Running head: Evaluation of Practice

# Evaluation of Practice

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# Abstract

An overview, analysis and evaluation of my practice within the Children’s Trust Fund. My role within this organization has exposed me to all levels of social work practice and therefore vastly developed my competencies in those areas. This paper will focus on the skills I have gained through this experience and the impact I have made on the target population by analyzing my competencies, strengths and weaknesses. This evaluation of skills will allow me to clearly recognize the impact I have made on those I’ve worked with as well as the immense impact they have had on me, and undoubtedly address those areas where growth is still needed.

# Evaluation of Practice

The Children’s Trust Fund has served as a phenomenal environment for me to gain and master the skills necessary to be a highly reliable and professional source of expert guidance, understanding and trust for people from all walks of life in their own unique situations. This experience has allowed me to gain experience in all levels of social work practice. Through this skill and competency building I was able to make an impact on those I worked with and learn from my experiences. Because of this field placement I now understand my capabilities that I once doubted and have a clearer understanding of the social work field.

# Overview of Practice

My responsibilities throughout field placement range from research and data analysis at the macro level, to group work; facilitating ICHANGE, a program for at-risk youth, to interpersonal communication. Entering the Children’s Trust Fund I was very unsure of my capabilities and apprehensive when faced with a task. Through this experience I have learned a great deal about myself and have gained confidence in my skills.

The Children’s Trust Fund mainly functions at the macro level of practice therefore I have gained a great deal of experience in this area. When entering this placement I was unsure of my desire to work at this level because I wanted to have a direct impact on clients. Through this experience I better understand how macro level work does have a great influence on clients by providing program funding and resources to those in need. I have gained clarity in policies and procedures related to grant proposals as well as how to prepare a successful grant proposal and effective program model. Through the review of the 2013 grant awardees’ proposals and contracts I have a concrete understanding of the importance of a well thought out work plan, budget and program register.

Through my experience with ICHANGE I was able to hone my skills at the mezzo level of practice. The first meeting I doubted my skills and ability to function as the group’s facilitator but through observation of my Supervisor I was able to better assess the group dynamics. Starting out I was having difficulty keeping the group’s attention and keeping them on topic due to my lack of assertiveness and confidence. When faced with conflict I was uncomfortable handling it in fear that the group would dislike me and therefore my presence there would not be helpful to them. Once I gained acceptance by the youth and I, familiarity with them it was a much more comfortable environment. I realized that assertiveness is necessary in conducting a group and keeping control of the group and through the guidance of my Supervisor and experience I gained the assertiveness skills in order to deal with conflict and resolve it effectively.

This field placement also allowed me interpersonal experience when working with staff. I have learned a great deal from each staff member at the Children’s Trust Fund which has resulted in learning a great deal about myself. I am now educated and competent on EGrAMS, an Electronic Grants Administration and Management System in which all grantees submit their grant information and data to be reviewed and rated by administrators for approval. Along with the technical skills and competencies I have gained I have also learned a great deal by observing the practice of staff members. Through observation I gained knowledge on how to deal with ethical dilemmas, how to resolve conflict and how to grow an organization and its services with extremely limited funding.

Impact on Target Population

I have been able to practice and grow my skills with both group and community systems. At the macro level I was able to assist in the grant approval process therefore through the grant approvals I was able to contribute to programs and services available to communities, families and children throughout the state of Michigan. With my expanded knowledge on policy and grant writing I was able assist in the assessment of grant proposals. Ensuring that these programs that the Children’s Trust Fund is providing funding for are sustainable and utilizing the funds with the best interest of the community which is critical when dealing with such limited funding and such great need.

