Reducing Risk in Off-Campus Academic Learning Experiences: A California State University Series

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Introduction

The Series: As the only systemwide publication of its kind, this series supports California State University's (CSU) efforts to provide practical risk mitigation strategies. The series is and continues to be the definition of a collective effort among CSU faculty, campus program staff, risk managers, students, and our organizational partners on creating and developing positive out-of-classroom learning experiences for all CSU students.

Each volume in the series will be organized around a specific off-campus academic learning experience – service learning, other forms of curricular community-engaged learning, academic internships, field trips, professional field placements. Every volume will provide perspective and guidance from campus program staff, faculty and risk managers, who have worked with colleagues in the Office of the Chancellor to understand risk mitigation issues related to the placement of students and purposeful approaches to addressing them.

Volume 1a: A Resource Guide for Community Engaged Learning: Service-Learning Edition

Volume 1a: Volume 1a is a resource guide primarily for service-learning faculty and service-learning/community engagement staff on CSU campuses. Risk Management and Procurement Officers are also encouraged to use this guide to better understand their roles in supporting service-learning placements. While some information in this volume will apply to other types of experiential education, Volume 1a is not intended to cover the intricacies that exist in each of the different types of experiential education programs, including other forms of curricular community-engaged learning. Future volumes in this series will be released as they become available. All types of experiential education need to examine risk mitigation issues as they pertain to their programs.

Volume 1a is an updated revision of the *Community Service Learning in the California State University – A Resource Guide for Managing Risk in Service Learning (2011)*, including a new section on student rights, and an update to the student participation guidelines. This edition also highlights "voices from the field," sharing the successful work of campuses including the CalState S4 database. Additionally, this volume includes three at-a-glance documents – one for faculty, one for campus service-learning staff and leaders, and one for campus risk managers – which provide a snapshot of essential practices that support both the mitigation of risk and the creation of positive service-learning experiences when implemented. Furthermore, electronic usage of forms is strongly suggested as it mitigates risk, facilitates easier storage and retrieval, and eliminates paper waste leading to better environmental sustainability.
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Finally, the volume includes a flow chart constructed as a blueprint to walk the reader through the risk mitigation process in a logical and easy-to-follow manner. Designed to work together, the segments contained in this resource guide can be used independently in instances where portions of the process are already underway on a campus. As the CSU moves towards improving quality and impactful service-learning experiences for all its students, this guide provides the necessary steps in creating new opportunities while appropriately mitigating associated risks. Considering numerous perspectives, the resource guide is intended to represent a commonsense and reasonable approach.

> ### Campuses are encouraged to consider utilizing **CalState S4** which fully integrates the CSU's risk mitigation process.

CalState S4: CalState S4 is a user-friendly interface that supports the tracking and management of students' off-campus academic learning experiences. These experiences include service learning, academic internships, and professional field placements (e.g., social work, teacher credential, other health and human service programs). CalState S4 fully integrates the CSU's recommended risk assessment process and forms throughout the platform, allowing staff the ability to add or update information with just the click of a few buttons. CalState S4's flexible forms functionality enables multiple campus programs to not only share documents across departments, such as university-agency agreements but also to customize forms that are program unique. Its time tracking feature ensures students have a hassle-free way to report their placement hours while also giving site supervisors a login-free, and secure method for verifying student time. With an intentional focus on gathering meaningful data, CalState S4 provides robust reporting on course enrollment, student placements, and program sites. Staff can export reports to perform extensive program analysis and inform future decision-making. To learn more about CalState S4, click **here**.

Service learning in the CSU: Faculty, students, and administrators in the California State University (CSU) have been partnering with their local communities since the first CSU campus was founded in 1857. These partnerships not only improve the quality of life across California, but they also advance faculty research, help to enhance students' subject knowledge, develop their job-ready skills, and increase their sense of responsibility and efficacy. As a result of these experiences, students are gaining an understanding of community, our democracy and furthering their relationships with one another and those around them.

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The Center for Community Engagement (CCE) — the first office of its kind in the U.S. – was established at the CSU Office of the Chancellor in 1998 with a goal of graduating students to be more socially responsible within their communities. It institutionalized service learning at all 23 campuses, which led to passing landmark resolutions by the Board of Trustees and Systemwide Academic Senate that ensure all students have the opportunity to participate in community service and service learning during their time at the CSU.

Service learning as a [high-impact practice](#) (HIP) is vital to improving student success as it applies classroom knowledge to real-world experiences and brings real world experiences into the classroom. Addressing environmental justice, researching urban poverty, and serving at nonprofit organizations are just some of the high-quality opportunities that engage students in issues affecting their communities. Not only does community engagement prepare students to become change agents, but their peer relationships are also strengthened.

The CSU's commitment to increasing access to high-quality service-learning courses, particularly for students from historically underserved communities, supports campus efforts to achieve the CSU's goals of closing equity gaps, improving time to degree and increasing completion rates. Along with its stellar faculty, CCE's programs and scholarships advance the CSU's commitment to inclusivity, equity, and student success.

Definitions

The following CSU systemwide definitions provide important distinctions for this resource guide, which is intended to cover the intricacies of risk mitigation as they relate specifically to service learning.

