



Community Counseling Center

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 2021 – Ashlee Youngblood

The Community Counseling Center (CCC) is a private, non-profit organization that has served the Harrisonburg and Rockingham communities since 1972. The CCC is focused on providing accessible and affordable mental health services to all groups of people. The Community Counseling Center's mission statement is "to provide quality mental health services for individuals, couples, and families of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County regardless of socioeconomic status." CCC's services include children's counseling, couples and marriage services, family counseling, group therapy (anger management, substance abuse, group counseling), individual services, co-parenting classes, and employer services.

My experience at the Community Counseling Center has been very valuable, and I am so grateful for the hands-on experience that I received during my field placement. My main responsibilities included supervising visitations and leading discussions in the anger management class. In the visitations, I took notes on what happened during the visits. Additionally, I kept in constant communication between the families that I supervised in order to keep a schedule for each family. The visits typically entail taking payments, note taking, communicating with both the custodial party and the visiting party, and scheduling. The visitations range from one to two hours and allow you to observe the different dynamics that are involved with court-ordered visitation cases.

With regard to the anger management group, I gathered materials for the weekly groups, lead discussions, checked clients in, and managed the paperwork. During anger management, I was able to see how therapeutic techniques are used in a group setting, which is an amazing opportunity to have. The anger management group was one of my favorite experiences while at the Community Counseling Center, because I was able to gain hands on experience in planning for a therapy group. Additionally, I was able to watch each client grow in their own ways.

The experience at the Community Counseling Center is really what you make it to be. During my time, I created a binder for the anger management group to keep track of the topics discussed each week, I partook in administrative office duties, assisted in orientation with new clients, participated in staff meetings, and I organized the filing cabinets. It is important to find where you are needed and find ways to fulfill that need. The staff at the center are also very helpful in helping you find your place and supporting you in your growth. I was interested in shadowing a therapy group, and the staff at the Community Counseling Center was very helpful in showing me the ropes for the anger management group and giving me the opportunity to shadow.

One thing I cannot speak highly enough about is how amazing the staff is at the Community Counseling Center. This semester was one of the hardest semesters during my time



at James Madison University, and the staff at the center were so willing to work with my schedule and work with me during my hard times. Whether I needed help finding materials for anger management or I needed help with a client, the staff were willing to support me and help me grow as an individual. Another advantage of this site is the hands-on experience that you get to have when it comes to therapeutic services. Through the supervised visits and the anger management classes, I was able to see what it is like to be in a therapeutic environment. The visitations are non-therapeutic; however, you are still able to experience the different dynamics between the parents and children, and think about how these dynamics might also influence a therapeutic environment. These experiences allowed me to gain insight on what it would be like to work in a counseling center in the future.

Another amazing opportunity that I had while at the center, was the ability to further my skills in research and the ability to adequately apply it at my field site. For my contribution project, I analyzed the influences of meaning and purpose, the adolescents mind, and self-awareness and the effects that these factors have on experimental behaviors in college students. Additionally, I applied these findings to the Community Counseling Center by creating materials based on cognitive-behavioral therapy and logotherapy. These materials were given to the center so that they can be used in individual and group therapy for substance use and/or abuse.

The disadvantages of the Community Counseling Center are very limited, as you get to work with an amazing staff that is willing to work with you. The only disadvantage that I could think of is how inconsistent the visitations can be. The visitations are court ordered so it shouldn't be this way; however, there were a few times when a family would cancel, and I would be short a couple of hours for that week. On the other hand, you get what you put into this field experience, so it is very easy to make up the missed hours as there are many opportunities to get involved at the Community Counseling Center. When I was short on my total hours, I asked my supervisor what I could do to help out around the Center, and they helped find me opportunities to help the clientele and/ or staff. Like I said before, you also have to find areas where you are needed and step into those opportunities. Additionally, the skill to find a need and fill it will help you in any work setting.

