



Diocese of Davenport

Handbook for Field Education Supervisors

Deacon Formation Program

7/6/2025

Welcome

Our thanks for your willingness to serve as a field education supervisor in our Deacon Formation Program. As the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*, 2nd edition, notes, you are an integral part of helping to form this class of deacons for our diocese. This small handbook is intended to be a help to you in exercising this most important service. If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, please feel free to contact the Deacon Formation office.

As part of the ongoing discernment and formation process, aspirants and candidates will take part in field education experiences that are connected to the Catholic Church, to some other religious institution and to field experiences that is not connected to a religious community. The supervisor is encouraged to assist the student in developing the appropriate skills and dispositions related to the experience and the student is encouraged to make use of other resources in exploring or reflecting on the specifically theological aspects of the experience.

Responsibilities

In the Diocese of davenport, those enrolled in the Deacon Formation Program are asked to complete 50 hours of supervised field education per year, usually in the form of two 25-hour experiences. For each of these experiences, a local field supervisor needs to be identified.

The local field supervisor provides on-site supervision by guiding and assisting the student in the integration of experiences and formation to the needs of the particular ministry being explored. The supervisor assists the student in developing and following the learning agreement for the field experience which documents the student's goals and objectives and outlines his ministerial assignments. An evaluation is completed by the supervisor according to the learning agreement at the completion of the field experience and sent to the director of field education.

As can be seen from the description below, "supervision" requires regular interaction with the deacon aspirant/candidate; the intention here is not that the student be given tasks to simply attend to on his own—but that the supervisor journey with him through this process.

The Learning Agreement

In consultation with the Program's Director of Field Education, the student identifies a possible field education experience. He is then asked to meet with the person who will serve as the local field supervisor and together develop a learning agreement. The form used is reproduced below and is also available on-line on the deacon formation website. Once the form is completed, it must be countersigned by the Director of Field Education before the experience may begin.

Supervision

"Good supervision guarantees that the pastoral assignment remains systematically educative and formational" (#288). While each field experience will be different, there are certain core components of supervision that should be common to every experience:¹

¹ From Ann Garrido, *A Concise Guide to Supervising a Ministry Student* (Ave Maria Press, 2008): 5-14.

1. Field education is not the same as field work. The primary aim of “field work” or volunteerism is service at the site. The primary aim of “field education” is the student’s growth as a minister.
2. Field education requires supervisors—experienced mentor-evaluators who can help students in the process of growing in ministerial identity and skills. There are three key qualities essential for supervisors: experience, competence, and generosity.
3. Field education requires reflection. “Doing” alone is not enough; intentional reflection must accompany the experience if growth is to occur. (See below.)
4. Field education teaches skills for ministry. There are simply some aspects of ministry that cannot be learned in the classroom. Supervised field experiences assist the student not only to learn these skills but also to grow in their confidence as ministers.
5. Field education develops ministerial identity and authority. Ministry is not only about “doing” but also about a way of “being” – about identity – in the community. In addition to knowledge and skills, a sense of “professional identity” is necessary for effective ministry. Being “a professional in the classical sense entailed the commitment to acquire expert knowledge and skills and to serve human needs with good moral character.... [P]rofessionals are to reflect a high degree of congruence between what they publicly declare to be committed to and the way they carry out their tasks.”² Healthy ministerial authority flows from the minister’s identity, his or her way of being, and not just from his or her position as a representative of the Church.
6. Field education aids integration. There is a dynamic relationship between the theology learned in the classroom, one’s pastoral experiences in the field, one’s relationships, and one’s spiritual life (life of prayer). Field education strives to integrate all these facets, refusing to treat theology, pastoral care, spirituality, and one’s humanity as unrelated.
7. Field education assesses skills, identity, and integration. One important aspect of field education is assisting the Church in assessing the student’s readiness for ministry. Absolute honesty is imperative here; only by such honesty can the student be truly helped to discern their vocation and develop as ministers. In that sense, the supervisor bears a tremendous responsibility on behalf of the Church: is this a person who ought to be ministering in the name of the Christian community?
8. Field education broadens vision. All of us come to ministry with a particular view of the Church, of other persons, and even of ministry itself. Field education offers the student exposure to the wide diversity that is the Church (and the wider community) and so helps the student develop a truly ‘catholic’ perspective.
9. Field education is spiritually enriching. Our theology claims that God is present in the details of our lives; if we are attentive, we catch glimpses of God at work. Nowhere is this more true than in ministry—a privileged locus of God’s action in the world. “Ministry is a place where persons come face to face with what is most essential and, hence, a place where God is especially alive and active. Field education puts students into sacred places, sacred relationships, and sacred moments.” As already noted (#3), these experiences demand intentional reflection.

(Theological) Reflection

Developing the skills necessary to effectively serve others requires self-knowledge and intentional reflection on one’s experiences. Supervisors are asked to engage the deacon aspirant or candidate in such a process of reflection. In those settings in which it is appropriate to do so, the supervisor should engage the aspirant or candidate in reflecting theologically on his pastoral experiences. Resources to assist with this aspect of supervision are listed below.

² From Richard Gula, *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry* (Paulist Press, 1996): 13.

Problems during the Field Education Experience

If at any time difficulties or problems develop during the field experience, the supervisor is asked to first discuss it with the deacon aspirant or candidate. If it is not resolved, or if the problem is a serious one, the supervisor should contact the Director of Field Education or the Director of Deacon Formation. In particular, problems in the areas of interpersonal relationships, emotional or psychological health, or substance abuse should prompt the supervisor to contact the formation program staff.³

Evaluations

At the end of the experience, the supervisor is asked to meet with the student and together complete the evaluation form (also reproduced below and available on the website). Prior to the meeting, the student should complete his portion of the form (Part 1: Self-Evaluation) and the supervisor should complete his or her portion (Part 2: Supervisor's Evaluation). At the meeting, the evaluations are shared and all sign the form. The completed form is returned to the Director of Field Education for his signature.

