



# **PARALEGAL** | FIELD PLACEMENT **STUDENT MANUAL**

Paralegal Student Manual for Field Placement

Creating a Safe Work Environment for Licensing Candidates, Law Society of Ontario

## SENECA POLYTECHNIC

SCHOOL OF LEGAL, PUBLIC AND OFFICE ADMINISTRATION (SLPOA)  
PARALEGAL & PARALEGAL ACCELERATED DIPLOMA PROGRAMS

### STUDENT MANUAL FOR FIELD PLACEMENT

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Law Society of Ontario Field Placement Requirements
Currently, the Law Society of Ontario requires students to complete 120 hours of work within the paralegal scope of practice under the direct or indirect supervision of a licensee in good standing with the Law Society of Ontario (or a Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant with an active status with the College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants).

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### OBJECTIVES OF FIELD PLACEMENT

Field placement provides paralegal students with a practical, “hands-on” experience, to integrate the theoretical skills you have learned in the classroom with on-the-job experience. It also gives you an opportunity to develop skills and professional contacts to give you an edge in an increasingly competitive and demanding job market.

The field placement relationship is primarily between the student and the placement host supervisor, which is the best way to practise for the “real world.” The quality of your field placement experience will be a result of the rapport between you and your placement host.

SLPOA remains supportive and involved: your field placement is monitored for compliance with the program requirements. If you are having a problem, it is your responsibility to contact the Coordinator, as soon as possible.

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### REQUIREMENTS

**Placement is mandatory:**

You must successfully complete a field placement of a minimum of 120 hours to graduate from the Paralegal Diploma program. Seneca Polytechnic cannot waive this requirement, as it is a requirement of the Law Society of Ontario.

**Supervision by licensee is mandatory:**

There must be a licensee supervising you during your field placement, whether it is directly or indirectly. Indirect supervision can mean that the lawyer, licensed paralegal, or

Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant does not have day-to-day, direct contact with you during your field placement. In fact, it might be another individual who is not a licensee who is your direct supervisor; but somewhere in the chain, there absolutely must be a licensee in good standing with the LSO or the CICC who could speak to the type of duties that you are performing during your placement, who can verify your attendance, and whose name and signature is being put on the Attendance Form 2 and the Host Evaluation Form 4.

Your host supervisor's name and signature must be on the form for the Law Society of Ontario Registrar's office with respect to your licensing application. That licensee should be comfortable speaking to those job requirements and what you were doing during your placement.

**Field placement is a minimum of 120 hours in length:**

Placements generally take place after you have completed the academic requirements of the Paralegal Diploma program. Placements run consecutively, between three and four business weeks, in a legal working environment. Over this period, it is possible for you to see a project through to completion, to understand office routines, to establish professional contacts and to gain experience and insight into the practice of law.

In certain situations, you may be permitted to complete your placement on a more flexible basis, for example on a once a week basis while you are completing your academic requirements. This must be pre-arranged and approved with the Field Placement Coordinator.

**Field placement hours:**

You are required to attend your placement during normal business hours which will be established before you begin your placement. While you are encouraged to stay at work beyond normal business hours if required to finish a pressing assignment, you are not expected to work overtime on a regular basis. If you do not wish to stay beyond regular business hours, you should discuss this with your host and the Field Placement Coordinator.

**Field placement is unpaid:**

You will not be paid for field placement work. There are reasons why host supervisors are not required to pay you during placement. Many host supervisors would be unable or unwilling to participate in field placement if they had to pay. Host supervisors are not eager to take on untested and inexperienced students, especially for a short period of time. In addition, their staff are contributing time and, therefore, money in providing work for you to do and guiding you through the work. Most host supervisors who take on field placement students do it, not because they see the students as a free source of labour, but because they are genuinely interested in contributing to our paralegal programs, and because they have an eye out for potential future employees. However, the overarching purpose is to provide the student with experience not a job at the end of the placement period.