Overall, my experience at the Community Counseling Center was amazing and this opportunity has helped me grow exponentially. This experience has allowed me insight on what my future would look like if I were to choose to become a therapist. The hands-on opportunities have also helped me gain a confidence that I did not know I had. I was very nervous to answer the phones and balance the schedules for multiple families; however, I now know that I can do these things with excellence and that I am more capable than I thought I was. Also, the support



and care from the staff really helped me get through the semester and work to grow myself into the person I want to become. While at the Community Counseling Center, I have continued to realize my passion for helping people. Being able to witness people have breakthroughs into how they can grow as individuals is one of my favorite things in life, and I was able to realize this during my field placement.

Fall 2021 - Sarah Dunn

The mission statement of the Community Counseling Center is “to provide quality mental health services for individuals, couples, and families of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County regardless of socioeconomic status.” The Community Counseling Center (CCC) offers affordable pricing as well as a sliding scale model when paying for counseling, which is based on an individual’s income. The CCC offers a variety of services such as individual, family and couples counseling, court-ordered visitations, anger management groups, co-parenting classes, and substance abuse assessment and treatment.

My main responsibility at the CCC was facilitating court-ordered visitations. We would occasionally accept non-court-ordered visitations; however, under these circumstances, the parent would not be allowed to see their child outside of the center, even with supervision. This may be due to a variety of reasons, but sometimes this is a permanent situation for the parent, or they are awaiting a court hearing. My job was to coordinate between the visiting parent (the parent doing the visitation who does not have custody) and the custodial (the parent/person with custody of the child), and schedule a time for visitation that works for them both. I would get the child from the car so that the visiting and custodial parents had no contact. When I was in the room with the parent and child(ren), I would take detailed notes on what the parent and child(ren) were doing. I would not insert my opinion at all in the notes, rather I would just write what was going on. These notes would be used when the parents went to court to see how the visiting parent is with the child. There were some guidelines that the parents had to follow. For example, the custodial parent could decide if the visiting parent could bring food, presents, and take pictures and whether or not there were certain topics that were off limits to discuss. Also, the parents could not talk about court, the custodial party, or adult topics. The custodial could also not give “false promises” to the child(ren) by talking about future events that are for the court to decide.

My other responsibilities at the CCC were administrative duties such as, taking payments, filing documents, faxing visitation notes, and answering phones. I would also help co-lead the anger management group. This group met once a week and individuals had to participate in 13 court-ordered anger management classes. I would help come up with lesson plans for the group and then help to lead the discussion. I also got to sit in on the weekly staff meetings and got to



hear about the counselors' clinical patients that they may have wanted input or advice on how to handle. The interns also had weekly meetings to discuss visitations with each other and our supervisor. For my contribution project I made a lesson plan for a depression and anxiety group for adolescents that the center had been working on implementing, which was originated by a previous field placement intern.

Overall, I had a great experience at the CCC. All of the staff was very supportive and understanding, as well as the other interns with whom I worked. The center had a great atmosphere and was very flexible with my schedule. I also worked with the other interns to make our visitation schedules. I really enjoyed getting the opportunity to work at the CCC, and was able to use my background in psychology to learn about and observe individuals. This experience allowed me to work with clients and come up with solutions when an issue was raised. The only negative experiences were at times when a visiting or custodial party would be disrespectful or not follow the CCC's guidelines that they agreed to follow. However, I would expect to have these same issues in any psychological setting, and my supervisor and fellow interns were always very supportive. The CCC set me up to be able to work in a variety of counseling settings, I was able to work with diverse populations and each visitation case was unique. I really enjoyed my time at the CCC and would recommend it to anyone interested in working in counseling with diverse populations. Working at the center furthered my interests in counseling, and helped me realize that I would like to work in family and couples counseling with diverse populations. It allowed me to see the need for couples and family counseling, especially for folks that may not necessarily be able to afford it, and I would like to be able to help serve these groups in the future.

