

ADVICE FOR STUDENTS SERVING WITH COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

THROUGH SERVICE-LEARNING COURSE OR PROGRAMS

What You Should Know & What You Should Think About!

Making Contact...How do I get Started *contacting an agency for the first time? You should...*

- Request to speak with the Volunteer Coordinator or by individual by name, if available.
- Identify yourself as “a Northeastern student, part of _____ service-learning course/program.”
- Have the days and times you are available or assigned ready.
- If you get his/her voice mail, leave a message including your name, day and evening numbers, service interests, and available days and times.
- Be PROACTIVE...Call again, or ask for assistance from another employee, if the Volunteer Coordinator does not get back to you within a day or two. And if making contact a second or third time does not work, then it might be time to pursue serving with another organization and/or...
- Contact your professor, program coordinator, Service-Learning TA or the Center of Community Service for assistance.

What am I Getting Myself into? *There are many ways you can find out about the organization.*

- Attend the orientation! This is the best opportunity to ask questions about their expectations of you!
- Ask for brochures, flyers and if they have a web site. Request information about the organizations mission, vision or purpose, and policies and procedures.

What do they Expect of Me? *The basics of Commitment, Responsibility & Confidentiality*

- The organization and its clients are counting on you to fulfill your commitment, don't let them down!
- Treat your service-learning placement like a job in terms of,
 - Being prompt for your orientation and times to serve
 - Setting up a schedule and sticking to it
 - Calling your supervisor ahead of time if you cannot make it—and arranging to make up the missed hours if possible.
- As a service-learning student you are representing:
 - Yourself, your Professor/Coordinator, the Center of Community Service and Northeastern.
- If you drop the class/program or stop going for any reason, inform the organization, and your professor/coordinator right away.
- You may be privy to personal information (name, address, medical history, etc) about the organization's clients (those you are serving). What's considered confidential may vary depending on the situation or organization. Confidential information should not be disclosed to anyone. During discussions about your experiences, personal details such as an individual's name should be left out or supplemented with a pseudonym.
- Many organizations require a completed CORI check (criminal background check) before you may begin serving. If you are uncomfortable with this requirement, talk to your professor/coordinator.

Common Sense *Trust It...Use It!*

- Ask for information about the agency policies and rules.
- Set boundaries while serving. Think about whether you want to share personal information, such as your address or phone number with those you are serving with.
- Respect others' cultures, religions, values and beliefs, as you would want them to respect yours.
- Ask your supervisor if you have any questions, you're not expected to know everything!

Safety-Tips *While entering into a new area can be a great opportunity to learn, it is also important to take precautions to ensure your safety in an environment that is unfamiliar to you.*

- Know where you are going...Plan your route in advance.
 - Have directions, maps, bus schedules, T or bus fares ready.
 - Have the necessary telephone numbers in case you get lost.
- Make sure someone is expecting you.
 - Always let someone know where you are going and when you'll be back.
- Whether walking or driving, use well-traveled and well-lit roads and paths, and walk with confidence.
- Plan to travel in pairs, or ask the organizations staff to drive you the nearest T station when it's dark.
- Do not display expensive jewelry, large amounts of cash or valuable items.
- Do not leave the same articles visible in your car, and always lock your car.
- It is unusual to be harassed or threatened while volunteering or traveling to a site.
 - If it should happen, keep moving and try to leave the situation.
 - Entering the nearest store or location where others are around could help to diffuse the situation
 - If you must respond, do so loudly and firmly!
- Report any incident to your professor/coordinator, the Center, and/or NU or Boston police if.

The Course/Program is almost Over, Now What? *Why and How you should make sure to leave on a good note?*

- Ending on a good note could lead to:
 - A potential reference for a job or a valuable contact for your future internship/coops/job search.
 - The ability to return and participate in future volunteer or service-learning opportunities.
- With at least a few weeks of service left, remind your site supervisor about your last day and...
 - Thank him/her for their assistance and for providing you with this opportunity.
 - Let the organization's clients know that you are leaving and why.
 - It can help the transition to bring them something simple they can remember you by (e.g. a card) especially when working with children who may have become attached.

**Please note: we encourage you to continue serving after the course/program ends, if you wish.*

Quick Summary...what's My role?

- To perform the service to which you commit to the best of your ability.
- To be Proactive; an enthusiastic and active participant in your service and educational experience.
- To critically think about how your service experiences relate to the course/program content, your future career/personal interests, and your civic responsibility as a member of society.
- To see the possibilities for your future through the opportunities you have been exposed to.
- To take advantage of being able to have fun while learning something valuable!



Northeastern University
Center of Community Service

Have questions or comments?
Contact the Service-Learning program at
373-7883 or service-learning@neu.edu

www.neu.edu/servicelearning
www.neu.edu/communityservice
