Guidelines for Counselor Community Engagement

Chi Sigma Iota (CSI) International promotes excellence in many areas of the counseling profession, including its commitment to “the realization of a healthy society by fostering wellness and human dignity” (CSI Vision Statement, 2009). At its core, counselor community engagement is responsive and collaborative, conducted in the spirit of servant leadership. In this way, counselor community engagement involves listening to those in need including individuals, families, and organizations, and working cooperatively to determine how best to provide support.

Counselors build upon the developmental nature of human growth, we call attention to life transitions as a place where counselors can make a difference, we espouse a wellness philosophy of outcomes for all people. Counselors advocate for those kinds of interventions which preclude the crises situations that create homelessness, drug addictions, spousal abuse, adolescent suicide, elder abuse, etc. All of them are critically important needs of persons in all communities but counselor interventions are designed to moderate and obviate the need for crisis interventions. Counselors are advocating, modeling, and demonstrating a preventative, holistic, developmental approach to helping.

These Guidelines for Counselor Community Engagement have been created to assist CSI chapters in developing and maintaining activities that engage their communities. They are intended to serve as a starting point for chapters and consist of a non-comprehensive guide for how chapters might choose to engage their communities. Through these guidelines it is hoped that chapters will better understand the basic principles of counselor community engagement, the key practical considerations when conducting such activities, and the resources available to help them to begin reaching out to their local, national, and international neighbors. Note that “counselor community engagement” is used throughout these guidelines. This applies to counselors at all levels from counselors-in-training, to licensed professionals. It is expected that each will work within their appropriate level of training and licensure.

Chapter Self-Assessment

To begin the counselor community engagement process, CSI International believes it is most helpful for a chapter to understand its own capabilities – resources and limitations – prior to engaging with others. Resources may include skills, attitudes, interests, and other assets (e.g. time, money, physical items). Limitations may include the lack of needed resources mentioned above but may also include legal (i.e. scope of practice) and institutional limitations (i.e. university, department, or chapter). A brief inventory of chapter capabilities will help to identify the types of projects where members may work together to serve others.
Identifying Community Needs

When considering counselor community engagement projects, chapter members should identify an organization or population of interest, and begin with some initial research regarding the needs of the group. Some of this information may be found via the organization website, if available, and through networking and fundraising organizations (e.g. United Way). Often, counselor education programs will have many existing relationships with local schools, agencies, and individuals who have needs that may be appropriately supported by CSI chapter efforts. In this initial exploration stage, project leaders should consider the needs of the community partner(s) and the resources the chapter has to offer. It is recommended that the chapter identifies the key stakeholders in the community and prepares to contact these individuals and/or groups to determine what efforts are currently being made to meet these needs and how the chapter may assist. Any counselor community engagement project should include a conversation with these partners to ensure that chapter efforts will support the community and not hinder existing supports (See Table 1).

10 Key Considerations for Counselor Community Engagement Planning

Using the CSI philosophy of counselor community engagement and an extensive review of current practices among CSI chapters, the Counselor Community Engagement Committee has developed ten key considerations for counselor community engagement. This framework provides a way for chapters to plan and evaluate activities that are most impactful for the community and consistent with the chapter’s capabilities to serve. Below are the ten considerations for developing chapter counselor community engagement projects.

1. How can my chapter work with others to promote meaningful counselor community engagement?
   Cooperation may be viewed as an implicit element to several key components to consider when creating a counselor community engagement activity including advocacy and community partners, yet it is still important enough to highlight on its own. Cooperation and collaboration provide a foundation for conducting initial needs assessments as well as promoting community change. Ideally, CSI chapters would work from a servant-leader perspective while building relationships and fostering partnerships to aid in the development of sustained activities.

2. What level of outreach should my chapter engage their communities?
   Counselor community engagement occurs through various outreach efforts, which may occur on campus, locally, nationally, or internationally. (Levels are further described below.) Efforts should be intentional in nature and coordinated to maximize the outcomes desired by the community in partnership with the chapter participants. While considering the level of community, chapters may need to
consider logistical implications such as travel, language barriers, and challenges to sustainability.

