A. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF AGENCY SETTING

The YWCA of Helena is dedicated to providing women and their children with safe, affordable housing and supportive services. Founded in 1906 by a concerned group of Helena women and incorporated in 1911, the YWCA provides transitional housing programs for homeless women of wide-ranging age, many with special needs such as mental illness, post-traumatic stress syndrome, chemical dependency, and prior criminal histories. The YWCA strives to assist all people in the community gain solid footing as they move toward stability and self-support.

Transitional Housing Programs
The YWCA provides transitional housing services for up to 33 women and their daughters at any given time through two distinct programs: WINGS and Open Doors. Each woman has a furnished bedroom and shares common bathrooms, kitchen and common areas. The YWCA is a perfect entry point for women transitioning from homelessness to permanent housing. WINGS is in an intensive, research-based program requiring a six- to 24-month stay, case management services, a minimum of 20 hours work per week, goal setting, and life skills classes. Open Doors places no requirements on length of stay, case management, life skills class participation, or employment expectations; however, all WINGS services are available to the women in Open Doors.

The Placer Pantry
The Placer Pantry provides basic toiletries to anyone in the community in need. Individuals may “shop” for the items they need on a monthly basis based on the size of their family and the products on hand. Those utilizing the Placer Pantry are grandparents raising young grandchildren, two-parent families, single parent families, and single individuals. The Pantry serves people who are employed and unemployed, housed and homeless. The Pantry offers a unique opportunity to connect the clients with other available community services.

Life Skills Classes
The YWCA Life Skills classes are provided to anyone in the community. Money Happiness: A one-week series of classes offered every month. This class teaches how to budget, how to save money, and how to pay bills. Educated Renter: A one-week series of classes offered every month. This class teaches the ins and outs of renting your own place from start to finish. Health Essentials: The topic of this one week series of classes changes monthly but always relates to health. Topics include Healthy Habits, Stress Management, Nutrition, and Fitness.
B. DESCRIPTION OF CLIENT GROUP
The women served by the YWCA of Helena have one thing in common: prior to coming to the YWCA, they were homeless. The YWCA serves women living in their cars, escaping domestic violence situations, coming straight from prison, or living on friends’ couches…

The YWCA has 33 single rooms for women and their eligible children. In 2011, the YWCA served 91 women and 10 children. The women’s average age was 42. The YWCA of Helena is open to all women and fills a vital gap in housing services.

The women calling the YWCA of Helena their home can be categorized as “extremely low income” based on Lewis and Clark County’s Income Limits Documentation System. A full 86% of the women fall under this category, with annual incomes of $12,250 or less. The other 14% of women served fall under the categories of “low” to “very low” annual incomes.

C. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES
The Student will learn, hands on, how to provide Case Management Services for women in need. The roll will be defined as working in a collaborative process that assesses, plans, implements, coordinates, monitors, and evaluates the options and services required to meet each individual client’s health and human service needs. This roll is characterized by advocacy, communication, and resource management and promotes quality and cost-effective interventions and outcomes. The Case Manager will focus on needs that can be addressed within a set time frame and with available resources. The case load will be determined through team evaluation.

The intent of case management is to help women become self-supporting while assisting them with basic needs. Clients are empowered by recognizing they are capable, have strengths, and have resources that can help them take control of their lives. Clients are treated with respect, assisted in identifying their own needs, and encouraged to build on their strengths and supported in meeting their individual goals. The outcome of case management is increased stability and self-sufficiency. Case management takes a team effort. The team consists of the client, the case manager, the YWCA staff, and community partners the client may be working with.

Students may expect to gain:
- Experience in social service setting with working knowledge of case management systems and planning techniques.
- Experience working with homeless individuals and families a plus;
- Ability to assess, develop, implement, and monitor individual goal plans.
- Ability to work closely with individuals and families to establish goal priorities.
- Ability to work effectively with other professionals and services to provide an integrated approach.
- Ability to organize and prioritize workload.
- Ability to thoroughly document conversations and actions.
- Ability to intervene and respond quickly in crisis situations.
- Proven conflict resolution skills.

D. EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS
A positive attitude will be the most important key to success. Attitudes, unlike skill sets, generally can’t be taught. Must believe in the shared humanity of all people, go the extra mile for someone in need, be willing to give someone the benefit of the doubt, treat each person as an individual and foster a return to independence, not greater dependence.

Students will be required to maintain regular scheduled hours and meet with Supervisory staff on a weekly basis.