Dos and Don’ts of Service-Learning*

* Adapted from the California State University Office of Community Service Learning's Best Practices for Managing Risk in Service Learning Manual.
SOME DOS

Here are some guidelines to help make your service-learning experience more successful and academically enriching.
DO be responsible

• Act in a responsible manner while representing USF at the service-learning site.
• Abide by all rules and regulations that govern the site.
DO ask for help when in doubt

• Your site supervisor understands the issues at your site and you are encouraged to approach him/her with problems or questions as they arise.
• Ask questions about things that you don’t understand or that make you curious.
• Ask for help in learning new skills that you need.
• Your site supervisor can assist you in determining the best way to respond to difficult or uncomfortable situations.
DO be punctual and committed

- Although you are volunteering your time, you are participating in the organization as a reliable, trustworthy, and contributing member of the team.
- The community organization you serve relies on your punctuality and commitment to completing your service hours and/or project throughout your partnership.
- Use your time (and other people’s time) well. If you don’t feel like you’re contributing, tell your site supervisor.
DO call if you anticipate lateness or absence

• Call the site supervisor if you are unable to come in or if you anticipate being late.

• Be mindful of your commitment; people are counting on you.
DO respect the privacy of all clients

• If you are privy to confidential information with regard to the persons with whom you are working (i.e., organizational files, diagnostics, personal stories, etc.), it is vital that you treat this information as privileged and confidential.

• You should use pseudonyms in your course assignments if you are referring to clients or the people you work with at the service site.
DO show respect for the community

• Value the knowledge, wisdom, experience, and perspectives of community members.
• Don’t assume that just because you’re from USF that you are smarter than everyone else.
• Placement within community programs is an educational opportunity, and you have the privilege of learning directly from the collective knowledge and wisdom of our local communities.
• Keep in mind that not only are you serving the community but the community is serving you by investing valuable resources in your learning.
DO value and respect diversity in the community

• People in the community might
  – be ethnically or culturally different from you,
  – have a different socioeconomic status,
  – be from another country,
  – speak other languages and dialects,
  – practice a different religion,
  – have different gender roles or identities,
  – organize family and kinship differently,
  – vary in age,
  – and have differing mental and physical abilities as well as ways of learning.

• Combat prejudice and negative stereotypes about these differences.

• Understand diversity in the community in sensitive and respectful ways.
DO understand the connection between the course and the community

• Understand the connection between the service-learning course and the service and learning objectives to be fulfilled at the service site.

• Understand your role as a service-learning student in working with the community partner.

• Consult your course instructor if you have questions about these connections.
DO be appropriate in attitude, manners, and appearance

• You are expected to treat your supervisor and others with courtesy and kindness.
• Dress comfortably, neatly, and appropriately.
• Use formal names unless instructed otherwise.
• Set a positive standard for other students to follow as part of USF’s ongoing service-learning community partnerships.
DO be flexible

- The level or intensity of activity at a service site is not always predictable.
- Your flexibility to changing situations can assist the partnership in working smoothly and producing positive outcomes for everyone involved.
SOME DON’TS

Here are some things you should **never** do during your service-learning.
• **DON’T** report to your service site under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
• **DON’T** give or loan money or other personal belongings to anyone at your service-learning site.
• DON’T make promises or commitments to a client that neither you nor the organization can keep.
• **DON’T** give a client or organizational representative a ride in a personal vehicle.
• DON’T tolerate verbal exchange of a sexual nature.
• DON’T engage in behavior that might be perceived as sexual with a client or community organization representative.
• **DON’T** use language or dress in ways that might be offensive to people in the community.
• **DON’T** tolerate verbal exchange or engage in behavior that might be perceived as discriminating against an individual on the basis of their age, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or ethnicity.
• **DON’T** engage in any type of business with clients during the term of your service.
• DON’T enter into personal relationships with a client or community partner representative during the term of your service.
• **DON’T** take pictures or videos of anyone at the service site unless permitted by organizational policy and authorized by your site supervisor.
SUMMARY

- By following the Dos and avoiding the Don’ts, you can increase the learning potential of your service-learning experience and offer a valuable service to your community partner.

- Consult with your instructor if you have additional questions, or contact the Office of Community Engagement for additional resources on service-learning (CommunityEngagement@usf.edu).