### Placement evaluation:

You receive a grade of satisfactory (SAT) or unsatisfactory (UNSAT or F) for field placement (FPL491). The grade is based on:

1. **Attendance**—you must fulfill the attendance requirements of the placement. Failure to do so will result in a grade of unsatisfactory. You must track your attendance on the Attendance Record (Form 2) that must be signed by a licensee (host supervisor.)
2. **Punctuality**—you must arrive at your assigned field placement on time and work a full business day. Persistent lateness or early departures will result in a grade of unsatisfactory.
3. **Student Evaluation (Form 3)**—you must complete the Supervisor Evaluation Form and submit it on time.
4. **Host Evaluation (Form 4)** —the supervisor must evaluate your performance. If you receive low ratings in areas pertaining to attitude or dependability, this may result in a grade of unsatisfactory, even if the supervisor otherwise finds your placement satisfactory.
5. **Quality of Work**—you must have a demonstrated ability to apply and integrate the theoretical and practical learning process from the classroom to the practical on-the-job experiences.
6. **Returning the evaluation and attendance forms**— you are responsible for returning all forms, within two business days of completion of the placement to the Field Placement Coordinator. ***These forms must be signed and emailed to the Field Placement Coordinator and the Field Placement Assistant.*** You are responsible for following-up with your placement supervisor to ensure that the necessary evaluation form has been completed and provided to you (or directly to the Field Placement Coordinator) in a timely manner. The Field Placement Coordinator cannot assume any responsibility for monitoring compliance on your behalf.

### Type of work on field placement:

Many different kinds of organizations offer placements; consequently, there is a wide range in the nature of the experiences that a student will have, and, it follows, in the quality of the experiences. Quality, however, is to a large extent subjective. What is good for one student is bad for another.

Sometimes, the combination of student and host supervisor may not be harmonious. If the supervisor is a problem, the Field Placement Coordinator needs to know immediately.

In assessing the quality of placement, keep certain things in mind. All placements are inherently limited. A common complaint is that the work assigned is not responsible enough or is too menial. You must earn the trust of your host supervisor before you can expect to be given responsibility. This can take some time, and of course is more likely to occur if you demonstrate a mature, responsible and self-directed attitude toward the work assigned.

While quality of work can be an issue, you will generally not be allowed to change your placement once it has started.

### **Protocol for field placement students faced with ethical problems:**

If confronted with a request by a host supervisor to do something that you believe is unethical:

Always clarify your instructions to avoid the possibility that you have misunderstood the request.

If the request does not come from your direct host supervisor, you may wish to ask another host supervisor for guidance. However, you do not want to appear to “go over someone’s head,” so use tact and discretion.

If the situation permits, contact the Field Placement Coordinator or, if not available, the Program Coordinator, or the Chair of SLPOA.

If the action is unethical, you should refuse to carry out the instructions. If necessary, the Field Placement Coordinator will advise the host supervisor on your behalf.

If the situation does not let you contact the Field Placement Coordinator, or you are unable to contact the Program Coordinator, you must determine for yourself whether the requested action is ethical. If certain that the requested action is unethical or you are in serious doubt about the ethics of the action, discuss your concerns with the host supervisor, if possible, and, if necessary, decline to follow the instructions.

You will not be penalized for any loss of the placement because of your decision to decline an unethical request.

### **What is and is not ethical:**

Be sure to identify what is and is not ethical. For example, you should not resign because the host supervisor asks you to tell a client he is out when he is in, but simply does not want to take that client’s call. However, you are expected to be aware of the restrictions and obligations placed upon you and the work you undertake on placement, and to use your best judgment in facing ethical issues.

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## **THE BUSINESS OF LAW**

In order to succeed in field placement and out in the real world, you must understand how law firms, paralegal firms, government offices and tribunals work and how lawyers, paralegals and administrators think.

This module outlines the typical requirements placed on students working in the legal services field—from sole practitioner paralegals to large practice law firms—and the government and tribunals.

### **What do lawyers and paralegals in private practice do?**

Lawyers and paralegals generally serve private interests. Lawyers often draft wills,

incorporate companies, assist in the purchase of houses, conduct litigation, etc. Paralegals may only carry out work that is permitted by the Law Society such as advice in Small Claims Court matters, Provincial Offences Court and in matters before administrative tribunals. Why do they do what they do? In part, because they are dedicated professionals. But as in any other business, lawyers and paralegals do what they do to make money.