Service Learning* (referred to as Community-Based Learning on some CSU campuses): Service Learning is a teaching method in which meaningful service is a critical component of course curriculum and assessment of student learning. It is characterized by critical reflection and a collaborative partnership among the instructor, students, and community, with a focus on both student learning and community impact.

Service-Learning Course*: An academic course (in any discipline) that provides students opportunities to participate in organized service activities that meet identified community focus areas while linking the community service experiences to the course content. This makes service learning a very different experience than other forms of curricular community-engaged learning.

* CSU Office of the Chancellor writing style guide: the term service learning is hyphenated when used as a
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description preceding a noun (service-learning program). Uppercase is used when the name of a specific program is mentioned (the Office of Community Service Learning at CSU Stanislaus).

Note: service-learning placements differ from community service placements because of the academic requirement associated with them, as well as the emphasis on reflection as an integral piece of student learning.

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Student Academic Field Experience for Credit Liability Insurance Program (SAFECLIP)

In 2006-07, the California State University Risk Management Authority (CSURMA) developed two insurance programs, Student Academic Field Experience for Credit Liability Insurance Program (SAFECLIP) and Student Professional Liabilities Insurance Program (SPLIP), for CSU students involved in several off-campus learning programs. CSURMA, a California Joint Powers Authority comprised of the CSU and its auxiliary organizations protects member resources by providing broad coverage and risk management services that stabilize risk cost.

> ## SAFECLIP insurance protects the CSU, students, and the learning site, **when** the proper agreement is in place.

SAFECLIP provides general and professional liability coverage for students enrolled in service-learning, other forms of curricular community-engaged learning, and internships for which students receive academic credit (see link for detailed information). In essence, the program provides indemnity, including legal defense costs for students, faculty, the campus, and the Learning Site (when required by contract/ agreement), if there is a claim or lawsuit involving injury to others or damage to property in connection with service learning and other academic fieldwork experiences. Please note the SAFECLIP program does not afford coverage for activities that occur outside of the United States and its territories. International service-learning placements should be reviewed with the campus Risk Manager.

Risk Mitigation in the CSU

Each of the California State University's 23 campuses are responsible for administering its risk mitigation programs in a manner that will attempt to minimize risk to CSU students and employees, as well as visitors, and protect the property of the campus. Risk mitigation is an important element in the CSU's mission to provide

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cost-effective access to world-class curriculum in a positive and enriching environment. Each campus has designated a risk manager to assist program staff and faculty in maintaining the campus risk management policies and practices.

Campus Risk Mitigation Plan: The tools and strategies developed in this volume are the result of nearly 25 years of practical experience across the CSU in implementing risk mitigation practices and procedures for service learning. These guidelines have been designed to provide a consistent approach within the CSU regarding several key risk mitigation components.

Because leadership and staffing changes frequently occur, campuses should develop/update and *document* their campus risk mitigation process for service-learning. Things to consider in the development and documentation of your campus' procedures:
- Determine if your campus has an existing risk mitigation policy for service learning that meets the requirements of the systemwide [executive order](#).
- Who is involved in its development and management?
- Is the policy current? How often is it reviewed?
- Do your campus implementation practices meet the existing policy? Are these practices flexible?
- Are there components of the policy that need to be revisited?

Risk Mitigation for New Service-Learning Partnerships: As individual components, the tools and strategies developed to reduce risk in service-learning placements can be implemented separately, but they can also be used together as a whole process when starting new partnerships with organizations. [The Risk Mitigation Process Flow Chart](#) outlines the process of creating a new placement for a service-learning course. Please note that this process should not be considered linear and will evolve depending on each situation.

- **Build Relationships:** As with any partnership, the first step is to take time to build relationships. Communication among all parties (students, faculty, site partners and university staff) is the foundation for a successful, high-quality service-learning experience. Discussions with stakeholders also go a long way in mitigating risk. Faculty interested in creating a new service-learning course or engaging a new community partner are strongly encouraged to work with their campus service-learning/community engagement office, which can provide a significant amount of assistance.

- **Determine Type of Placement (In-Person, Virtual, Hybrid):** The types of service-learning opportunities available to students are generally grouped into three types: on-site (in-person at the organization or a

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field site), virtual/remote (not at the organizations' physical learning site, and usually indicating work is done from the students' home, campus, or another "virtual' environment), or a hybrid approach (a combination of the other two types). The type of opportunity offered may affect the level of risk determined at a learning site, which risk mitigation forms students are required to complete, and, in some rare circumstances, may even result in changes to the university-agency agreement (UAA). Additionally, the type of opportunity may determine what training or orientation will be provided to students.

- **Assess Learning Site:** Assessing learning sites is a vital step in identifying risk concerns that may be associated with off-campus service-learning opportunities; therefore, a risk assessment is one of the most critical steps an institution can take in protecting itself, its students, faculty and learning sites. But the fact is that site visits can be the most logistically challenging and the most time-consuming component of the risk mitigation process. Though site visits are highly recommended on new placements, a thorough pre-placement risk assessment may allow for a site visit to take place after the initial placement, but before the UAA expires, and on occasion, a site visit may be waived (i.e., for low-risk placements). See section: Risk Assessment Forms.

