

Expectations and Responsibilities in Service-Learning

The service site expects students...

- * To fulfill all hours and complete projects.
- * To complete a service-learning agreement that indicates goals and schedule of hours, with reasonable assurance that this agreement will be honored.
- * To respect the policies and expectations of the site, especially in regards to confidentiality and participation in required training sessions.
- * To behave professionally while carrying out assigned tasks, including observance of their established dress code.
- * To serve in a manner which preserves the reputation and integrity of Tennessee State University.
- * To provide a minimum 24 hour advance notice of absence.
- * To provide a minimum 48 hours advance notice if service must be ended.
- * To notify the professor and the Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement, if the student or site supervisor terminates the volunteer position.

You can expect the site supervisor...

- * To provide meaningful and satisfactory work related to skills, interests and available time.
- * To provide an orientation to the site and training for the position.
- * To share as much information as possible about agency organization, policy, clients, programs and activities.
- * To afford sound guidance, direction and input.
- * To encourage respect from fellow workers toward the student as a non-paid staff member.
- * To provide an opportunity for the student to make suggestions, receive feedback and develop a sense of being as an integral part of the program.
- * To complete an evaluation of your efforts at the end of the term.
- * To recognize your efforts as a volunteer.

The Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement expects students...

- * To accurately and dependably fulfill their committed hours.
- * To complete a service-learning agreement that indicates the goals and schedule of hours, with

reasonable assurance that this agreement will be honored.

**To follow TSU's policy on alcohol and drug use.*

* To provide a minimum 48 hour notification if site placement is terminated.

* To participate in structured reflection sessions.

* To approach safety on site with common sense.

* To respect client confidentiality in journals/papers and class discussions.

* To complete course work in a timely fashion.

* To complete a new service-learning agreement if placement site is changed.

* To adhere to TSU's honor code.

You can expect your professor with support from the Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement...

* To facilitate a basic orientation to the service-learning concept and requirements.

* To provide information on service learning, expectations and responsibilities, and support in locating a service-learning site.

*To assist in developing service-learning objectives and agreement.

* To provide support through challenges or difficulties encountered at service sites.

* To hold reflection sessions to facilitate the integration of service experience with learning objectives.

* To furnish opportunities to receive feedback and evaluate your experience at the end of the semester.

* To provide access to a resource center on service and leadership, including tapes, videos and books.

* To offer information about national community service networks, including hot web spots, listserves, and student conferences.

Special Considerations When Working With Children

The Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement makes the following recommendations to service-learning students and organizations to ensure safe interactions between volunteers and children.

Screening Volunteers:

Service-learning students working directly with children should be screened according to the

guidelines of the agency before their placement at the site. Screening may include a personal interview with the supervisor, police background check, criminal history disclosure statement, fingerprinting and/or letters of recommendation. Service-learning students working with children should ask their agencies about screening procedures. Site supervisors have their right to refuse placement of any student.

Training Volunteers:

Prior to their placement, service-learning students working with children should be informed of the potential liability risks in areas of sexual harassment, child molestation, one-on-one situations and physical and mental abuse. Service-learning students working with children should ask their agency about training procedures to avoid these situations.

Appropriate Precautions:

Service-learning students are advised to take the following precautions:

- Avoid one-on-one situations that place you alone with a child or isolate you and the child from the main area of activity.
- Respect the privacy of the child. Do not become intrusive or curious more than is necessary when working with the child.
- Respect your own privacy. Some children express a natural curiosity about boyfriends or girlfriends, personal relationships, and even sexual activity. Discussions about any of these topics is not appropriate.
- Use common sense when discussing sensitive subjects and do not go into details about your private life.

Reflection

"The ability to step back ponder one's own experience..."

Human beings have a natural need to reflect on past experiences, to work through the feelings associated with those experiences. Without adequate time to do so, our thoughts tend to become distorted by frustration, emotional overload and burnout. Reflection allows us to turn inward...

- Leads to thoughtful and thus more effective service.
- Helps you to search for long-term solutions to problems or issues witnessed on-site.
- Links academic content with service experience.

Reflection Models

One model for reflecting upon experience is to ask yourself, "**What,**" "**So What,**" and "**Now What**". This is a three step model.

What?

Step one asks for a statement of facts and occurrences. Asking "what" starts the reflection process through descriptive questions:

* What do I expect to get out of this experience (goals, purpose, ideas)?

- * What did I observe during my first visit?
- * What is the agency's mission? Its goals?
- * Are there other agencies in the community that have similar goals?
- * What part was the most challenging? Surprising?
- * What roles am I taking on?
- * What of myself did I share with others
- * What happened to me today?

So What?

Step two pertains to the difference the experience makes to you, the individual. It looks at the consequences of the day's action and asks the significance. This step challenges you to interpret the meaning of your experience.

- * What did this experience mean to me?
- * What did I do that was effective? Why was it effective?
- * What am I learning about myself and others?
- * What did I do that seems to be ineffective? How could I have done it differently?
- * What values, opinions, decisions have been made through this experience?

Now What?

Step three is the process of applying the lessons you have learned to other situations and contexts.

- * Is it important for me to stay involved in the community?
- * What will the final results of my efforts be?
- * How will my efforts working with this agency contribute to social change?
- * How can I use what I learned in my coursework or in a future career?
- * What changes would I make in this experience if it were repeated?
- * Will I continue to be of service? Why or why not?
- * How does this experience exemplify or contradict course materials?

Keeping a Service-learning Journal

Service-learning is graded through assessing what is learned through service. Grades are not based simply on completing your volunteer hours (although this is important). Keeping a journal of your experiences is a valuable method for documenting your progress in reaching academic goals.

Through journal writing, you describe, reflect and process your involvement in service. A journal serves as a useful record of both your service activities and what you learn.

A journal is not a log of events. It is a way for you to analyze the activities in which you are engaged and the new things you are learning. In a journal you can describe important events, and relate activities to your overall objectives. Below are some suggestions on what to include in a journal and what questions you might want to address. Use these suggestions in your own way. Don't treat them like a grocery list, each to be answered in a sentence. Some may not apply to you, or may need rephrasing for your situation.

About your work:

- * What do you do on a typical day at your service site?
- * Describe something you most disliked on site and why.
- * If you were in charge of the organization you volunteer for, what would you do to change/improve it? How hard would this be?

- * Tell about a person there whom you find interesting of challenging to be with. Explain.
- * What do you feel is your main contribution?

About yourself:

- * How do people at your service site (staff and clients) see you?
- * What did someone say or do today that surprised you?
- * What compliments have you been given/not given and what did they mean to you?
- * Did you take (or avoid taking) any risks there lately?
- * What has happened that made you feel you would or wouldn't like to do this work as a career?
- * What kind of person does it take to be successful at this work? As a successful volunteer?
- * What have you done at your site that has made you proud?
- * What insights have you gained into people and working with people?
- * Tell about the best thing that has happened to you there lately; something you or someone else said/did, a feeling, an insight gained, a goal accomplished.
- * What's the most difficult part of your work? In terms of skills and knowledge? In terms of personal demands?

Resources

- 1 Jacoby, Barbara. *Service Learning in Higher Education*. (San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers, 1996).
- 2 Grose, S. Kim. *Community Service and College Curriculums*, in Lieberman and Connolly. *Education and Action: A Guide to Integrating Classrooms and Communities*. Campus Outreach Opportunity League, 1992.
- 3 Virginia Polytechnic and State University Service-Learning Center "Service-Learner's Handbook," 1995.
- 4 BreakAway Site Leader Survival Manual. ed. Axt, Debbie. Vanderbilt University, 1994. P. 48