

Working with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) in the Adult Protective Services (APS) was an exciting opportunity for me. I have always wanted to help the elderly in some way, so this was the perfect internship. I feel that I was prepared for most of the tasks required for the job. Answering phones was harder than I thought as people call for things that are not even related to APS, but it was OK. Interviewing clients, questioning alleged perpetrators and talking to medical staff was new to me, but it didn't take long to relax and ask questions that needed answers. These tasks were made easier just because most people like to talk and filled in the needed blanks without even knowing it. The hardest part of this placement was trying to decide if a person is being honest or not during an interview. Another difficulty that I faced was a seeming lack of power by the DCF. Getting things done was sometimes a long and drawn out process and many times all that could be done was to make strong suggestions that changes take place. Take your meds...don't yell at your mother...and so on as no laws were broken, just moral issues. APS has no power to Baker Act or remove people from bad environments without Law Enforcement backing.

The classes that helped me the most with this internship were: Work with Individuals and Families and Interviewing and Recording (both are social work classes) because there is a lot of talking and listening involved in APS. As investigators, we must listen to the client when he or she is able to speak and listen to the alleged perpetrator's side of the story to prove or disprove that abuse, neglect, or exploitation has occurred. The skills learned in these classes were how to keep people on track and in focus when you are trying to gain information and facts about a certain issue and those skills came in very handy. Along with those two classes, Introduction to Gerontology, Social Aspects of Family Violence, and Services for the Elderly, Case Management were of great importance for this specific internship. Most of our cases involved the elderly so these classes helped me to understand that being older does not mean that you are dead. And being elderly does not mean that you no longer have a

choice in your daily activities even to the point of choosing not to take medications prescribed to you by a doctor. As long as you are a competent adult, you may choose to live any way you wish, even if you may be hurting yourself. Many of the clients seen by an investigator just need services to be provided in the home and DCF can go a long way in getting these needs met. Meals on Wheels, home health care agencies and companionship agencies were supplied often while I was interning.

Along with the above social work classes, the criminal justice classes I have taken prepared me for this internship. American Criminal Justice System, Criminology, and Police in America were of importance for this job. Many of the cases I went on with Debbie Williams involved having to call Law Enforcement (LE) for our own protection when going on a call. Knowing some basic functions of LE was critical for this internship and the classes about the criminal justice system and the police taught me what I needed to know to be comfortable around such authority figures. LE is there to help and serve as protection if needed (luckily, it wasn't). Many of the calls that we were told to take LE on were just because there was a weapon in the house, which is of course legal, but LE would come any way and stand guard while the client was being interviewed.

For this internship, it would have been helpful to have some training before the start in basic language and acronyms for the office, or maybe just a printed form with definitions of frequently used acronyms and language in the DCF. It would have also helped if there was a class to destroy shyness, but there is not. I did overcome my strong desire not to speak and interviewed clients and alleged perpetrators on my own, so maybe just being on the job helped.

I would recommend this internship to other students. The adult side of DCF was very concerned with seeing that I got hands on training and was involved as much as possible with entire cases. I have heard horror stories from other students who were just stuck with doing paperwork during their entire internship and learn nothing. DCF Adult Investigations did not do this. I was told I got lucky as no severe abuse cases were called in while I was there, but if one had come in, I would have been expected to

treat it like any other case and do the job, not hide in the background till it was over. That is the only way to learn real life and work skills. The books can only go so far, but being involved in cases is the real thing. Along with training, everyone I came in contact with treated me politely and with respect. Only one investigator did not allow me to join her on cases and apparently that was because she thought I would slow her down, but she still asked me to pick up paperwork for her and talked to me about her cases. It was a great department to internship with.