Step Up For Mental Health Internship Experience

Mellon Foundation Unpaid Internship Award Recipient Presentation

Lillian Baca
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>My Background:</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Degree</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>I am pursuing a degree in Psychology.</td>
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<td>I am also minoring in Gender Studies.</td>
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<td><strong>Desired Field</strong></td>
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<td>I would like to use my Psychology degree to pursue Marriage and Family Therapy.</td>
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<td><strong>Future Goals</strong></td>
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<td>My next step is to continue my education. I want to get my Master’s in Counseling Psychology with a concentration in Marriage and Family Therapy.</td>
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Who is Step Up For Mental Health?

Mission:
“Step Up For Mental Health’s mission is to support, educate and provide services to empower families living with the challenges of mental health disorders. We do this by providing a safe place to share stories and find support for others who are dealing with mental health disorders or caring for a family member with a mental illness. We believe that mental health issues impact social issues, including education, homelessness, and poverty. Step Up For Mental Health® strives to match families with resources to help move them toward a more productive life.”

https://www.stepupformentalhealth.org/about/mission/
Role and Tasks:

Title: Intern and Peer Support Facilitator

- Answering the Helpline phone
- Adding new clients into the case management system
- Taking client intake calls and responding to their needs based on what the non-profit can offer them
  - Bus Pass, Bill Pay, Food Box, Clothes, and so much more
  - Outside Resources if we can’t fulfill their needs ourselves
- Organizing and providing one-on-one peer support sessions for clients that are looking for more emotional support
“Swag Bags” for people experiencing homelessness

Filled with: gloves, hats, band-aids, hand sanitizer, snacks, and many other necessities, and a card with words of affirmation.

Pictured: Lillian (Left) and Caroline (Right) holding up swag bags they filled that will be given out to people experiencing homelessness living in Humboldt Park in Chicago.
Takeaways:

I really learned how capable I am to do this kind of work for others.

Having the opportunity to directly with clients through challenging times and be a supportive hand was fulfilling and built up my confidence in what my desired career field will be.
Conclusion:

- I learned so much about the mental health world and some of the available social resources in Chicago for people in need.
- I learned a lot about case management software and some of the processes in the client care process.
- I learned about balance. Since there is a substantial amount of emotional weight involved in crisis care and mental health care, I have had to practice stepping away and taking care of myself too.
- I am so incredibly dedicated to the pursuit of mental health care and helping others with their well-being. I loved working with my clients and I gained so much from the experience.
- I feel so incredibly fortunate to have been helped through this experience from the Mellon Foundation as well. As a result of the award, I was able to dedicate more time and energy into the work I was doing with Step Up For Mental Health. I grew a lot as an individual and as a worker. I am grateful for my experience.