

HDFS DEPARTMENT

UNDERGRADUATE PRACTICUM AND WORK

EXPERIENCE HANDBOOK

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
HISTORICAL NOTE AND WORK EXPERIENCE OPTIONS	3
INTRODUCTION.....	5
Definitions of Titles	5
PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES.....	5
Philosophy	5
Objectives.....	6
PRACTICUM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	7
HDFS Practicum Coordinator Responsibilities	7
Site Supervisor Responsibilities	8
Appropriate Activities for HDFS Practicum Students.....	9
Activities Not Appropriate for HDFS Practicum Students	10
PRACTICUM REQUIREMENTS AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES	11
Application Process	11
Background Checks for HDFS Practicum	12
Practicum Requirements and Process	13
Practicum Credits and Hours Policies	16
Professional Conduct.....	18
NCFR CODE OF ETHICS	19
NAEYC CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT	21
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.....	23

HISTORICAL NOTE AND WORK EXPERIENCE OPTIONS

For many years, the department required each undergraduate student to participate in 6 credits of practicum, which is designed to be a work experience preparatory for assisting students in making the transition from school to the workplace and providing an opportunity to test out a job or career to determine if it is a good fit. In 2017, the practicum requirement was amended to just 3 credits, which is the current minimum requirement. Students had two registration options for practicum. Most students engaged in HDFS 4980 – *Practicum in Human Development and Family Studies*. A few, who had a desire to work with older adults, registered for HDFS 4970 – *Gerontology Practicum in Human Development and Family Studies*. The requirements for these two courses were the same and so this handbook explained the processes for both courses.

The department recently approved other work experience options which will fulfill the practicum requirements. These additional options were available beginning with the Fall 2025 semester. While all options historically have been called practicum, a better description now is **practicum and work experience**. However, you will likely hear the historical title used most often.

The following are the current practicum and work experience options. The requirement remains for students to register for and complete 3 credits of one of these options:

HDFS 4950 Research Experience in Human Development and Family Studies:

This option is a good fit for students who are considering an academic career. Note that students can engage in a limited amount of research as part of the traditional HDFS Practicum course (HDFS 4980), while still getting a community agency experience. Therefore, this option is only suggested for students certain they will be pursuing an academic path. ***If this is your plan, then this handbook will be relevant for you. However, you will not have to participate in a background check, and you may ignore all references to this as you read the handbook.**

HDFS 4960 Practice Teaching in Child Development Laboratories: This new option is for students who are planning careers working with young children. This involves doing student teaching in the Adele and Dale Young Child Development Lab. These students must complete the prerequisites for this and have been approved for this track. Note that students can work as aides within the Child Development labs. However, this will take place

through the traditional HDFS 4980 Practicum path. ***If this applies to you, meaning that you have done the prerequisites and have been approved to complete the child lab student teaching path, then this handbook is not applicable for you. Contact the Practicum Coordinator, who will confirm that this is your pathway. Once this is confirmed, you will not be contacted further about the traditional practicum pathway and there will be a number of tasks that you can forego.**

HDFS 4970 Gerontology Practicum in Human Development: This continues to be a traditional practicum option for students who want to focus on working with aging adults. This practicum is also a component of the department's *Gerontology Certificate* program. ***This handbook applies fully to this track.**

HDFS 4980 Practicum in Human Development: This is the traditional practicum experience which likely will be completed by most students. It involves volunteer or paid work for a community agency in the HDFS field, which can also include many settings on the university campus. ***This handbook applies fully to this track.**

SUMMARY

This handbook is written for the HDFS 4970 and 4980 options. If you are going to participate in the research-based HDFS 4950 option, this handbook is relevant other than all references to background checks. If you are pursuing the HDFS 4960 Student Teaching option, this handbook does not apply to you. Instead, you should contact the Child Development Lab staff and follow their instructions regarding applications, background checks, and all other tasks.

If you are uncertain which track you will select, we suggest that you proceed as if you are participating in HDFS 4980. Adjustments can be made later.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to facilitate and coordinate the practicum experience in Human Development and Family Studies. The handbook is to be used as a reference for understanding the perspective and scope of practicum. It is the responsibility of the practicum student to read this manual, to become familiar with their responsibilities, and to seek clarification from the Practicum Coordinator, as needed. All practicum students are bound by the conditions outlined in this manual.