In a law or paralegal firm, no time is spent on a client's behalf without it being documented.

In the business of law, firms do not want the employees to waste time. The key points to remember are that it is necessary to keep track of time spent, and time must not be wasted. This is true even when the lawyer or paralegal is working on a flat-fee basis, and not an hourly-rate basis.

Like any service industry, image and keeping clients happy are very important. The image of the firm will depend on the type of firm and the type of clients. To succeed as an employee, you must be aware of that and emulate the image appropriate to your firm.

### Overheads:

As in all businesses, expenses are incurred to earn that income, and the business is profitable only if income exceeds expenses.

Law is a surprisingly expensive business to run, with high overheads. Some of the expenses of a law practice are rent, salaries, equipment, professional fees and insurance. Consequently, time spent with you may be time your host supervisor is diverted from earning income.

### Safeguarding client interests:

Legal firms serve their clients. In the course of their work, lawyers or paralegals receive things from clients that must be safeguarded.

*Information*—Clients provide lawyers and paralegals with information concerning their cases. This information is to be kept strictly confidential. Client information is not to be discussed outside the office. It is not to be discussed with friends, family or colleagues. Confidentiality is at the heart of the relationship between a lawyer or paralegal and his or her client.

*Money*—Lawyers and paralegals usually receive money, sometimes lots of money, from clients to be held for specific purposes, e.g., to pay damages or to retain the firm. This money must be safeguarded. It must be held in a special trust account and used only for the purposes authorized by the client. Every use of trust money must be accounted for. Misuse of trust money is a serious breach of the *Rules of Professional Conduct* and the *Paralegal Rules of Conduct*, and can lead to discipline from the law society.

*Paper*—Clients often provide lawyers and paralegals with documents. Documents must be kept safe, not destroyed and not lost. Documents must be kept where they can be found when needed, and should never leave the office. If you do work outside the office

with the permission of your host supervisor and you need the documents, use photocopies if you can rather than taking original documents from the file.

### Keep business aspects of law in mind:

If you understand law as a business, you will be able to appreciate the reason for some of the steps you are instructed to take, and the manner in which lawyers and paralegals deal with you.

### Lawyers:

Lawyers may be general practitioners or may specialize in one area of law. They may be partners or associates. Associate lawyers are paid a salary. Partners share in the profits of the firm after all expenses are deducted. Formulas for calculating partners' shares in those profits may be very complicated and are usually governed by a partnership agreement.

### Paralegals:

Regulated by the Law Society of Ontario, paralegals are professionals with legal training and experience. Paralegals are non-lawyers who offer specific legal services directly to the public, without the supervision of a lawyer. Paralegals are, however, limited in the areas in which they can work. Paralegals currently can only appear in court where legislation states that an agent may appear. Such courts include Small Claims Court, Provincial Offences Court, and in summary conviction proceedings of criminal court. Paralegals also appear in many administrative tribunals such as the Landlord and Tenant Board. Paralegals often work as sole practitioners, in small firms but they also work in large firms or for various tribunals, or government departments.

### Legal support staff:

This term describes trained staff who work with lawyers in serving clients, *i.e.*, legal secretaries, legal assistants, law clerks and paralegals. These people usually have some specialized legal training. They often have direct contact with clients.

### Office management staff:

These people run the business and administrative side of the practice. Seldom do they have legal training. Instead, they provide the basic functions all businesses typically employ. Examples include:

*Accounting staff* keep track of money, both that of the firm and that of clients, bills to be paid and fees to be collected.

*Personnel, human resources, and employee relations staff* recruit and hire staff and manage the stage by scheduling holidays, determining raises, and resolving disputes.

*Systems managers* specialize in computer operations, and are more likely found at large firms.

*Physical resource managers* deal with office space acquisition and allocation, an ongoing concern in large, growing firms.

A *chief executive officer* (CEO) is required by larger law firms to manage all day-to-day matters.

*Catering staff* are sometimes employed by large law firms to serve coffee and food to clients and other lawyers meeting with the firm's lawyers.

