Best Practices to Reduce Risk in CBTL Courses, Assignments or Activities

Increasingly colleges and universities are incorporating community-based learning elements into their curricular and co-curricular offerings. Based on these experiences there is a growing body of evidence-based practices on how to manage risk in community-based activities. The principles below are considered best practices related to managing risk in community-based projects. Since at UNF we offer many types of community-based learning, these guidelines are intended to assist instructors in planning and conducting CBTL assignments or instructional components. For additional assistance, contact the Center for Community-Based Learning (CCBL).

Best Practices for Managing Risk in CBTL Programs

- Provide UNF Acknowledgement of Risk Form and other trainings, orientations or project specific forms to students so that students fully understand the following:
  - their responsibilities,
  - learning objectives and assignment objectives,
  - information about the populations they will be serving,
  - risks associated with their community-based assignment or placement,
  - liability or sexual harassment policies
- Provide a UNF Talent Release Form when students are being photographed or videotaped for their project.
- Make sure there is a Formal Written Agreement for any long term partnerships between UNF and the community organization you are working with. General Counsel can help develop an appropriate agreement form for your particular partnership.
- Discuss the goals of the project with students so that they fully understand their responsibilities, learning objectives and service objectives.
- Realize that community members often know best what a community needs and include them in your course planning and discussions when relevant.
- Track and monitor when students are onsite at a community organization.
- Consistently communicate with your UNF department designated risk manager and/or the CCBL staff.
- Conduct site reviews before, during and after a CBTL course or activity is offered.
- Meet the special safety needs of your individual students.
- Offer alternative placements or special accommodations for students to avoid potential risks.
- Be aware that there are state and federal regulations regarding fingerprinting and background checks for those students who will be working in community organizations that specialize in the care of children, elderly or persons with disabilities. Consider the student fees involved in covering the costs for fingerprinting and background checks.
• Know where emergency contact information for students is kept. If the community organization asks the student for additional emergency contact information, a copy should be kept at the university for the duration of the CBTL experience.
• Do NOT arrange travel for individual students. Liability is greatly reduced if students are responsible for their own transportation to and from a service site. However, in the case of a large group project off-campus, rental of a bus service may be necessary. Speak to your department risk manager or a staff member from the CCBL to determine the risks and liabilities associated with these options.

Understand that faculty members can be individually named in lawsuits and should play an active role in ensuring safe and positive CBTL experiences for their students. Faculty members will be protected by the university in the case of a lawsuit, so long as the faculty member was acting within the scope of his or her work. Realize that students are NOT automatically covered for liability through the university or community organization when they enroll in a course or participate in a CBTL experience.

**Best Practices for CBTL Syllabi, Curricula or Discussion**

- Include upfront information and descriptions to the students regarding the learning goals, nature of the project and responsibilities of the students.
- Specify whether or not a project is mandatory. If it is mandatory, offer an alternative placement or project for students who cannot do, for whatever reason, the specific project you have identified.
- Include the contact information of the community organization(s).
- Let the students know the needs of the community that will be met through this project.
- Include input from community organization representatives in the planning and development process.
- Explain how assignments link the community organization to at least one of the course content elements or learning outcomes.
- Explain how students will be evaluated, if project is part of for-credit course.
- Explain how learning will be demonstrated through personal reflections or presentations.
- Incorporate university-wide CBTL *Student Learning Outcomes* into the project or program where possible.
- Consider creating a *Learning Plan* for each student that defines the scope of service to ensure the faculty member, student and site supervisor meet educational objectives, create measurable outcomes and understand the inherent risks of the project.
- Approach potential community partners several weeks in advance of the project or class start date.