- **Maintain University-Agency Agreement (UAA-SL):** If no university-agency agreement is in place for service learning, then it is recommended that a risk assessment be completed before, or at a minimum, simultaneously to, drafting the UAA-SL. If an agreement already exists with the organization for another program on campus (e.g., academic internships, teacher education) then a conversation should occur with your contracts department to determine if an addendum is needed to the existing UAA for service-learning courses (which in most cases won't be necessary). Additionally, if there is a current open-ended agreement that is more than five years old, it should be reviewed and updated accordingly. Agreements need to be reviewed as part of the renewal process, typically every five years. See section: The University Agency-Agreement.

- **Orient and Prepare Students:** Faculty members, service-learning staff, and learning site representatives are encouraged to work together to ensure that before the first day of service, a student orientation is offered. Some of the things that may be covered include health and safety requirements, as well as potential risks that are tailored to the type of service-learning placement (virtual/in-person/hybrid). Orientations might be shared across parties, or one party takes responsibility. For example, a campus may have the community partner be solely responsible for the orientations. Additionally, as part of the orientation process, the faculty member should provide students with information on how to track their

hours of service. See section: Forms Applicable to Students.

Documenting and communicating your campus process to mitigate risk is a critical step in risk mitigation. Working together to ensure that everyone is familiar with the placement details through orientations, training, and the course syllabus is a valuable learning experience for students. Along with important career-related and life skills, students will also learn the importance of training and why safety protocols matter to them personally and for the communities in which they serve. These lessons are lifelong character-building experiences that will benefit the student long after they have graduated.

Templates and Models

The form templates in this resource guide outline the <u>recommended</u> standards for campuses to follow. Campuses have the discretion to use the forms, language, and strategies they have developed as long as they uphold the spirit of the standards outlined in this guide.

Partnership Forms

The templates below are provided to assist campuses with the process of partnership development and pre-placement risk assessment. The recommended forms present the questions that should be considered when gathering information for the first time or as a follow-up with a learning site. If information is not gathered electronically, but via a conversation or site visit, the open-ended questions may be asked when appropriate, allowing the learning site representative to expand on their answers and explanations. Online research of the learning site is also a quick and efficient way to accentuate a pre-placement risk assessment. Some examples may include googling the name of the organization with the word "safety record" or "injuries" or "investigations" added; or checking the Better Business Bureau for complaints, etc.

Request to Initiate Partnership Form (RTIP): The R*equest to Initiate Partnership* form can be used to gather necessary information from the proposed learning site interested in partnering with the university. This form serves as an initial repository of information about the potential learning site. The site's responses will help the service-learning/community engagement department, or if applicable, the faculty member, determine if an organization is appropriate for service-learning students or if it is more appropriate for an intern or student volunteering for no course credit. The RTIP also gathers important risk information to allow programs to do a

risk review prior to beginning or as part of the university-agency agreement process.

An example of a Request to Initiate Partnership Form for non-S4 campuses can be found here. CalState S4 campuses have an example web-based RTIP Form that they can request of the S4 Help Desk.

Service-Learning Course Planning Checklist for Faculty: Faculty who gather their own placement site information and conduct their own site visits, may use the Service-Learning Course Planning Checklist designed especially for them. It is a course-specific form that helps faculty review requirements for the learning site and students. Use of the checklist can prevent future issues with student placements and allow faculty to have a better understanding of any potential student risks, site logistics, and site supervision.

Note: Faculty from campuses using CalState S4 do not need to use the Service-Learning Planning Checklist as it is already built into the S4 RTIP form as part of the Partnership Intake process.

Risk Assessment Forms

Learning Site Self-Assessment Form (for learning site use): Whether or not the *Request to Initiate Partnership* form (RTIP) is used; a risk assessment should be conducted before the UAA-SL is executed and/or placement occurs. The purpose of the Learning Site Self-Assessment is for the site to respond to a set of questions that could reveal inherent risks that might cause student health and safety concerns.

Note: Campuses using CalState S4 do not need to use the Learning Site Self-Assessment form as the site assessment component of the risk mitigation process is fully integrated.

Pre-Placement Assessment Rubric (for CSU campus/internal use only): The Pre-Placement Assessment Rubric is another assessment template that may help to evaluate the risks at a potential learning site in greater detail. It is a tool that campuses can use to evaluate whether a site visit is needed. The Rubric is for use by campus personnel, be it service-learning/community engagement staff, faculty, risk management, or a combination of the three working collaboratively.

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If the initial assessment reveals increased potential hazards to the student, it is strongly encouraged that a site visit be required. If additional risks were not identified, follow the suggested timeframe provided in the *Rubric* for conducting a site visit.

All sites require a site *assessment,* but not all sites require an **on-site** visit. The Pre-Placement Assessment Rubric, if used, can help determine if an in-person site visit is recommended. If all answers on the rubric are "no" then a site visit is not generally needed, and the site assessment can be performed through alternative types of assessment. Examples of alternative site assessments can include a review of responses submitted by the learning site and/or online research (location of site, safety of region, organizational safety record, etc.). Students should not be placed at a site prior to a completed site assessment. It is a suggested good practice to complete an on-site assessment, if possible, but it is not required if there is low risk.