These same functions must be done in most firms, although, depending on the size of the firm, not always by specialized staff.

## **TIME, MONEY, AND PAPER**

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### **Docket:**

Lawyers and paralegals often bill their time to clients, *i.e.*, the client may be required to pay the firm based on the number of hours legal assistants, law clerks, paralegals or lawyers worked on a file. These hours will be billed to the client based on an hourly rate fixed by the firm. Even when the lawyer or paralegal is billing the client on a flat-fee basis, many firms require that the time spent working on a file be documented. This then allows the firm to compare the amount of time spent on a matter to the flat fee charged to ensure that the fees charged are appropriate. In addition, many governmental departments require time records to be kept, despite the fact that no bills are ever sent to a client.

Accordingly, you may be asked to keep track of your time. Tracking time spent on a client's file is *docketing*. To docket successfully requires an understanding of how to keep track of time and proper implementation of the firm's docketing system.

You must continually track what you are doing, for whom you are working, and how long you spent working on a client's matter. Pay careful attention to and remember what you have done all day and make a note of it at the time. It is very difficult to do this at the end of the day without having kept track of it throughout the day.

This may sound easy, but in fact it is very hard to do. Some professionals never get the hang of it. They work ten hour days and can only docket four hours. Docketing properly is a discipline. Also, some days conspire to make docketing difficult. You might be working on one file, get interrupted by a call about a second file, start working on the second file and get interrupted by a lawyer with a request for some urgent work on a third. This makes it difficult to keep track of where time is being spent.

Different firms use different docketing systems. You must find out what method your department or firm uses, and determine if the firm wants your time docketed. Even if the firm does not ask you to docket your time, it is a perfect opportunity to practise.

Some firms use manual docket slips. Many firms use a computerized system for keeping track of docketed time. Regardless of the method, the same information is required:



- The date the work was done
- The name or initials of the person doing the work
- The name of the client for whom the work was done, and the particular matter involved (in case the client has more than one file with the firm)
- The file number assigned by the firm (may be optional) A code for the type of work involved (may be optional)
- The amount of time spent
- Expenses or disbursements incurred
- A more detailed description of the work performed (remarks)

As a particular task is completed, a docket is entered. If you put aside the file, then docket the work done, even if you intend to do more work on the file afterwards. A separate docket is entered for the later work.

During the course of the day, a number of dockets will be entered. They will remain in the order in which they were entered until the end of the day or several days. At that time, the information from the docket slips will be posted to the appropriate file by either physically filing the docket slips in the actual file or special docket file for that file, or by computer entry. Before handing his or her dockets over at the end of the day, the student should get into the habit of totaling the docketed hours to see how much productive time the student spent out of the entire working day.

In some firms, lawyers will use their dictating machines to note their docket entries. Someone else will then either prepare and file docket slips, or make the appropriate computer entries. In other highly computerized firms, the lawyers and clerks will make their docket entries directly into their own computers. In yet other firms, each file will contain a time sheet, and docket entries will be made directly into the file on that sheet.

Whatever the method, the purposes of docketing are always the same:

- To keep track of the time spent and nature of the work done for a specific client so that the client may be properly billed for that work; and
- To keep track of an individual's total billable time, so that the firm can measure that person's productivity.

While docketing time is common for most private law firms, legal departments in corporations and government may not require that their personnel docket their time. Working in-house, they are not required to bill a client, and docketing is therefore unnecessary for that purpose. However, some departments may require docketing to keep track of individual productivity.

### Valuing time:

Do not read, do homework, talk on the phone, arrive late, leave early, go for smoke breaks, or take long lunches. Time on placement belongs to the firm or department. Even if in the unenviable position of having nothing to do despite best efforts to find work, you must at least look like you are not wasting the firm's or the department's time. Here are

some things to keep in mind:

- When given instructions, take notes, quickly and efficiently, without asking the host supervisor to repeat those instructions several times. Take a pen and pad of paper with you when called into a host supervisor's office. Don't rely on your memory.
- If you have questions after receiving instructions, try to answer the questions before bothering the host supervisor. Look things up, call for information to the appropriate governmental office or ask someone.
- When asking questions, be efficient. Do not run into the host supervisor's office each time a question arises, or, worse still, stop working until the host supervisor is available to answer questions. Complete as much of the job as possible, and save questions to ask all at once at the end.
- When the work is done, deliver it in an organized manner, and let the host supervisor know what has already been done. If given a memo setting out the instructions, return the memo with the work, and note the steps taken. Or, prepare a short memo reply.
- If billing your time, you are generally expected to do as much billable work as possible. If there is work to be done on a particular file for which the client may be billed, that work has priority. You should not assist someone else in doing clerical or secretarial tasks, such as photocopying or assembling documents that are not billable, unless specifically instructed to do so.

### Appointments and deadlines:

Keeping track of appointments and deadlines is another aspect of time management. Using a desk diary or pocket diary to keep track of appointments, things to be done and deadlines is invaluable in this line of work.

In order to maintain insurance coverage for negligence in the event of a missed deadline, each law / paralegal firm must maintain a tickler system to keep track of deadlines such as limitation periods and filing deadlines. The student must learn the system used by his or her placement and use it. The student may choose to use his or her own diary as a back up.

### Keeping track of money:

Law and paralegal firms incur expenditures on behalf of clients. These are called disbursements. Sometimes they have received money from the client as a retainer and are spending the client's money. Other times they are laying out the money on behalf of the client and expect to be reimbursed. In both cases the firm must keep track of the money. If it's the client's money, there are statutory and law society requirements to do so. If it is the firm's money, the firm wants to keep track of it, so they can claim reimbursement from the client.

You might think that questions of money have nothing to do with you, that it is the

responsibility of accounting staff. To some extent that is true, but there are implications when handling money. Follow bookkeeping procedures in place to help, and not hinder, the work of the accounting staff. Also, whenever money or things that cost money pass through your hands, keep track of it.

### Petty cash:

While on placement, you may be given money from the petty cash fund to cover payments you make for the firm. These funds cover things such as TTC fares, court or other government filing fees, phone calls, out of office photocopy charges, *etc.*

If given petty cash, you have to account for it on a regular basis, and have it replenished by the firm. This means asking for and saving receipts and docketing unreceipted costs, such as subway fares. Many accounting systems have you mark the receipts with the file number or client name and, if unclear from the receipt itself, what was purchased or why the money was spent. This lets accounting staff make the appropriate entries later.

Key points to remember are:

- Only spend the money as authorized. Keep receipts for everything.
- Always ask for a receipt.
- Keep track of all expenditures in a book.

At all times, the remaining funds plus the noted expenditures must add up to the original amount. It is essential to note all expenses as they are incurred so that the amounts balance.

Students are entitled to be reimbursed for money they have spent on things for their host. Make sure you keep track of these items, and make notes about them as you would if it was a part of your petty cash. You are not entitled to be reimbursed for parking at your placement's place of business, but if you go to another location on business, the parking fees incurred there should be covered.

### Long distance charges:

If the student makes a long distance call on behalf of a client, the cost can be billed to and collected from the client.

Every firm has a procedure for keeping track of long distance calls. Some firms will require the student to dial a sequence of numbers that includes the client file when making long distance calls. Through a computerized system, the charges are then automatically billed to the client file. Some firms will require the student to ask for time and charges from the operator. Others will expect you to keep written records of long distance calls.

Do not make personal long distance calls at the firm's expense. This is theft, and would be grounds for summarily ending a placement, and would jeopardize graduation.

### Photocopies:

Photocopy expenses are usually billed to the client on a per page basis. It costs money to own or rent a photocopier and there is often an additional per-copy expense to the firm to cover the cost of ink and paper.

Each firm has its own system of keeping track of photocopies. The system may be as simple as writing down the date, file name and number of copies in a book. The book may require the entry of the actual sequential copy number from the machine. Other firms use a computerized system that uses an access card or code. It is essential to charge clients for all copies made on their behalf, or else the firm is spending money unnecessarily.

Do not use the photocopier unnecessarily or for personal purposes under any circumstance.

