



Valley Community Services Board Prevention Services

Placement Description

Prevention Services offers a broad array of substance abuse prevention and mental health promotion activities for populations across the lifespan. Time is spent both in the office and throughout the community, attending Coalition meetings and teaching groups.

Intern or Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities

- Contributes to planning, coordination, implementation, and evaluation of evidence based prevention programming for youth.
- Assists in collaborating with Health Planning Region 1 to facilitate suicide prevention initiatives in catchment area
- Co-educates local merchants on underage tobacco laws and provides materials to reduce sales to minors.
- Works closely with community Coalitions to promote population level change around prevention initiatives.

Other Notes

May have additional opportunities to present on a variety of prevention topics as well as attend local health fairs. Travel time from James Madison University is 30 minutes.

Contact Information

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Read about students' experiences at this site below:

Fall 2022 – Anna Kreienbaum

This semester, I had the opportunity to work in the Adult Mental Health Case Management Department in Valley Community Services Board (VCSB). Adult Mental Health Case Management is one of the many services that Valley provides to clients. Overall services are oriented towards behavioral health, substance use, and developmental services. The mission at Valley is to “provide community based mental health, intellectual disability and substance use services to the citizens in the counties of Augusta and Highland and the cities of Staunton and Waynesboro”. Case managers abide by this mission by providing service to adults who are diagnosed with a serious mental illness and experience significant difficulties due to their mental illness. Case managers develop treatment plans for clients through collaboration with other professionals and agencies. Treatment plans reflect the clients' strengths, needs, and interests and promote client self-determination and independence. Anyone in the community can seek services at Valley, but the typical population of clients identify as low income. Valley bills Medicaid for services for this reason and case managers also have the responsibility of helping clients set up Medicaid if they haven't already during intake. Mental health services are not consistently available through insurance and one reason I was drawn to Valley was because of the drive the organization has for providing treatment for low-income individuals.

Because Valley has so many departments and services, I was able to gain a lot of experience in a variety of different ways. First and foremost, I was able to gain direct client care experience. Not only was I watching the background of the treatment plans through paperwork and billing, but I only got to interact with the clients themselves. On a typical day, I carried out client visits with staff and got to be a listener for those in need of someone to talk to. I also was given the opportunity to sit in and help with a peer support session at Cross-Roads Adult Inpatient Psychiatric Unit and helped with outreach services to coordinate housing for the homeless community by going out and finding people. Though I stayed in Community Based Services most of the time, there are also a variety of trainings and shadowing opportunities at Valley. For example, I was able to shadow a Nurse Practitioner at Valley to learn more about the clinical side of treatment with medication, which was very interesting. Overall, there are so many different services revolving the mental health field available at Valley and everyone that works there was very open to sharing their knowledge.

Being able to interact with clients was the biggest advantage of this experience for me. Before coming to Valley, I had never interacted with anyone diagnosed with a serious mental illness. The more I was able to interact and learn, the more I realized how complex mental health is. Recovery is not linear, but I watched treatment plans be successful right before my eyes and was able to witness the difference in psychological states when medication was administered and used properly versus not. Through these direct experiences, I realized how much I want to work in a healthcare setting in the future and help people reach their goals. Clinical and Abnormal



Psychology provided a great background in understanding mental illness and different treatment options. I probably would not have been as empathetic towards clients if I did not have a general understanding of their illnesses. I remember learning about schizophrenia in Abnormal Psychology and understanding the symptoms, but not fully comprehending what schizophrenia was until one of my first in home client visits where I watched the symptoms from the PowerPoint play out. Regarding Clinical Psychology, I learned what psychotherapeutic techniques typically worked for different populations which helped when comprehending client treatment plans. Overall, the Psychology major has done an amazing job preparing me for the mental health field.

Watching the variety of mental health occupations in action was the biggest advantage for me at Valley. As I mentioned before, there are many different professions, and the entirety of the staff wants to help interns learn and grow. I was interested in hearing client's stories and developing a better understanding of acute mental illness which is what Valley gave me. Though it did not affect me as significantly because I was only at Valley for 150 hours, burn out is very real in mental health professions. One limitation to working in any mental health field, not just Valley, is the risk of burnout. Valley does a good job advocating for their staff and giving paid time off, but if you are not able to take care of your mental health yourself, it is very hard to take care of other people's. This is just an important factor, not necessarily a disadvantage or limitation to working in any Community Services Board but something to keep in mind when anticipating going into any mental health field. The staff at Valley reminded me of this a fair amount.

Every client that I met at Valley came from diverse backgrounds and experienced a variety of life experiences. Though every client had a different story, I noticed a similarity in the way many of them were raised. Time after time, the client's revealed Adverse Childhood Experiences related to the unhealthy or absent parental figure in their life. From a collection of these circumstances that I found out about through clients, I decided to focus my research paper on child development complications and consequences for other caregivers when a child experiences child maltreatment at a young age. Based on the research I found, a variety of physical and psychological problems arise in both adult victims of child maltreatment and the next caregiver. Based on this information, my solution was focused on a proactive approach to limit child maltreatment from happening in the first place through parenting resources: specifically Triple P and the Nurse Family Partnership. Though my time at Valley was not long enough to implement one of these practices directly, I chose to create an updated pamphlet on resources in the area for parents requesting help and a questionnaire to help case managers determine which areas of parenting clients may need help with during treatment. Overall, I left this experience with a desire to work in a healthcare field due to the satisfaction I felt with helping others in need. I feel more confident in my ability to work with a variety of clients and understand mental health more than before.