Definitions of Titles

The Practicum Student is a Human Development and Family Studies undergraduate student who assumes a professional role within an agency or a placement setting.

The Practicum Site is an agency that provides services to families or individuals throughout the life span.

The Site Supervisor is the professional agency representative who supervises, mentors, and evaluates the practicum student during the duration of the practicum experience.

The HDFS Practicum Coordinator coordinates the practicum experience between the student, the participating agency, and the university.

PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES

Philosophy

A holistic educational experience combines both theory and practice. Practice is the direct application of theory within a distinct setting for the purpose of additional knowledge and skill acquisition. The holistic education process is a method whereby students acquire:

1. The capacity to identify different theoretical perspectives and the conditions in which they are applicable.
2. The skills necessary to apply theory and function professionally within the area of expertise.

The Human Development and Family Studies Practicum provides students with opportunities to apply classroom knowledge in the delivery of services to clients and to develop knowledge, skills, and abilities through experience. Thus, the Human Development and Family Studies practicum offers each student a chance to demonstrate and apply

knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal qualities while being supervised by professionals. This valuable experience can serve as a practical method for determining a student's readiness for a career in Human Development and Family Studies and/or graduate school and can help the student determine interest and ability in specific settings and roles.

Objectives

By the completion of their practicum experience, students are expected to develop the following:

1. The ability to identify, understand, and utilize basic values and attitudes consistent with Human Development and Family Studies professions.
2. An understanding of the scope of Human Development and Family Studies professions and the professional opportunities for Human Development and Family Studies majors.
3. An awareness of the impact of social problems such as poverty, mental illness, crime, family breakdown, etc., upon individuals, families, and society.
4. An understanding of the various programs and services available within the community to help clients find the agencies best suited for their needs.
5. An understanding of the "team" approach, including a familiarity with professionals and other individuals important to the client or family who are part of the team.
6. An ability to apply theoretical knowledge and to function professionally within their areas of expertise.
7. Interpersonal skills that are engaging, helpful, collaborative, and/or directive, when appropriate, depending upon the situation. Effective interpersonal skills require the ability to observe, listen, and communicate both verbally and in writing with individuals and groups.
8. The ability to work with clients using a strengths-based approach in assessing needs, planning, implementing prevention and intervention programs, and successfully terminating services when client is ready.

PRACTICUM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The following guidelines have been prepared to outline the responsibilities of the USU Human Development and Family Studies Department, the participating agency, and the student.

HDFS Practicum Coordinator Responsibilities

1. Examine student transcripts, applications, and other materials prior to practicum enrollment to determine whether the student has completed the necessary requirements for practicum.
2. Notify the student about the status of their practicum application upon review.
3. Create a list of local practicum sites in which practicum experiences are available and make the list available to students (lists of sites used in other regions of Utah will also be maintained).
4. Develops policies and guidelines for practicum experiences in cooperation with faculty, practicum sites, and students.
5. Manages the electronic Practicum Agreement forms and ensures that they are signed by the student and site supervisor prior to beginning the practicum.
6. Conducts an on-site or videoconference visit with the student and the Practicum Site Supervisor.
7. Assists practicum students and Practicum Site Supervisors with any concerns or problems.
8. Provides access to an online syllabus for each student approximately two weeks prior to the beginning of the semester in which they are scheduled to do their practicum.
9. Grades student assignments, assign points for required paperwork, and assigns a final grade at the end of the practicum.

Site Supervisor Responsibilities

1. Interviews the student to determine whether his or her needs and career objectives correspond with those of the practicum site.
2. Orient the student to the practicum site by explaining its purposes, services, eligibility requirements, area served, administrative structure, methods of recording, etc. A special attempt should be made to help the student understand how the practicum site fits into the network of community services.
3. Identify the parameters of the student's role and responsibility within the placement setting, introduce them to staff members, and arrange for them to attend staff or committee meetings whenever possible.
4. Provide the student with adequate working space and other practical necessities that may be involved in completing work assignments.
5. Assist the student in defining and establishing practicum objectives congruent with the function of the practicum site and the role of the student in the agency.
6. Facilitate meaningful experiences that will provide opportunities for engaging in a variety of tasks and professional experiences.
7. Make the student aware of referral sources within the community and introduce them to professionals outside the immediate practicum site when a referral or a team approach is indicated.
8. Schedule regular supervision time with the student where an on-going evaluation of the student's performance is shared.
9. Inform the student and the HDFS Practicum Coordinator immediately if the student's level of performance is not satisfactory.
10. Complete online evaluations of the student regarding his or her progress at the halfway point and upon completion of the practicum experience.
11. Participate in a practicum site visit interview with the Practicum Coordinator and the student (set up by the student) that most often takes place via videoconference.
12. Assists the student in documenting the completion of required practicum hours and sign off the hours on the final evaluation form when they are completed.

