

Shadowing

Orientation Activity

Shadowing refers to accompanying other staff members as they go about their work. Watching experienced caseworkers will give you a first-hand view of the types of situations child welfare caseworkers experience and will help you gain a better understanding of how cases progress through your agency.

Instructions:

1. Meet with your supervisor to identify three or four staff members who have agreed to have you accompany them as they work in the field. You should try to arrange activities that give you a broad view of the work of your agency, including:
 - o Home visits with families who have different types of problems, different cultural backgrounds, and with different degrees of involvement with the agency
 - o Visits to foster homes to meet and talk with children in care and their foster caregivers
 - o Visits to residential facilities and group homes operated by the agency or by other community agencies
 - o Sit in with workers in the agency while they screen complaints in the intake unit
 - o Sit in with workers in the agency while they interview a potential adoptive family.
 - o Observe a court hearing
 - o Observe a Semi-Annual Review
 - o Other _____

2. Arrange a schedule that accommodates those you will shadow and also gives you the best opportunity to get a broad view of agency services. You can expect to spend three or four days shadowing, asking questions, and talking to your supervisor about what you are learning.

3. When you are in the field, the caseworker you are observing should explain that you are a Trainee who is learning how the agency operates. Be friendly, professional, and respectful. You will probably have many questions. This is the time to ask them! You should, of course, not raise issues or concerns during the contact with the client; it is more appropriate to wait until you are alone with the caseworker or with your supervisor. It's a good idea to write down your questions as soon after the shadowing experience as possible, so you will have them available when you discuss the experience with your supervisor.

Adapted from: OCWTP (2001). *Training, Orientation, and Optimal Learning (TOOL) Caseworker Manual*