Contacts

Director of Deacon Formation
563-888-4257

Director of the Diaconate
563-888-4256

Resources

National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States, 2nd edition.

The Deacon Formation Program has produced a handbook used to teach Theological Reflection to those in formation. A copy is available from the Director.

Garrido, Ann M. *A Concise Guide to Supervising a Ministry Student*. The Concise Guide Series, ed. Kevin McKenna. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2008.

Gula, Richard. *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*. Manwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1996.

Killen, Patricia O'Connell and John deBeer. *The Art of Theological Reflection*. New York: Crossroads, 1994.

Whitehead, James D. and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead. *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry*. Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1995.

³ For a detailed list of issues that may arise during field placement, see Garrido, 101-102.

DEACON FORMATION FIELD EDUCATION
SUPERVISED FIELD EXPERIENCE LEARNING AGREEMENT & EVALUATIONS
INSTRUCTIONS

Learning Agreement Guidance

Hours – total # (briefly breakdown the hours in the Objective as indicated below)

Learning Objective

1. 1-2 short statements of **WHAT** you plan to do, generally describing the assignment
 - a. name of ministry or program, particular activity
 - b. categories covered
 - i. Area of Ministry (Charity / Word / Sacrament)
 - ii. Scope/Location (Parish / Deanery / Diocese / Community)
 - iii. Level of Involvement (Observe / Participate / Lead / Initiate New)
 - c. # of contacts, # hours each & time period

Suggested format of statements:

“This experience in [name of ministry/program], will be ministry in [Area of Ministry], in the [Scope/Location], to [Level of Involvement] by [name the activity]. This will involve [# times, # hours each, time period].”

2. 2-3 concise statements of how this experience will address aspects of your personal development plan (**WHY** you plan to do this – **MOST IMPORTANT**)
 - a. expand a past area in a new way, or develop a new area of ministry
 - b. why you are personally drawn or called to this ministry

Suggested format of statements:

“I have a personal goal to [name it]. This experience is intended to develop my ministry of [name of area] by [this specific field activity] to [behavior/skill to develop]. At the end of this assignment, I will be able to [specific way of using this behavior/skill].”

Note: please do not refer to “the poor”, “the hungry”, “the old” – they are all people – “people who are poor”, “people who are hungry”, “people who are seniors”, etc.

3. Keep all this brief, don’t explain HOW you’ll do this – you’ll get asked if more info is needed. Keep this to one page if at all possible. Don’t attach long detailed descriptions.
4. **PLEASE TYPE** all forms, not handwritten. If that’s not possible, please be sure to print legibly.

Putting all that together - EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETE LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

I have a personal goal to better relate to people with needs different from mine. This experience in a Food Pantry, will be ministry in Charity, in the Community, to participate by checking people in. This will involve working once a week for 2 hours each time over 12 weeks. This experience is intended to develop my ministry of charity by interacting with people experiencing hunger to understand their needs better. At the end of this assignment, I will be able to identify appropriate ministerial outreach for people who lack adequate food, and to help others understand these needs better.

Field Ed. (Supervisor) evaluations

- talk with your local supervisor periodically during the assignment about feedback
- after the assignment is completed, you meet with the local supervisor and the form is signed by both of you, send the evaluation to the Director of Field Education to review and sign for you to put in your binder.

Handbook for Field Education Supervisors

DEACON FORMATION FIELD EDUCATION SUPERVISED FIELD EXPERIENCE LEARNING AGREEMENT

Name _____ Year _____ Semester _____

At the beginning of the academic year each student confers with the director of field education and his local field supervisor in determining the experiences that would benefit him in his formation. In developing the learning agreement students should assess themselves in a number of ways. They should take an honest look at their previous experience, their current skills and abilities, and their need for further development. Objectives are predictive behavioral statements. The students' objectives should detail what they want to be able to do when they finish their field education experience. Objectives indicate what skills and behaviors students need to learn in order to achieve their goals. The learning agreement is to be turned in to the director of field education by the end of the academic semester.

Total number of hours _____ Log the hours spent during the assignment in the journal along with the location and activity

Ministry area (see Table): _____

Assignment description: _____

Agency or parish providing supervision: _____

Location: _____

Local supervisor: _____

E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

Start date: _____ End date: _____

Learning Objectives: _____

Acknowledgments:

Student: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

I have received a copy of the *Field Education Supervisor's Handbook* and agree to abide by its provisions.

Local Supervisor: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Director of Field Education: _____ Date: _____

DEACON FORMATION FIELD EDUCATION EVALUATION FORM (PART 1)

Student Portion

Name: _____ Year _____ Semester _____

1. How was each learning objective met? If objectives were not met, please explain why.

2. How has your understanding of the Church developed during this assignment?

3. What have you learned about yourself? How could you minister more effectively? What do you need to do to further grow in ministerial skills?

4. Any other comments regarding the field experience:

DEACON FORMATION FIELD EDUCATION EVALUATION FORM (PART 2)

Local Supervisor's Portion

Name of Student: _____ Name of Supervisor: _____

1. Student's level of accountability / reliability

2. Student's ability to relate to others

3. Student's ability to work collaboratively in ministry

4. Student's openness to supervision

5. Student's ability to understand pastoral issues and formulate pastoral responses

6. Student's ability to relate theology to their ministerial experiences

7. Student's areas of strength and weakness

8. Suggestions for continued growth

9. Any other comments regarding the field experience:

The student and local supervisor met and reviewed the above comments on (date): _____

Signatures:

Student signature: _____

Local supervisor: _____

Director of Field Education: _____ Date: _____