Appropriate Activities for HDFS Practicum Students

Human Development and Family Studies students have been prepared educationally to participate in the following types of supervised practicum experiences:

1. Intake interviews.
2. Attend and assist with therapeutic, educational, and support groups.
3. Develop and teach community education classes focused on family-related topics such as child abuse, human growth and development, parenting, marriage, divorce, aging, death and dying, family crises, substance abuse, etc.
4. Observe and interact with individuals and families throughout the various developmental stages of the life span.
5. Learn the day-to-day practicum site management routines.
6. Supervised case management.
7. Assist with family problem-solving in a community setting, including home visits and in-home parent education.
8. Supervised crisis intervention.
9. Day care and preschool curriculum planning and implementation.
10. Participation in engaging with clients, data collection, the assessment of the client's current situation, the development of treatment plans, implementing interventions, monitoring and evaluating efficacy of interventions, evaluating progress, and determining when services should be terminated.
11. Observe and participate in practicum site staff meetings, community planning meetings, and interagency meetings.
12. Participate in special training sessions.
13. Supervised agency documentation.
14. Day-to-day activities, such as answering phones, greeting clients, paperwork processes, etc., necessary for the operation of a professional agency.
15. Complete pertinent readings suggested by the site supervisor.
16. Work on special projects such as making brochures, posters, or bulletin boards to facilitate the services provided by the practicum site; assist with community education programs; and help organize fund raising programs.

Activities Not Appropriate for HDFS Practicum Students

1. A continuation of a current job without some additional focus. While you may remain in the same employment setting for a practicum, as approved, the responsibilities will need to include some different opportunities.
2. Continued work at a site where the student completed a previous lab or practicum.
3. Excessive “busy” work at the expense of other professional experiences. For example, some filing, shredding documents, and receptionist work may be appropriate, as this is necessary for the functioning of an agency. However, this may be inappropriate if it is all that the practicum student is doing at the expense of participation in other professional activities.
4. Serving in a therapist role. A student may be present in an individual, couple, family, or group therapy setting, and may participate, but there should be a licensed therapist present, who directs the discussions and interventions. While the practicum student could be taught about case notes, these should be completed by the licensed therapist.
5. Unstructured childcare with no opportunities for planning, implementing, and evaluating developmentally appropriate activities.
6. Unsupervised practicum settings, such as working as a nanny or a live-in home-care provider for elderly clients not associated with an agency where supervision is available.
7. Teaching in a setting that does not focus on HDFS principles or on general education. This would exclude teaching in a setting like seminary or institute.
8. Hours worked while residents in an inpatient or residential setting are asleep. Only hours with awake clients can be counted.

PRACTICUM REQUIREMENTS AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Application Process

1. Students should download and review a copy of the Practicum Handbook, located at <http://hdfs.usu.edu/programs/undergraduate/practicum>.
2. Students should complete the online application to participate in the practicum experience, located at the same website, ensuring that they do so by the deadline for the specific semester. The application includes signing a Confidentiality Agreement and a Criminal Charge Disclosure Agreement.
3. On the application, students must list two people who can serve as professional references, including their email and professional role. These should be from employment and academic sectors. Ecclesiastical leaders, family members, and friends are not acceptable references.
4. As part of the practicum process, **all** students must complete a background check. Due to the intricacies associated with this, it will receive its own section in this handbook.
5. Students will receive a *Letter of Approval* or a *Letter of Conditional Approval* from the Practicum Coordinator informing them of their eligibility to participate in practicum or outlining the tasks that need to be done to be eligible.
6. The student should then select the semester when they want to begin their practicum and sign up for at least 3 credits (It is a Variable Credit course, and the default is 1 credit).
7. The students should then begin efforts to locate a suitable site and to negotiate a practicum experience. While the student is ultimately responsible for completing this task, they may schedule an appointment with the Practicum Coordinator to identify and discuss options.
8. If there is any question whether the site and the tasks being completed there will fit with the purposes and objectives of practicum, contact the Practicum Coordinator to inquire.
9. Send the Practicum Coordinator the information needed to create and send out an electronic *Practicum Agreement form*, to be signed by the student and site supervisor. The information needed includes: 1. the name of the student, 2. The student's email address, 3. the name of the agency, 4. The name of the site supervisor, and 5. The supervisor's email address.

