



Central Shenandoah Valley Office on Youth

Placement Description

Programs and direct services to at-risk families and youth living in the city of Waynesboro, Staunton, and Augusta County. The wide variety of programs offered by the Office on Youth allows an internship to be tailored to meet the individual student's specific interests.

Intern or Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities

Participate in:

- Teen pregnancy prevention
- Youth pre-employment training programs
- Observation of parenting programs
- Juvenile Crime Control Program – work with court involved youth through community service
- Coordinate child abuse prevention campaign (Spring)
- Drug and gang prevention through the SAW coalition
- Pathway, which is a program for suspended and expelled youth

Contact Information

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Regionalized to Staunton and Waynesboro, & Augusta County

- **Location:** Waynesboro Site
250 South Wayne Avenue, Suite 101
Waynesboro, VA 22980



Phone: 540.942.6757

Location: Staunton Site
900 Nelson Street, 2nd Floor
Staunton, VA 24401
Phone: 540.332.3806

Read about students' experiences at this site:

Spring 2015 – Laurel Brubaker

The mission statement for the Central Shenandoah Valley Office on Youth is, "...to develop positive connections between youth, their families, and communities to build a strong foundation for a successful future." They accomplish this mission through providing a wide variety of services to youth and their families throughout Waynesboro, Staunton and greater Augusta area. The many services that they offer include the Pathway program (which is an alternative school for youth who have been suspended or expelled), crime control services, employment services, teen pregnancy prevention services and family services.

Each of these services mentioned besides the Pathway program have multiple programs and classes offered within them. For example, the family services provides numerous different programs to aid in relations between parents and their children and the overall health of the family, such as Parent Project, Moms and Dads Inc. and For the Kids' Sake. Each of these programs include a series of classes participated in by the families and targets specific issues within the home and the family dynamic.

Although I was able to briefly shadow a variety of services that the Office on Youth provides such as criminal control services, teen pregnancy prevention and family services, the main program that I took part in during my internship was Pathway. While at Pathway I had the opportunity to work with at-risk youth from Waynesboro and other surrounding cities that had been suspended or expelled. This alternative program provides students with the capability of keeping up with their work while outside of school serving a suspension or working towards their GED if they have been expelled. Students would either be working from online programs or from work that had been provided to them by their schools.

While at Pathway I had the opportunity to be most involved when helping lead "group" in the morning towards the beginning of the semester, developing and implementing my own structure for group as I gained experience and working with students one on one when completing their assignments. Some other miscellaneous tasks included helping Tammy organize her files and folders for the students, helping her create academic binders and materials for them



and creating PowerPoints and other visual learning aids for teaching the students their material. This is an important aspect of creating a learning environment for these students at Pathway since there is not one teacher up in front lecturing to the class. They must read and teach themselves most of the material they learn so it is important that the information provided is translatable and each to follow.

To expand a little more on group, when I first arrived at Pathway group was simply a time set aside in the beginning of the day when the students would sit around the table with a staff member and they would lead them in a discussion with some silly questions. Often this time ended up extremely unfocused and had no real purpose of goal except to get the students talking and engaged in the morning. I felt that this time could be better utilized so I spoke to my supervisor and asked her if I could take it on as a project and develop it. She responded enthusiastically, saying that they had wanted someone to do so for a while. I decided to focus on this for my contribution project and ended up researching group counseling used with at-risk youth and researching the needs of at-risk youth and the approaches that have already been used in an attempt to aid and empower them. This was probably the most enjoyable aspect of working at this site for me.

Some limitations included not having a ton of room to grow professionally in the psychology field outside of my direct work with group, which could be related to future experiences with group counseling. This was a great opportunity to dive into research related to this topic and be able to directly apply and implement the things that I had learned. The only disadvantage was that there was not a large amount of overseeing when doing this but that also gave me the freedom to do whatever I wanted to try. There were times when I wished that I could have been having a richer experience when it came to the variety and depth of things that I got to shadow and participate in. However, this is something that could have been different had I been more assertive and vocal about what I desired for my experience from the beginning and throughout.

This experience was very helpful and insightful when it came to my ability to better understand my skills and myself when it comes to working with at-risk youth. This is a population that I am very passionate about working with presently and in my future career so it was a very helpful experience to have working with this group of kids throughout the semester. This site challenged me in both expected and unexpected ways, but was also very satisfying in other ways. I feel much more confident and capable when it comes to my ability to communicate with and relate to these youth as both a person of authority and a mentor or friend. This is very empowering and applicable for the field I hope to go into and for my internship coming up this summer, which is working with at-risk youth in a wilderness intervention program with with Outward Bound. I am much more confident and excited going into this new experience having had the experience I've had working with the Office on Youth and



specifically with the students at Pathway. I am very thankful for this past semester of opportunity to grow and learn about myself and the people that I hope to serve in the near future. This site has also caused me to strongly reconsider pursuing grad school sooner than later because it has helped me realize my desire to value and pursue my opportunity for higher education so that I may better serve the people I work with.