**Key Field Experience Activities for UPP Interns:  
A Guideline**

**Introduction**

Graduates of Ohio’s University Partnership Program (UPP) are making a positive impact working as caseworkers in Public Children Services Agencies (PCSA) across the state. An essential part of their training is the completion of an internship in a PCSA.

Agencies should consider the following when organizing productive field placements for UPP interns:

* Assign work that is meaningful, but not overwhelming for students.
* A range of experiences should familiarize students with a comprehensive understanding of key agency services.
* Field experiences should follow a logical sequence, as much as possible, in the hectic world of child protection.
* It is critical that UPP interns have “real life”, “hands-on” experiences with clients and case situations. However, this should not put the PCSA or state at risk of liability or failure to meet mandates.

While state law affects field placement experiences, the host agency determines much of the interns’ day-to-day activities. Ohio policy stipulates that all cases must be officially assigned to a PCSA caseworker/employee, and that employees must perform certain specific case functions (e.g. making a monthly visit to a child in substitute care; making “face-to-face contact”, once a month with the principals involved in an in-home service case). However, interns can play a key role in these types of cases and can carry out a variety of other functions as well. For example, they can accompany caseworkers on home visits, monitor parent-child visitation, and make auxiliary home calls.

The principles that should guide the scope, nature and intensity of intern involvement include the following:

* Prior assessment of intern’s skills
* Interns’ preparation for the activity
* Close supervision.

With a plan in place to execute these principles, the host PCSA can engage the intern in a variety of very important learning experiences.

**Listing of Key Activities for UPP Interns**

The following recommended field activities were suggested by PCSA Field Instructors and administrators, social work educators, child welfare training experts, and the professionals who operate the UPP network. Every intern should be involved in each of these activities, at a minimum, to guarantee a meaningful field experience. Adjust these activities to suit the agency’s and the intern’s specific situation.

The list is not meant to be all-inclusive; you will likely find additional valuable activities for your interns. Remember that the purpose of these activities is the professional development of the interns, not to address staffing shortages at the agency.

Furthermore, interns should be placed primarily in intake and ongoing units, since they are most likely to be hired into those types of units upon graduation. The content in the child welfare classes the students take also align more with intake and ongoing, thus giving the students to apply what is taught in class to their work in the field.

1. **Lessons to Learn from the Field Instructor other agency personnel**

* Confidentiality
* Personal safety techniques
* Key agency policies which guide caseworker activity
* The purpose of key forms and procedures and the techniques involved in completion (e.g. especially the CAPMIS safety assessment, safety planning, family assessment & Family Case Planning tools)
* The rudiments of SACWIS – **please be sure to give them a password as soon as possible**

1. **Observations**

* The screening of a new referral and an initial investigation home visit
* A Juvenile Court hearing involving a child abuse/neglect action
* A child removal
* The process of placing a child in out-of-home care
* A sexual abuse investigation interview with a child and/or alleged perpetrator
* A permanency or adoption placement staffing
* Observe children of varied ages and assess their level of development
* A multi-disciplinary team meeting or family group conference or family team meeting
* A semi-annual review (SAR)
* Shadowing caseworkers from all of the agency’s service departments

1. **Participation in key activities**

Consider progressing the student from observing/shadowing these experiences, then allowing them to take the lead while the caseworker observes, then conducting some of these activities under the caseworker’s or supervisor’s supervision with follow up de-briefing. **It is important, however that interns not independently conduct activities that are mandated for caseworkers to complete** (i.e.: monthly home visits).

* + Visit key community service agencies
  + Monitor a parent-child visit
  + Visit a child in placement
  + Interact one-on-one with a child with a pre-planned purpose
  + Conduct a client interview to practice engagement skills
  + "Lead" a home visit
  + Complete a safety assessment
  + Complete a safety plan
  + Complete a family assessment
  + Complete a Family Case Plan
  + Complete documentation entries based on actual client contacts
  + Have some responsibility for the management of an open case (that is officially assigned to a PCSA employee) – if permitted by agency polices

**Closing Statement**

The UPP State Coordinator staff (listed below) and UPP universities are eager to help you develop your internship programs for UPP students. We can provide direct assistance, collaboration, and consultation to any PCSA interested in hosting interns.

Also, a publication for Field Instructors (“Recommended Practices in Field Instruction, A Guide for Field Education Sites”) and one for students (“University Partnership Program of Ohio: Child Welfare   
Practicum Handbook”) is available as tools to assist agencies in structuring the field placement.

Ohio's Public Children Service Agencies support of the UPP has been remarkable. We hope this   
document will help PCSA partners as they join in the challenging, exciting and   
important process of educating the next generation of professionally trained caseworkers.

**The UPP Network**

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| **Universities and**  **Coordinating Administrative Entities** | |
| University of Akron | Miami University |
| Ohio State University | Bowling Green State University |
| Cleveland State University | Central State University |
| Ohio University | University of Rio Grande |
| Wright State University | Department of Children and Youth |
| University of Cincinnati | Ohio’s University Consortium for Child and Adult Services (OUCCAS) |
| Ohio University | Public Children Services Association of Ohio |
| Youngstown State University | Ohio Child Welfare Training Program |

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