Background Checks for HDFS Practicum:

1. **ALL** students must complete a background check prior to participating in practicum. Understand that this background is for the university, NOT for the practicum site. Many sites also require a background check. When possible, we will try to use one background check for both the university and agency.
2. The department will accept copies of recently completed background checks at other jobs and settings, if they contain the necessary information. Send copies of these to the Program Coordinator for review and approval. The department cannot accept emails from representatives at other agencies attesting that the student has recently completed a background check there.
3. The standard in the field is that background checks are valid for one year. If you reach the one-year date of your initial background check clearance before completing your practicum, you will need to complete an additional background check to continue.
4. There are some agencies and work settings that sign up for a perpetual background check, sometimes called a Rap Back program. Having one initiated prior to one year ago is not sufficient to fulfill the department requirement. However, in many cases the agency can access their account and print out a letter stating that the student is still in good standing, as of that date. This will fulfill the background check requirement.
5. Since there is uncertainty whether a student may have to do a separate background check for the practicum site selected, it is recommended that the student refrain from completing the department background check until this has been determined.
6. If a student is not providing an outside background check, they are **REQUIRED** to complete the department background check through the **CastleBranch** system. The web address is: <https://portal.castlebranch.com/UT19/spif/UT31/UT31bg> You will pay the cost of this background check, which is around \$45.00. The results will be sent to the Practicum Coordinator. They will also be sent to students when they enter their email address on the application.
7. If you have criminal charges on your record, the Practicum Coordinator and Department Head will determine if you are eligible to participate in practicum. In most cases a setting can be identified. Please speak to the Practicum Coordinator in advance, if desired, to discuss concerns about background checks and work and career options in the field.

Practicum Requirements and Process:

Note that this process is included in the syllabus for the Practicum Course.

1. **Identify a Site:** While the department has developed relationships with some agencies, you are responsible for identifying a site that will allow you to volunteer (or work) in your field of focus, primarily consisting of face-to-face service delivery to the clientele. **50 hours** of work at your practicum equals **1 credit**. With rare exceptions, HDFS students must complete a minimum of **3 credits** of practicum (**150 hours**). All students may complete up to **12 credits** of HDFS practicum. If you are uncertain how many credits of practicum you are required to complete, please contact Laura Holley, HDFS Advisor (Office 205A; 797-1530; laura.holley@usu.edu)
2. Take the **Practicum Preparation Quiz**. This has been created to make sure that you understand your responsibilities and some of the details related to the practice experience. You are required to take this quiz until you get 100%. This is no limit to the number of times you can take it or the frequency between attempts.
3. Contact the Practicum Coordinator (Kevin Barlow; kevin.barlow@usu.edu) and provide the information so that a **Practicum Agreement** document can be completed for you. It will be sent to you by email first and you will electronically sign it. It will then be sent to the practicum site supervisor for their signature. Once this takes place, it will be sent to the practicum coordinator, who will upload it to Canvas and state that you are now approved to begin your practicum.

The information needed includes:

- *Your name and the preferred email address you want the document sent to.
- *The name of the agency where you will be completing your practicum.
- *The name and email address of the site supervisor at the practicum site.

4. **Begin your practicum**, documenting your hours on the **Practicum Hours Tracking Sheet** and following the guidance of your site representative.
5. **Identify Objectives:** Download the Practicum Objectives form from the Files section in this class. You may then type your goal and four objectives into the document, review it with your site supervisor, initial the document acknowledging that this review has taken place, and then upload it to Canvas. These objectives should be specific, measurable, and time-specific objectives you would like to complete during your

practicum. Examples are located in this assignment section. This should be completed and uploaded in Canvas within **30 days** of beginning your practicum (measured from the day your agreement form is signed).