- **Campus-wide/College-wide.** Efforts to engage on-campus services/programs to serve university community members. Also included are on-campus projects directly initiated by CSI chapters to serve on-campus communities (students, faculty members, staff members, etc.) Activities that focus on serving chapter or counseling program members are not generally considered counselor community engagement.

- **Local programs.** Agencies/organizations within the town or community with which the CSI International program can collaborate.

- **National outreach.** Efforts that take CSI members outside of the local community to other states where issues negatively affect the inhabitants of those areas (e.g. natural disaster issue sites). Local communities may also be impacted by these issues; however, the activities are focused more broadly or in areas farther away from the local chapter home city.

- **International outreach.** Efforts that engage CSI members with an international community (e.g. Mexico, East Africa).

3. **What community areas or issues should my chapter focus on in its work?**
CSI chapter reports support the idea that there is not one particular way of creating and implementing a counselor community engagement activity. Likewise, there is not one singular topic to address. When determining topic selection, chapters should consider the concept of intentionality while assessing which topics will ultimately provide positive change for the greater good. These topics may address any number of issues spanning from nutrition, social justice, substance abuse, spirituality, etc providing they meet the needs of the targeted community.

4. **With whom should my chapter engage?**
There is no limit to which populations CSI chapters can serve. In the 2009-2010 year, CSI members reported to have served families, students at every educational level, school and mental health counselors, current U.S. soldiers and veterans, children and youth, low-income and homeless persons, mentally handicapped, refugees, victims of violence, older adults, persons with physical disabilities, individuals whose lives are affected by economic downturns, and LGBTQ communities. CSI chapters may decide to engage any population in need and need not be limited to those mentioned here. Ideally, CSI chapters co-create an outline of
action with populations served so that communities can generate growth and wellness in their own words and in their own actions to create lasting, positive, and intentional change.

5. **Who else may be important partners in chapter counselor community engagement efforts?**

CSI International chapters collaborate with various organizations to maximize engagement and effectiveness within their communities. Such community partners may include (but are not limited to) K-12 schools, university programs on campus (e.g. volunteer center on campus), and community agencies/organizations that advocate for specific populations (e.g. domestic violence victims, homeless populations, etc.). Below are some examples of activities in which chapters already partake in and key components for chapters to consider when engaging in these activities.

6. **What kinds of activities could my chapter take part in to engage our community?**

CSI chapters meet community needs while enhancing their levels of professional development and global awareness through a variety of activities. This may include projects that are educational in nature, fundraising, and providing a number of services including referral coordination, treatment, building projects, and disaster relief.

- **Education.** Many chapters serve the community by identifying local needs and hosting and facilitating community conversations. In addition, some have provided conferences for counselors, CEUs, and in-service trainings. Professional development and global awareness can look and mean something different for each activity but each case engages and promotes the growth and generativity of a community in some way. Both types of activities can include inviting community representatives to discuss a topic relevant to expanding chapter members’ counseling competence through workshops, shadowing fellow professionals to expand population-specific knowledge and competence, and recruiting community members to join a cause towards which they feel strongly.

- **Charitable Donations and Fundraising.** Many CSI chapters donate in a number of different ways, some ongoing and others one-time contributions. Donations can include but are not limited to monetary contributions, clothing drives, book drives, food donations, as well as musical instrument and school supplies drives. Chapters should keep in mind that although donations may be a one-time offering, it is possible to collaborate with community
agencies/members to contribute throughout the year and contributions need not be one-way in nature (e.g. food drive for low-income for families that consists of families sharing a favorite recipe with donors). Meaning, it is possible to empower communities in need to share their resources with the greater community and for all parties to benefit from donation events. Chapters will also want to consider if these activities utilize the knowledge and skills of counselors. If fundraising is accompanied by more extensive outreach, then the community may be able to benefit from the specialized training of CSI members.

- **Counseling and Related Services.** When providing direct services to the community, there are a number of considerations for a chapter. Liability issues are greater when these services are provided and all chapter and department stakeholder should be advised prior to engaging in these. For instance, if a chapter decides to provide career services to a local community, there needs to be clear protocols in place that defines the type of services that can be provided by chapter members and contingencies for crisis situations. Risks to the community and chapter members should all be considered with the Chapter Faculty Advisor, department administrators, and key community partners. Effective planning will mitigate these risks and direct the project towards positive outcomes.