Spring 2021 – Emily Flaherty

The mission statement of the Harrisonburg Community Counseling Center (CCC) is to provide services to all of their clients regardless of their socioeconomic status. In order to serve all of their clients, they use a sliding scale payment, and they accept a wide variety of insurances. The CCC is a non-profit organization that serves all individuals, couples, and families. There are many services at the CCC, these include individual counseling, couples counseling, family counseling, co-parenting classes, anger management counseling/classes, substance abuse counseling/classes, as well as supervised visitations.

My main responsibility at the CCC was to supervise visitations. Supervised visitations are for parents who are court-ordered to visit the CCC to see their children. In addition, I was also responsible for conducting orientations for the visitations. During the orientations, I would explain to both the custodial and visiting party the rules and procedures of visitations. The procedure of visitations is quite simple. The visiting party must arrive 10 minutes before the start of the visitation to check-in and be sent to the visitation room before the custodial party arrives. Once the custodial party arrives, the visitation supervisor goes outside to the front of the building



where the custodial party is parked and brings the child(ren) inside for visitations. The visitations are typically one hour and once the time is over, the visitation supervisor will take the children back out front to the custodial parent. As soon as the visitation supervisor sees the custodial party drive off, they give the visiting parent the OK to go. The rules of visitation are as follows, there is no discussion of the custodial party or court and all discussion must be appropriate, we ask that the parents don't make "false promises", and we allow no physical reprimanding of their children. False promises refer to making promises to the children (telling them they will be home soon or that they will be able to come to their home, etc.) that may or may not end up being true. Our main goal of visitations is to make sure everyone is happy, comfortable, and safe.

Aside from visitations, I was also responsible for administrative duties. Such as making copies, faxing documents, organizing files, as well as other clerical duties. Additionally, I would sit at the front desk to answer calls and take payments from the clients. When the office manager wasn't in, I would sit in for her and assist clients and staff. I was also able to sit in on a few anger management classes which were very interesting to watch. For my contribution project, I helped the CCC come up with a new therapeutic counseling group. That was also a great experience.

Overall, I had a very positive experience at the CCC. All of the counselors and other staff were extremely welcoming. I am very thankful for this opportunity. I learned many valuable skills both as a professional and as a psychology student. The only negative experience I had during my time at the CCC occurred during a visitation. One of the parties got very frustrated during a visitation and made some disrespectful comments towards me. However, my supervisors were extremely supportive and helped me through this experience. They spoke to the party who was disrespectful towards me and let them know that we do not tolerate that treatment towards our staff. I always felt very supported and appreciated at the CCC. My supervisors and all of the other staff members created a fun and inviting environment. I really enjoyed my experience at the CCC, so much that I will be working there over the summer!

Fall 2020 – Peighton Corley

The mission of the Community Counseling Center is to provide accessible counseling services to the Shenandoah Community. The CCC provides individual, group, and visitations which include court ordered services. As far as group counseling sessions, there are anger management and substance abuse groups. The individuals in these groups are usually court ordered to attend whether it be due to a DUI or to domestic violence that they are facing legal action with. The supervised visitations are another court ordered services that are provided when the courts have determined that one parent is not able to see their child without direct supervision. Many times, visitation services are offered through the community counseling center in order to provide a more neutral environment for the child, as opposed to having a relative supervise the visitation. For most of these services, if the client does not have insurance,



then the cost is determined by their income, making it one of the most affordable counseling services in the area.

