



Center for Marriage and Family Counseling

Intern or Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities

- Observe or facilitate groups for adolescents and adults
- Observe or help with parent visitation
- Help conduct urine screens/alkasensor checks
- Review files for needed information, such as signed treatment contracts and release forms
- Do supervised visitation notes
- Observe 12-Step support groups (A.A. or N.A.)
- Preview new educational materials or videos for use in treatment
- Perform other administrative duties, such as A) updating mailing lists; and B) preparing folders/packets for clients.
- Data entry for monthly statistics
- Help individual clinicians with research

Contact Information

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Read about students' experiences at this site below:



Fall 2016 - Sam Boyce

This semester I interned at the Center for Marriage and Family Counseling (CMFC). The center's mission is to "provide quality mental health services to individuals, couples, and families of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County regardless of socioeconomic status". CMFC is a non-profit organization that provides individual, couples, and family counseling to both insured and non-insured clients. A sliding fee scale is offered to make the services more accessible to the community. Supervised visitation and exchange services are available, as well as multiple group sessions. These include substance abuse education and treatment groups, an Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP), and anger management.

During my time at CMFC, I was given the opportunity to observe various substance abuse treatment and anger management groups. I was able to consistently attend the same groups each week, which allowed me to get to know the clients better. I especially enjoyed listening to client's stories and learning what brought them into our center. I found that interacting with clients in both the office and group helped them feel more comfortable around me. In preparation for these groups, I could gather client packets and breathalyze members for substance abuse and IOP groups. The counselors encouraged me to participate and I was eventually given the opportunity to co-lead substance abuse groups. This was an incredibly helpful experience where I could practice my professional and interpersonal skills. I was also able to strengthen my public speaking skills through the facilitation of these groups. Before this internship, I would get nervous when presenting or speaking to large groups. However the way the groups were set-up enabled me to feel more comfortable when speaking.

One of my responsibilities at CMFC was completing various administrative office tasks. This included assisting clients in person and over the phone, taking and leaving messages, scheduling clients, and handling payments. This quickly acclimated me to flow of the office and how things operated. I was initially thrown into the job without much training, but this turned out to be a blessing in disguise. It taught me to be self-sufficient when alone in the office and also to be confident in my abilities. My supervisor provided support and reassurance when handling new situations, which allowed me to pick things up quickly.

During the course of the semester, I helped my supervisor with the responsibility of supervised visitation and exchanges. This was one of my favorites experiences because I was able to observe many different interactions between parents and their children. During the visits, I took observational notes and recorded any significant interactions between the parent and child(ren). The process of going through supervised visitation can be extremely stressful for the family. Because of this, it is important to keep your composure when dealing with aggravated or emotional clients. Facilitating supervised visits made me more comfortable around children of all



ages. It also helped me learn how to be assertive with clients to ensure that the rules were followed.

This placement site is best for individuals who are independent and flexible. The opportunities are numerous if you take advantage of them. It is important to ask questions and get involved with groups if possible. My time spent in groups were some of the most valuable experiences I gained CMFC. I gained professional and interpersonal skills, and built relationships with the clients and counselors. All of the staff members at CMFC are friendly and willing to help, but it is important to take the initiative.

One limitation of this site is the temporary location. Since CMFC and the church share the space, issues can arise with the location of group meetings. CMFC has easily worked around this issue so far, but an increase in clients could pose a problem. The only disadvantages of this site are typical monetary issues that come with being a non-profit.

One major advantage of this site was the amount of flexibility. I was able to make my own schedule, which allowed me to complete office duties and attend group sessions. If needed, I was able to come in early or leave late which was incredibly helpful. Each day is different at CMFC, so it is important to be able to go with the flow and help out wherever needed. This site is less structured than others, which could be positive or negative depending on your expectations. I personally found this structure enjoyable because it kept things interesting. Another advantage of this site is the opportunity to get involved in substance abuse and anger management groups. These groups provide valuable experience in dealing with clients and seeing real world applications of concepts learned in class.

My time at CMFC really opened my eyes to issues within the community and all the services offered in Harrisonburg. My experience at the center was overwhelmingly positive and helped to guide me towards my future goals. I have always been interested in clinical practice, and this site helped expose me to all the different routes I can take to get there. Talking with individual clinicians was beneficial because they were able to share their experiences with me. I am quite thankful for this internship and all the experience I gained over the semester.

