

## Transforming student's orientation to learning on placement

### Round Table

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Students often approach their Social Work placements with preconceived ideas about what it will be like to be a student and how they will learn in this environment. In some cases these preconceptions limit their ability to learn in the placement environment and may threaten the success of the placement. Field educators can use a variety of levers to open the student's view of what learning might be in the placement environment.

These include developing learning contracts that detail areas where the student is responsible for their own learning in relation to the 'being' on placement. In this paper the presenter will provide two case examples where students are only allowed to proceed in their placement if they demonstrate that they are engaging with the issues that have limited their learning.

In one case this meant that a student evaluated her own resistance to learning in a placement setting that she did not like. The result was that she 'moved' from being angry and resistant to being 'open' and receptive on placement. The change in her posture towards learning in her practice environment changed dramatically. She developed a new way of learning that integrated an evaluation of her own reactions to the environment and her knowledge. There were a number of *key people* involved in assisting this process thus creating a heightened level of activity and interest around her efforts that highlighted the importance of the work that she was being asked to do.

In another case a student presented a range of personal issues that impinged on his ability to engage with the process leading up to the allocation of placement: blaming others for his difficulties was one of these. The author considered that these issues needed to be addressed for the development of his professional identity. The student was asked to actively engage with his tendency to blame others while he was on prac and this was written into his learning contact. The goal of this work is to provide this student with the opportunity to learn about his own *patterns of attribution*. While he may have not considered that this was something that he had to learn about when he enrolled in the course, it is considered necessary for the development of an ethical and professional identity.

There are parallels with family therapy principles that the author will draw out.

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