

University of Houston  
Graduate College of Social Work  
Checklist of Dos and Don'ts for Field Instructors

**TO DO REMINDERS:**

1. **Do be ready for the excitement and challenges of a unique experience**
2. **Do provide meaningful assignments and constructive feedback**
3. **Do spend ample time, up front, getting to know your intern**
  - a. Are they a full- or part-time student?
  - b. What is their class schedule this term?
  - c. Do they have a full- or part-time job?
  - d. Are there days and/or times that you cannot participate in the internship and/or supervision? (This may relate to religious practices)
  - e. How many hours per week do they plan to commit to the internship?
  - f. Which days and times are they available? What is their flexibility?
4. **Do have a clear discussion about communication expectations and styles. Be specific.**
  - a. What is the best way to contact them (e.g., a phone call, e-mail, or text message)?
  - b. What is their preferred phone number and e-mail address?
5. **Do also be clear about how the intern can and should communicate with you.**
  - a. The way(s) the intern can reach you most effectively
  - b. How and when the intern should communicate with you in cases of illness or emergency
  - c. How promptly you expect the intern to respond to your communication (e.g., within hours, within the day, within 2 days, etc.)
  - d. How promptly the intern can expect you to respond
6. **Do give the intern a careful tour of the facilities, including locations of:**
  - a. Fire extinguishers
  - b. First aid kits, including automated external defibrillators (AEDs)
  - c. Storm shelters
  - d. Exits
  - e. Security systems
7. **Do help interns make use of the following resources as they get acquainted with the organization and its stakeholders:**
  - a. Mission statement
  - b. Agency strategic plan
  - c. Annual report
  - d. Agency policy and procedure manuals
  - e. Agency website
  - f. Websites of agencies giving or receiving referrals
8. **Do be clear about the intern's personal use of a cell phone during internship hours.**
9. **Do make sure the intern has use of the organization's phone and e-mail system.**

10. Do discuss confidentiality and what it means in your agency. Review step by step process of how your agency maintains confidentiality for clients and with collaborative partners
11. **Do balance flexibility and structure.** Ask students what is working and what isn't.
12. If your intern provides you with an accommodation letter, Do convey that you are willing to work with them and, if needed with staff at the school's disability services office.
13. Do review agency safety procedures during supervision meetings.
14. Do ensure that students have access to any available policies or manuals that are used by agency staff or volunteers.
15. Do let the interns know from the start that supervision is an integral part of their learning experience and it is their responsibility to bring discussion points to the meeting.
16. Do help interns own the practicum and take responsibility for their learning during supervision.
  - a. Ensuring that interns receive answers to their questions of which you may be unaware
  - b. Helping interns review their progress, organize their thoughts, and prepare for supervision
  - c. Using supervision time efficiently and as scheduled
  - d. Developing the skill of preparing for and leading a meeting within and organization or the community
  - e. Planning and timing presentations
17. Do communicate to interns that you will offer agenda items that you determine are important for their learning and growth or relate to their circumstances.
18. Do approach problems openly, supportively, and thoughtfully during supervision, or sooner, if needed.
19. Do consult with the Field Liaison assigned to the intern to discuss any concerns you may have regarding the intern.
20. Do consistently include social work's core values in discussions about making practice conclusions.
21. Do consistently ask the intern to identify the numerous aspects of diversity—ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, education, age, sexual orientation, ability, and so forth—reflected in the clients, contextual communities, and partner organizations
22. Do encourage the intern to make thoughtful conclusions about how diversity relates to the challenges that clients, communities, and organizations encounter.
23. Do foster the intern's strength-based perspective that recognizes and values the experiences of all persons.

#### **DON'T REMINDERS:**

24. **Don't** make the assumption that the new intern is the same person as your last intern or that the experience will be identical.
25. If this is your first intern, **don't** assume that the intern will approach the internship as you approached your internships.
26. **Don't** assume all the information you need about the intern is on the field application form or internship application.

27. **Don't** ask the intern to “hit the ground running” without taking the time to have some thorough conversations about the experience and expectations—both yours and those of the intern.
28. **Don't** expect or encourage students to use their personal phone or e-mail account with clients or other agencies.
29. **Don't** assume that the intern understands the organization's context and the safety precautions that may be critical.
30. **Don't** begin the practicum experience by letting students think that supervision is optional.
31. Supervision is intentional; **don't** dismiss it as conversations done in passing or while walking together between meetings
32. **Don't** make supervision solely your responsibility as the supervisor.
33. **Don't** wait to introduce ethical tools, agency policies or decision making protocols.
34. **Don't** take sides or undermine authority, but **do** mediate, if necessary, and advocate on behalf of the intern if all else fails.
35. **Don't** allow interns to take every comment by clients, interns, or staff members personally.
36. If a student provides you with an accommodation letter, **don't** ask them what is their disability. Student may/may not choose to disclose that information.

*Adapted from the following sources:*

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Hensley, M. (2016). Chapter 3: A Checklist of Dos and Don'ts. In *The Social Work Field Instructor's Survival Guide*. Springer Publishing Company.