Levels of Concern:

- *Acute concern:* Acute concern sites should be visited in person *before* a University-Agency Agreement is issued and a student placed. Students *must not* serve at acute concern sites until a site visit is conducted and the areas of concern are addressed, a robust evaluation, and the necessary documentation for your campus is completed. For example, an acute concern is where students would be working with hazardous materials or machinery.

- *Moderate concern:* Sites with moderate concerns may be contacted to discuss the areas of concern; a follow-up site visit may be necessary. If a site visit is necessary, it should take place within six months, but no longer than one year. Students may serve at this site if communication with the site eliminates or reduces the risk concerns, provided the documentation required for your campus is completed. If the risk is reduced to an "acceptable" risk to the campus, a site visit is not required. If the concerns continue after the communication, a site visit must be scheduled before a UAA is issued and students are placed; students should *not* be permitted to serve at the site until after a site visit is completed. Examples of moderate concern include serving in county health in which students might interact with children, youth, survivors of domestic violence or other populations that require more supervision or accommodation needs — more information is needed to determine the level of concern.

- *Minimal concern:* Minimal concern sites are not required to have a site visit, and students may serve at the site once the *University-Agency Agreement* and other necessary documentation determined by your campus are completed. For example, students are creating a website for a non-profit organization.

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Your campus risk manager is a great resource and can assist with assessing risk. Their job is to reduce the amount of risk and liability exposure, not to prohibit educational experiences that may seem "too risky." No opportunity comes without risks. In reality, there are very few service-learning opportunities that cannot have the associated risks mitigated enough to be considered appropriate.

In-Person Site Assessments: The site visit is an informative meeting for all parties involved. If possible, the meeting should include site leadership and any staff who may supervise students. This meeting allows all concerned to understand the expectations and parameters of the placement. In addition, the meeting should include an overview of service learning, expectations for students and the learning site, risk mitigation and safety protocols and procedures, as well as the procedures to follow if a student is injured. Any helpful forms or information should be brought and shared with the staff at the learning site. For example, if students are bringing or electronically sending forms for the supervisor to sign, review those forms at the meeting. The University-Agency Agreement for Service Learning (UAA-SL) should be reviewed as well. Information gained from your site assessment will be helpful for student orientation and training.

Most people performing site visits are not risk managers and may not be experienced in assessing risk. For non-S4 campuses, the RTIP form and Service-Learning Course Planning Checklist are two examples of forms that have been developed as a resource template for faculty and/or service-learning staff to use either prior to meeting with the learning site by gathering the information ahead of time (through web research, review of documents provided, etc.), or during an in-person site visit.

Consider the following when an in-person site assessment is necessary:

- Who has the authority to conduct an in-person visit? Will the community partnerships coordinator make the visits? The faculty? Who in the service-learning or risk management office is trained to perform the visits? (If your office has limited resources, you may wish to expand the number of people trained and authorized to conduct site visits.)

- Based on the flagged risk, how are you going to evaluate that risk? Is the on-site assessment being conducted as a follow-up to an initial assessment in which potential hazards were revealed? Who should conduct the follow-up? What questions should be asked during the on-site visit? Should you consult your risk manager after you evaluate the risk on-site? Who is responsible for making the final decision (e.g., will it be a joint decision from all involved university parties, the faculty member, the

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service-learning office, or the campus risk manager)? **Note:** be sure to document in detail (this can be done electronically or on paper that is saved) anything that is discussed regarding the follow-up on-site assessment.

Risk Assessment for Remote/Virtual Learning Experiences: A virtual learning experience means service projects/activities are completed off-site (i.e., not at a physical learning site). Students will be performing learning activities via telephone or computer, including using a computer at home, at a campus-supported site or other available Wi-Fi hot-spot location away from the learning site itself. Some examples of virtual learning experiences include research, online tutoring/mentoring, translating, advocating for a cause, creating multimedia, proofreading, etc.

If a student is required to report to a physical site/location for any component of the learning activity (other than signing initial paperwork or attending a brief orientation), it is not a remote/virtual experience.

Additional Items to Consider for Assessing Remote/Virtual Learning Experiences:
- Will the student orientation be conducted virtually? If not, where will orientation take place?
- How will service-related activities be effectively coordinated between the supervisor and student?
- How will the supervisor check-in with the student on a regular basis?
- What method, if any, is in place for evaluating the student's work?
- Will the virtual learning activity require the student to remotely access somebody else's private residence or other location (e.g., nursing home, hospital, etc.)?
- If so, will they interact with vulnerable populations? Then, follow the same guidelines you would work with any vulnerable population.

The University-Agency Agreement

After the initial discussion and risk assessment, the faculty member or service-learning staff should have all the information necessary to initiate the University-Agency Agreement for Service Learning (UAA-SL). The UAA-SL contains the terms and conditions commonly found in out-of-classroom placement agreements. Campuses can use either the UAA-SL template, or the existing UAA template developed by their campus. Additionally, some learning sites may have an agreement that they are required to use. If this is the case, consultation with the campus risk manager and/or contracts and procurement officer will be needed to develop an agreement that meets both parties' needs.

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The learning site should be given time to review and recommend any amendments to the UAA. If no amendments are necessary, the designated signatory (typically a staff member from procurement) can execute the agreement and move to the next step in the process. If the learning site requests an amendment, then the contract office's designee, the risk manager and the service-learning director should review the amendment so that the legal campus representative can determine if the suggested changes are acceptable; if so, the amended agreement should then be executed per campus procedure.

