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SOCW 441

Reflection Activity

April 21, 2008

How have I grown personally from my internship at the selected agency?

When I began the Social Work program in the fall of 2006, my passion in life was to learn more about childhood sexual abuse in an effort to help victims of child abuse. As a result of my course studies in the program and my field placement at Partnership for Families, Children and Adults, my personal passion has now changed to advocate for single adult women who live in poverty. While studying Social Work Policy I class, I discovered that I am in danger myself of falling below the poverty line after retiring from the workforce.

I was assigned a caseload of five single older women at my field placement and experienced through their individual lives the harsh reality of poverty and its effects on one's emotional, mental, and physical well-being. As a result, my field placement helped me find closure to the past, face the present reality of life, and work toward making a change in the current Social Security benefits allowed this population.

How have I grown professionally as a result of my internship at the selected agency?

I have grown professionally from my internship as a result of my personal growth as described above. I incorporated into my learning agreement the following assignments to help me better understand the plight of this population.

- Summarized information from Table B.5 – The Cumulative Percent of the Elderly Who Experience Poverty by Race, Gender, and Marital Status researched by Mark Robert Rank and recorded in his book, *One Nation, Underprivileged*, to classify and document each of my client's socio-economic status.
- Conducted an assessment of ethnic and socio-economic differences in my clients' neighborhoods.
- Read, made photocopies, and handed out articles from AARP magazines and brochures regarding how the present Social Security program is affecting the older single adult population.
- Wrote a letter to the *Times-Free Press* in an effort to increase public awareness of the problem of poverty in the older single adult population.
- Wrote a letter to the State Department of Finance advocating for grant funding on behalf of the Elderly Services of Partnership for Families, Children and Adults.

How would I describe my personal strengths as a generalist social worker?

My personal strengths as a generalist social worker include the following core values of the social work profession.

Service – I serve the clients that I have been assigned to the best of my ability (competence). I have also sought to work on providing help and resources as soon as possible because I would appreciate being treated the same way if I were in their position (empathy).

Dignity and Worth of the Person – I have always enjoyed getting to know people of other cultures and backgrounds (diversity) and have respect for human relationships (importance of human

relationships). I have grown in this area because I have been exposed to more diverse populations while in the program.

Integrity – I always attempted to be honest with people, even if the truth hurts. I have carried my honesty and integrity into the workforce and believe that the clients appreciate my honesty with them.

My greatest strength is the natural ability that I have to encourage others. I have often been told that I am approachable, laid-back and easy to talk to. Somehow, I can put others at ease in the midst of difficult situations.

If I had to pin-point four areas which need growth, what would they be? Why did I select these areas?

Four areas that I need growth in are:

- (1) Managing conflict – Even though I read another book on managing conflict last semester, I still avoid it. By avoiding conflict, I have allowed other people to have their own way; it isn't good for either of us.
- (2) Taking on too much responsibility – because it tends to wear me out and others are robbed of needed learning experiences.
- (3) Lack of self-confidence regarding technology – Even though I have learned much during the past several years, I have a desire to learn much more regarding computer literacy. In the future, I believe technology will increase, and I want my skills to remain current and marketable.
- (4) Personal transition – I am still in the process of transitioning into a professional from friend/encourager. I am thankful for the natural ability I have to encourage others, but I

believe I will be more effective as I develop my abilities with a more professional delivery. (I realize this can only be learned in the field.)

What are my future learning goals?

My future learning goals are to develop my natural gifts and talents into a more professional style; I believe that I can only achieve this goal with practice in the field.

I also have a desire to learn more about advocating for single older adults which adheres to Ethical Standard 6 in Social Worker's Ethical Responsibilities to the Broader Society. 6.04(a) of the NASW Code of Ethics states that Social Workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully. Social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice.

What is my preferred social work theory and how will I incorporate this with future generalist practice skills?

My preferred social work theory is Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development because it describes human life in eight stages. For "normal" development to occur, one passes from one stage to another. When "normal" development has not occurred, generalist social workers can help clients find closure to whatever stage they may need help moving from to progress into the next stage of life. Erikson's theory is also a useful guide for social workers by helping people understand some of the struggles that are a "normal" part of development.

What are my service goals?

My service goals include helping people in need and addressing social problems. I will begin my generalist social worker practice on April 24 as case manager of homemaker services at Partnership for Families, Children and Adults. My job responsibilities will be to receive or reject referrals from the Adult Protective Services in four counties, supervising eight homemakers, making home visits with clients on a regular basis, and inspecting homes to make sure clients are being served to the best of our ability. My personal goals are to be sure the clients' (and homemakers') needs are met. I also plan to advocate for changes in policy and legislation that would improve social conditions in order to improve the quality of life for my clients.

If I had to summarize my overall field experience, what would I say?

To summarize my overall field experience, I would say that I received a tremendous amount of support from both Ellie Johnson and Todd Bragg that enabled me to learn more about the living environment of the elderly population. Some of what I learned will still be a part of my job as case manager in the homemaker department. My field placement was definitely preparation for my future as a generalist social worker.