Introduction:

[Walden logo with title]

Welcome to Communicating with Potential Field Sites with Walden Career Services. Are you actively searching for a field site to complete your counseling program requirements? One powerful strategy is to reach out directly to potential sites. But how do you do this effectively and make a positive first impression?

In this video, we will share resources and tools to help you communicate your qualifications and program requirements. You will learn helpful tips for professional communications. Finally, you will acquire multiple strategies and specific language to help you communicate face-to-face, over the phone, through email, and on LinkedIn.

To be fully prepared before you reach out to potential sites, ask yourself these important questions:

First, are you familiar with your Field Experience requirements and timelines? If not, visit the School of Counseling Field Experience to learn more. Remember, that
through the course of your communication with a site supervisor, you will likely be asked detailed questions about your program.

Second, have you maximized the resources offered by the Career Services Center? If not, visit the Career Services Resources for Field Experience page to gain the skills you need to succeed.

Third, have you strengthened your cover letter and resume, and created a career portfolio to showcase artifacts of your work? If not, create an account on OptimalResume and get started today!

Finally, have you utilized the available resources to research potential sites? Watch the video, Locating Counseling Field Experience Sites, to engage in a proactive search.

After you check all four boxes, you are ready to start communicating with potential sites!

To communicate effectively, you will first need to research the potential site and identify contacts including Center or Agency Directors, potential site supervisors, and others who may offer insights and information.

Also, be ready to answer questions about your career and academic goals, qualifications, prior work and volunteer experience, and academic knowledge.

Review assignments and projects you’ve completed, and be ready to talk about them in future conversations.
Always model professionalism in your appearance, and be courteous and respectful in your oral and written communication. Remember that first impressions count!

You may wonder, what is the best way to reach out to field sites- through a phone call or through email? In most cases, a person-to-person connection is best.

However, you must be fully prepared before you pick up the phone to call a potential site!

Ideally, your contact will be someone who may be able to serve as a potential site supervisor and is already a part of your professional network, or is someone who has been referred to you by a family member, friend, colleague, or someone in your professional field. This would be considered a “warm” phone inquiry.

Here is an example of language you could use.... [READ]

Hello Ms. Cramer, my name is Stella and I’m a graduate student pursuing a master’s degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Walden University. I received your name from Dr. Larson, who mentioned that you work with mentally ill and chemically dependent clients and specialize in bipolar disorder. As I prepare for a future career in mental health counseling, I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you, learn more about your work, and discuss the possibility of my completing a field experience at your site. Would you have 10-15 minutes to meet with me over the phone or in person?

*If the response is a yes, say:* Thank you! What time and date are you available to meet?
If the response is a no, state: I understand you are very busy and I greatly appreciate your time. I would like to send you my resume and field experience requirements in case there are any other opportunities to complete a practicum[or internship] at your site.

If you don’t reach the individual and need to leave a message, conclude by providing your number and stating:

I greatly appreciate your time and look forward to connecting with you.

If you are reaching out to an Agency Director or another contact without a referral, you want to let him or her know what specifically interested you about the agency, the population it serves, and the unique services they provide. This would be considered a cold phone inquiry.

Here is an example of language you could use for this type of communication….

[READ]

Hello Ms. Cramer, my name is Stella and I’m a graduate student pursuing a master’s degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Walden University.

As I understand, your agency serves clients with mental illness and your specialties include cognitive therapy and behavioral assessments. As I prepare for a future career in mental health counseling, I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to learn more about your agency and discuss the possibility of my completing a field experience at your site.
With my knowledge of diagnosis and assessment, crisis intervention, and counseling theories, I could bring valuable information to your agency. Would you have 10-15 minutes to meet with me over the phone or in person?

Remember to always adapt language to your own experience, style, and career goals to sound genuine and authentic.

Practicing your phone inquiry approach will help you showcase your oral communication skills and build your confidence.

Another way to reach out to potential site supervisors or agency directors is through email. With this approach, you have a chance to showcase your written communication skills. Your inquiry letter should include a greeting, closing, and signature. Emails and letters should also be free from all typos and grammatical errors. For more information on how to format your inquiry letter, visit the Career Services Center’s Resumes & CVs tab, and view Letter templates available through the OptimalResume system.

