

Program Improvement Project – Overview

# of pages double-spaced	Point Value
8-10	3 points
11-14	4 points
15+	5 points

As part of the Social Work Field Practicum experience it is important that the student seek opportunities to add value to the agency programs where they are receiving their field instruction. Agencies and organizations that provide social services are generally dependent on private and public funding sources, which are utilized to fund all aspects of their program operations. Due to the high demand for funding within the community, funding resources are limited and requests for these funds are extremely competitive.

Most social service agencies are not-for-profits and subsequently administrators and managers are challenged with meeting program needs with limited fiscal resources. Since the largest expense to most social service organizations is the cost of employees' salaries and benefits, most agencies are fiscally constrained in their hiring practices. As a result of this dynamic, many social workers have been challenged with "doing more with less." Program improvement projects are often a low priority due to the demands of managing a normal workload.

Program improvement projects are essentially the creation of a work product that enhances the program for the consumers and/or improves the work experience for the staff. The needs of various agencies vary greatly depending on the size, staffing patterns, budgetary constraints, etc. The vast majority of agency programs are in continual need of program enhancements. The paid staff are often unable to respond to the needs for program improvements due to the extensive demands on their time. This need creates a great learning opportunity for the social work student. In addition, the student is able to provide a valuable service for the agency and a substantial contribution to the program.

Procedure for Program Improvement Project Assignment

Steps to be taken for completion of this assignment:

1. Discuss the details of the Program Improvement Project with your Field Instructor (and Field Liaison if this is to be a major 5-point field assignment). The proposal should include the details of the project and work products that will be submitted.
2. Once agreement is made on the details of the Program Improvement Project, the student should submit an outline of the project with a time frame for completing tasks to the Field Instructor (and Field Liaison if this is to be a major 5-point field assignment).