Workers Compensation: One common area of concern for both parties is how to respond if a student is injured or becomes ill while participating in a learning activity. The UAA states that neither the university nor the learning site is responsible for providing Workers' Compensation insurance to students (as they are not employees of the university or learning site, and Workers' Compensation is program designed for employees). The Student Service-Learning Participation Guidelines inform students that they are personally responsible for paying the costs related to the treatment of any injury or illness they may suffer while participating in a learning activity. For this reason, students are encouraged to maintain health insurance (in addition to the basic care they can receive at their student health center) for the duration of their placement.

If the learning site requires that the university provide students with Workers' Compensation insurance as part of the service-learning activity, you must review this request with your risk manager and/or contracts and procurement department. Please note that extending Workers' Compensation to students is <u>very rarely done and should only be considered if the placement site will not allow the placement without it AND the placement site offers an opportunity that is essential to the student's curricular program and cannot be found in another setting</u>. To learn more about Workers' Compensation and service-learning placements, visit the FAQ.

Campus Placements: Please note that a UAA is not required if student placements occur on campus and within a CSU entity, as the University's liability insurance program would cover students under such placements. It is recommended that a document outlining what the student will be doing and how it connects to course objectives be used (an example is the Learning Plan which is often used by faculty as an educational document in service-learning). However, placements on a CSU campus, but within a non-CSU entity (e.g., auxiliary services, an external high school housed on a CSU campus, etc.) are considered external organizations and will require a UAA-SL.

TIP:

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It is recommended that each campus develop a process when there is disagreement among service-learning staff, faculty and/or risk manager as to whether a placement should be approved.

Note: On most campuses, service-learning directors and individual faculty members are not authorized to sign the UAA. A few campuses, however, have given signatory authority to the service-learning director. SL directors with signatory authority who have questions about an agreement should always consult their contracts and procurement office before signing a UAA.

University-Agency Comprehensive Agreement for All Programs Covered Under SAFECLIP (UAA-Comprehensive): In general, a UAA-Comprehensive template can be developed to include all campus programs covered under SAFECLIP for out-of-classroom placements. The template includes recommended language around placement parameters. Click here for a comprehensive agreement template.

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Forms Applicable to Students

Orientation Checklist: The Orientation Checklist is a resource tool to help prepare service-learning students for their community engagement experience. This checklist can be adapted and designed by each campus for their various service-learning placements. The orientation should provide students with a clear understanding of the work they will be doing, the risks (and subsequent preventions) associated with that work, and how they should conduct themselves when they are working in the community as part of a class assignment. Some of the information in the orientation will be the same for all students, and some will be specific to the individual learning site. The information and specifics that need to be compiled for the students' orientation will come from conversations with the learning site. Orientations might be shared across parties, or one party takes responsibility. For example, a campus may have the community partner be solely responsible for the orientations. See Recommended Tips for Successful Orientation Approaches.

Student Service-Learning Participation Guidelines: Prior to reporting to a learning site, students should review and sign the Student Service-Learning Participation Guidelines to demonstrate that they have read and are aware of potential risks present, behavior expectations, and the scope and duration of their service assignment. While the goal of service-learning placements is to foster the desire for students to continue serving their community, it is important from a risk management perspective that the requirement of service learning is separate from the "voluntary service" of any student at a community-based organization not connected to a course. This precaution helps to reduce the university's liability exposure by defining whether the student was outside their agreed-upon "term of service." Many students may wish to do additional volunteer hours or tasks outside the scope of or past the end date of their placement, and clarity for all parties involved in understanding what time and work are related to the placement, and what is on the student's own time is important.

It is recommended that the Student Service-Learning Participation Guidelines be incorporated into the student placement process (e.g., orientation, online pre-service sign-up process). Campuses may include additional guidelines that are specific to the campus or a particular placement, but it is recommended that no guidelines be deleted without first having a discussion with the campus risk manager.

Release of Liability Waiver: The California State University Use of Approved Waiver of Release of Liability (Waiver) was established to facilitate a uniform and consistent application of risk control on all campuses in the California State University system. The Release of Liability Waiver form is a legal document that students should read thoroughly before signing. Waivers are strongly recommended for all service-learning participants and must be completed prior to the first day of service. They should be stored according to your campus document

retention policy. Faculty should be prepared to have an alternative assignment (i.e., research, paper, class presentation) for students that decline signing the Waiver. A variety of circumstances that students face may prohibit them from engaging in service-learning (i.e., transportation, health conditions, etc.) and they will self-select not to participate. There are countless ways to have students who decline to be on-site for service learning to still be engaged in the overall experience. It is the responsibility of the campus to be familiar with the CSU policy.

Time Logs/Student Tracking Form: It is essential for faculty and service-learning offices to ensure that students are properly tracking and documenting the dates and times that students are participating with service-learning activities as part of their service-learning requirement. The Time Logs should provide documentation of when, where, and what type of activities for which students participate. It is highly recommended that students keep track of their service hours. A signature by the site supervisor or faculty member serves as a verification of hours completed. This also protects students because it can serve as proof of the hours they served at the learning site. A process should be developed that allows the site supervisor to confirm that the hours and activities reported are accurate and provide the University with verification of where students have been placed during the term and ensure learning activities are within the scope of the agreed upon learning plan service objectives.

