

Communication and Behavioral Guidelines for Classroom and Field Placement

As a Boston University School of Social Work graduate student and developing professional social worker, you are expected to comport yourself with integrity and professionalism:

- Come prepared for class (readings, assignments, etc.);
- Participate actively in a manner that is respectful of each other's contributions, of clients, of the instructor and of the shared learning process. Out of respect for others, it is important that only one conversation occurs at a time. Please view listening and hearing others' points of view as equally important as talking in class;
- Maintain the confidentiality of all clients, students, co-workers, and family members during class discussions, activities, and in-class assignments by eliminating any identifying information from written documents and in-class conversations.

Please review BUSSW's policies on academic honesty, integrity and professional behavior in the classroom which can be found in the *Student Handbook: Ways and Means* on the BUSSW web site at <http://www.bu.edu/ssw/current/index.shtml>. Concerns related to plagiarism and other forms of academic and behavioral misconduct will be adjudicated according to the guidelines specified in that document. Be scrupulously careful to credit all sources utilizing APA-style formatting for assignments. Additional information can be found in the Style Guide at http://www.bu.edu/ssw/current/academic/style_guide/index.shtml.

The following guidelines will assist you in communicating and behaving in a professional and effective way.

E-mail communication:

- Open and close e-mails with appropriate greetings and signatures using your complete name.
- Use standard capitalization, sentence structure and punctuation. Check spelling.
- Re-read e-mails before you send them to make sure that your meaning is clear and that you are conveying the information you intend.
- Do not use electronic shorthand, i.e. that is used in instant messages, tweets, etc.
- Respond to e-mails in a timely fashion.
- Make sure that all communication about clients is appropriately disguised to protect their privacy.
- Be aware of taglines and e-mail addresses that may not convey a professional image or may be misinterpreted.
- Fill in the subject line.

Additional detailed guidelines for e-mail communication can be found at:
<http://www.101emailtippetips.com/>

Telephone communication:

- Cell phones at the field placement: Personal cell phones should not be used for communication at your field placement. Calls to clients should never be made from personal cell phones or landlines. Cell phones should be off during meetings, supervision, contacts with clients or

consumers. Cell phones provided by the field placement agency can be used to conduct professional activities as proscribed by the agency. Text messaging during any agency activities should not be done under any circumstances

- **Cell phones in class:** Please turn off cell phones and refrain from taking calls unless you are “on call” and have cleared this with the instructor prior to class. Under such circumstances, please put your phone on vibrate, sit close to a door, exit before you answer the phone, and conduct your phone call as quickly and as quietly as possible. At absolutely no time is it appropriate to be “texting” or “IM-ing” during class.
- **Voice mail:** Make sure when leaving a voicemail message that you provide your full name, phone number, and date and time of your call. Be sure to speak clearly and to minimize ambient noise as this may make your message difficult to understand. When leaving messages for clients, please follow appropriate agency protocol. Your agency voice mailbox should have an appropriate greeting and calls should be answered in a timely way. Information about whom to contact in your absence should be on your voicemail greeting.

Use of laptop computers

At your field placement: Laptop computers can only be used at your field placement with approval by your field instructor for process recordings (appropriately disguised)/analyses or other field-related communication and projects. Client information should not be stored on your personal computer. Make sure that you have a secure place to leave your computer at the agency. Please be aware that if you are subpoenaed and you have agency or client information on your laptop, all that information is admissible in court.

In the classroom: The use of electronic devices to “surf,” check email, or engage in anything other than note-taking is inappropriate in a graduate classroom.

Social networking sites

If you use social networking sites, be sure that your pages are secure and do not contain any information or photographs that could be interpreted as unprofessional by those who can access the site (clients, agency personnel, classmates, employers, faculty, etc.)

Dress

Dress at your field placement should be in keeping with the dress code for other professional social workers at the agency. Athletic wear, shorts, flip-flops, baseball caps, t-shirts with logos and other casual/recreational clothing are generally not acceptable in professional social work settings. Clothing that is revealing or form-fitting is not appropriate. If you have a question about the dress code at your placement, please contact your field instructor or your faculty advisor.