



Harrisonburg-Rockingham Social Services District

Placement Description

Provides a full range of social services for foster children in the Harrisonburg-Rockingham County area

Intern or Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities

- Social histories
- Make referrals for services for foster children
- Attend and participate in interdisciplinary team meetings, FAPT meetings and court proceedings
- Home visits with biological and foster families
- Assist social workers with placements of children to residential facilities
- Visitation between foster children and biological family
- Compile case history and obtain pertinent information for the placement of children
- Assist foster home coordinator in recruitment and training of foster families
- Provide supportive services to foster and adoptive families

Contact Information

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Read about students' experiences at this site below:



Spring 2015 - Jenna Tempera

My Field Placement Experience this semester was at Harrisonburg Rockingham County Social Services District (HRSSD) in the Foster Care Department. The mission of Social Services is “the promotion of self-reliance and protection of citizens through community-based services”. Foster Care offers a wide range of services to families and children in the City of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. Some of these services include: foster family, residential, or independent living home placements, housing assistance, parent training, intensive home-based services, independent living skills training, respite care services, medical assistance, and therapeutic, mental health and substance abuse counseling. These children come into care by being referred to us on a CHINS (Children in Need of Services) petition or by Child Protective Services.

During my time at Harrisonburg Rockingham County Social Services District Foster Care, I was given countless opportunities and experiences I would not have been able to have at other sites. My experiences at this site were never dull and always changing and there was continuously new information to learn. A majority of my time at this site was spent shadowing, attending court, or filling out paperwork. When I was able to shadow workers in the field, we would conduct home visits to foster children or biological parents, transfer foster children to new placements, and attend Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, Family Partnership meetings, and Virginia Enhanced Maintenance Assessment Tool (VEMAT) meetings. On days spent in the office, I was able to observe supervised visits, fill out home studies for future foster parents, compile information for a full disclosure when a child is about to be adopted, read through case files, fill out applications for foster children when they are going to be transferred to a new residential placement, and other office duties such as copying and filing. Over the course of the semester, I was able to take on some responsibilities on my own and took notes on supervised visits and tried to find potential adoption placements for some long-term foster children.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time spent at this site and I am grateful that I had so many opportunities while I interned there. The many opportunities I was given are definitely one of the major advantages of this site. The workers at HRSSD Foster Care are constantly busy and always doing different things day to day, which gave me the opportunity to do something different every day. Another advantage of this site is the staff members you get to work with. They were extremely open and welcoming to me throughout my time spent at HRSSD Foster Care. The nature of our work can be very difficult and you see and hear things that are not an easy topic for everyone. Having an open and friendly environment at a workplace that deals with this type of population is important. They showed support for each other by going in pairs to homes or environments that they needed support in. The workers were always preparing me for what I was going to see and made sure I knew that I could leave if I found it too hard. Seeing and working in this environment made me realize how important it is to have the support of your coworkers and I now know this is something I want to look for when I am applying to jobs. I did not see many limitations to this site, but one thing I would suggest for individuals looking to complete their Field Placement at this site is to have an open and flexible schedule. There were many days that I ended up staying at the office longer than my assigned hours, simply just to get the experience in. I was fortunate enough to have the entire day open on days I spent at my site, and this gave



me the opportunity to extend my hours there. I was able to gain experiences I would not have been able to if I did not have a flexible schedule this semester. In the end I went over the 150 hours required for this placement, but I gained valuable skills that I will be able to use in the future.

When I began working at this site, I knew that I wanted to pursue a career in child welfare or something pertaining to domestic violence. This internship gave me the opportunity to see and learn a wide range of services provided to families and I had the opportunity to be right in the middle of everything. Before this internship, I started to realize that I was more into pursuing a career in social work, but my experiences were limited in the area. Looking back at my time spent at this site, I now can strongly say that I am prepared to pursue social work and that this is what I am extremely passionate about.

Fall 2014 – Kendra Edwards

My Field Placement this semester was at the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Social Services Foster Care Department. Our mission statement is “Our process to continuously improve services for children and families will be rooted in the best of practices, the most accurate and current data available, and with the safety and well-being of children and families as the fixed center of our work.” These services are offered to children in the Harrisonburg-Rockingham community whose general well-being is in danger. Some of our children are referred to us, and others become involved through Child Protective Services. In fact, we provided services to 124 children and their families in 2012, 89 in 2013, and 79 so far this year. These services include placement, independent living skills, mental/physical health treatment, mentoring/tutoring, opportunity for a permanent home, and resources to the actual foster family such as counseling, respite, finances, etc.

There were many great opportunities and experiences that I had at this site. Each day was different for me. Some days, I was able to spend the entire day in the field shadowing workers, and on others I spent my time in the office. When I was able to shadow case workers in the field, we usually visited foster children in their home or school. However, sometimes we went to biological homes or attended court hearings. In addition, I was able to make some visits to foster children on my own or with another intern. In the middle of the semester, I did this the most often, and I’m very thankful for the experience that I got from making visits. We hadn’t had enough familiarity with this field in the beginning of the internship to make visits on our own, and towards the end of the semester we were only allowed to visit those in care who were over the age of 18. When I spent time in the office, I occasionally did some copying and putting binders together, but I also had the opportunity to learn even more about the Foster Care field by reading various case files to become accustomed with the different types of children that this agency helps. In fact, I learned nearly as much by just reading files as I did spending time in the field. The case files that I was able to read had very detailed accounts of what the child had been through and also allowed me to become more familiar with different documents and forms.



I loved interning with this site, and I'm thankful that I did end up choosing Foster Care as my Field Placement. In my opinion, this site has many different advantages. First, the staff members are all very friendly and hard-working people. As a new intern, I was nervous at first about how my interactions with everyone at this site would be. However, I immediately felt completely welcome and everyone that I got the chance to work with was always open to answer my questions and never seemed to get frustrated with me. In addition, the staff members here were not only great with me, but I was impressed with how much compassion they have for clients despite the fact that clients in this type of agency are not always the easiest to deal with. Another advantage of this site is the attention and care of the supervisors. They each are very approachable and easy to talk with, even about problems. I have experienced various other workplaces with supervisors who are so intimidating or rude to everyone who works under them that I never felt comfortable talking with them about anything in general. However, I feel that the supervisors at this agency have the perfect balance of authoritative and friendliness. My favorite part of interning at this site, aside from all of the great experience I was able to gain, was definitely talking with all of the staff members I got to know. They all were so warm and inviting, and didn't even mind talking with me about questions I had on topics such as graduate school and career advice.

As far as any disadvantages or limitations of this agency, I really had a hard time thinking of any. The only negative thing that I could think of was the fact that this agency does seem to have a tough time with the burn-out rate of case workers, which often brought added stress on the rest of the workers. Although, in my opinion, that is more of an issue that this field has in general, and is not specific to this site. However, I was told that they are addressing this issue and are working very hard to find the best ways to lessen each workers case load as an attempt to decrease this burnout rate.

Going into this internship, I was on the fence about whether I wanted to pursue Counseling Psychology or Social Work. I had recently completed an internship at the Counseling Center, which I thoroughly enjoyed, so I was hoping that by also completing an internship in a Social Services Department I would be able to make a final decision between the two. Luckily, this experience has indeed helped me choose where exactly my passion is, and I've decided that Social Work is what I would like to do. Through this internship, I've learned so much about the child welfare system and helping families in need, which I am incredibly thankful for.