An example of a student tracking form can be found here. CalState S4 campuses utilize the time log feature.

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Student Rights

Every service-learning student should be made aware of their rights regarding their service participation. This can be done during class time, at the site orientation, or stated in the syllabus. Clearly stating students' rights and who to contact if an issue or concern arises will help protect the students during their placement and may help mitigate future problems. Campuses are responsible for informing students of their rights and should determine how the information is shared with students (e.g., faculty, service-learning office, as part of the online placement process, in the course syllabus).

Students have the right to:
- decline signing the Release of Liability without penalty to the course grade. They will not be allowed to participate in the service-learning experience if they decline to sign and an alternative assignment/task will be provided.
- contact the faculty member about issues or modifications to service.
- contact the faculty member, designated University official and/or learning sites' human resources department to report discrimination, sexual harassment, or any other issues they experienced at the site. Reports of possible discrimination, harassment or retaliation by the site will result in the immediate removal of the student from the learning site, regardless of the status of the University's investigation as stated in the University-Agency Agreement.
- contact the faculty member or designated University official if they are asked by the site to perform tasks not within the scope of the agreed upon service-learning activities or objectives.
- notify the learning site and campus-specific University representative immediately of any suspected violation of local, state, or federal laws.
- remove themselves from any situation where they feel threatened or at risk.

It is important to remember that a positive experience starts with students knowing and understanding the expectations of all parties, and their options should an unforeseen circumstance arise.

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When a Student Declines a Service-Learning Placement: If a student declines to have a service placement, an alternative non-placement option should be provided to give the student access to some of the same learning objectives. Determining and approving the alternatives is the responsibility of the faculty member. There are many alternative options (background research, additional paper, presentation of research findings), and the faculty member should work with the student to determine the best alternative. If the alternative assignment is a placement at a different site or doing different work at the same site, those changes should be outlined and agreed to by the student, faculty member, and the learning site.

Background Checks

Background checks (which may include fingerprinting) are often required for service-learning students who come into contact with protected data or classes of people, such as children, persons with disabilities and persons living in assisted-living facilities. The decision of a learning site to require a background check is solely up to the learning site's interpretation of the laws or regulations that govern it and are at the discretion of the learning site. Learning sites are responsible for facilitating background checks for service-learning students placed at their sites. The university plays no role in this decision and only needs to know which learning sites require background checks. During the site visit or assessment, the learning site should inform the university whether background checks are required and how any required background checks will be handled: where, when, at what level, how long the processing will take, and if students will be responsible for any costs. Because some background checks take much longer than others, faculty members should be prepared well in advance if, in fact, the background check process will take more than a few days.

Federal and state laws and regulations governing background checks are very strict regarding the privacy of the person being reviewed. Most allow only the entity requesting the background check to have access to the results. Consequently, because the university is not the requesting agency, no faculty or staff member should be given the specific results of a student's background check and should decline to receive the results if offered. Learning sites are under strict guidelines to keep all background check information private and can be subject to serious legal penalties if they violate this right of privacy. This means that if a student takes two separate service-learning courses, each requiring a background check, the student needs to submit two background checks so that the results can be sent to two separate locations. This is true even if the service-learning courses are in the same semester.

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Although it is the responsibility of the learning site to determine whether a background check is necessary, they are permitted to pass reasonable costs associated with the background check on to the student.

> **If the student has to pay for the background check, that information should be made clear to the student at the beginning of the course and written into the syllabus.**

For more information concerning background checks, contact your campus risk manager or human resources department.

Conclusion

This resource guide is a road map for mitigating risk in service-learning placements. Throughout the research process, and now in the text of this guide, the philosophical goal of creating thoughtful, meaningful, and positive learning experiences for CSU students and community members has been at the forefront. While risk mitigation does not always seem to be the most rewarding way to spend faculty, staff or community-based organization time when developing a service-learning course, it does prepare all parties to handle any accident or incident that may occur within any given placement. Following the risk mitigation procedures outlined in this guide serves to teach students potential protocols they will need in their chosen career path and personal lives. By taking this proactive step to examine the way the CSU deals with risk mitigation in service learning, the CSU continues to be at the forefront of the national service-learning field.

This resource will be continually updated and include new questions and responses from CSU service-learning staff, faculty, campus risk managers and learning sites. A collection of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) is also

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available on the CSU Center for Community Engagement's (CCE) website here. If you have questions about how to incorporate these processes into your current operations, please feel free to contact the campus risk manager, or staff in the Office of the Chancellor (CCE or Office of Risk Management and Public Safety). CCE staff can be reached at (562) 951-4749 or cce@calstate.edu and Risk Management at (562) 951-4580 .

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Essential Practices

Essential Practices for Faculty to Prepare Students for A Quality Service-Learning Experience while Mitigating Risk

As a faculty member, you play a pivotal role in setting a solid foundation for a student's service-learning experience. Your commitment to partnership building both on- and off-campus, as well as your understanding of risk mitigation practices are critically important to student success. Faculty members set the tone of promoting safety, informing students of their placement sites, and reflecting with students throughout the entirety of the service-learning experience.

