RMH Community Health

Intern or Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities

- Assist with substance abuse prevention among youth. Work with multiple individuals and agencies in the community as part of a larger community coalition.
- Write and/or collect articles for “Youth Gives Back”, a bi-monthly insert in the Daily News Record that promotes the ways youth are positively impacting their community. Will also be translated into Arabic, Spanish, and Russian and distributed in these communities.
- Collaborate in community organizing meetings on substance abuse prevention
- Assist with data collection and analysis.
- Assist in marketing of all programs
- Possible research and work on grants
- Assist in childcare for Grand parenting Education and Support Groups.
- Interact with the community at Health Fairs, presentations, and in working with Environmental Strategies to positively affect Health and Mental Health of the Community.

Contact Information

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Read about students’ experiences at this site below:
Sentara RMH Family Connection focuses on two goals, improving child development and improving childcare services in 10 counties and 6 cities throughout the Shenandoah Valley region. SRMH Family Connection includes three main programs, Childcare Connection, Healthy Families of Blue Ridge, and Parenting Education and Support (PEAS). Childcare Connection is the resource and referral agency for parents and child care providers in the Northern and Central Shenandoah Valley. I mostly worked closely with Childcare Connection, which focuses more on the relationship between parent, childcare provider, and child. The other two programs that make up Family Connection focus directly on the parent-child relationship. Healthy Families of Blue Ridge provides a free volunteering home visiting program that helps first time parents learn how children develop and how to keep them healthy, and PEAS offers classes for expecting parents, and parents of infants, toddlers/preschoolers, and teenagers.

SRMH Family Connection’s mission is to meet five specified goals. Family Connection strives to make available comprehensive high quality services to families and childcare providers, to provide comprehensive accurate data that is accessible to the community, and to be recognized and utilized as a highly respected resource of information and service to families and childcare providers. SRMH Family Connection also desires to maintain financial sustainability and accountability, and to be well governed and well managed.

Throughout my field placement experience, I have been able to see Family Connection implement time and energy into improving their services and meeting their goals. While working closely with childcare centers, teachers, and directors, I have been able to implement a lot of positive changes in organizational issues, classroom layouts, lesson planning, and availability of educational resources. Much of my experience included hands-on learning inside childcare centers.

Alongside my supervisor, I was able to advocate grant resources that would help provide money for new supplies and academic resources for the children at the center. One of the grants I worked most closely with was VSQI, Virginia Star Quality Initiative. VSQI gives childcare centers coaching and technical assistance to improve the teaching knowledge of the teachers at the childcare center, and gives them money to buy new educational toys, books, and posters to use.

PCAN (Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect) and CSEFEL (Center on the Social-Emotional Foundations of Learning) were to other programs/grants that I worked with at my placement. PCAN offers childcare professionals information focused on helping them to recognize the importance of their relationships with very young children and their parents in reducing some of the risk factors associated with abuse and neglect. PCAN provides Family Connection with tools to create better relationships between teachers and parents and directors and parents. Increasing partnerships with parents gives a childcare center more availability to be
able to help children, educate parents, and become increasingly aware of what may be going on in that child’s life.

The third and last program I had the opportunity to be a part of is CSEFEL, Center on the Social-Emotional Foundations of Learning. CSEFEL focuses on promoting the social-emotional development and school readiness of young children birth to age 5. It is a national resource center funded by the Office of Head Start and Child Care Bureau for disseminating research and evidence-based practices to early childhood programs across the country.

The only disadvantage of at my placement is the amount of travelling involved. SRMH Family Connection is a resource that serves areas an hour and a half North and South of Harrisonburg. The amount of time I was travelling to sites could have been used doing other projects or other hands-on activities in the field. From another perspective though, this is what the typical demands of a grant-run agency in which there is not a lot of money, and resources must be spread extensive distances.

There were many advantages of working at SRMH Family Connection. Working with the programs such as VSQI, PCAN, and CSEFEL gave me the opportunity to be an advocate for children. In a situation where early childhood educators are underpaid and under-qualified, children are left without tools they need to reach their full potential. This field placement experience has given me an opportunity to make a difference in childcare centers by helping with teacher training, and therefore improving the quality of education these children will receive.

This opportunity also gave me insight to future career goals I want to pursue. Along with RMH Family Connection doing great work for a great cause, I chose this sight because even though I am more interested in research, I saw SRMH Family Connection being a great opportunity to see how psychology research is being used, specifically developmental psychology. I do not see myself going into specializing in developmental psychology or early childhood education, but I do see myself continuing with research and going into higher education. It has been interesting and a pleasure to see the use of research in a setting that helps people in need.

While I was interested in the work of Family Connection, I was most interested in the assessments that were used to evaluate childcare centers, their teachers, and the effectiveness of trainings. Since then, a spark of interest in assessment and research evaluation has given me some direction for graduate school in the next coming year. Along with a new found interest and with the professional skills I have gained and developed throughout my experience, I feel confident that my future holds great promise.