

Appendix 1. Approaching Practice Placements¹

CMOs in which management/teams are supportive of staff supervising students appear to thrive in their provision of quality practice placements,² and given this we make the following recommendations:

Values and attitudes: Consider the student as an asset and acknowledge the benefits students can bring to the service. Examples of this include students bringing new and up-to-date knowledge to the service and enhancing critical thinking of the Placement Educator and the team. This will create equality between staff and students which in turn will help students feel safe, supported, validated and valued.

Have a positive approach: Students can lighten workloads, rather than adding to them. They can perform tasks while staff are doing other tasks, checking in with staff once tasks are completed (depending on level of study as well as their ability to function autonomously). This way students receive supervision while extending their practice.

Recruitment: Providing students with the opportunity to learn within a CMO can have a positive influence on future recruitment of staff within the specific CMO where they have undertaken their placement, and in the CMO workforce in general. If students have had a good and supportive placement at a CMO, it is likely they will want to come back to work at that CMO in the future. There is a direct link between good placements and career choice.

Professional development: Placement educators can view supervision of students as part of their own professional development. For many professions, it is part of continuing professional development (CPD) to guide, assist and teach others. Documented feedback from students can be placed in portfolios as evidence of meeting CPD requirements.

Approach the student as part of the future workforce: Students are the colleagues and leaders of tomorrow. Recognising and respecting this may motivate teams to ensure students have quality experiences that maximize their ability to function as highly competent professionals.

Identify learning opportunities: Identify all learning opportunities that the team and /or service can provide to students prior to placements commencing.

Own space: Provide students with a space of their own, e.g. own table and chair where they can sit down to do their work.

Welcoming: A welcoming event such as a team morning tea will assist students to feel welcomed into and part of the team. The welcoming gives students an opportunity to start feeling more familiar with all people present, possibly enhancing their ability to approach staff for support when required.

Placement Timing Calendar: Use a Placement Timing Calendar to outline the dates HEPs are seeking practice placements in CMOs over the academic year. This will assist teams to plan for practice placements prior to receiving student/HEPs requests.

¹ Mental Health Coordinating Council 2013, Practice Placement Guide: Mental Health Workforce Professional Entry Practice Placements in the NSW Community Managed Mental Health Sector, MHCC, Sydney.

² Adapted from the Werry Centre 2012, pp.15-16. (The Werry Centre for Child & Adolescent Mental Health Workforce Development 2012, Fieldwork Supervisors Handbook: Practical tips & strategies for student placements in infant, child & adolescent mental health/AOD settings, 2012, The Werry Centre for Child & Adolescent Mental Health, Auckland NZ)