#1 Familiarize Yourself with Campus Risk Practices: Please consult the Service-Learning/Community Engagement Office on your campus to see what forms are required by the University for both partners and students. Before placing students at a learning site, confirm with the service-learning/community engagement department that the learning site has a current University-Agency Agreement on record. It is imperative to know that the **Student Academic Field Experience for Credit Liability Insurance Program** (SAFECLIP) provides general and professional liability coverage for students enrolled in service-learning courses and learning sites only when the proper agreement is in place.

> Required student risk forms need to be signed prior to a student's first day of service. It is highly encouraged to list the forms required by students on your syllabus, shared verbally on the first day or week of class and verified before students begin service.

It is strongly recommended that every service-learning participant sign a Release of Liability Waiver. If a student refuses to sign this waiver they must be provided with an alternative assignment and may not be penalized in terms of their grade or course standing. Your campus may require additional forms based on risk management policies. Seek out the consultation of your service-learning/community engagement office and campus risk manager.

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#2 Conduct a Student Orientation: Communicate with your community partner to negotiate service-learning placement specifics, logistical information, and orientation requirements. The Service-Learning Course Planning Checklist for Faculty and the Orientation Checklist are examples of two resources that can assist with the topic areas that should be covered before service. Faculty members and learning site representatives are encouraged to work together to ensure that, prior to their first day of service, a student orientation is offered to make them aware of their learning opportunities, the nature of their service-learning placements, any health and safety requirements, as well as any potential risks.

#3 Develop and Discuss a Learning Plan with Students: Faculty are encouraged to utilize, create, discuss and review the Learning Plan. Though not a risk management document, the Learning Plan is an educational service-learning tool that provides the opportunity for faculty and students to have a conversation on the connections between the course content and the service placement. A copy of the completed and signed Learning Plan by the student can be shared with the learning site contact. These plans can be filed by the faculty member with other course materials or managed and stored electronically on platforms such as CalState S4 which allow students, faculty, and site supervisors to sign the form and access it as needed. As a course material, the Learning Plan is stored according to your campus documentation retention policy, typically three years from the end of the service-learning course.

#4 Inform Students of their Rights: Clearly communicate and inform students of the rights they have regarding service-learning placements. This can be done through the syllabus, during class time or as part of the online student placement process. Students should be aware that their course grade will not be affected as they have the right to decline signing the Release of Liability Waiver form. If this occurs, students are to be made aware that they will not be placed at a learning site and will instead receive an alternative assignment. Students participating with a service-learning component, have the right to contact you or a designated University official at any time to modify their service requirement, report harassment, and inform you of unexpected changes to their service-learning responsibilities. By students knowing their options and their rights in service-learning placements, they can make a more informed choice about their participation. It is highly encouraged that you collaborate with service-learning/community engagement staff on how this information is communicated. For more details on students' rights, see page 19.

#5 Track Service Hours through Time Logs: The faculty member should provide students with information on how to track their hours of service. For example, the service-learning office may have a database (i.e., CalState

S4) that allows students to create a personal login for their placement and track their hours electronically and where hours can be verified by site supervisors or faculty themselves. Time logs are beneficial to see the exact timing of students' hours, the tasks completed, and an accurate total of hours served for the class. More information on time logs can be found on pages 17-18.

#6 Incorporate Reflection: A critical piece of the learning that occurs in service-learning is directly related to the reflection. Reflection activities can take several forms such as journals, focus groups, classroom and/or community presentations, portfolios, etc. These activities serve a purpose to have students see the connection between their service in the community and the classroom content. By incorporating reflective activities with students prior, during and after their service-learning placements, faculty can more accurately gauge how the project/experience is progressing or if there are issues that need to be addressed with students or the learning site.

Essential Practices for Service-Learning/Community Engagement Staff to Create Quality Service-Learning Experiences while Mitigating Risk

Whether you are a new service-learning/community engagement staff member or a veteran practitioner, there are practices that when implemented support both the mitigation of risk and creation of positive service-learning experiences. You play an integral role in the process.

#1 Support Proper Documentation: To ensure a meaningful experience for everyone involved with service-learning activities, it is important for CCE staff to become familiar and knowledgeable with their respective campuses and CSU Service-Learning policies and systems. Become familiar with your authorized signers on your campus, your campus's retention policies, and all risk mitigation forms that learning sites, faculty, students, and staff must complete when participating in service-learning activities. Also, identify and become familiar with other key staff on your campus that are also responsible for components of the risk mitigation process, such as your campus risk manager and contract officers. This will allow you to establish a support team so that you can easily connect with them when additional assistance is needed. Lastly, make sure that those you work closely with are familiar with your systems and procedures, and you with theirs, to ensure that everyone is upholding university and systemwide guidelines and policies. Having systems in place that are well-documented will be beneficial to help you properly address any issues that may arise within your program.

#2 Build Relationships and Communication: It is important to develop relationships not only with your

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community partners, but also with on-campus colleagues, this includes, but is not limited to, risk managers, contract officers, faculty and staff, and student participants. You can connect with those you have built relationships with to properly address issues when they arise and/or clarification is needed. Building strong relationships with the aforementioned will not only create strong bonds throughout the partnership but will also likely lead to a better learning experience for all.