- **Cautionary Statement:** When providing counseling and counseling related services, chapters need to consider who will be providing services and how these activities will be supervised. Chapters may determine that alumni who are licensed and working within their scope of practice can provide direct services, where master’s students will not be able to identify as counselors and will not be able to provide counseling services unless supervised by a designated faculty member. If the latter is chosen, it is recommended that the community site be considered for approval as an official internship site in order to protect all parties involved. Doctoral students may be licensed, but as students, they may require departmental supervision when working on CSI chapter activities that include counseling services. Additionally, it is important to recognize that while working in international settings, we need to practice ethically within our training and capabilities, even where scope of practice laws do not exist.

- **Other Volunteer Activities.** Chapters may also get involved in volunteer activities that are directed by other partnering organizations. When considering these types of projects, it is important to evaluate the quality of
the partnering organization, the training they provide, and their effectiveness in the community.

7. What might it mean for my chapter to advocate?
Advocacy takes on many different meanings within the Counseling profession. Some types of advocacy that have been observed within chapters are client/population specific advocacy, general community advocacy, and professional advocacy. While conducting advocacy, it is advised to consider the ACA Advocacy Competencies.

- **Client/Population Specific Advocacy.** Chapters intentionally serve the well-being of specific clients and/or populations (e.g. homeless, LGBTQ), through service or education with community members. Furthermore, members may collaboratively engage with community leaders, including politicians, to advocate for the needs of various populations. A chapter that decides to walk in a civil rights parade would be an example of this activity.

- **General Community Advocacy.** Chapters intentionally serve the well-being of the general community without targeting a specific population. An example would be a chapter writing a letter to a local representative about the need for a community health center.

- **Professional Advocacy.** Chapters intentionally serve the well-being of the Counseling profession (e.g. chapter advocacy). An example would be chapter participation in a counselor advocacy day. For further resources on professional advocacy, see Eriksen (1997) and the professional advocacy webpage.

8. How often should my chapter take part in Counselor community engagement activities?
Counselor community engagement occurs for various durations depending on the needs of the community and the desired level of commitment by the chapter. While the principle of generativity suggests ongoing projects are ideal, some services may better address community needs when provided in a singular event. Therefore, CSI chapters should give strong consideration to frequency.

- **One-Time Service Events.** Such activities may include supporting special events, such as serving at a day of service planned in celebration of MLK Day, or planning a single project, such as a holiday visit to the children’s ward at a hospital or a one-time event to provide activities and companionship at a local senior center.
• **Ongoing Counselor Community Engagement.** When forming a partnership for ongoing engagement, chapters are likely to seek reciprocal relationships with community partners. CSI members will certainly gain valuable experience and a sense of accomplishment through service, yet it is important to ensure that the partner agency/organization is the primary beneficiary. Events can occur weekly, monthly, or annually to be considered an ongoing counselor community engagement activity.

9. **How might my chapter plan and develop counselor community engagement activities?**
   An important component of designing a successful counselor community engagement activity includes adequate planning and preparation. Activities that intend to have a positive impact on the community require identifying a goal, generating ideas, planning, and organizing prior to implementation.