During my time at the CCC, I was able to assist with administrative duties, co-facilitate group counseling sessions, and coordinate and facilitate supervised visitations. Because of extenuating circumstances with another staff member, I was the primary administrator at the front desk for a few weeks during the course of the internship. With these administrative duties, I helped coordinate clients with counselors, created client files, took payments, and managed client information and payment for the billing company. Through working this role and having to coordinate clients and counselors, I learned about insurance policies and the difficulties with becoming affiliated with each one and about counselor workloads/schedules. I was also able to co-facilitate the group sessions. Initially, I was under the impression that I would just be observing, but eventually I was asked to provide input and help facilitate the group along with the licensed counselor. This was one of my most valuable experiences at the counseling center, as it allowed me to develop basic counseling skills and understand what goes into a curriculum/treatment plan in the group setting. I was also able to realize the limitations of counseling, especially for individuals facing legal issues and learned about other social services such as case management that I tried to refer clients to when needed. Lastly, I was able to coordinate and facilitate supervised visitations. When new clients came to start supervised visitations, it was my job to schedule their orientations where we discussed rules and details about their situation. From there we scheduled weekly or bi-weekly visitations between the custodial and visiting party and held these visitations. During these visitations, I took notes of what happened during the session and enforced rules such as refraining from inappropriate conversations during the session.

This site is a well-rounded experience that I would recommend to anyone who wants to work as a counselor in the future. As an intern, you can participate in almost anything, short of individual counseling. Since it is a smaller counseling center, there is less of a formal structure and most of the other counselors see you as a collaborator rather than an undergraduate who is just interning there. The goal of the counselors is to support you and help you be successful during your time there. Because there is less structure within the center, it also means that you have to take initiative with your projects. Since you are seen as a collaborator, there are very few times where you will be asked specifically to do something for anyone. The intern must take the initiative to find the projects and things that they want to make better, find the groups that they want to go to, and facilitate the visitations that they want.

This site reaffirmed that I would like to continue counseling in the future and that I would like to do non-profit work. I saw how crucial it was for individuals to be able to have their services, and with how many centers price their services, a lot of clients would not be able to access them without places like the CCC. The most important thing I learned at my time with



the CCC is how to be more empathetic. Before my time with the CCC, I was not sure how I would be able to help individuals who have done things or feel ways that I disagree with on a very fundamental level. However, I realized through working with our clients that everyone is on their own recovery journey and I am on that journey with them so that they can generally have a better quality of life. So even when working with a client who might be easy to judge, it is important to refrain and realize that they are in counseling to get help and be in a better place.

For my contribution project I decided to focus on program evaluation. I researched models for evaluating programs and tried to make a model that implemented that process. There are many constraints within a counseling center to implement an evaluation since many of the counselors have hefty client loads. For my project, I tried to break down what program evaluation is, the steps to implement it, and how the counseling center might do that in their own context. This was in an effort to alleviate the use of ineffective practices and to better understand the CCC's impact on the community it serves, and if there is anything that can be done to help serve sections of the populations better.

The CCC was a wonderful place to intern and I highly recommend this site for students passionate in non-profit counseling. The staff there were not just supervisors, but friends and were a wonderful introduction to professional counseling. I felt supported and appreciated with everything I was able to do there and if I were in the area, I would probably continue to work there.

Spring 2020 – Rachel Stewart

This semester, I was given the opportunity to complete my field placement internship at the Community Counseling Center (CCC), formerly known as the Center for Marriage and Family Counseling, located in downtown Harrisonburg. The Community Counseling Center's mission is to provide quality mental health services to individuals, couples and families of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, regardless of socioeconomic status. This nonprofit organization does their absolute best to offer affordable counseling services through various forms of payment including insurance options, Medicaid, self-pay, and sliding fee scales based on the individual's amount of income. In addition to the counseling services offered here, the CCC also offers supervised visitations, co-parenting classes, and substance abuse and anger management groups. During my time interning at the center, I noticed the staff always working tirelessly to accomplish this mission and putting their clients' needs first. Doing so is certainly not easy, but I was truly inspired by the counselors' drive to accommodate and help as many people as they could.

While I was an intern, the CCC offered me an immense amount of experiences and were very flexible with my schedule. The staff always made sure I felt comfortable in whatever I was doing, and offered me so many learning opportunities to advance my career. When I first started, they let me shadow staff members several times before I felt comfortable enough to facilitate



supervised visitations on my own. Supervising court ordered visitations between parents and children and documenting what went on during that visitation was one of my main responsibilities at the site. Although I was a little timid doing so at first, I certainly think I learned a lot during that time and acquired a lot of responsibility.