### Transportation costs:

If using your car for your host supervisor's business, you are entitled to be compensated, typically on a per kilometre basis. Keep track of the kilometres driven and, if applicable, the name of the client, for reimbursement.

### Computerized research/computer networks:

Some research services bill by the amount of server time used. Note the time spent and the name of the client involved, so that the expense can be billed to and recovered by the client. For example, Quicklaw allows you enter the client name and file number, and bills sent to the firm will be so itemized. Follow your host supervisor's policies.

### Keeping track of paper and filing:

All employers will have a filing system. Each client will have a file for each separate matter on which the firm has been retained.

Methods of organizing the file vary from firm to firm: colour-coded file folders depending to the type of matter; accordion files as opposed to file folders; sub-files; clips; duo-tangs or brads used to affix papers to the files.

Record keeping practices vary too. Some firms use a central filing system, while others have each person keep his or her own files. In most firms, files are organized by file name, but in some they are organized by file number. Some systems can be very sophisticated and complex. Records management is a science determining what should be filed, how and for how long. Optical disk technology now exists by which electronic facsimiles of documents may be stored, instead of the actual paper.

### Here are some basic considerations:

- Avoid taking documents from the file in the first place. Correspondence, for example, is often on a brad, and can be reviewed without pulling the file apart.
- Before pulling a document from the file, note how it is organized. Typically,

separate sections are set up for correspondence, documents, pleadings, etc. Correspondence is organized in reverse chronological order, i.e., the most recent correspondence is at the top, and secured together, so that they do not become unordered.

- If a document is taken out of a file, it must be returned. If a document is misfiled, it is lost, and is as good as destroyed. Do not lose documents (they may not be able to be replaced). Refile them to the right file. After noting how the file is organized— such as letters in reverse chronological order on the brad—make sure that the document is properly replaced within the correct section of the file, in the correct order, and not merely returned to the top of the file.
- Avoid polluting the file with additional copies of documents. Many legal files have needless duplicates of pleadings and exhibits, for example. Don't add to the clutter.
- When sending out a letter or a document, there must be a copy for the file. It is very embarrassing to have to call the lawyer or paralegal on the other side, or worse, the client for a copy of something the firm prepared.
- The purpose of a legal file is to provide a complete record of all work done on behalf of a client. Nothing can be carried around in someone's head. Everything should be noted in the file. Record all conversations, calculations, etc. If your placement ended unexpectedly, someone else should be able to know exactly what is going on in a file by looking at it.

## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

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You may encounter personality problems during placement. Problems are best tackled sooner rather than later. Problems do not go away; they just get bigger. First attempt to resolve the problem on your own. If that is not possible or is unsuccessful, contact the Field Placement Coordinator for assistance.

Below are examples of problems encountered by past students, together with suggestions on how to resolve the problems. Remember, no one student experienced all of the following problems, and most students experience no problems at all.

**Problem**—*The tasks are too simple or you are not being given enough responsibility.*

**Solution**—Be patient. It takes time before a host supervisor trusts a student enough to give anything involving any real responsibility. If the situation persists, you may suggest other jobs you may do. This should be phrased in terms of additional ways the student may be of help, not as what you do or do not want to do.

**Problem**—*A client is rude.*

**Solution**—It is not your place to admonish a client. Handle difficult clients diplomatically.

Be polite. If at a loss, excuse yourself and call someone else to deal with the client.

**Problem**—*You are required to work long hours or are given no time to eat lunch.*

**Solution**—Wait to see if the situation is an unusual one due to some sort of emergency or if it is a regular, ongoing situation. If the latter, gently speak to the host supervisor. His or her guidelines advise that students are not expected to work overtime. If you cannot resolve the matter, inform the Field Placement Coordinator.

**Problem**—*You are made to feel that you are imposing when asking the host supervisor questions.*

**Solution**—Maybe you are imposing. Check other, non-human sources for help before approaching a host supervisor, time permitting. Check the Rules of Civil Procedure, look up statutes, find a textbook, check the library, or ask a secretary, law clerk or assistant. If you must ask the host supervisor, make a list of questions and ask them all at once—this way you are not running into the host supervisor’s office each time a question arises. At the beginning of placement, ask if you can set aside a specific time of day to review work or ask questions.