6. **Schedule and participate in site visit:** This should take place at approximately the halfway mark in the practicum. Therefore, you should contact the Practicum Coordinator as you are approaching the halfway point, with a few days and times that work for you and your site supervisor. This visit will take place via videoconference and is usually 20-30 minutes in length. It should include all three parties and will focus on your experiences so far and progress on your objectives. **You will not be observed carrying out your duties and you should maintain the confidentiality of your clients, consistent with the setting where you are completing your work.**
7. **Mid Practicum Evaluation:** When you schedule your site visit, you should also request that your mid-practicum evaluation be sent electronically to your site supervisor. Provide the Practicum Coordinator with the name of your site supervisor and their email address to facilitate this. It is suggested that you send an email regarding the last two items stating:

"I am approaching the halfway point in my hours. Therefore, please send ----- a mid-practicum evaluation for me at this email address: ----- . Also, we are available for an online site visit on the following days and times."

8. Complete **Assignment #1:** At the midway point in your practicum, you should compose this assignment. In it you should summarize what you have learned at your site so far, how it connects to the coursework you have completed, and what you have learned about careers in this field. This should be a two page (double spaced) paper.

***It is expected that the Mid-Practicum Evaluation and Written Assignment #1 are completed at least 24 hours prior to the site visit so that data from these sources may be discussed. 20% of your grade on each will be tied to whether you completed the written assignment within this time frame and did your part to facilitate the completion of the evaluation.**

9. Complete **Assignment #2:** This assignment should focus on your thoughts about your practicum experience, including the impact it will have on your educational or

employment plans within the field. You should also make connections with the coursework you have completed towards your degree. Choose five of the department's Undergraduate Learning Objectives (<https://cehs.usu.edu/hdfs/assessment/undergrad-learning-objectives>) Links to an external site. and describe how you were able to use what you have learned during your practicum. Be clear with your connections. This paper should be 5 to 7 pages in length (excluding title page, reference page, if used), comply with APA standards, including being double-spaced, professional in nature, with correct spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence and paragraph structure. This should be turned in at about the same time as you complete your practicum hours.

10. **Final Practicum Evaluation:** Once you have completed your practicum hours, request that your final practicum evaluation be sent electronically to your site supervisor, by again providing the name and email address of the site supervisor to the Practicum Coordinator.
11. **Student Practicum Evaluation:** Once you have completed your practicum hours you will also be sent the link to an evaluation form which you should complete. This will allow you to share your feedback about the practicum experience. You can request this from the Practicum Coordinator.
12. Upload your **Practicum Hours Tracking Sheet** (with signatures) to the appropriate place in Canvas.

***Grading: The syllabus, located on Canvas, will distinguish the point values for each of these tasks, the grading criteria, and the procedure by which a grade will be assigned for the practicum experience.**

Practicum Credits and Hours Policies:

1. The student earns practicum credit by working 50 hours of clock time for each semester hour of credit. Use the following table to determine the number of hours that must be worked:

<u>Credit Hours</u>	<u>Clock Hours</u>	<u>Credit Hours</u>	<u>Clock Hours</u>
3	150	8	400
4	200	9	450
5	250	10	500
6	300	11	550
7	350	12	600

2. A minimum of 3 credits, or 150 hours of practicum, is required for all HDFS undergraduate students.
3. HDFS majors who are concurrently completing a gerontology certificate must complete 3 credits and 150 hours of practicum, but these students should sign up for HDFS 4970 instead of 4980.
4. When registering for practicum credit, only one credit will show on the student's registration. As a variable credit course, it is the student's responsibility to change the credits to the required number of credits either online or in person at the Registrar's Office. You may request a copy of a document demonstrating how to make this adjustment from the Practicum Coordinator.
5. Students may complete their practicum at either one or two sites. The benefits of having two sites may be to compare two careers or work fields or to ensure that the required number of hours can be met. When doing this, the student should designate a primary site, for which they will complete objectives, have a site visit, and have evaluations completed.
6. Students may complete their practicum over more than one semester. If they are continuing the current practicum credits into another term, they do not need to sign up

for practicum again with the university. At the conclusion of the first semester, a Temporary (T) grade will be placed on the transcript. This will be replaced by a letter grade when all practicum tasks are completed. Under these circumstances, they can work at their practicum sites and accrue hours during the break between semesters.

