

Introduction

PLAYING FIELD

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Playing field focuses on the student's understanding of what is 'in touch' and what is 'out of touch', in terms of the initial contacts with a potential client of the agency. It helps the student consider the areas of uncertainty (the 'grey' areas), and also how the person's concerns, problems and requests must be set in a broader framework.

Purpose

Students need to develop a good sense of the scope of work of the agency where they are placed. *Playing field* uses a games metaphor to help the student consider when work is 'in' or 'out' of play. It is not especially difficult when the ball is in the centre of the agency's concerns or well outside this area; it is more problematic when it is on the margins, and in those circumstances when there is a clash of professional conduct and agency procedure.

Method

The student should consider their work with a particular person, family or group. It helps if this can be a relatively complex situation, where each of the four sectors of the playing field are relevant.

How does, or did, the student work with the different concerns. In particular, how do they identify what is in the agency's remit, and what happened to those concerns which were outside the remit?

Discuss with the student whether there were there any disagreements or conflicts about which part of the field a particular concern lay in. (About 1 hour total).

Variations

In the first instance, students should do this activity retrospectively, taking a situation with which they are now more familiar. They should then return to *Playing field* at the initial stage in their work with a new service user.

It helps to develop your own case example for the student to work with. In this way, you can ensure that there are concerns, problems or requests in each of the four sectors. You can introduce situations which are controversial, with plenty of activity in the grey areas.

Contact with practice teachers and students in other settings gives students an opportunity to consider how different agencies define their own playing fields, and how strongly or faintly they paint the lines of demarcation.

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PLAYING FIELD Activity

Consider your work with one particular person, if possible where each of the four sections in the box below applies.

Write just one example of a concern, problem or request in each quadrant.

CONCERNS, PROBLEMS or REQUESTS . . .

Grey area	... identified by the person and which ARE in the agency's playing field	... identified by you and which ARE in the agency's playing field
	... identified by the person but which are NOT in the agency's playing field	... identified by you but which are NOT in the agency's playing field
	↓ ?	↓ ?
In whose playing fields did the concerns in the bottom two sections belong?		