As a JEP student, your work in the community is similar to that of a social scientist who conducts “participant-observer” research. Throughout the course of the semester, you will observe and participate in the daily activities of those you meet at your JEP site, and you will write about your experiences on a weekly basis. These JEP Reflective Questions (RQs) are designed to help you focus your observations and critically reflect on your experiences in relation to what you are learning about in your USC course.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS HINTS:

1. **Read the questions first.** Reading the question before you go to your JEP site is required in order to answer many RQs, and having the questions on your mind will when at your site will help focus your observations and improve your response to all RQs.

2. **Write as soon as possible.** As soon as possible after leaving your site, sketch out your answer to that week’s RQ. Even just taking a few notes about some difficult moments, things that surprised you or highlights will make writing later much easier and will provide the examples and observations you need to write an outstanding journal.

3. **Proof your work.** Like any college-level writing assignment, proof your work to make sure the writing is clear, error-free, and that you answer the question at hand.

4. **Read and respond to your PA's comments.** The questions are related to and build upon one other. So refer back to previous responses and to take seriously your PA’s feedback each week and respond to the feedback by following the PAs suggestions.

5. **Be respectful.** Show your respect by being mindful of the limits of your experience and knowledge. Avoid generalizations and stereotypical explanations of behavior; in other words, do not make arguments that assume you know how someone else thinks or feels or use these assumptions to explain the way people act or their circumstances.

6. **Use examples.** Focus on writing detailed and concrete accounts of people, social settings and conversations (including direct quotes, when possible). Never make claims without evidence or examples!

YOUR ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS

The core parts of each assignment (which you need to focus on) are highlighted in **bold**. Use the additional questions to guide/supplement your answer. **Please refer to the PA agreement you received in training for instructions regarding journal due dates and format requirements. Note that some weeks require longer responses and are worth more points.**

ESSAY ONE - “Preflection”  
(1 page, 10 points, due: 9/26)

*Please respond to one of the following prompts. Question #2 is for returning students only.*

#1: Over the next eight-weeks you will be taking your college education outside of the walls of the University.
Based on what you know about JEP and what you know about your site, what do you imagine your JEP experience will be like? Make sure to explain why you think what you think and use examples from your experiences at USC and in the community to explain yourself. Make your imagined vision of your JEP experience specific by addressing these two questions: **Ideally, what would you like to learn from your experiences in JEP?** When you think about JEP, what makes you the most nervous or concerned?  

#2: Think back to your last experience in JEP and think about how you can take what you've learned about JEP, USC and the surrounding neighborhood, or the organization or school you worked with and improve your experience this time around. **Now that you know something about how JEP works, what do you hope to learn from doing JEP again? What was the biggest obstacle you faced in your last JEP experience and how will you address that issue this time?** Make sure to use clear and detailed examples from your last JEP experience to explain your reasoning.

**ESSAY TWO: First Impressions**  
*(1.5-2 pages, 15 points, due: 10/3)*  
**Describe your initial experiences at your JEP assignment.** What are your most vivid impressions? What are some of the notable social and physical characteristics of your JEP site (for example, the number, age, sex, race, and ethnicity of the people, and the size, space, decor, noise level, etc., of the classroom, buildings, and grounds)? **How does your initial visit to your JEP site compare and contrast with your expectations?**

**ONE-ON-ONE CHATS:**  
*(Scheduled with your PA, 10/10-10/14)*  
This week you will be meeting one-on-one with your Program Assistant to talk about your experiences in JEP. In place of a full-length essay this week, we ask that you take a few minutes to **jot down any questions, comments or concerns that you have about your JEP assignment so far.** For example, what are your tasks at the site and how are you adjusting to your new role? How are you relating to the people at your site? Are you having any problems with any of the logistical aspects of your assignment (e.g., schedule, transportation, Blackboard access, etc.)? **You do not need to submit these notes on Blackboard; rather, take them with you to your one-on-one chat with your PA so you are prepared and remember to talk about any issues that need to be addressed.**

**ESSAY THREE: Family Experiences**  
*(1.5-2 pages, 15 points, due: 10/17)*  
What have you learned so far about the families of the individuals with whom you are working?  

*For students placed at agencies:* What brought them (and/or their families) to the programs offered by your JEP site and what are they hoping to gain from participating? What are their short- and long-term goals and what do they think is necessary to accomplish these goals? Are their goals and plans the same as the agency’s/site’s plans?  

*For students placed at schools:* What have you learned about the family background of the student(s) with whom you are working? For example, are they from an immigrant family and, if so, when did their family immigrate to the United States, and from where? What do the student(s)’ parents do for a living? What are the student(s)’ goals – for education, career, family, etc. – and what do they think is necessary to accomplish these goals?  

**NOTE:** Please be respectful of individuals’ privacy. If those with whom you are working have not offered personal information about their lives, do not probe for details. If you can’t answer the specific questions in this week’s assignment, focus your response on what you’ve learned in general about the children and families associated with your site, either from the staff at the site or from your USC course.
ESSAY FOUR: Family and Households in the Neighborhood
(2 pages, 20 points, due: 10/24)

In order to understand the diversity and complexity of families in your JEP site’s neighbourhood, first you will need to find and analyze data on their composition.

