



# The Arc of Harrisonburg & Rockingham

## Day Support Services

### Community & Center-Based Programs

### Placement Description

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Community-based program in which participants have opportunities to experience inclusion through volunteering, recreational, independent living, and job exploration activities. Our Center-based program is designed to prepare clients to interact successfully in the community through soft-skills training, social skills, independent life skills, and making informed decisions. Both programs are person-centered and focus on the wants and needs of our individuals with the goal of living “a life like yours”.

### Intern or Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities

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#### Field Placement

- Assist participants in accessing community services, volunteering, and experiencing community enrichment activities.
- Working one-on-one and with groups both in community and in the center.
- Assist with center-based activities (e.g. communication skills, sign language, recreational, social skills, and leisure preferences)
- Assist with art and craft projects.

#### Interns

- All responsibilities listed above.
- Must obtain background checks and submit to drug testing.
- Attend quarterly/annual meetings and review confidential files.

### Contact Information

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Read more about students' experiences at this site below:



*Spring 2019 – Rebecca Miller*

The Arc of Harrisonburg aims to promote and protect the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as actively support their full inclusion and participation in the community. The Arc offers many programs, one of which is an in-center program that helps client's work on individual goals. They also provide community engagement to better the client's social skills within the community and their interactions with other society members. Both programs not only promote greater independence for individuals with disabilities, but also teach them daily life skills that are needed to grow to their fullest potential.

Interning at the Arc of Harrisonburg has opened my eyes wider to many situations that I thought I have already experienced. One of my responsibilities was to read the client's files and to become familiar with them and their disabilities. While at the Arc, I mostly participated in the community engagement program. I spent about three hours on Wednesday mornings and five hours on Friday's in the community doing various activities and participating in community service opportunities. We often went to local churches to help with clerical duties, such as putting together the bulletin boards, folding pamphlets and setting tables. I also participated in Meals On Wheels where we delivered meals to those who need them in the surrounding areas. Lastly, the clients and I spent many hours of leisure time in the community, shopping at the Dollar Store and Wal-Mart frequently. We also went bowling, went out to lunch at many restaurants, went to the local community center and played various games - a favorite game at The Arc is Uno. Through my time in the community with the clients, I was saddened to see some of the hardships that they face daily. However, I was also able to see their great capabilities and ways in which they overcome such hardships.

Although most of my time was spent with the clients outside, in the community, I also spent some time in the center with clients. I spent one-on-one time with a few clients, where I got to connect with them. There was a specific time where I helped a client learn how to spread peanut butter and make a sandwich. I also played a safety signals card game with a client to help reinforce his knowledge. Friday afternoons were spent in a music therapy circle where I helped facilitate the singing and use of instruments. One of my favorite activities I helped with in the center was baking. I went to the kitchen with three clients and a staff member and we made brownies and cookies. We first got the ingredients and materials out, and then I read the directions on the box, talked through the steps with them and had the clients actively participate in making the brownies. This activity was exciting for me, not only because I got to take lead but also because I got see the client's faces when they learned something new and felt a sense of pride. That feeling of pride is what I hope many of the clients get to experience in the future.

I found that there were many advantages to interning at this field placement site. I grew as an individual and enhanced many personal skills. I learned how to communicate effectively with my supervisor, appropriately with the clients and professionally with the other staff members. Although I didn't start at the Arc with exceptional communication skills and a high level of confidence when speaking to the clients, this would not be an appropriate option for someone who isn't a communicator or doesn't want to improve such skills. A large part of my



job was to interact with and talk to the clients, which involves a great sense of communication and professional skills. I also think it is important to feel comfortable working with adults with disabilities because I found the more I got to know the clients, the more valuable my experience became.

One of the more difficult aspects of working at The Arc was how differently days varied depending on the client's moods at that time. For example, there were days where clients were extremely happy, energetic and smiling from ear to ear, but there were also days that I came in and the same clients were upset, crying and arguing. Yet, because I became familiar with their files, I was aware of possible reasons for their frustrations and also possible options to helping them get over those hurdles. Many days were filled of singing and laughter; however, there were days where client's needed more attention and support. Because everyday was different, I didn't always know what to expect and some days were more exhausting than others. Thankfully, the staff members are incredibly welcoming and helpful. At first, I was nervous about taking initiative and was shy, but because the staff was so approachable, I was able to break out of my shell, gain self-confidence and get more out of my internship.

During my time at The Arc, I had many valuable experiences that have promoted my career goals and further influenced my passion and excitement for my future. Before my time at The Arc, I had spent many hours working with children with disabilities and mostly in a comfortable setting with other people around me, in which I never was challenged. Yet, while interning at The Arc, my patience was tested, my values were questioned, and much of my knowledge was disputed. I learned a great deal not only about adults with disabilities, but also about myself. Before the internship, I thought I had a firm understanding on disabilities and felt a great sense of confidence working with the population, but after my time interning, I learned that I had many misconceptions and was wrong about many of the things that I thought I knew. My time at The Arc was extremely enjoyable and a valuable learning experience.

After interning at The Arc, I learned so much about the client's skills, their everyday lives, and their interactions in the community and with others. Through this experience, I've discovered that I do want to work with individuals with disabilities. Although, my career goal involves working with children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, I will be able to recount the various experiences I have had to help further my passion for this field. Overall, I have thoroughly enjoyed my internship at The Arc and would recommend this placement site to anyone interested in working with adults with disabilities or anyone who simply wants to learn more about the population. I think many people could benefit from spending time at The Arc because it provided me with various learning experiences.