**Problem**—*You are not given adequate instructions or enough guidance.*

**Solution**—Try the same approach outlined in the last situation.

**Problem**—*There is never enough work to do.*

**Solution**—Suggest jobs that can be done (files that need organizing, transcripts to be reviewed, etc.). Perhaps someone in the office is involved in a motion, trial, examination or closing, which you could simply observe. Take the initiative and not just sit there and wait for wonderful work to fall into his or her lap.

**Problem**—*The office is heavy with office politics, and people are trying to involve you.*

**Solution**—Stay clear of office politics at all costs! Some workers in large firms or institutions take delight in the misery of others; some are unhappy and want you to join in their misery. Decline the invitation. If asked to comment on some piece of gossip or asked to join in making fun of some member of the office, say nothing, say you don’t really know, or make neutral responses. Don’t get a reputation as a rumourmonger. If you do, you can inadvertently alienate people with decision-making power—over your evaluation, reference letter, or in consideration of a job offer.

## **PROFESSIONALISM IN DEMEANOUR AND ATTITUDE**

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If professional in demeanour and attitude, you will head off many problems, and it is more likely that you will be treated with respect and given responsible tasks to perform.

### **Dress and appearance:**

Dress conservatively. Adjust the choice of dress if the employer's standards are different. Take your cue on appropriate dress from the most conservative person with whom you work. Your appearance is a reflection on the firm or department and on SLPOA. If necessary, the student should invest in one good quality work outfit and wear it every day. It can be used later for job interviews.

### **Be respectful:**

In each placement, start by addressing your host supervisor as Mr., Ms., or Miss. Always address a judge as Your Honour, Your Worship, sir or ma'am. If you sense a greater degree of informality, ask how the host supervisor wishes to be addressed. Don't presume to call the host supervisor by his or her first name, unless asked by the host supervisor to do so.

Even if on a first-name basis with your host supervisor, do not confuse informality with lack of respect. Always follow the host supervisor's social lead. You should not assume that you are the host supervisor's friend. It is important to remember that the host supervisor is always in a host supervisory position.

As well, avoid addressing your host supervisor informally in front of other members of the profession or clients. Some clients expect and want a formal relationship with their lawyer or paralegal. Informality in front of clients and outside professionals can undermine the basis for the relationship.

### **Be reliable:**

If you attend regularly and are always punctual, you increase the chances of being given a greater degree of responsibility. Remember that failure to attend regularly and to arrive punctually will result in an unsatisfactory rating, a failed field placement, the loss of a potential reference or even an employment opportunity, as well as damage to the reputation of SLPOA and Seneca Polytechnic.

### **Attitude:**

Be enthusiastic. Be a team player. In discussions with office managers, the term team player comes up repeatedly. Never consider any job beneath you. Expect to pay your dues. Try to drum up work and take responsibility for the quality of the field placement experience.

### **Pay attention to . . .**

. . . *Instructions*—If they are given orally rather than by memo, take careful notes. No one has patience for questions about things already covered, especially if you do not take notes. Clarify instructions as they are given.

. . . *Details*—Law is a business of small details. Pay attention to small points. It is better to work slower and be correct, producing a lower volume of work without errors, than to be fast and inaccurate.

### Questions:

If relevant to the practice of your placement, bring your own rules, precedents, etc. As stated earlier, best practice is to try to answer questions on your own, so bringing in resources that will help complete a task with a minimum of questions will make you look competent and prepared—and save time!

### Docket:

Record the work you do. If given a memo of instructions, then mark off what was done and when, along with any disbursements, on the memo. Remember to return the memo to your host supervisor with any relevant documents and receipts. If not given a memo, prepare one setting out what work was done and any disbursements.

### Precedent binder:

You must ask for permission to collect and keep copies of precedents that you come across. Placement is a valuable opportunity to build up precedents. Most placements are happy to share their precedents. (Chances are the firm got it from someone else!) Ask about deleting the names of clients or otherwise redacting the document. Specifically ask about using the photocopy machine and whether you have to pay for this personal photocopying.

## CONTACT

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