 # 3 Facilitate Learning Site Assessment: Site assessment is crucial when developing your partnerships. It helps the authorized campus representative to identify any risk concerns that may be associated with the site and safety requirements to cover during student orientation. It allows all parties to better understand what is expected from each other and iron out all the details before any learning activities take place. This also gives ample time for the university and the community partner to conduct a site visit if needed or address other concerns that may arise. For more information on learning site assessment, see section starting at page 11.

 # 4 Maintain University-Agency Agreements: Mitigating risk for all parties involved with service learning is essential. After an authorized campus representative has completed an initial assessment of a learning site, it is important that the University-Agency Agreement is formalized and executed. If you are not sure if the agreement you are using is an agreement that adheres to CSU policy, make sure to communicate with your risk manager and contracts officer. If a learning site needs help understanding the agreement, work with your campus team and/or share the Legal Terminology 101 document. Lastly, please note that the **Student Academic Field Experience for Credit Liability Insurance Program (SAFECLIP)** provides general and professional liability coverage for students enrolled in service-learning courses and learning sites only when the proper agreement is in place.

#5 Help Familiarize Students of their Rights: Help support a process for clearly communicating and informing students of the rights they have regarding service-learning placements. This can be done through the syllabus, during class time or as part of the online student placement process. Students should be aware that their course grade will not be affected as they have the right to decline signing the Release of Liability Waiver form. For students participating with a service-learning component, they have the right to contact a faculty member or designated University official at any time to modify their service requirement, report harassment, and inform them of unexpected changes to their service-learning responsibilities. By informing students of their options and their rights in service-learning placements, they can make a more informed choice about their participation. It is highly encouraged that service-learning/community engagement staff collaborate with faculty on how this information is communicated. For more information on students' rights, see page 19.

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#6 Understand Purpose of Release of Liability Waivers: Waivers are strongly recommended for all service-learning participants and must be completed prior to the first day of service. They should be stored according to your campus document retention policy. Faculty should be prepared to have an alternative assignment (i.e., research, paper, class presentation) for students that decline signing the Waiver. The Release of Liability Waiver form is a legal document that students should read thoroughly before signing. As a service-learning/community engagement practitioner, you can collaborate with faculty to think creatively about engaging students who decline the Waiver. A variety of circumstances that students face may prohibit them from engaging in service-learning (i.e., transportation, health conditions, etc.) and they will self-select not to participate. There are countless ways to have students who decline to be on-site for service learning to still be engaged in the overall experience. For more information about the Release of Liability Waiver, see page 17.

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Essential Practices for Risk Managers to Assist with Mitigating Potential Risks Associated with Service Learning

The risk manager plays a vital role in assisting appropriate campus stakeholders with the implementation of risk mitigation policies, procedures and techniques associated with service learning and other experiential learning experiences. The goal is not to deter such placements, but to assist in the mitigation of risk. These mitigation measures are necessary so that the learning opportunities afforded to students through community partners will be able to occur. Risk managers are highly encouraged to consider the guidance below which can serve to strengthen their knowledge and understanding of the service-learning process and opportunities for mitigating risk.

#1 Understand Student Academic Field Experience for Credit Liability (SAFECLIP) Insurance and Indemnification: When a campus attempts to execute a University Agency Agreement with a site, there is often a need for negotiation of language specifically related to insurance and indemnification. It is therefore incumbent upon the risk manager to become familiar with the applicability of the CSU SAFECLIP coverage, and when and how that coverage might apply to our students and the site. Those same negotiations can also involve requests for the campus to extend worker's compensation coverage to students in the event they sustain an injury during their placement. The risk manager should be prepared to respond to these questions regarding coverage, and how the SAFECLIP insurance should be perceived as a benefit to the site. This knowledge will also be helpful to the risk manager in the event there is a need to file a claim.

#2 Become Familiar with the Approval Process and Forms: The risk manager needs to have a strong understanding of the steps necessary for a site to become approved. While the Request to Initiate Partnership, Learning Site Assessment Form, Pre-Placement Assessment Rubric, and the Service-Learning Course Planning Checklist for Faculty are all different forms, they each contribute to the assessment of potential risks associated with a particular site. The risk manager should become familiar with these forms and the purpose they serve. The risk manager should also be prepared to provide guidance in the event the completion of these forms reveals any significant potential risks, as well as when an actual in-person site visit might be required. In addition to these forms, the risk manager should also become familiar with the language in the University Agency Agreement, as risk managers are often called upon to review proposed revisions to the insurance and indemnification language. Lastly, the risk manager should become familiar with the applicability of the waiver of liability form in relation to service learning, as well as any online platforms their campus utilizes to assist in

facilitating service-learning opportunities (i.e., CalState S4, other).

#3 Collaborate: The risk manager should establish a collaborative working relationship with their campus service-learning/community engagement staff as well as their Procurement and Contracts office. A strong working relationship will serve to ensure the appropriate stakeholders are comfortable reaching out to you for input on the various risk-related questions that arise throughout the approval process. Risk managers are often asked to provide guidance related to the level of risk at a potential site, or whether the proposed alternative contract language is acceptable. Establishing these relationships will also serve to further inform each stakeholder as to the risk manager's appetite for risk.