

# Innovations and Tips for The Students' First Placement

Developed by Susan Mulholland, U of A Fieldwork Coordinator

## INTRODUCTION

As Occupational Therapists, you always come up with some great tips and innovative ideas on how to better work with and supervise our OT students. Below are some compiled ideas/strategies to help make the first placement a success. **Please share this information with your staff or other OTs (feel free to make copies).**

Let us know if you have new ideas that can be shared and we will print them in future editions of the Fieldwork Newsletter.

The First Placement  
January to February  
5 Weeks, 4 days/week  
Level 1

## CASELOAD

Establishes a therapeutic relationship with one or more clients.

- During this first placement, the students should be **"doing"** as much as possible versus observing...
  - ❖ they should be able to learn to do those tasks/activities that you would teach a family member, volunteer, or assistant.
- The focus in this placement is on the **professional skills!**
  - ❖ do they look, behave, approach this placement in a professional manner?
  - ❖ are they socially appropriate?
  - ❖ managing to develop relationships with patients and other team members?
  - ❖ taking initiative to learn and asking appropriate questions at the appropriate time?
  - ❖ do they understand where to find information? Are they able to find this information?
  - ❖ are they feeling more comfortable in this health care environment?
  - ❖ are they sensitive to and aware of the hierarchy, politics, "who is who", and the general running of your site?
- Some general University **learning objectives** for this placement are listed at the end of this document and some other ideas for what the student should be able to do are listed in the Site Manual that your facility should have (2005 version, grey cover)
- **Visits** to other sites/community services/equipment vendors etc are encouraged

- ❖ identify 1 day/week that the student is responsible for organizing eg, visits to sites relevant to their placement/caseload i.e., acute care - equipment/wheelchair vendor.
  - ❖ the student should report back re: what they learnt and how it is relevant
  - ❖ students need to be sensitive that sites may say "no" to visitors due to workload, inappropriateness etc.
  - ❖ visits to sites where their classmates will explain service area/caseload/activities etc.
- Spend  $\frac{1}{2}$  day - full day with other **team members**.
    - ❖ student can follow patient to visits with other team members (if consent given)
    - ❖ have student explain how the team members' roles are different
- Whenever possible, encourage **students** to work **together** if there is more than one student at your facility eg,
    - ❖ visit sites/community services/equipment vendors together (see above)
    - ❖ practice assessments typically used by your site...eg, an initial interview, ROM, MMT, Jebsen Hand Function etc...
    - ❖ have students orient each other to different service areas
    - ❖ encourage students to communicate with each other to share experiences and problem solve (email, phone etc)
- Focus on **active observation** skills (versus passive)
    - ❖ ask the student to observe something specific re: the client eg, it may be the way he sits in the wheelchair, how he moves or transfers etc?
    - ❖ ask the student to concisely and clearly describe their observations to you
    - ❖ ask the student to observe your interactions with a client and to problem solve what the symptoms are? impact on functional independence? equipment needs? what is the diagnosis?
- Select **particular patients** (vs. ALL of them) that you would like your student to interact with and/or observe. Have your student go to resources and find out more re: diagnosis, appropriate assessments, activities etc. and report back to you.
- Feel free to say to a student, "that is a great question, why don't you go and **explore** it a bit and tell me what you find out...?"
- If you work with a very busy caseload you may like to ask the student to **write down** their questions and save them until a quieter time or pre-scheduled meeting time.
- Ask your student to spend  $\frac{1}{2}$  day becoming **familiar** with the location, contents and use of...
    - ❖ activities, equipment, assessments etc. found within your department/site
    - ❖ resources available to OTs within your program/department/site

- ❖ resources available to patients/clients via your site (patient education etc).
- Some settings have found that by the end of this placement the student is able to run a particular **patient education** group (eg, hip/knee) or can assess for simple bathroom **equipment**, make recommendations, fill out a form, and provide education to the client on it's use.
- The student can practice taking quick, concise, clear **written notes** for you as you assess the client.
- Ask for the student's **opinion** re...appropriate activities, adaptations, equipment, or services.
- Students benefit greatly from **time spent with clients**...
  - ❖ allow the student time to become comfortable "chatting" with patients
  - ❖ ask the student to "collect" specific information from patients eg, ADLS (leisure, productivity etc).
  - ❖ patients are usually very interested in students and often ask questions about school, where they are from etc...This is a great opportunity for the students to define "What exactly is Occupational Therapy?"
- A student could **accompany** a client to a Day Program or their other therapies (if consent given)...participate and observe the program and client's participation...and report back...again working on observation skills.
- Ask the student to read a client's **chart**...
  - ❖ to see how goal directed charting is done, then discuss how to set "client centred goals"
  - ❖ ask the student if the goals are "SMART" (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time orientated)
- Ask student to analyze an **occupation** or select a therapeutic activity for a client and give rationale (eg, why this activity?)
- Feel free to ask your student to **assist** in any student or University related activities eg,
  - ❖ input into a "Student or Orientation Binder"
- This placement is a wonderful opportunity for the student to experience **diversity**:
  - ❖ clients, their family, friends and social situations, community resources
  - ❖ diagnoses
  - ❖ many roles of OT
- Request that the student present a summary of 1 of their University **assignments**
  - ❖ to you or at a staff meeting or inservice

- Identify a topic area or broad theme for the student to integrate their experiences and discuss, once a week at a pre scheduled time. The theme can be changed each week or every few weeks...e.g., OT models of practice in this setting, the work environment, the interdisciplinary team, what does client centred "really" mean? etc
- FIELDWORK IN GENERAL – TRY A PEER BUDDY SYSTEM:
  - ❖ Schedule a weekly meeting with other OTs supervising students to share ideas, to reinforcement, stress relief etc.
  - ❖ Pair yourself with another OT for support and to bounce ideas off of.
  - ❖ Identify 1 or 2 OTs at your site who will provide supervision for the student when the supervising OT is away (sick or holiday) or needs a break.
  - ❖ We at U of A are more than happy to link you up with another clinician in a similar practice area at a different site to share ideas eg, Calgary acute care OT with Edmonton acute care OT

UNIVERSITY LEARNING OBJECTIVES- Level 1

By the end of the placement students will be able to:

1. describe the role of occupational therapy in this setting
2. apply the Occupational Performance Process Model to specific clients
3. describe client-centered practice
4. participate in planning and implementation of OT programs with assistance
5. communicate with clients and colleagues in a professional and effective manner
6. demonstrate ethical and safe practice
7. demonstrate effective time management skills and self-direct learning

I hope you find this handout relevant and helpful. Please contact me to add to the list or clarify any of the items.

Thank you for your commitment to student education.

Donna Drynan  
 OT Fieldwork Coordinator  
 604-822-7415  
[ddrynan@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:ddrynan@interchange.ubc.ca)