Welcome to Communicating with Potential Psychology Field Sites with Walden Career Services!

Are you a doctoral or masters student actively searching for a field site to complete your psychology 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’s psychology field experience page 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. And finally, 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!

After you check all three 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 the future conversations; and, 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 had 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’s an example of language you could use (see slide). You’ll notice that for this example I’m using a doctoral level student:

Hello Ms. Cramer, my name is Stella and I’m a doctoral student pursuing a degree in clinical psychology at Walden University. I received your name from Dr. Larsen, who mentioned that you work with diverse populations of clients with mental illness, and specialize in multicultural clinical intervention and cognitive assessments. As I prepare for a future career in clinical psychology, 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 over the phone or in person?

If the response is “yes”, say “thank you, what time and date are you available to meet?” If the response is “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 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 other 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 will be considered a cold phone inquiry. Here’s an example of language you could use for this type of communication (see slide).

Hello Ms. Cramer, my name is Stella and I’m a doctoral student pursuing a degree in clinical psychology at Walden University. As I understand, your agency serves clients with mental illness, and your specialities include multicultural clinical intervention, and cognitive assessments. As I prepare for a future career in clinical psychology, 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 psychological theories and advanced research methods and assessments, 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.

[New slide: Communication Strategy: Site Visit]
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 and professional demeanor, and introduce yourself at the front desk. Here's an example of a powerful introduction (see slide):

Hello my name is Stella and I am a doctoral student studying clinical psychology. 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 this 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.

[New slide: Making Connections Through LinkedIn]
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 then begin.

[New slide: Communications Strategy: LinkedIn Invitation to Connect]
Search for the individual you like to contact using the first and last name and organization. After you locate their profile, send a personalized invitation to connect; here’s an example (see slide):

Dr. Jackson,
I am a graduate student enrolled in a clinical psychology program at Walden University. I came across your LinkedIn profile while I was researching psychology 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 you convenience.
If your invitation to connect is accepted, the next step is to take the conversation offline. Send a message and ask if they would be able to connect with you over the phone; here's an example:

Dr. Jackson,
Thank you for connecting with me through LinkedIn. From your profile, I learned that you specialize in multicultural clinical intervention. I have developed a strong interest in this topic during my academic program and I would like to gain your insights into working with diverse populations of clients. 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. And finally, customize your language to sound genuine and authentic in your communication. Remember that there are many different ways to reach out to potential 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 also invite you to register on OptimalResume to access custom clinical psychology and general psychology resume templates, along with cover letters, career portfolios and other tools to help you market your skills to potential sites.

Finally, for questions related to the psychology field experience process or requirements, visit the School of Psychology field experience page.

If you have additional questions we invite you to reach out to your field placement coordinator for assistance. Thank you for viewing this program!