Social Work: preparing for placement  
(making contact with the proposed agency)

The preparation process

The process of identifying and organising placements is the responsibility of the Field Education team in your school. When you undertake your placement would depend on:

- the structure of your course
- the completion of all the required subjects
- meeting all the pre-placement requirements
- the stage you have reached in your degree
- any other formal requirements specified in Social Work and Human Services Work

It is important that you find out about the procedure for organising placements. Understanding the time scales and responsibilities involved will help to ensure that you make a useful contribution rather than hinder the process.

- You will receive emails from Field Education Coordinators at your university email. Check your email and ensure that you complete all of the required steps.
- Fill in any forms you are given about your preferences, previous experience and learning needs as fully as possible: This information will be used to match you to a particular placement. Your information will be balanced with other students’ information and the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) requirements.
- Talk to your Field Education Coordinator about the sort of placement you feel you need. Field Education Coordinators are experienced in assessing the learning needs of students. Your Field Education Coordinator may have a different idea from you about the placement that would suit you best.
- Be honest with yourself and those involved in organising your placement. Exaggerating your past experience or ignoring particular learning or other needs will not prepare you for a successful social work career. If you have personal or health issues consider discussing these with your Field Education Coordinator as they are experienced in considering these issues.

(Lomax et al. 2010, p. 7)

Contacting your proposed agency

Your first contact with the agency will be to arrange a time for a pre-placement interview. It is recommended that in your initial email to the agency that you introduce yourself and organise an interview. Be clear about the purpose of the email and enquire when would be a suitable time for the interview. Ensure that any correspondence you write to the agency is polite, formal, grammatically correct and adheres to all professional writing conventions. It would be a good idea to refer to resources on how to write professional emails, and to get someone to read your email before you send it.
Pre-placement interview with your agency
The pre-placement interview is an opportunity for the agency to decide whether you are the right student for them. You need to be clear in advance about the purpose of the interview as it will affect the way you present yourself and the types of answers you provide. The pre-placement interview is also an opportunity to find out more about the work you will be doing. Agencies will expect you to have reviewed their website and have some familiarity with the work they do. It is also important to have a clear understanding of the role of a social worker and to be able to articulate why you are studying social work.

Example questions you may want to ask during your pre-placement visit
- What are the hours of work?
- Are there other students in the agency and could I speak to them before I start?
- What could I read before I start to help me prepare for this placement?
- Do students have their own desk and phone?
- What are your expectations of a student undertaking their placement in this agency?
- What are some of the things I could do so that I could experience successful outcomes in my placement and the agency benefits from hosting me?

(Lomax et al. 2010, pp. 7-8)

Resource adapted from: