If there is a local budget issue that is likely to impact your agency consider what efforts your agency might take on and have the student help organize this (phone calls or letters to your board of supervisors, holding community meetings to educate others about the impact of this budget decision, etc.)
- Have the student attend a board of supervisors/advisory board meeting where the budget for your agency is being discussed.

Election Year

As an election year you may consider the following as a way to help students understand how elections impact direct service

- Have the student explore if your agency can serve as a voting site for local and federal elections
- Have your student put together a one page informational flier about where clients/staff can vote and important dates for voter registration, etc.
- Consider having your student provide a community education forum for clients about the importance of voting and help them register to vote and/or sign up for absentee ballots
- Have the student attend candidate debates