10. **How did the counselor community engagement activity impact the community, chapter members, and the chapter as a whole?**
    As with many aspects of counseling, incorporating a level of accountability and applying the principle of generativity may lead to a stronger sense of validity and promote replication of monitored and enhanced activities. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate the outcomes of the counselor community engagement activity with the community members and with chapter members (see Debriefing below). Strong project development will support these evaluation efforts that should occur at various intervals during the project, at completion, and at predetermined follow-up periods. This information should be used to modify future counselor community engagement activities by the chapter and its members.
Table 1. The table below includes descriptions of the Ten Key Considerations and examples for your consideration when planning Counselor Community Engagement activities in your CSI Chapter.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Consideration</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Working Together</td>
<td>The underlying philosophy of cooperation and service needed to be successful in counselor community engagement when working with other organizations, agencies, and populations</td>
<td>• Servant Leadership Role in Community</td>
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<td>2. Level of Counselor Community Engagement Outreach</td>
<td>Where your chapter chooses to engage the community:</td>
<td>• Service Learning office</td>
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<td>• Campus-wide/College-wide</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Local programs</td>
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<td>• National outreach</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• International outreach</td>
<td>• YMCA</td>
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<td>• National/natural disaster</td>
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<td>• International Community (e.g. Mexico, East Africa)</td>
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<td>3. Issue Areas</td>
<td>The kinds of issues for which your chapter would like to take action on in your community</td>
<td>• School dropouts</td>
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<td>• School violence</td>
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<td>• Social Justice</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Elder needs</td>
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<td>4. Populations served</td>
<td>Who your chapter serves in its counselor community engagement activities</td>
<td>• Pre-school – older adults</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Homeless, populations experiencing financial poverty</td>
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<td>5. Community Partners</td>
<td>Agencies, organizations, populations, and other entities your chapter works with to help a specific population within the community</td>
<td>• K-12 schools</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• University programs on campus (e.g. volunteer center on campus)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• community agencies/organizations that advocate for specific populations</td>
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<td>6. Activities</td>
<td>The kinds of Counselor Community Engagement activities your chapter takes part in</td>
<td>• Information session on eating disorders</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Clothing donations</td>
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<td>• Career guidance</td>
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<td>• Volunteer at senior centers</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Boy/girls club volunteer</td>
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Next Steps: Meaningful and Ethical Services to your Community

Following the exploration of key consideration for counselor community engagement, chapters will want to engage in a modified informed consent process with the community of interest and/or partners. CSI chapters should strongly consider discussing chapter-community partner expectations for behavior and action, risk management, appropriate documentation for all party records, and debriefing.

Expectations

In all cases, it is important for both the partner and the CSI members to be clear about expectations. CSI members should perform services appropriate for their level of training – service is a great way to increase self awareness and observe a variety of populations members may encounter in future work and service, all while providing support to a community partner. By attending to the capabilities of its members, a chapter will be able to clearly state to community partners how it may contribute its resources for the betterment of all involved. Likewise, members are best served when they understand what they may expect while serving. Some types of counselor community engagement have greater demands and personal rewards than others. In all cases, it is helpful to remember that counselor community engagement involves ongoing dialogue and a willingness to adapt to changes.
Risk Management

Be sure to check with your community partner regarding policies and procedures that may be in place, for the protection of those who serve as well as those who are being served. When coordinating a Counselor community engagement project for your chapter members, be sure there are clear expectations for your members. There may be additional considerations among stakeholders at the university, department, and community members as well. (See Counseling and Related Services within Key Considerations). Some details about risk management to consider include:

- What will members be doing (or if this is not yet determined, state this)?
- Will members be acting in a counseling capacity?
- Are all (any) members qualified to provide the services, especially counseling and counseling related activities?
- How will chapter volunteers be oriented to the site and trained to serve?
- What is the proper attire?
- What are the anticipated hours of service?
- What type of site and academic supervision will be needed?
- Who is the point of contact (from your school and at the site)?

Documentation

There are many reasons for documenting your service actions. Identify a member of the chapter, possibly the Counselor Community Engagement Committee Chair, to keep records of services provided, participants, organization contact information, and outcomes. Documentation provides historical information for the chapter, which can guide future chapter leaders as well as assist in continuing or enhancing projects/events – or identifying best practices (or challenges) for future consideration. Depending on the type of services provided, other documentation may be required including formal agreements between community partners, training documents, and emergency procedures. In addition, such documentation will assist chapter leaders in detailed completion of the Chapter Annual Report and to nomination materials for chapter awards and grants.

Debriefing

To make the most of your service experience, it is important to allow time for members who participate to reflect on the service. In addition to identifying useful “lessons learned” for future service projects, provide an opportunity to share individual thoughts and observations regarding personal learning or civic learning that participants experience. (See Appendix A for suggestions regarding reflection).
Appendix A

DEAL: A 3-Step Model for Pre and Post REFLECTION
Adapted from Patti Clayton, Ph.D., North Carolina State University

The following model serves as a way your chapter can consider projects before they begin and then debrief following a counselor community engagement activity. We recommend you take part in debriefing shortly after the counselor community engagement activity so that the actual experiences, associated feelings, goals and objectives, and reflections are discussed and acknowledged for growth.