7. To facilitate practicum being a multi-semester option, a special Canvas page has been created that is not semester specific. Therefore, while you may be shown as being in a practicum course associated with a semester, there will be no information there. Instead, you will be added to the ongoing practicum Canvas page. You will be removed from that page when you complete the course. If you do not believe you have access to this Canvas page, please contact the Practicum Coordinator.
8. While planning is recommended to prevent this, a student may need to alter the number of credits of practicum based on the number of hours completed during a semester. For example, a student may sign up for 5 credits of practicum and anticipate working 250 hours at the selected site. However, they may later decide that realistically, only 200 hours will be completed. Therefore, they will want to change the 5 credits to 4. Likewise, some students discover that they are getting more hours than expected and may want to add additional credits of practicum during the term. In both cases, they should contact the registrar's office and petition for an Academic Record Adjustment. This process is described at:
<https://www.usu.edu/registrar/records/update/petition/>.
9. Students may also choose to complete additional hours and credits at their practicum site in a subsequent semester. In these cases, the student completed the 150 hours of practicum during the first semester and is now choosing to extend the practicum further. If the student informs the Practicum Coordinator about this plan, they may negotiate the completion of the practicum tasks. For example, the student may be instructed not to complete written Assignment 2, the student evaluation, or request the final evaluation from the site supervisor until the completion of all hours during the subsequent semester.
10. Students may register for up to 12 credit hours in one practicum site over one or more semesters.

Professional Conduct

Within the agency setting, students are expected to conduct themselves professionally in the following ways:

1. Understand the philosophy, vision, mission, and method of operation and comply with the rules of practice within the practicum setting.
2. Maintain a professional appearance and exhibit dependability and promptness in all dealings at the practicum site.
3. Give advance notice to the Practicum Site Supervisor and make up the time on another day if it is necessary to miss time at the agency.
4. Take the initiative to interact with co-workers and to draw from their experience, being aware that much learning is acquired from informal contacts.
5. Be aware of the ethical codes adhered to by the agency and implement the Ethical Decision-Making Process when necessary. Two sets of Codes of Ethics from the field are contained on the following pages.
6. Prepare for regularly scheduled supervision sessions with the Site Supervisor.
7. Make yourself available for, and attend, staff and other meetings when possible. Much information about the operation of the agency can be obtained from attending agency meetings.
8. Notify the HDFS Practicum Coordinator immediately should any problem arise which may affect the successful completion of the practicum experience.

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON FAMILY RELATIONS CODE OF ETHICS

Students must adhere to professional values and ethics. This includes an understanding and practice of such general principles from the National Council on Family Relation's Code of Ethics. For the full text, please visit:

<https://www.ncfr.org/board-and-governance/governance/ncfr-ethical-principles-guidelines-family-scientists>

Principle I: General Principles for Family Scientists:

Family scientists are respectful of all individuals, do not unethically discriminate, do not develop intimate personal relationships in their role as family scientists, are sensitive to the complications of multiple role relationships, protect the confidentiality of their students or clients, and do not engage in sexual harassment.

Principle II: Family Scientists Are Respectful of Students and Clients:

Family scientists are respectful of diverse family forms. They are respectful of students and clients' sensitivity in discussing personal family issues. Family scientists do not exploit the hierarchical relationship with persons they serve and are respectful of privacy issues.

Principle III: Family Scientists Abide by High Professional Standards:

Family scientists are responsible to uphold high professional standards. They are encouraged to be cooperative with other family scientists in gathering and sharing of scientific information. They strive to keep current with material in their domain. They are ethical in representing their profession at their place of employment, as well as other settings.

Principle IV: Family Scientists Conduct Research Ethically:

Family scientists contribute to society and to the profession through research and evaluation activities. When conducting research or evaluation, family scientists recognize that their ultimate responsibility is to the participants. Family scientists honestly report the findings of their study.

Principle V: Family Scientists Are Ethical in Their Interactions With Employing Organizations or Agencies:

Family scientists are respectful of the internal policies and procedures of current and past employers.

Principle VI: Family Scientists Are Involved in Improving Society:

Family scientists are advocates for individuals and families and participate in developing policies and laws that are respectful and empowering to them.

Principle VII: Family Scientists Are Ethical When Reviewing Professional Writing:

When a reviewer for a professional work, family scientists avoid conflicts of interest, read materials carefully and in their entirety, and evaluate them fairly.

Principle VIII: Family Scientists Understand and Abide by Ethical Principles and Assist Others in Doing So:

Family scientists understand and abide by ethical principles, encourage and assist other family scientists to know and apply them, and teach ethical principles to students of family science.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN - CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

Practicum students working with this population should also be aware of this organization's code of ethical conduct.

