

Workload management

PERFECT TIMING

INTRODUCTION

Perfect timing consists of a set of twenty-four different activities which a student might have to fit into a working week. The student and practice teacher each construct a diary for the week ahead, incorporating the twenty-four activities. They discuss the criteria they used to manage the time.

Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to look at the ways in which students organize their work within the working week. A set of demands and constraints which mirror the student's work on the placement are used to discover the principles which can be used to manage a workload.

Method

This activity can be completed by a practice teacher and student together or by a small group of practice teachers and students. It achieves particularly good results with one practice teacher and two or three students. Give the students a set of *Perfect timing* cards (either print the page and cut out the cards, or create your own tailor-made set - see Variations below).

Before the practice tutorial, you and the student should separately organize the same set of demands (the twenty-four activity cards) into a manageable working week. (Allow 20 minutes.)

At the practice tutorial, or in the small group, compare your 'diaries' for the forthcoming week, discussing the reasons for your decisions. The exercise can be made more or less difficult by the number of activities you put into the pack. You can upset careful planning by producing rogue cards (unexpected activities) *after* the diary has been organized. (About 30 - 60 minutes).

Variations

Perfect timing is an activity can be tailored to your particular setting, so use this one as an example. You can prepare for this before the student's placement begins by making a note on separate cards of different demands made on your time. Note what the demand was (e.g. a visit to a single parent to discuss financial problems) and the length of time set aside for each demand. If the demand had to be met at a specific day or time (such as a team meeting on Wednesday from 9.30-10.30) make a note of the details on the card. Small, repeated demands, like telephone calls and re-dials, can be totalled (for example five outgoing telephone calls, with estimated time taken). If the students' work takes them outside the home base, find a map of the area with bus routes if needed.

The pace of time in informal settings, such as group care and drop-in centres, is different from the pace in more formal settings, such as field social work and probation practice. Making use of unstructured time may be a key skill in informal settings, and a similar diary exercise can be used to log the use of time.

The amount of time taken to complete visits to locations outside of the office can vary considerably accord to the means of transport available to your student - car, cycle, bus, train - or even walking! Take account of these differences according to local circumstance and the student's access to differing forms of transport. Other factors to be taken into account might include the distance from the office to the car park, if this is notable, and the time needed to park a car in a busy area.

Towards the end of the placement, you might wish to make a new set of *Perfect timing* cards (or encourage the student to do so) and repeat the exercise as completed earlier in the placement. Students can be asked to consider how their organization of time on the placement has been influenced by their experiences of the agency. Are there any changes in they would like to make in the way they manage time and workload?

On the next page are twenty-four Activity Cards. Arrange the activities into a working week. The office is about a mile from the clinic and street addresses are within ten minutes' walk of a bus route. Central office and the court are four miles away, 20-30 minutes by bus.

What criteria do you use to decide how you will plan your week ahead?

Workload management PERFECT TIMING Activity

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| <p>ONE HOUR LUNCH EACH DAY</p> <p>Mon.-Fri. 1 hour <i>Anywhere</i></p> | <p>VISIT TO ASSESS ELDERLY PERSON FOR RESPITE CARE</p> <p>est: 45 mins <i>Brick Street</i></p> | <p>COURT REPORT ON JUVENILE OFFENDER</p> <p>written by Tuesday est: 2 hours <i>Office</i></p> | <p>COURT APPEARANCE</p> <p>some time during Friday morning est: not known <i>Court</i></p> |
| <p>TEAM MEETING</p> <p>Wednesday weekly 9.30-10.30 <i>Office</i></p> | <p>5 OUTGOING TELEPHONE CALLS</p> <p>est: 30 mins. <i>Office</i></p> | <p>WORKING PARTY ON COMMUNITY CARE</p> <p>Wednesday fortnight 2.00-3.30 <i>Central Office</i></p> | <p>VISIT SINGLE PARENT - FINANCIAL PROBLEMS</p> <p>est: 1 hour <i>Slinn Street</i></p> |
| <p>10 INCOMING TELEPHONE CALLS</p> <p>est: 1 hour <i>Office</i></p> | <p>VISIT ELDERLY MAN WANTING COUNCIL ACCOMMODATION</p> <p>est: 45 mins. <i>Conduit Rd</i></p> | <p>DISCUSS TEENAGE MOTHERS' GROUP WITH HEALTH VISITOR</p> <p>est: 1 hour <i>Clinic</i></p> | <p>5 OUTGOING TELEPHONE CALLS</p> <p>(including re-dials) est: 30 mins. <i>Office</i></p> |
| <p>REVIEW ON CHILD IN FOSTER CARE</p> <p>Tuesday 2.00-3.00 <i>Hill Lane</i></p> | <p>PRACTICE MEETING WITH LOCAL HEALTH CARE STAFF</p> <p>Friday, weekly 1.30-2.30 <i>Clinic</i></p> | <p>VISIT CONFUSED ELDERLY WOMAN, SEE DAUGHTER</p> <p>est: 1 hour <i>Hands Road</i></p> | <p>MEET WITH MOTHER, CHILD, STAFF AT DAY NURSERY</p> <p>est: 1 hour <i>Beet Street</i></p> |
| <p>2 RECORD SUMMARIES, 3 LETTERS, 2 MEMOS</p> <p>est: 1 hour <i>Office</i></p> | <p>5 INCOMING TELEPHONE CALLS</p> <p>est: 30 mins. <i>Office</i></p> | <p>2 RECORD SUMMARIES, 3 LETTERS, 2 MEMOS</p> <p>est: 1 hour <i>Office</i></p> | <p>PRACTICE TUTORIAL SESSION</p> <p>Thursday, weekly 9.30-11.00 <i>Office</i></p> |
| <p>VISIT TO FAMILY EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS</p> <p>est: 1 hour - evening <i>Elmore Road</i></p> | <p>CASE DISCUSSION WITH PART-TIME O.T.</p> <p>Tue., Wed. or Thu. est: 30 mins. <i>Clinic</i></p> | <p>STUDENT SUPPORT GROUP</p> <p>Friday, 1.00-2.30 (usually Thursdays, fortnightly) <i>Central Office</i></p> | <p>DAY DUTY</p> <p>Wednesday 9.00-12.30 <i>Office</i></p> |