**Step One: Describe** (in fair detail and as objectively as possible) ... the Counselor Community Engagement experience (e.g., the activity, the video, the lecture, the reading, etc.)

- What is (was) the purpose of the counselor community engagement experience?
  - How does it relate to the developmental, preventative approach to helping?
  - Will it promote wellness and human dignity among those who are served?
    - Who will determine(d) the purpose of the experience?
    - What steps will be (were) taken (e.g. needs assessment) to determine the purpose of the counselor community engagement experience?

- Who are (were) the stakeholders in the counselor community engagement experience?

- Whose needs are (were) being met with the counselor community engagement experience?
  - What are (were) the needs that are being targeted?
  - How will (did) you know when the needs of all people involved are (were) met?

- What is the definition of a successful counselor’s community engagement experience?

- How can you maintain these relationships within the community for future collaborative counselor community engagement experiences with the chapter?
Step Two: Examine the experience discussed in light of the purpose your counselor community engagement activity played in your chapter. Choose a particular theoretical construct (e.g., developmental counseling, wellness, Constructivist, Adlerian, Rogerian, etc. in relation to client populations, e.g., adolescence, young adult, etc. to examine in more detail in light of this counselor community engagement experience. Consider your gut level feelings, your values and your basic knowledge as you further explicate the concept and what it means for you.

Step Three: Articulate Learning from the two steps above. Answer the questions below:

• What will (did) I learn (about myself as a CSI member, my CSI chapter, the population worked with or discussed, my fellow CSI members, our community partner, the dynamics between our partner and our chapter, etc.)?

• How will (did) I learn it?

• Why is this learning important for me as a current or developing counselor?

• What will I do personally in my future practice as a counselor, or what will our chapter do together in our future counselor community engagements in light of this learning?

• What will be (were) the benefits for our CSI chapter and the community with this counselor community engagement experience?

Post Experience only:

• What worked well?

• What could have worked better for our CSI chapter and the community with this experience?

• What steps can be taken to maintain CSI’s relationship in the community and enhance this experience for future replication?


See http://www.curricularengagement.com/SampleResources.html for additional resources regarding reflection and the DEAL Model
Appendix B

Recommended Reading

Case Examples of Counselor Community Engagement


Counselor Community Engagement a School Setting


Counselor Community Engagement Advocacy


Implementation of Counselor Community Engagement


Institutional Benefits of Counselor Community Engagement

Professional Advocacy


Outcomes of Counselor Community Engagement


Servant Leadership


Service Learning


**Social Justice and Counselor Community Engagement**


**Transformational Learning**


**Websites**

Council on Engagement and Outreach –  
http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1685&frcrld=1 has a link to the 2010 Commission on Innovation, Competitiveness, and Economic Prosperity (CICEP) Council on Engagement and Outreach (CEO) Summer Meeting

Presentations:  
http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1685&frcrld=1  
This website offers several PowerPoints giving a brief overview of many key factors of counselor community engagement as the university level such as how to measure your current engagement and providing an example of a successful relationship that is long term. These presentations offer foundational information and chapters would have to adapt those components to work at their level.

http://www.uc.edu/cel.html

Campus compact: 4th of July President’s declaration, campus assessment  
http://www.compact.org/advancedtoolkit/defining.html

Community-campus partnerships for health: Principles of partnership  
http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/ccph.html

National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges: Report on the engaged institution  
http://www.nasulgc.org/publications/publications.asp

Unity College: Benchmarks for an engaged campus  
http://www.unity.edu/servicelearning/default.htm

UNC-Chapel Hill: Report on education for civic responsibility  
http://www.unc.edu/chan/intclim/chapv.htm

Evergreen College: the engaged campus report and recommendations  
http://www.evergreen.edu/user/cslldtf/report.html

Middlebury College: benchmarks for the engaged campus  
http://www.middlebury.edu/~vcc/definition.htm

University of Maryland: establishing benchmarks for the engaged campus
http://www.inform.umd.edu/csp/engagedcampus.html

Metropolitan University: the engaged campus
http://www.metrostate.edu/ccbl/ccblengcmp.htm

University of Utah: building an engaged campus – a four year plan to strengthen community partnerships and service-learning and encourage Community-based scholarship http://www.saff.utah.edu/bennion/plan.htm