COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING FOR STUDENTS:
DEFINITIONS & GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING A PLACEMENT

Community-based learning (CBL): A type of experiential learning in which the student:

- Provides some "meaningful" work (service)
- Which meets a "need" or a "goal"
- That is defined by a "community"
- And where such work flows from the course objectives,
- Is integrated into the course by means of assignments that require some form of reflection on the work in light of the course objectives and
- Is assessed/evaluated accordingly.


Considerations for students undertaking Community-Based Learning.

1. **Select your site**
   - Decide on an organization that will fit your schedule, your goals, and the purposes of the course. Read the descriptions of each site carefully.
   - Know your comfort level: Do you like to work with children? Are you comfortable working with troubled youth? Do you prefer working with adults?

2. **Meet with the site contact person or designated supervisor**
   - After you have made your site selection, attend an on-site orientation. Find out who your supervisor will be. Introduce yourself as a student serving as part of a course. ASK questions about the site, the clients/guests and the situations that make the services of the agency so necessary for the clients.
   - Make sure that you participate in all orientation and training required.
   - Reach an agreement on your schedule and the work you will be doing. Factor in travel time as you commit to a schedule.
   - If you are working with children or other vulnerable populations, the agency may require a background check or some form of vetting. Some sites may require a TB test or fingerprinting.
3. **Understand and keep your commitment**
   - You are doing this as an assignment for the course. Follow the schedule to which you committed; regularity is essential for the agency and your own learning.
   - The agency and its clients will depend on you. Contact your site supervisor if you are unable to attend.
   - Your service commitment begins immediately and runs throughout the entire semester. A good rule of thumb is to plan on spending 1-2 hours a week at your site. You must make a commitment to serve at your site **weekly**.

4. **Learn and follow the rules**
   - Make sure you learn and conform to the policies and procedures of the site at which you are serving.
   - Honor confidentiality, especially when using client names in casual conversation and in your written work. Ask your site supervisor for specific guidance in this area.

5. **Use your good judgment**
   - Do not undertake tasks or respond to requests that seem inappropriate or risky.
   - Ask questions of the staff and explore ways of handling situations that you are new to you.
   - Report anything that concerns you to your supervisor, professor or CSC staff.

6. **Absences**
   - If you need to break your schedule notify your site supervisor as soon as possible and arrange a make-up time if possible.

7. **Transportation**
   - Transportation to and from most sites will be by bus, personal car or CSC van. Ask the site coordinators what they recommend.

8. **Taking advantage of the Community-Based Learning Opportunity**
   - Discuss your experiences with other students; many students find this very valuable in linking course learning with community-based learning.
   - Look for and question connections between course topics and the experiences on site. Do the manifestations in real life fit or contrast with the theoretical or historical perspectives presented. How does the practical experience inform your understanding of the theories and course discussions. What can you bring from each to the other?
   - You may also consider writing a brief journal entry after each volunteer session, to record your questions and reactions and to keep track of your actual work done at the site with the individuals you meet.
   - Be aware of your own attitudes and preconceptions; they will influence your learning and the relationships you build with the people on site. Be open to having your ideas challenged. Know that the people at the site may also have preconceptions and attitudes toward students in general or toward Notre Dame students in particular. This is not necessarily bad or good, but something to remember, especially as you begin your work on site.