

ISSUES TO CONSIDER BEFORE LAUNCHING A JOB SHADOW PROGRAM

A job shadow program has just a few key components, making it an attractive tool for work-based learning. After advertising the program to students and employers, the program director needs to 1) partner students with participating job hosts in their field of interest; 2) coordinate with students, schools, and job host to establish a suitable date and time of the job shadow, 3) encourage evaluation and reflection from the student and job host. Beyond these basic steps, however, there are some important issues to consider when launching a job shadow program. Using the checklist below will help you ensure that your program planning has attended to these issues.

- Safety and Health**—Students must be informed of any worksite-related health and safety concerns. Advise employees to give the student a proper safety orientation to the worksite. In addition, students must provide information on any pertinent health issues they may have.
- Parent Consent**—For each student involved in the job shadow program, the program director should provide parents with a Parent Consent form, that includes 1) a permission slip for the student to participate in the program on a given date/time and place, 2) the parent’s consent to allow the student to travel by public transportation or in his/her own vehicle, if necessary, and 3) information from the parent about any medical conditions of the student and emergency contact information.
- Insurance and Liability**—Determine how the student will be covered by insurance (most likely, the employer’s insurance will cover this). Notify the employer of the potential insurance and liability factors, including: injury to the student on the worksite, injury to student while traveling, injury to employees of workplace, and/or damage to the employer’s property.
- Orientation**—An orientation for both the student and job host prepares them for the responsibilities they will be expected to fulfill and gives them an overall sense of purpose for the job shadow. At this time, the student and job host should outline, in writing, their personal goals for the job shadow.
- Scheduling**—Take into account the differences between school and work schedules, and coordinate the job shadow agenda with attention to detail.
- Travel**—Be sure to make detailed travel arrangements well in advance. Determine if the student will take public transportation, drive his/her own car or if the program director will coordinate the travel.
- Job Placement**—Take into consideration the personalities of the students and jobs host when pairing them for the job shadow. Allow the student to express his/her interest in a particular job, but also help the student to overcome any stereotypes he/she might have of other potential job opportunities.

- Child Labor Laws**—Child labor laws are most likely *not* pertinent to a job shadow. However, with more extensive work-based programs, students might be protected by certain guidelines under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Child labor laws are relevant only if the student is being paid for his or her work, or if he or she meets other criteria as determined by FLSA.

- Troubleshooting**—Have a back up plan for an alternative job shadowing site or host in the event that a job host has an emergency situation and is not able to keep his/her commitment.

- Evaluation and Reflection**—Prepare an evaluation form that assesses the student before, during, and after the job shadow. Plan reflection exercises (i.e. journaling, group discussion, verbal report, etc.) for the student to interpret his/her experiences. *Be sure to promote reflection throughout the program and not only at the end. The reflection component of the program is one of the most effective tools for the student to gain value from the worksite experience.* In the final evaluation, ask the student and job host to assess the program's effectiveness and to review their original goals in light of the experience.