Section I: Ethical Responsibility to Children:

Childhood is a unique and valuable stage in the human life cycle. Our paramount responsibility is to provide care and education in settings that are safe, healthy, nurturing, and responsive for each child. We are committed to supporting children's development and learning; respecting individual differences; and helping children learn to live, play and work cooperatively. We are also committed to promoting children's self-awareness, competence, self-worth, resiliency, and physical well-being.

Section II: Ethical Responsibility to Families:

Families are of primary importance in children's development. Because the family and the early childhood practitioner have a common interest in the child's well-being, we acknowledge a primary responsibility to bring about communication, cooperation, and collaboration between the home and early childhood program in ways that enhance the child's development.*

*The term *family* may include others, besides parents, who are responsibly involved with the child.)

Section III: Ethical Responsibility to Colleagues:

In a caring, cooperative workplace, human dignity is respected, professional satisfaction is promoted, and positive relationships are developed and sustained. Based upon our core values, our primary responsibility to colleagues is to establish and maintain settings and relationships that support productive work and meet professional needs. The same ideals that apply to children also apply as we interact with adults in the workplace.

Section IV: Ethical Responsibilities to Community and Society:

Early childhood programs operate within the context of their immediate community made up of families and other institutions concerned with children's welfare. Our responsibilities to the community are to provide programs that meet the diverse needs of families, to cooperate with agencies and professions that share the responsibility for children, to assist families in gaining access to those agencies and allied professionals, and to assist in the development of community programs that are needed but not currently available. As individuals, we acknowledge our responsibility to provide the best possible programs of care and education for children and to

conduct ourselves with honesty and integrity. Because of our specialized expertise in early childhood development and education and because the larger society shares responsibility for the welfare and protection of young children, we acknowledge a collective obligation to advocate for the best interests of children within early childhood programs and in larger community and to serve as a voice for young children everywhere. The ideals and principles in this section are presented to distinguish between those that pertain to the work of the individual early childhood educator and those that more typically are engaged in collectively on behalf of the best interests of children—with the understanding that individual early childhood educators have a shared responsibility for addressing the ideals and principles that are identified as “collective.”

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why do some students complete more than the minimum number of practicum credits?

The choice to complete more than 3 practicum credits is usually related to how many credits a student still needs to graduate and their choice regarding whether to fill needed credits with additional classes or more hours of practicum. A student may have completed all desired courses and may still need a few credits to graduate. They may consider doing more practicum hours as preferable to a classroom-based course.

Can I get paid for my practicum?

Yes, but the Practicum Coordinator does not arrange paid practicum experiences. If you would like to get paid for your practicum, you will need to find a job that you can use for a practicum. However, in some cases it might be in your best interest to choose a site you would like to get paid for in the future rather than a site you can get paid for in the present, because many of the best sites are volunteer but could lead to a better job in the future.

Do I have to stay in Cache Valley to do my practicum?

No. We now have students both around the state of Utah and in many other states. Students have completed practicum experiences all over the world. However, we have an extensive list of frequently used sites only in Northern Utah. Those in other regions of the state or nation will need to find their own sites and then have them approved by the HDFS Practicum Coordinator.

What should I say if I contact an agency to ask about whether I can complete a practicum with them?

If it is an agency that has been used recently by students, they will know what you are inquiring about and who to have you speak to. If you are contacting an agency that students have not used in the past, the following script is suggested:

“I am a Human Development and Family Studies student at Utah State University. As part of my requirements, I need to work or volunteer with an agency in the field, which is called a practicum. I am interested in the services your agency provides and was wondering if I could talk to you about fulfilling this with you? I also want to let you know that I passed a background check for the university and can provide a copy, if needed.”

Does my Site Supervisor need to have any special training?

There are no specific educational requirements supervisors must have before serving as a supervisor. However, it is expected that they have had some type of professional training, at

least some post-secondary education, preferably at least a bachelor's degree. Site supervisors should not be related to the students they are supervising. This is considered a conflict of interest and is not within the ethical guidelines students are expected to adhere to. If you have any questions about your supervisor's qualifications, please contact the HDFS Practicum Coordinator.

Do I need to register for Practicum credit?

Yes. Practicum credits must be registered for and paid for just like a regular class. Students may take up to 12 credits of practicum, across multiple semesters.

Can I spread my practicum over more than one site?