What impact does socio-economic status and inequality have on family structures? Go to the Census Bureau website to find out more about the occupations and income levels of the community residents with whom you are working:

- Go to factfinder2.census.gov
- Click on the “street address” link in the lower right corner of the screen (it’s the second box up from the bottom).
- Enter the street address for your JEP site in the “address search” pop-up box and click “Go.”
- In the “Geography Results” that appear click the “Census Tract” link and it will appear in the upper left under “Your Selections”
- Click on the “Map” tab to see the census track so that you know the size and location of the area.
- Close the “Select Geographies” pop-up box by clicking the “x” in the upper right.
- Take a look at DP-1, QT-H3 and QT-P11 data sets (look for these in the “ID” column), and anything else you find interesting. Click “View.”
- If there is something in particular you are curious about, such as how much people pay in rent as a percentage of their income, return to the main page and review the specific “topics” in the box on the left or use the search feature to look up “rent.” Note that data might be from different census years.

Take a look at the tables and describe the families who live in the neighborhood in which you are working. What interesting information do you find? Imagine you are a professor teaching a course about children and families that requires JEP and use whatever you find interesting in the data to create a research question that you will assign as the paper for this imaginary USC class. This research question should be both a paper you could imagine a USC professor assigning and something that you find interesting, curious, upsetting or otherwise engaging. Write out your research question and explain why you think it is an important question to ask. Why is the question important for a USC student to answer? Explain what data prompted you to ask the question and provide some context for why this question needs to be asked in Los Angeles. Finally, talk about what sort of research a student would need to perform in order to answer this question and how a student's JEP experience help them answer the question.

BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION: Topic To Be Announced
(2 posts to Blackboard, 10 points, due: 10/31-11/4)
Instructions and topic will be posted on Blackboard.

Discussion purpose: Your weekly journals consistently reveal a wide range of interesting insights and abilities that result from your coursework and service-learning assignments. Since students participate in JEP from more than 100 different courses each semester, and rarely do all students in a particular class choose to enroll in JEP, we lack the opportunity to bring you together on a regular basis to learn from one another. As a result, the educational benefits of participating in JEP are limited mostly to your individual or small group experiences. This forum is designed to counter the relative isolation of JEP’s service-learning assignments by providing an opportunity for you to share your insights with your peers.

ESSAY FIVE: Family Policy and Family Politics
(2 pages, 20 points, due: 11/7)

Whether the government should or should not get involved in promoting marriage is a matter of opinion, yet it
does actively involve itself in other issues facing the children/teens/families at your JEP site. It also regulates and guides the ways in which the site can respond to these issues and the needs of the children/teens/families. What are some of the important policies and laws that impact the issues facing the families or individuals at your JEP site (e.g., domestic violence laws, child welfare/foster care policy, homelessness, educational policy, welfare reform, family planning, etc.)? How do these policies and laws regulate the ways in which your site can respond to the families’ or individuals’ needs? What issues relating to marriage and families do you think need to be addressed in US law and politics in order for the organization you are working with to be able to more effectively meet their goals? Use an example from your JEP experience to explain why you think this particular issue needs some funding, greater awareness, regulation, change in the law, etc. If you think current laws and the state of political discussions serve your organization well, explain how and why you think this is good for families.

ESSAY SIX: Your role in a Community Service Organization

(1.5-2 pages, 15 points, due: 11/14)
Reflect on your role at your site as a participant in a community service organization. List one or two things that you have done that might benefit the person(s) with whom you are working, either immediately or in the long run. Consider some of your personal limitations as a helper. Was there something you could have done to benefit your student/client but did not do, perhaps because you could not do it? What kinds of limitations do community service programs like JEP face when working in the community?

ESSAY SEVEN: Final Reflections

(2.5-3 pages, 25 points, due: 11/21)
In addition to potentially providing beneficial services for the communities in which it is implemented, service-learning is also credited with numerous benefits for the participating students. In particular:

1. Young people gain access to the range of supports and opportunities (or developmental assets) they need to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. One study of youth civic activism found that these settings had particular strength in cultivating youth and community involvement (Lewis-Charp et al., 2003).
2. Increased sense of self-efficacy as young people learn that they can impact real social challenges, problems, and needs.
3. Higher academic achievement and interest in furthering their education.
4. Enhanced problem-solving skills, ability to work in teams, and planning abilities.
5. Enhanced civic engagement attitudes, skills and behaviors. Many leaders in public service today speak about how they were nurtured, inspired, and shaped in early experiences in community service or volunteering.

(Sources: Chung, 1997; Coe-Regan et al, in press; Lewis-Charp et al., 2003; Tannenbaum, S. C., 2007; and YMCA of the USA, 2004)

Consider these benefits and reflect on the various ways in which your JEP experience has impacted you this semester. Based on your personal experience, do you believe that the above-mentioned benefits can come from participating in a service-learning program? Which outcomes seem most likely for service-learning students? Which seem least likely? Are there other benefits that you have experienced that are not listed above? In answering these questions, make sure to explain your reasoning and use specific examples from your service-learning assignment and your course.