My favorite experience while at the center was being able to observe the anger management and substance abuse groups. The counselors were always very encouraging and welcoming to me, and gave me a lot of freedom when it came to these group therapy sessions. When I first started, I thought I would just be observing these groups, but I was actually able to interact with the clients and even offer my own input if I felt the need. Many of the counselors often told me that I could lead a group at some point if I wanted to, which is what I planned to do for my contribution project. For my project, I did research on the how substance use affects our brain and emotions, and created a template for leading both of the groups which included a lesson in psychoeducation and relaxation techniques for controlling anger. Unfortunately, due to these unusual circumstances, I was unable to actually implement this, but I am so thankful that I had the opportunity to be involved in these groups because doing so was something I never imagined I would get the chance to do as an undergraduate student. From this experience, I was able to observe a lot of different counseling techniques and styles as well, which was one of the biggest things I took away from my time at the center.

My other responsibilities included doing administrative work in the office and assisting the office manager with tasks she needed help with. This usually included answering the phone, printing and making copies of forms, creating new client charts, and organizing client files. During this time, I was able to learn how a counseling center functions behind the scenes and learn many administrative skills that are important for any future job. The office manager, Brenda, was one of the main people who made my time at the center so enjoyable, and I was grateful to be able to work alongside her and learn from her every day.

There were numerous advantages to working at the CCC for my field placement. The biggest advantage for me was the amount of flexibility they offered. I had complete control over when I wanted to come in to complete my hours, which was very helpful to me since this was my final semester as a senior. My academic schedule was a little hectic, so being able to have this flexibility was extremely useful. Another advantage was the amount of learning opportunities that were offered at the center. As I mentioned earlier, I was given a lot of responsibility, especially when it came to the supervised visitations. Supervising visitations on my own gave me a newfound sense of confidence and understanding of what it would be like to provide services to individuals who are in need of a safe environment. Being able to sit in on the anger management and substance abuse groups gave me several advantages in advancing my professional career as well. I plan to further my education in graduate school to pursue counseling, so getting this hands on experience during my time as an undergraduate student was extremely invaluable. Clients in these groups are also disclosing very personal information, so maintaining confidentiality and respect were two other skills that I developed during this time.

The only disadvantage I experienced was not being able to complete my field placement at the CCC due to the unfortunate circumstances of COVID-19. I was very saddened to know



that I would not be able to finish the rest of my semester and implement my contribution project, but I am thankful to have taken away so many positive experiences during the time I did have there. I learned so much from all of the counselors at the center, and developed professional skills that I know I will take with me in my future endeavors. The CCC offered so many opportunities for advancing my career, and helping me figure out if this profession is truly what I want to pursue. I feel extremely lucky to have been able to intern here, even if it was for a short time, and to have had the opportunity to work with such a supportive group of people. From this experience, I definitely know that pursuing counseling as a career is something I want to do, and I am so happy I made the decision to intern here.

Spring 2018 – Theresa Patsalos

This semester I was given the opportunity to fulfill my field placement at the Center for Marriage and Family Counseling (CMFC). At CMFC, the staff there work towards fulfilling their mission of providing quality mental health services for individuals, couples, and families of the Harrisonburg and Rockingham County area regardless of socioeconomic status. The Center is a private, non-profit organization that works with and accommodates a wide range of clients from the Shenandoah Valley. They accept multiple forms of payments ranging from insurance, sliding fee scales, and self-pay methods based off of an individual's yearly income. Along with counseling services, they provide anger-management sessions, substance abuse sessions, substance education sessions, and child visitation sessions.

During my time at the Center, I handled administrative duties, observed anger management sessions, and supervised parent-child visitation sessions. When completing administrative tasks this included answering phones, creating new client charts, and making faxes or copies. Initially starting out at the Center a lot of my tasks included learning how to fulfill all of the administrative aspects. I was also taught how to run the office; by doing this I was responsible for taking payment from clients and checking them in for each session they were scheduled for. Some of the other responsibilities that I had to fulfill in the office included scheduling new and returning clients. Learning the different counselor's schedules was extremely beneficial for being able to effectively schedule each client according to the services and time frame that they were requesting.

