

TIPS FOR FIRST YEAR MSW INTERNS

1. Train yourself to ask lots of questions, and not just of your field instructor. (Ask other social workers at the agency, other professionals). Ask your supervisor if you can make individual appointments to speak with other professionals. The more that you learn, the better the experience will be. Your supervisor will not know what you don't know unless you ask. Remember, people usually enjoy talking about themselves and what they do.
2. Dare to speak up or question something that you don't understand, that you may not agree with, or an idea you have to improve the situation or develop programming. You have a fresh perspective on the operations of an agency that the "insiders" do not.
3. Ask for articles or other resources pertaining to a particular subject matter that you would like to know more about. If those around you do not have something, they can at least point you in the right direction.
4. Look inside at your feelings and reactions to things you experience with your cases and use supervision to process them even if it conflicts with your need to appear competent. These feelings and reactions are normal.
5. Jump on the band wagon. If you hear of or ask about some creative group, program, etc. going on at the agency, ask if you can observe or participate or talk to the person doing it. You may need to flex your schedule to be around when these opportunities are available.
6. Be open-minded and nonjudgmental. You will see and hear things that will be new to you and to your personal experience and value system. It is important to recognize this, process it and move on.
7. Identify clear goals and expectations for your placement experience with your supervisor. This way you'll know where you're going and the progress you make.
8. Dress professionally. Your appearance to staff and clients matters.
9. Take care of yourself. Work + Family + School = A lot. Find corners of time to do those little things you need to do for yourself.
10. Pick a field placement your second year which is different than your first year's placement. It's good to be exposed to different fields of social work, plus you never know (although you think you might know) what field you may want to specialize in.

"DIG IN, ASK QUESTIONS, TAKE RISKS, BE AWARE AND HAVE FUN!!"