Here is an example of a warm inquiry email.

Please feel free to pause this program to review the email in detail.

I want to briefly point out the formal greeting, and that the first paragraph includes...

An introduction, the reason for the inquiry, mention of the person who referred her to this opportunity, and examples of how her interests align to Ms. Lund’s areas of expertise.
In the second paragraph, she highlights....

Specific knowledge areas from her academic program and shows enthusiasm. She also includes the Field Experience requirements for her program.

Finally, she concludes the third paragraph by stating:

I would welcome the opportunity to learn more about your agency’s needs and further discuss my qualifications and program requirements. I appreciate your time and look forward to connecting with you at your convenience.

You’ll notice that she ends the email with the formal letter closing, “Sincerely,” followed by her full name.

You could use similar language for a cold inquiry email. The only difference is that you would focus on the services the agency provides and how they are aligned with your interests, skills, and/or knowledge areas.

Please feel free to pause this program to review this email sample.

A third strategy for connecting with a specific field site is to visit the agency in person. A site visit would allow you learn more about the agency and make face-to-face connections.

Professionalism and preparation are key to a successful site visit....

Dress in business attire, even if the organization or agency does not have a business dress code. Bring a notebook, pen, several copies of your resume, and a career
portfolio. Exhibit a friendly, professional demeanor, and introduce yourself at the front desk. Here is an example of a powerful introduction........[READ]

Hello, my name is Stella and I am a graduate student studying clinical mental health counseling. I am interested in learning more about your agency and speaking to someone about internship or practicum opportunities. Could you suggest someone who may be able to answer my questions?

If someone is available to speak with you: Wait to be introduced, articulate your purpose for the visit, and be prepared for an on-the-spot or future meeting.

If no one is available: Thank them for their time, ask for a contact person for follow up, and leave a copy of your resume.

Another way to make connections is through LinkedIn, the largest professional networking site. If you have a LinkedIn account, ask yourself this important question: Do you have an updated and complete LinkedIn profile? If your answer is “no” or “I am unsure”, visit the Career Services Center website and watch one of our LinkedIn webinars to improve your profile.

After your LinkedIn profile is ready, you can begin!

Search for the individual you’d like to contact using their first and last name, and organization. After you locate their profile, send a personalized invitation to connect. Here is an example [READ]
Dr. Jackson,

I am a graduate student enrolled in a clinical mental health counseling program at Walden University. I came across your LinkedIn profile while I was researching counseling professionals in my area. I would like to connect with you through LinkedIn to learn more about your background and experience.

For step-by-step instructions on how to send your personalized invitation, visit LinkedIn’s Help Center. A link to the Help Center is provided here for your convenience.

If your invitation to connect is accepted, your next step is to take the conversation offline. Send a message and ask if they would be available to connect with you over the phone. An example is....[READ]

Dr. Jackson,

Thank you for connecting with me through LinkedIn. From your profile, I learned that you specialize in bipolar disorders. I have developed a strong interest in this topic during my academic program and I would like to gain your insights into the diagnosis and assessment of clients with this disorder. Would you have a few minutes to share your expertise with me over the phone? I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to learn more about your background. Is there a date or time that would be convenient for you? You can reach me directly at 123-223-3343 Thank you for your time.
As you actively reach out to potential field sites, don’t forget to follow up. Always bring your best through your communications and demeanor, send thank you emails, and stay in touch in case new opportunities arise.

A few final thoughts to consider...

Remember to be proactive! Landing a field site requires research, effort, and persistence.

Consider your communication strengths and use the oral or written communication strategy that is best suited for you.

Customize your language to sound genuine and authentic in your communication—remember that there are many different ways to reach out to potential field sites.

For more tips on locating field sites, resumes and cover letters, online and offline networking strategies, and interviewing skills, visit the Career Services Resources for Field Experience page.

We invite you to register on OptimalResume to access custom resume, cover letter, and career portfolio templates for Counseling Field Experience.

Finally, for questions related to the Field Experience process or requirements, visit the School of Counseling Field Experience page or contact your Field Experience Coordinator.

Thank you for viewing this program.