Another opportunity I had while completing my Field Placement at CMFC included observing anger management therapy sessions. I was able to check in the clients and observe their progress each week during each session. After observing some of these sessions, I was able to accompany a counselor to a court hearing to inform a judge about some of the different clients' progressions in or completions of anger management classes. This was very interesting for me to participate in given that I had never been to a court hearing before with this type of format. I was never able to participate in observing the substance abuse or substance education groups because my schedule was not open during the times that they were held. Although being able to participate in those sessions was something that the staff at CMFC always encouraged me to be a part of if I ever found free time to do so.



Another responsibility that I had at CMFC was supervising parent-child visitation sessions. This task was one that took up a majority of my completed hours at the Center, along with the administrative duties. What this responsibility entailed was to observe a parent-child visitation session and document every interaction that took place between the child and the visiting parent. Learning how to schedule both the visiting parent, custodial parent, and myself for an allotted time slot for these type of sessions was one of the difficulties that took place while fulfilling my time at the Center. Being able to supervise these sessions on my own was something that I felt was the most beneficial for portraying to me what it would be like to work in a therapeutic or counseling setting. After supervising these sessions, I would then sometimes be given the opportunity to communicate with the Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) of the specific case and communicate with them about the interactions and progressions between both the child and the visiting parent.

My overall impression of the site was a very positive and beneficial experience for me. The advantages outweigh the few disadvantages that were presented to me at the site, but comprehensively I feel that the Center provided me with a wide range of learning opportunities. Being able to schedule my own hours and pick times to observe different group therapy sessions was a huge benefit for me. This semester I had a very tricky class schedule but I was able to come in during the times that worked best for me. The anger management and substance abuse sessions were held at multiple times as well, so I was able to come in to the sessions that I was able to attend, and if I ever had free time in my schedule I was also given the opportunity to come in and observe a different group therapy session. Another advantage of the site was being able to fulfill some more hands-on therapeutic services while only in my undergraduate career. Being a parent-child visitation supervisor gave me the opportunity to see first-hand what it would be like to provide a therapeutic and safe environment for not only the child but the adult as well. Even though my job only included documenting interactions, I developed a strong sense of my role at the Center and how I could use my skills to improve their services.

The only disadvantages I would say I experienced at the Center was having to be extremely self-reliant in the administrative setting. In the office it can get overwhelming answering phones, checking in clients, and trying to complete other tasks all at once. Sometimes I did not always know the answer on how to help certain clients or callers with questions or inquiries. Whenever this occurred the only way I could help would be to write a message for a staff member at the center to call them back so that they can answer their question for them. During my time at CMFC I learned a lot of skills that I did not have before completing my field placement with them. I was able to learn how to act in a professional setting, and I learned whether or not pursuing counseling was a career option that I wanted to do in the future. After completing my semester with them I was further reinforced to hopefully work with a practice similar to theirs for when I become an Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) after attending graduate school.

Overall, I am very thankful that I was able to work with the staff and counselors at CMFC and learn from them. They were all very encouraging and supportive and they continually provided me with countless opportunities to learn more related to the field of



Psychology. Although this placement was a very self-reliant and more independently based work setting, my supervisors were always willing to help me when needed and provide me with additional tools to help improve my skills.

Fall 2017 – Taylor Weir

This semester I had the privilege of interning at the Center for Marriage and Family Counseling (CMFC) in downtown Harrisonburg. Our mission statement is “to provide quality mental health services for individuals, couples, and families of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County regardless of socioeconomic status”. The Center is a private, non-profit organization offering affordable counseling services to residents of the Shenandoah Valley. CMFC offers for clients without insurance a sliding fee scale based on their socioeconomic status and is funded by the United Way. CMFC provided a variety of services including individual, couple, and family counseling, visitation, anger management groups, substance abuse education and substance abuse treatment groups.

