Want to Host a Social Work Field Student? Here's How!

A Presentation to the MLA Conference

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A Word About Your Speaker

- Mark Giesler, PhD, LMSW
  - Professor of Social Work, Saginaw Valley State University
  - Therapist at Butterfly Counseling, Inc, Ypsilanti, MI
  - Five years of research about the intersection of social work and library services
    - "Field placements at public libraries: Experiences of social work student interns" (*Advances in Social Work*—in press)
    - "Perceptions of the public library social worker: Challenges and opportunities" (*Library Quarterly*)
    - "Humanizing oppression: The value of the Human Library experience in social work education" (*Journal of Social Work Education*)
    - "The collaboration between homeless shelters and public libraries in addressing homelessness: A multiple case study" (*Journal of Library Administration*)
    - "A place to call home?: A qualitative exploration of public librarians' response to homelessness" (*Journal of Access Services*)

Community-based history

Shared ethics

Emphasis on service

Professional skills and integrity

Respect for human rights/social justice

(From Zettervall and Nienow's *Whole Person Librarianship)*

Social Work and Librarianship: A Shared History and Perspective

And Yet What Happens in Practice?

- Librarians as Gatekeepers

- "Community-based non-professionals who have a "professional and moral responsibility to assist homeless people [and other vulnerable patrons] to the best of their capabilities"

  – From Anderson, Simpson, & Fisher (2012)

A Current View of Social Work Student-Library Partnerships

https://wholepersonlibrarianship.com/

Presentation Overview

Starting the Process

Getting Staff Buy-In

Tasks Students Assume

Communication with the University

Supervision Arrangements

Potential Barriers and Solutions to Those Barriers

Starting the process

Tasks Students Assume

Supervision Arrangements

Starting the Process: Understanding the Competencies

1. Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior

2. Engage diversity and difference in practice

3. Advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice

4. Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice

5. Engage in policy practice

6. Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

7. Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

8. Intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

9. Evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

Starting the Process: Bachelor vs. Master Level

- **Bachelor-Level** = generalist practice teaching basic prevention and intervention methods

- **Master-Level** = builds on generalist practice to include advanced (clinical and macro) skills applied to a specialized area

Starting the Process: Interviewing and Recruitment

- An opportunity for collaboration

- An honest and open conversation

- Who is the ideal student for this placement?

Starting the Process: Meet Mary

- "What I have found most impactful…is I want the [intern] to get out of the experience what they're hoping to, and then we will adjust the experience to suit them. They're doing us a huge benefit and helping us build and improve and serve the more vulnerable populations in our community."

  – From Zettervall and Nienow's *Whole Person Librarianship*

Starting the Process

Tasks Students Assume

Supervision Arrangements

Tasks Students Assume: Micro, Mezzo, and Macro

- Micro
  - Patron resource information and referrals
  - Crisis intervention

- Mezzo
  - Programming for patrons (Book clubs, special events, etc.)
  - Nonclinical support groups for patrons

Tasks Students Assume: Micro, Mezzo, and Macro

- Macro
  - Library needs assessments
  - Staff trainings
  - Writing grants

Tasks Students Assume: An Innovative Example

"Coffee and Conversations"

Task Students Assume: Meet Joshua

- "I have come to define my role as a community resources coordinator as bringing awareness of these services to every patron walking in through the library doors, empowering them to reach a higher quality of life. My desire, along with community partners and library staff, is to provide a one-stop shop model in which patrons can access resources for education, emergency services, employment, family matters, health improvement, and immigration…"
  - From "Social Work Students and Public Libraries" blog

Starting the Process

Tasks Students Assume

Supervision Arrangements

Supervision Arrangements: The Knowns

- Required number of face-to-face supervision hours

- Must be provided by a qualified social work supervisor

- Supplemented by a librarian task supervisor

Supervision Arrangements: The Ideal Supervisor

- Takes a hands-off approach

- Is available when needed

- Is willing to help student learn about library culture

- Serves as an advocate for students

- Has community connections

- Seeks outside support

Supervision Arrangements: Meet Marla

- "That's the biggest challenge…figuring out how to deliver the service within the parameters of what the library allows and defines as their service."
  - From "The Experiences of Field Supervisors of Social Work Interns Placed in Public Libraries" (Giesler, Johnson, and Paauw, currently under construction)

Getting Staff Buy-In

Communication with the University

Potential Barriers and Possible Solutions

Getting Staff Buy-In: Considerations

- Who makes the call--Library or SW Field Office?

- What needs to be in place?
  - *Affiliation agreement*
  - *Time duration of placement*
  - *Proper supervision arrangements*
  - *Library staff buy-in*
  - *Spatial considerations*

Getting Staff Buy-In: Meet Beth (and Company)

- In general, most staff are amenable to social work partnerships, although some staff may feel these partnerships are beyond the role and responsibility of the library
    - From "The Changing Role of Libraries: How Social Workers Can Help" (Families in Society)

Getting Staff Buy-In

Communication with the University

Potential Barriers and Possible Solutions

Communication with the University: Keeping the Lines Open

- Connect with all supervisors.

- Craft the learning plan.

- Ask about university supports for student.

Communication with the University: Meet Jenna

- "A place to process my colorful and impactful experiences...it was definitely a good support and it helped illuminate the need of having social workers in libraries to the rest of my class...I still bonded with my classmates even though they weren't in libraries...this class was essential."

  - From "Field Placements at Public Libraries: Experiences of Social Work Student Interns" (*Advances in Social Work*)— Giesler, Johnson, and Paauw, in press)

Getting Staff Buy-In

Communication with the University

Potential Barriers and Possible Solutions

Potential Barriers and Possible Solutions: A Partial List

- Poor or rushed orientation to the experience
  - Educate the student about the library system.

- Library/social work philosophical differences
  - Navigate the difference between privacy and confidentiality.
  - Learn about mandated reporting.
  - Have a conversation about what "helping" means.

- Student safety
  - Remember that students are not seasoned social workers!

Potential Barriers and Possible Solutions: Meet Kai

- "We really struggled and have tried a lot of different things in terms of finding a balance between keeping [the service provider]safe and protecting the privacy of patrons. We're hoping that in the remodel that's going to happen in some areas of our central library next year…that's one of the problems we'll be able to solve."

  – From Zettervall and Nienow's *Whole Person Librarianship*

Additional Resources

"Resources for Social Work in the Library" guide sheet

Thank you for your service to our communities!

Mark Giesler, PhD, LMSW
Saginaw Valley State University
magiesle@svsu.edu