



GUIDELINES FOR SERVICE – LEARNING STUDENTS:

Vulnerable Populations

Establishing Rapport:

“Engaging [individuals] successfully means establishing rapport, which involves reducing the level of threat and gaining the trust of the [individual] in the ... helpful intent. A condition of rapport is that [the individual] perceive [the service-learning student] as understanding and genuinely interested in their well-being”

(Hepworth and Larson, 1990, p. 29)

The values and attitudes required of the service-learning student in establishing rapport:

- Nonjudgmental attitude
- Acceptance
- Understanding of the individual’s right to self-determination – *“the right and need of [the individual] to freedom in making their own choices and decisions”* (p. 69)
- Respect of the individual’s worth and dignity

Service-Learning students *“foster rapport when they relate with empathy and authenticity”* (p. 29)

Confidentiality:

Conveying respect and affirming the worth of the individual also occurs through keeping CONFIDENTIAL any and all personal information that may be disclosed by the individual. Disclosures by the individual can normally be discussed ONLY with your immediate agency supervisor (addressed in part III).

Never, under any circumstances, should personal information about the individual(s) be discussed with others.

Some examples of inappropriate situations include:

- Discussions with the individual’s parents, guardians, family members, or friends
- Discussions with your family or friends
- Discussions with fellow students and classmates (even if they are completing their project with the same agency!)
- Conversations with other volunteers or employees of the agency
- Parties, school activities, or agency social activities

When discussing the individual(s) as a part of class discussion or a written assignment centered around the service-learning experience, care must be taken to:

- Change the individual’s name
- Eliminate identifying characteristics (where parents work, identifiable physical characteristics, where the individual lives, etc.)
- Suppress details about personal information that has been disclosed – for instance, you might state that the individual has a history of abuse by a family member, but details about who, when, and where should be kept confidential.