When evaluating my practice at the group level, I am better able to assess and evaluate my skills because I can see my successes and failures first hand. When working with this particular group I was working with youth ages 12-16. I found trying to create group cohesion and build the dynamics of group difficult because of the inconsistency in participation. Through this experience I was forced to put my values aside and strive to gain an understanding of the individual group members. During the first few sessions I was shocked at how aggressive and disrespectful the youth were and learned to sway from judgments and make every effort to understand why the youth displays such behavior. Through these sessions I think that I was able to reach the youth in a positive way. In spite of their defiant behavior they still participated and engaged in the sessions once I was able to gain control of the group. The lessons and activities that I facilitated taught the group life skills and ways to set goals to modify their actions and prevent them from following in many of the destructive behaviors that they have been exposed to throughout their lifetime. I think that the growth that I experienced within myself throughout this experience was due in part to facing my fears of dealing with conflict and therefore I was able to have a greater impact on the youth.

Overall I think that advocating for families and children is definitely a good fit for me. I am very passionate about prevention and awareness due in part to the eye opening facts that I was faced with when joining the CTF team. I definitely think that my efforts could be put to great use at all levels of social work. I think that the best fit for me will be at the client or group level of practice because I feel confident that I can have a great impact of families and children when working with them directly; I like to visually see progress and change happen.

Through my group experience I have an immense concern for the youth of today and the environments that they are raised in and I think that without an intervention within the family system along with the school system these youth will continue down the wrong path and repeat the cycle. For that reason I am seeking to gain a greater understanding of family dynamics and school policy in order assess and evaluate where change is needed and what can be done.

Values and Ethics

The Children’s Trust Fund is built on the foundation of ethical social work practice therefore I have been exposed to such practice. Through my work at the Children’s Trust Fund I am conducting myself in a way that preserves the values and ethics of the social work field. I now appreciate fully the importance of understanding the population I am working with in order to recognize what they need and how to get these services to them. I now strive to understand the background, social diversity and experiences of the population and through statistics and research can better understand how to effectively reach them.

This placement has helped me understand the values of the social work profession by the mission and purpose of the Children’s Trust Fund as well as by example through the staff members. I have gained the skills necessary to assess the needs of the target population within communities and strive to advocate for what is necessary to ensure that these communities have the opportunity to gain services to assist these disenfranchised groups. This experience and the mission of the Children’s Trust Fund have been inspirational to me. Having gained greater understanding of the children and families who are neglected and abused has empowered me to continue to learn and grow in order to make a greater difference through advocating for these families and children.

ICHANGE has significantly assisted me in the development of ethics for social work practice. This experience required me to seek an understanding of these youth’s experiences in order to better understand their effects on their current behavior. Through ICHANGE I have learned the importance of self-determination and empowering the youth to make decisions in life that will lead them where they want to be. This has also helped me understand that I can’t force these youth to listen, change or be pro-active they have to want to and that has been difficult for me. I need to learn to have more patience, respond more effectively and continue to work on my assertiveness skills in order to be entirely effective. I see such potential in these teens and it is disheartening to listen to their outlook on life. I now am better able to differentiate between my own values and those of the population I am working with and with that am better able to assess their viewpoint and therefore relate to them in a more effective way.

Evaluation

Overall this placement has served as such a great and powerful source of education to me and has given me the opportunity to utilize and grow my skills in order to positively influence the social worker that I strive to be. This setting would be ideal for my first position in the social work field because it does expose me to all aspects of social work practice and the networking opportunities are endless. For me to work in my current field placement setting they would first need the funding to sustain a position for me which is nearly impossible due to the lack of funding available to the Children’s Trust Fund. Also, I would need to gain a better understanding and gain competence in all aspects of the Children’s Trust Fund. Currently I am focusing on strictly the Direct Services of which my Supervisor is the Coordinator. In order to fully understand the entire function and to be a well-rounded employee of CTF I would need to research and assess its other various sectors, including; Local Councils, Program Development, Fund Development and Research Analysis. Given the opportunity, I would flourish due to the efforts of the staff at the Children’s Trust Fund and their willingness to teach and encourage me to have confidence in my skills.