Spring 2016 – Cassidy Gonzalez

This semester my placement was at the Center for Marriage and Family Counseling (CMFC) in downtown Harrisonburg. The mission of CMFC is to provide mental health services for individuals, couples, and families of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County regardless of socioeconomic status. The center provides a wide range of services such as individual, children's, couple, marriage, and family counseling. Additionally, CMFC provides employer



services, supervised visitation and a range group services which include anger management, substance abuse education, treatment, an intensive outpatient program and aftercare.

The majority of my responsibilities involved administrative duties in the office. These included greeting clients, answering the phone, scheduling clients, taking messages, inputting client forms and questionnaires, preparing client packets, and filing documents. All of these tasks, and other office duties, covered ninety percent of my time at the site. As a student you often learn theory and perspectives. Learning how the business side of a counseling center operates was helpful. There is a great deal that has to be done to provide services to the community, especially as a non-profit.

At the beginning of the semester the schedule of group sessions was provided to me in order to assist me in assessing which groups I could attend. I had the opportunity to observe any of the groups at this time in order to narrow down my selection that would fit my schedule. I regularly observed two groups that fit my schedule which were anger management and one session of intensive outpatient program (IOP). The groups are composed of primarily court mandated clients who are often unhappy with the requirement to attend the group. This presented interesting dynamics for the groups as I observed. Through observing the groups, I gained an understanding of how many variables can contribute to the success of a group. It is my opinion that the groups were the most difficult job I observed because of all the variables, dynamics, and personalities that could come into the sessions. I found it very beneficial to experience this and gain such knowledge.

During the anger management group I contributed more as a member. I was allowed to participate and speak up with thoughts or comments but not as a leader in the group. During IOP my contribution was more as a group leader when I felt the need or desire to speak up and present questions or thoughts. Although I did not always speak up in either group, I found both of my roles in the two groups beneficial. I preferred experiencing the group as a leader in order to practice my own skills in small ways. One of the IOP leaders offered to let me lead a group but due to weather cancellations and my personal schedule, I was unable to do so.

Later in the semester I began the responsibility of supervised visitation. The supervised visitation is often court mandated and can be a very difficult process to navigate as the parent or guardian and child(ren) become accustomed to the experience. While fulfilling this duty I took objective and observable notes on the interaction between the visiting adult and the child(ren).

Limitations of this placement include the physical space at CMFC. The space presented obstacles when working with staff and clients especially when there was a high volume of counselors and clients in the building. Additionally, due to CMFC being a non-profit functioning on grants and donations, there are limited resources. Despite the limited resources CMFC still manages to largely follow their mission and serve the community regardless of socioeconomic status.



Some disadvantages of this placement were the high amount of office duties. These were not what I anticipated and I would have appreciated a more challenging environment or involvement. Although I spent a great amount of time around my supervisor the feedback given was only at my specific request. These conversations did not feel frequent enough for me personally and this reflected the lack of structure, or self-created structure, for the undergraduate intern at CMFC. The opportunity to observe court with my supervisor was not offered to me through the semester as I was given the responsibility of covering the office instead. I would have appreciated this opportunity that previous students at this placement experienced.

The main advantage of CMFC was the ability to create my own schedule. This flexibility translated into the way time was spent while at the site as well. I checked in on my duties and responsibilities but was largely left to complete my tasks individually while relying on my independence and initiative. Although this flexibility and lack of structure worked well for me, it may be difficult for another student at this site. Another advantage was the range of clients served at CMFC. With the variety of clients seen I was able to have many unique interactions. Additionally, being in the office meant I was in the high traffic area where I could observe and assist with clients when necessary or when I was able to. This provided great potential for interaction with clients and staff.

The main learning opportunity I had was in keeping my composure. While interacting with clients any number of unexpected scenarios can occur. Clients may be in any emotional states when they call or are there in person. Interacting with these clients, especially those in group sessions or the parents in supervised visitation taught me a lot about how to keep my composure. Although I thought I knew how to keep my composure before it had rarely been tested in such circumstances. The tense situations when clients were upset taught me the most. I gained a great deal of knowledge and experience from these interactions. Additionally, I learned much more about working with children as I previously had little to no experience with them. I gained basic understanding of working with children through my supervisor, some of the staff, and the supervised visitation. Finally, I gained understanding of how to work with not only a variety of clients but a variety of professionals as well. The variety of staff members each taught me something different through their personalities and experiences. This semester spent at CMFC taught me a great deal and allowed me to further specify my career goals within clinical mental health counseling while helping me gain a better understanding of my preferences in a work environment.