The majority of my time at CMFC was spent in the office performing administrative duties. Every day I would make and restock forms, record group notes, make new client folders, file, fax, organize, answer phones, schedule appointments, greet clients, and take payments. While a majority of these tasks were menial, I wasn’t prepared for the complexity of scheduling appointments. Keeping track of clients, payments, insurances, counselors, and legalities made scheduling appointments and visitations a difficult task to conquer. At first I made countless mistakes, but my supervisor was very encouraging and helped me slowly learn what information to ask for and how best to answer questions. This taught me how to speak and correspond professionally under pressure while being able to multitask with the phone call and taking care of clients coming into the Center while having counselors coming in and out through a high traffic area.

More interactive opportunities I partook in were weekly anger management and substance abuse education groups. I was able to attend the same groups each week, which helped me to establish a relationship with the clients each week, which in turn made them more comfortable speaking in group and asking me questions. Both groups were comprised of court-mandated clients who, for the most part, did not want to be attending the sessions. Although this made engagement and motivation in the groups harder, it was interesting to observe the importance of a respectful and understanding dynamic between the members, the counselor, and myself. For the substance abuse education group, I breathalyzed each client and was encouraged to participate in group discussions. For the anger management group, I created a participant workbook and was able to hand these out to the clients and co-facilitated each group session. Toward the end of the semester, I accompanied a counselor to the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court where we would report the progress and success of our clients who had attended substance abuse or anger management groups. I found this to be an exciting change of pace from



the daily office, and I had never been in a court room before. I enjoyed learning legal terms and how CMFC interacts with other sites in the community.

The biggest advantage of this site was the flexibility my supervisor allowed. I was able to choose my own hours and leave if something came up and come in outside my usual schedule if I needed any extra hours. Another benefit I did not foresee but took full advantage of was the opportunity to talk with the counselors, who mostly got their education in the area, and get advice on schooling, licensure, practicums, and behind the scenes aspects of counseling I never knew about. I am so grateful for the kindness and support of the employees here; they have guided me in the right direction for my aspirations.

One limitation I encountered at CMFC was due to timing; this semester the site moved from their temporary location back to their old location, so a majority of my first month was spent helping move things, reorganize filing cabinets, and fix anything that was mishandled during the move. Another obstacle the center faced during my time was the loss of the visitation coordinator, which is a major part of the services we provide. Unfortunately, my schedule did not work with the after school visitation schedules, so some of the counselors had to stretch their schedules to accommodate the change. This also made scheduling very difficult and the Center ended up being very crowded at times because rooms were overshared and overbooked.

There aren't many disadvantages at this site. The main one that comes to mind is that you mainly get out of it what you put into it. You are able to choose your own hours, and it is your responsibility to take the initiative to engage in the many opportunities the site offers. Apart from that, the responsibilities will remain more clerical, even though CMFC had plenty of growing and learning opportunities. This could be considered another disadvantage. I would recommend expecting to spend a majority of the time answering phones or waiting for further instruction. There were days where there was nothing for me to do, so I did homework in between taking calls and messages. For interns in incoming fall semesters, a problem they may encounter is the influx of people wanting appointments during the holiday season. The counselors get very booked up, and unfortunately I had to turn down people who needed counseling.

My experience at the Center for Marriage and Family Counseling was incredibly positive. My supervisor and the staff were welcoming from the start and I truly felt like a part of the work family. I received help, support, advice, and encouragement every day and any time I began to struggle. I learned an enormous amount of interpersonal and professional skills as well as gained self-confidence when dealing with clients. My social anxiety with clients gradually diminished throughout the semester and is a skill that will stay with me and be beneficial in a multitude of settings. As soon as I interviewed here, I knew this was the place for me, and I was not proven wrong. This internship has solidified my goal of becoming a Clinical Mental Health Counselor and clarified the paths to achieve my future.

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 of 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.



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