

Developmental Stages in Field

Stage 1: Beginning

Students Report:

Feeling like a stranger, then a guest
Feeling vulnerable and self-conscious
Being enthusiastic about assignments, yet fearful
Feeling anxious about meeting other staff
Feeling overwhelmed

Students Need:

A safe place to share concerns with seminar members and faculty liaison
Permission to be learners; to understand learning styles
To build self-awareness of strengths and limitations
To identify support systems
To discuss feelings and questions with field instructor
To be introduced at the agency, to have a place to sit, to leave coat, papers
Clarification of roles, expectations, and policies
A written orientation plan
A plan to focus goals and meet general requirements
To individualize placement
To understand how to use supervision in planning and reviewing work
Skills to start work assignments

Stage 2: Reality Confrontation

Students Report:

Stress: often get the flu or a cold, become a bit depressed
Becoming disillusioned with agency, field instructor, social work classes
Wondering if social work is a good fit for them
Wondering if social workers can do any good
Sometimes wanting to give up or change placements

Students Need:

To talk with peers, field instructor, and faculty liaison about doubts and fears
To reflect on how they handle stressful situations; to use stress management skills
To examine their expectations of themselves
Permission to make mistakes and take risks
To identify discomforts with agency, field instructors, social work profession
Assistance with major problems, crises, and decisions
To explore feelings about support, authority, independence
To build a solid supervisory relationship with field instructor
Effective supervisory conferences
Skills in feedback

Stage 3: Relative Mastery

Students Report:

Feeling more confident and competent
Learning to leave worries at the agency
Continued anxiety about new assignments, working with clients
Reaching a compromise between reality and expectations
Willingness to discuss value dilemmas

Students Need:

To take more initiative in own learning, become more self-directed
To explore new challenges
To continue building relationship with field instructor
To evaluate more concrete feedback
To evaluate own practice
To build on strengths and interests
To identify what learning they still need
To find ways to contribute to the agency

Stage 4: Closure

Students Report:

Feeling ambivalent about ending: sad, detached, relieved, withdrawn

Graduating Students Report:

Reappearance of self doubt
Being distracted by new demands - relocating, job search, license exam

First-Year Students Report:

Feeling ambivalent about ending: sad, detached, relieved, withdrawn
Looking forward with confidence to the next practicum
Having clearer expectations for the next practicum
Being concerned about meeting higher expectations for the next practicum

Students Need:

To reflect on past experiences with endings; identify patterns
To share feelings with seminar members and field instructor
To start the closure process early
To develop an ending plan
To reflect on their growth and learning
To use learning to develop new goals and future plans