Yes, students can use up to two practicum sites. However, students are encouraged to spend more time in one site getting an in-depth experience instead of spending less time in many different practicum sites getting broader experiences. This seems to be the preferences of most agencies as well, since they want to spend time training students and then give the student increasingly greater responsibilities.

Can I participate in university research for practicum?

Yes, with two options. You may forego this HDFS 4980 practicum course and take HDFS 4950 instead, in which case you will engage in research exclusively. However, if you'd like to engage in the two-site option with one of them being research-based, you may do so, signing up for HDFS 4980. The research site should not be your primary site, and you are limited to 50 hours of research for this practicum.

What if I can't get all my hours in at one site because they don't have enough for me to do?

Most sites have no problem giving students the hours they need since they are grateful for the extra help. However, sometimes there may not seem to be enough to do. Students can volunteer to do special projects, such as making flyers or brochures, conducting an in-service training, or asking for recommendations for special readings. If your supervisor needs help thinking of things for you to do, don't hesitate to give suggestions of things you are willing to do. In a few cases, the hours are just not available for the student at their practicum site. In this case, you should consult with the Practicum Coordinator about other opportunities to complete hours, including picking up a second site.

What if I decide I don't like my site?

Sometimes students learn that they really don't want to do what they thought they would enjoy doing. This doesn't mean that your practicum is a failure—it means that you learned something very important before you got into a paid position that you would not like. In most cases, we

want you to fulfill your commitment to the agency. There may be exceptions to this. Talk to the Practicum Coordinator if you find yourself in this position. Sometimes just talking to your site supervisor about concerns you have can help immensely with how much you like your practicum site.

I'm really busy. What if I just don't have the time or energy to go to my practicum site when I agreed to be there?

The most destructive thing a student can do is quit going to their practicum or not show up for scheduled time without contacting their supervisor. This not only affects whether an agency is willing to supervise future practicum students, it affects your professional future as your supervisor sees you as non-committed and not dependable. As a practicum student, you not only represent yourself, but the HDFS Department and USU as well. Also, you represent the agency while you are working hours there. Most practicum sites expect their practicum students to conduct themselves just as professionally as if they were a regular employee, including attending staff meetings or special trainings when possible. This might mean a student has to rearrange their schedule so they can be at their practicum site. If you quit going without contacting your Site Supervisor and Practicum Coordinator, you may find yourself in a position where you will not be allowed to finish your practicum at your site or you may not be referred to another site. This can negatively influence your practicum grade.

Do I have to complete my practicum during the semester for which I applied?

No. Once you have been approved, you can change to a more convenient semester without reapplying.

How many credits of practicum of practicum must I complete and how many hours is that?

Most students need to complete 3 credits of practicum, which is 150 hours of work at the site. There is a 50:1 ratio of hours per semester credit. In rare cases, a student may need to complete more than 3 credits. It is recommended that you consult your Degree Works plan and also meet with or speak with the department's advisor if you have questions about this.

Can I use an already completed background check for my practicum?

Yes. If you have a current background check in place and can provide us with a copy, you will not have to complete the USU background check. You must keep in mind that if your background check expires prior to the conclusion of your practicum, which is one year following its completion, you need to have updated this. You may not count hours or work at your site during a period when there is not a current background check.

What if I miss the deadline for applying for the practicum?

If you do not apply for practicum by the deadline for the term, you will not be allowed to participate in practicum that term. You will need to wait for the next term, ensuring that you apply on time. The university must follow this with exactness.

When is the deadline?

The deadline for applications for the fall semester is noon on **July 1st** of each year.

The deadline for applications for the spring semester is noon on **November 1st** of each year.

The deadline for applications for the summer semester is noon on **March 1st** of each year.

Can I count hours worked during terms when I am not registered for practicum?

You may not count any hours worked prior to the first day of the term for which you have been approved and you register for practicum. Then, if you do not complete your practicum by the end of that term, you may continue to work at your site and accrue hours after the conclusion of the term, until you have completed the process, without having to sign up for practicum again.

What happens if I don't complete all my hours or coursework during the term?

All students who have not completed the practicum by the end of the term in which they registered for it will have a Temporary (T) submitted as a grade placeholder instead of a letter grade. The student may continue to participate in the practicum for as long as is needed to complete the process, without having to sign up for additional practicum credits. When the student has completed the practicum, a Change of Grade will be submitted, replacing the Temporary with a letter grade.