Keeping a Journal

Twenty percent of your internship grade will be based on your journal, which you will build as the semester goes along. Although it may seem like a chore, if you put time into it will give you a way to see yourself growing and changing. It also forces you to take regular time to reflect on what you are doing. Finally, it will be a major resource for your final paper.

Unless there is a pressing reason not to do it this way, you will be submitting your journal entries electronically (more about that later). That means that you should create a file on your computer for your entries and make each entry a separate document in that file. However, you should also purchase or set aside a loose-leaf notebook - one that you don’t use for anything else. In that notebook will go hard copies of your journal entries and other items to be discussed later in this document, and the whole notebook will be collected at the end of the semester.

Journal Entries

The majority of your journal will be entries that you write in. There are three kinds of entries:

Daily Entries

You should write an entry after EVERY day that you go to your internship. There is no “right” length for these entries, but they should record what you did and saw that day, new ideas and concepts you were exposed to and how you can use them, and your personal thoughts and feelings about what is happening to you. They should be chronological, organized and legible. The things you learn at an internship can be divided into four categories: knowledge, skills, personal development and career development. Knowledge refers to things you know about; for example you might learn the principles of behavior modification. Skills are things you know how to do; you know how to set up a behavior management program. Personal development refers to what you have learned about and ways you have grown in terms of your attitudes, values, reaction patterns and personality traits. Include all these categories in your journal.

There may be days when you feel stuck, although if you work at it they will happen less and less. Your text includes some suggestions for getting past those times when you feel like there’s nothing to say.
Weekly Event Analysis

At some point during the week, choose either an incident that occurred that stands out for you, or something significant you learned. In the case of an incident, describe the incident and your feelings and reactions. Discuss why this incident stood out for you, and how it may have had an impact on your internship. In the case of something you learned, describe how this knowledge will be useful to you in your internship, and outside it if applicable. You can just include this entry with the daily entry for that day, and in some cases one entry may service both purposes.

Structured Entries

At the end of each chapter in your text are questions that will serve as structured journal entries. Your syllabus will tell you when each one is due; please be sure to keep track. The journal entries are designed to coincide with certain events and junctures at your placement; however, you may find yourself ahead or behind that pace. If you are ahead, consider moving on to future journal entries and readings. If you are behind, let me know and we can adjust the journal schedule.

Take some time to read through all of the entries soon. You will see that some of them require more time and reflection than others. Be sure to plan your time accordingly. For example, even though entry two is not due for two weeks, I suggest you start on it right away.

Also, please note that in some cases the questions assigned are different depending on whether you are doing your first internship (EDG 431) or your second (EDG 430).

Leave Enough Time

Perhaps the most important thing you can do for your journal is to allot sufficient time to do it. Doing it over lunch the day it is due will not be a good approach. As you plan your days and your weeks, leave yourself 30 minutes after every time you go to the internship to write your daily entry. The structured entries will take more time - up to an hour each.

Submitting Journal Entries

Our internship class meets on Monday. Every week, even if we do not meet, you need to do two things by Thursday at 5:00. One, you need to email your journal entries, including all daily entries, the weekly summary and any structured entries assigned. I will return everything to you the following Monday, with comments.

Two, you need to go to the Blackboard site (which is described in your syllabus), and post a one sentence answer to this question: What is most on your mind about your internship this week?”
Sometimes I will make comments on your entries. They may tell you ways to improve your journal or they may be comments and questions on the issues you are raising. Other times I may have no particular comment. Feel free to ask me specific questions in the entries themselves.

I will grade the structured journal entries using a plus, check and minus system (roughly corresponding to A, B, C). You are welcome to rewrite any of them; just turn in the old one as well.

Please remember that failure to keep up with your journal will result in your being withdrawn from the internship. See the syllabus for details.

Other Items to Include

Your journal should be a creative, interesting account of your experience. Be sure to include examples of your work - a report you wrote, a project you designed, etc. Also, include examples of client work where appropriate. Finally, watch the newspaper and popular journals for articles pertaining to your agency or the problems it addresses; I expect to see at least three in your journal with your reactions to them.

The quality of your journal, the thought that goes into it and the way it is presented, says a lot to me about how seriously you are taking yourself and your work. Make it reflect the best you can do.

Confidentiality

Your journal is a confidential document. It may contain sensitive information about clients, supervisors and co-workers. It is very important that you take good care of your journal and not leave it, either in hard or file copy, in a place where others can see it.

Final Due Date

Your completed journal is due on May 3, unless you have not finished your hours by then. It should include hard copies of all entries, as well as the other items listed above.
Your final paper is a chance to reflect on and write about your experience this semester. I suggest you review your entire journal before writing, and consider quoting from it as a way of supporting your points. You should include the following points, though not necessarily in order:

a. Introduction - A brief overview of the agency and your role.

b. How would you characterize your experience with the clients? What have you learned about this population and your ability to work with them?

c. Discuss your relationship with your supervisor. What did you enjoy? What, if anything, do you wish s/he, or you, had done differently?

d. What are the most significant ideas, concepts and skills you learned? How were they useful to you in your work and in other areas of your life? In responding you should consider knowledge, skills and self understanding. Include learnings about yourself as a human service worker as well as more general reflections.

e. What were some of your "successes" - things you feel good about? What were some areas you struggled with? How did you handle them?

f. What is the most important way in which you have grown? Where do you see evidence of that growth?