

Models of Fieldwork

The Group Model

Description:

A fieldwork model that involves groups of 2 to 6 students being supervised by one or a group of fieldwork educators during the same fieldwork placement.



How it Works:

The focus is on the students working together to plan their learning experience rather than depending solely on the fieldwork educator(s). Each student is assigned clients who he/she is responsible for individually and shared clients who are the responsibility of the student group. Students are expected to consult with one another when questions arise. Students should have the opportunity to share knowledge and ideas with each other and to reflect on experiences together. The fieldwork educator(s), however, is the expert who oversees and ensures good quality therapy. The fieldwork educator(s) also provides any expert intervention that is needed.

In this model, if there is only one fieldwork educator, he/she turns over his/her own caseload almost completely to the students by assigning clients to the students throughout the placement. This is a key element in order for the fieldwork educator to provide adequate supervision and not be overburdened during the fieldwork placement or after the students have departed.

If there are two or more fieldwork educators providing student education, one of these educators should take on the role of a coordinating educator. This person takes responsibility for the overall organization and structure of the placement and for facilitation of student interaction and collaboration. Each of the therapists involved in the placement experience accepts responsibility for areas of instruction specific to his/her strengths, interests, and expertise and assigns clients accordingly. The key element in assigning clients is to keep in mind that there are other educators also assigning clients.

Strategies for Success:

The **role of the coordinating educator** is to oversee the placement and ensure that the students' needs are being met by:

- Pre-planning the placement well in advance with the assistance of the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator and/or Outreach Developer.
- Preparing for the students' placement by arranging students' work space, meeting and discussing scheduling, expectations, and evaluation procedures with the participating occupational therapists.
- Carrying out general orientation activities.
- During orientation, clearly stating it is expected that students will collaborate with each other, and not compete for things such as clients, new opportunities, and therapists' time.
- Providing students with a schedule and developing student objectives, ensuring that there are both individual and group learning objectives.
- Providing time and identifying potential space for students to collaborate and work together.
- Holding weekly group supervision meetings in order to provide ongoing feedback, facilitate student interaction, and identify student needs.
- Meeting with each student individually, at least weekly, to assist with individual learning needs.
- Encouraging students to journal experiences and share reflections and questions at weekly student meetings.

- Coordinating student evaluations by incorporating students' self, peer, and therapist evaluations.

The **role of the fieldwork educator(s)** in this model is to introduce the students to various practice areas and to provide opportunities for them to practice their skills. Strategies for doing this are as follows:

- Accept responsibility for specific areas of instruction.
- Meet with the other fieldwork educator(s) and coordinating educator, if applicable, to discuss expectations, scheduling, and evaluation procedures.
- Agree on and maintain similar expectations for student performance with other participating therapists.
- Communicate weekly with the other fieldwork educator(s) and coordinating supervisor, in order to share information about the students' workload demands to avoid overloading the students.
- Articulate clear and measurable expectations to assess each student's individual and group performance.
- Set-up individual learning activities that correspond with each student's individual learning objectives.
- Set up structured joint learning activities. For example, during direct client contact, activities may be co-treating a client, co-leading a group, or co-developing an intervention plan. Indirect client activities may include developing a shared case presentation, peer review of documentation, or weekly peer meetings to share journal excerpts. Other activities may include joint teaching sessions with the students, having the students prepare a project together, or practicing assessments and interventions.
- Be prepared to answer questions and assist students but direct questions requiring specific expertise to the appropriate fieldwork educator.
- Keep a log to track the students' individual and group performance in order to assist with the evaluation process.
- Model team building behaviours.

The **role of student** in this model is to be an equal participant in the learning process by accepting responsibility for his/her own learning and for working collaboratively with others. Strategies for doing this are as follows:

- Identify individual learning objectives and shared group learning objectives.
- Share ideas and intervention strategies with the other students.
- Clarify expectations for the placement with other students and divide labour on assigned tasks.
- Support each other and respect each other's contributions.
- Receive and provide constructive peer feedback.
- Seek out information from the other students as well as fieldwork educators.

The **role of the University** includes: educating students and fieldwork educators about this model, and assisting with preparation for a placement for both fieldwork educators and students to ensure that all have the same information and that roles/expectations are clear. The University will also be available to provide ongoing guidance and advice to students and fieldwork educators during the placement.

Advantages of the group model include:

- Increases student time for practice and reflective discussion without increasing the fieldwork educator's time commitment.
- Enables part-time therapists to be involved in fieldwork education.

- ➔ Students take more responsibility for their own learning thereby decreasing dependency on the fieldwork educators.
- ➔ Students provide mutual companionship for one another. Peer support may decrease anxiety and fear which may lead to a higher performance level.
- ➔ Promotes more open communication among all members of the learning team and emphasizes teamwork, interaction, and communication skills.
- ➔ Students are exposed to and gain experience in a variety of practice areas.

References (Note: Suggested readings are marked by an *)

*Anthony, A. & Gaipman, B. (1996). Group Supervision Manual. University of Toronto, Department of Occupational Therapy.

Avi-Itzhak, T.E. & Kellner, H. (1995). Preliminary Assessment of a Fieldwork Education Alternative: The Fieldwork Centers Approach. The American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 49(2), 133-138.

Crist, P. (1993). Nontraditional and Group Fieldwork Models: Their Time Has Come. Education Special Interest Newsletter. AOTA. 3-4.

Fleming, J. Christenson, J., Franz, D. & Letourneau, L. (1996). A Fieldwork Model for Non-Traditional Community Practice. Occupational Therapy in Health Care, 10(2), 15-35.

Hengel, J. & Romeo, J. (1995). A Group Approach to Mental Health Fieldwork. The American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 49(4), 354-358.

Please contact the Outreach Developer for your region, _____, or the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator at (204) 789-3992 if you would like more information about this model or the fieldwork program.



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