**Notes from Standard 6 Funeral Directing** – **Best Practices**

Facilitated by Jolena Grande – Cypress College

The History of this addition to Standard 6: Advisory committees tell us our students don’t know how to do anything outside of the prep room. Some of our students have never even been in a funeral home. These types of comments spawned Standard 6.10. Why should we track these funeral directing activities?

How do we *do* this?” Some schools have been implementing a funeral directing practicum for years. Some schools have this figured out…while others are wondering how do we do this?

Thus, a seminar on Best Practices:

There have been overwhelmingly positive results with this implementation.

Here are bullets of the discussion feedback:

* Students spend 54 hours in a funeral home – 1st Semester – deal with notification of death, transfer of remains, embalming etc. and 2nd semester – actually *working* funeral services generally becoming more proficient in the funeral home. Paperwork is implemented in arrangement instruction and could immediately be practiced at work.
* Develop a check sheet for all the requirements and send to preceptors. In the Spring the activities are centered around Funeral Directing – mock arrangements, document and verify, removal, embalming. Have difficulties with church services.
* In a 4-year program, the last semester of the sophomore year is a 5-week practicum. The first semester of the senior year is a 7-week practicum working in a funeral home and accomplishing:

 15 cases (arranging)

 15 funerals

 15 embalming

 Knowledge of paperwork

 Prepare obit and death notice

 Prepare Statement of Funeral Goods and Services Selected

 Time sheets

 + 10 cases embalming in school

 Mock arrangement simulations

 Track all documentation with Mort Trac

 Make the practical parts of the standard part of the educational process – real time experiences

* In exchange for time in the Funeral Home, offer CEU to preceptors for helping

Remove the funeral home apprehension. Offer FERPA, legal, OSHA training, FTC etc.

Funeral homes are respective of education and practice but won’t help students fulfill their requirements.

* Another program also offers CEU’s in exchange for working with students. Preceptors come to the school and training small workshops

 Funeral Homes are reluctant to have students present in the FH and arrangement conference. Need to be convinced that it is really just like having an intern and emphasize that the FH will have had a key role in that student’s formation

* Another program requires an apprenticeship BEFORE school. In school they use rubrics for tasks and arrangements

Funeral homes are still resistant… it might be easier when asking for help by saying” the ABFSE Standard says a student MUST……”

* Another program’s practicums were named Internship 1 and Internship 2 and the school’s legal counsel cautioned that it might imply that some payment was offered.

Changed the name to Funeral Service Clinical 1 and Funeral Service Clinical 2. They offer preceptors a training manual with all the needed paperwork and policies included. In the Funeral Service Clinical 1 they place students in funeral homes. Funeral Service Clinical 2 is mainly management and merchandising and funeral directing, but topics covered in the classroom FIRST. Also involved is a 4-day intensive role play training. They also offer students NFDA Cremation Certification and Arranger training. In FS Clinical 2 involves real time experiences in funeral homes.

* One program has faculty that won’t allow students going out to funeral homes. Everyone has a first call and everyone has arrangement training.
* Don’t allow students to be compensated. Grades were issued by the mentoring preceptors. Sometimes hard decisions have to be made, such as dismissing preceptor sites that refuse to comply with the requirements of the standard.
* An FD practicum can turn school assignments into required tasks, create assignments for experiences tied to class. Exposure to these tasks help students when faced with job interviews, a sometimes unintended consequence. Clinical experiences in funeral homes can be like an extended job interview and many students actually get hired as a result.
* Another program as added a practicum in the last semester of the program. They have projects to create GPL, CPL and OBC price lists, statement of funeral good and services selected with appropriate disclosures and mock funeral arrangements in a project-based learning setting. Plenty of the required forms can be accessed online.
* To get Funeral Home buy-in, write letters of support, inspect their facilities, issue training manuals and seek sponsorship agreements with funeral homes covering their liability. A Management Practicum involves 70-92 hours in the community…students write of their experiences using proper terminology. Always foremost in the mind is “are students having meaningful experiences”? IF a student is for some reason dismissed from the FH they fail the practicum. A big part of it is a student “fitting in” to the culture of the funeral home.
* How realistic are your simulations?
* With attire and clothing a big issue, some programs have developed business attire exchanges or career closets to give clothes to students to help them appear more professional.

Perhaps offer a grade incentive for proper attire.

* Consider partnering with nursing, EMT, police and fire programs for realistic simulations
* Procedures – proper removal from cooler, proper use of a lift, proper body mechanics, removal techniques from various situations (hospital morgue, hospital floor, wedges between toilet and wall, down stairs etc.

* Use Rescue Randy a 165 lb training mannequin.
* Participate in disaster skills training with EMT and Police
* Instruct preceptors on specifications of the standard
* Spreadsheet tracking
* Hands on cremation competencies
* Create a FD case report
* Inquire with Vital Records to see if “dummy” accounts could be set up for students to practice EDR (Electronic Death Registration)
* Give preceptors specific expectations
* Difficulties in first calls – some FH employers do not want to send m/f ‘couples’ on removals
* Create mock scenarios
* Invite students to have family members come in to make mock arrangements with another student

This was an excellent give and take that offered a myriad of ideas that programs are already doing with great success or can implement to comply with the FD Standard 6.10 successfully and efficiently.