Fall 2015 - Anna Stock

This semester I interned at the Center for Marriage and Family Counseling. Their mission statement is to provide affordable mental health services to the Harrisonburg and Rockingham community regardless of socioeconomic status. The Center for Marriage and Family Counseling provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, employee, and family counseling. The center also provides supervised visitations, substance abuse treatment and education groups as well as anger management groups.



My major responsibilities at this site involved shadowing my supervisor, so a majority of my duties were helping out in the office. A lot of my time was spent entering client's outcome questionnaires into the computer and printing out clinician reports so clinicians could more easily assess the status of their clients. Aside from that, I also put together the information packets for clients, filed folders, and answered the phone to schedule appointments and take messages.

Outside of office work, I observed substance abuse treatment group, intensive outpatient treatment group, and anger management group, which took place weekly. Before group, I typically checked clients in, took their payments, and breathalyzed them. During group, I contributed to discussions and observed the group dynamic, and afterwards, I would usually discuss what went on with the counselor. I enjoyed consistently going to the same groups because I got to know group members on a more personal level and had the opportunity to see their progress as the weeks went by. Most of the clients that come to group are court mandated, so every Thursday I also went to court with my supervisor. Court was one of my favorite parts of my internship. Coming into this I had very little knowledge about the court and justice system. Throughout this semester, however, I learned more than I ever expected and am so much more interested in justice studies and how it applies to social work and counseling. I also got to sit in on orientations with clients for visitations that were scheduled through my supervisor as well as supervise the visitations.

One of the biggest advantages at my site was the fact that I was able to make my own schedule. CMFC was very flexible, and I was able to choose my own hours, which was super helpful when I needed to leave early or change my schedule around last minute. The only negative aspect of this was that it was not as structured as I had anticipated going into it. I found myself scheduling my hours mainly around the groups and court to keep myself busy which made things inconsistent.

Overall, my time there was very positive, and I am so thankful for all the experiences and relationships I made with the people at CMFC and how welcoming they were to me. I learned a tremendous amount about working with diverse populations and how to maintain a professional attitude with clients. It was an opportunity for me to apply what I have learned in the classroom to real life situations and I have much better insight into what a career in this field entails. I have strengthened a number of skills that will help me in my future education and career pursuits. This experience has helped me confirm that social work is still the path I want to take, however, it has also helped me realize I do not want to specialize in substance abuse counseling. Interning at CMFC made me feel much closer to the Harrisonburg community, and it was inspiring to see firsthand the impact we made on not just individuals but the community at large. Working in this environment has shown me that social work and mental health is where I am meant to be and has pushed me to work even harder to achieve my career goals.

Spring 2015 - Alyssa Adams



I completed my field placement at the local Center for Marriage and Family Counseling Center (CMFC) in downtown Harrisonburg. The mission of CMFC is to provide mental health services for individuals, couples, and families of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County regardless of socioeconomic status. Services offered at the center include employee assistance, supervised visitation, individual counseling, marriage/couples counseling, parenting classes once a month, and group therapy sessions including: anger management, substance abuse education, substance abuse treatment/Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP), and substance abuse aftercare. While there, I participated in administrative duties in the office, overseeing supervised visitation sessions, and observing group therapy sessions.

During supervised visitation, I was able to observe families and take notes on the interactions between the child(ren) and parent(s). These visitations are set up through court ordered custody rights and some are passive while others are active. During passive visitations, I was allowed to be in the next room and keep an eye on the situation from afar whereas during active visitations, I had to be in the same room with both the visiting party and the child(ren) at all times. Notes included general occurrences during the visit and how the parent(s) and child(ren) greeted and said goodbye to each other. There is a very strict procedure as to how the visitations work that I had to learn from my supervisor. Once I got the hang of everything, I enjoyed watching the interactions between families and observing the changing dynamics.

I was also able to observe both anger management and substance abuse education group therapies. I was not able to attend substance abuse treatment or IOP due to my schedule. During both group therapy sessions, I both observed and participated in therapy like a co-counselor and a group member. The therapists encouraged me to jump in whenever I felt comfortable. I was able to see how therapists and clients interact in a group setting and how a group therapy session is run in general. It was interesting to see the dynamic of the group and how each client interacted with the others and to what extent everyone was willing to share. At one point during the semester I was able to lead an anger management class with the support of the therapist. It took me about a week to prepare and I was still nervous, but everything went pretty well and I was encouraged by the staff every step of the way. Due to all of this interaction, I learned a lot about how to manage anger and substance abuse all along the way.

Lastly, I helped out in the office with administrative duties such as answering the telephone, filing paperwork, entering Outcome Questionnaires into the system, checking clients in for group therapy sessions, creating fundraising flyers, and putting together packets for clients. The administrative side of things was a little less exciting, but I'm glad I was able to see the administrative side of how a counseling office runs. I actually learned a thing or two while fulfilling the duties I was given that I had not known prior to working in the office.

Overall, I learned a lot while putting in hours at the Center for Marriage and Family Counseling. In working with their questionnaire system, I learned the different red flags the OQ measures for in clients and how to input them into the system to see results. Another aspect I thought was beneficial of doing my placement there was that I was able to network with a



handful of therapists and gain information about how they got to where they are today. I was welcomed in eagerly on my first day and felt like I became part of a family by my last. In observing group therapies, I was able to see a typical client-therapist interaction and see how group therapy works. I realized that a lot of how it is run has to do with the personal style of the therapist which I never took into consideration before. Additionally, I had never had any idea how supervised visitation works and what it entailed, so being able to conduct those visits and take notes was extremely beneficial. All in all, I think the center is a great program to have in the area. They are very resourceful and always do the best they can for their clients.

My time at the center has impacted me in very positive ways. I thoroughly enjoyed all of the experience I was able to get there and was sad to see my time come to an end. Spending over 150 hours at CMFC only further validated my ambition of gaining a Master's degree in Family and Marriage Counseling. I'd love to work in a similar setting in the future and only hope that the staff at my future job site is as welcoming and accepting as the staff at CMFC.

Spring 2014 – Stephanie Guilman

This semester I interned with The Center for Marriage and Family Counseling. The mission of this site is to provide mental health services for individuals, couples, and families of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County regardless of socioeconomic status. The services provided at this site include individual counseling, couples/marriage counseling, family counseling, employer services, and group services such as anger management therapy and substance abuse therapy and education groups.

I really enjoyed my experience at this site. During my time at The Center for Marriage and Family Counseling I spent a lot of my time entering clients' Outcome Questionnaire (OQ-45) responses for the various clinicians to refer to during their individual times in counseling. I also had the great opportunity to observe anger management therapy and IOP substance abuse education groups each week during the entire semester. I even had the opportunity to present my own research on mindfulness during one IOP substance abuse education group. In addition, once a week I would observe court with my supervisor. The vast majority of individuals in the anger management and IOP substance abuse groups are mandated from court into these classes. It was very interesting to experience the court-to-counseling process full circle.

My experience at this site has been nothing but positive. The moment I interviewed with The Center for Marriage and Family Counseling I knew that it was the right placement for me. While working at this site I had the advantage of working with some of the most caring and genuine professionals I have ever met. After the first week of working at the center I soon realized I was not just an intern but a member of a caring mental health community.

During my experience at The Center for Marriage and Family Counseling I learned so many interesting things. In particular, I learned how to effectively treat clients with respect while



staying professional at all times. I learned how to speak to clients who may be in distress and help them calm down regardless of their current situation. Since I am fluent in Spanish, I was able to help my site with taking phone calls in Spanish and helping clients fill out their paperwork if they only spoke or read Spanish. In this way, I learned how important it is that mental health facilities have multilingual professionals to provide services. I really enjoyed learning how to work in an office setting while helping the clinicians in any way I could (i.e. scanning files, photocopying documents, etc.). I found that working at this site several times a week helped me focus on my professional development and helped me realize what kind of career I want in the future. My experience at this site has confirmed with me that I wish to seek a career in a helping profession. I have learned so much about the important role that counseling plays for individuals, couples, and even those in group classes.

I will always remember my experience interning with the Center for Marriage and Family Counseling. I feel well prepared to pursue a career as a mental health professional and even more passionately about the field. I gained such impressive knowledge about the counseling profession and I look forward to putting what I have learned during this experience to use in my future endeavors.