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ChildServe

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About ChildServe

ChildServe is a non-profit organization that partners with nearly 4,600 families throughout Iowa to serve children with special needs. These needs range from developmental delays, disabilities, and mental health disorders.

By using a multi-disciplinary team, ChildServe puts pediatrics and families first. Rehabilitation nurses, therapists, and physicians team up to give each child a personalized care plan and growth benchmarks. Furthermore, families are partnered with staff to help them understand the condition and their child's future care.

ChildServe incorporates the core values of care, integrity, trust, partnerships, and excellence in their relationships with children, families, staff members, and community.



ChildServe's Mission and Vision

ChildServe's mission is to partner with families to help children with special healthcare needs live a great life.

ChildServe believes in being uniquely positioned in Iowa to improve the healthcare and wellbeing of children with special healthcare needs.



Days and Hours of Internship

To obtain the full 150 hours, unpaid internship times were completed Mondays and Wednesdays from 8am to 12pm.

Training

In addition to New Employee Orientation, a briefing was required regarding confidentiality of both the patients and the assessments given. The tests offered were specific to ChildServe, not allowing us to share with other companies or individuals.

Everyday Experience

As a psychology intern, I was able to work under a pediatric psychologist who specialized in diagnosing autism, attention-deficit disorders, and anxiety. Each week, I was presented with opportunities including:

- Acquire questionnaires for first-time patients
- Perform assessments such as WISC-V, WIPPSI, and ADOS
- Assist in diagnosing patients from the above tests
- Help the psychologist inform families on the results of the evaluations
- Sit in on case-study meetings
- Attend the Midwestern Psychological Association Conference and autism awareness events
- Advise families on community resources relevant to the child's diagnosis
- Observe other specialties areas including: Mental health therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, concussion clinics, physical therapy, social workers, and applied behavioral analysis
- Listen to and understand ChildServe's impact on children and families in the organization



Research

Apart from the day-to-day experience, I was also fortunate enough to aid the psychologist in research. This encompassed:

- Gather articles regarding gender differences in autism and social skills
- Collect references concerning gender dysphoria and social skills
- Accumulate data on the neurobiological basis of gender dysphoria



Lessons Learned

Throughout my time at ChildServe, there were a few life lessons I gained:

- Textbooks are nothing compared to real life; each child is unique, teaching something classes cannot. This easily became the most challenging part of the internship.
- I found my love for neuropsychology, the study of the brain, which would not have happened without this internship.
- I was able to put into practice the information on mental health conditions and illnesses I had been learning for the past two years at the University of Northern Iowa, which was very rewarding.
- By seeing first-hand the impact an organization has on a family, one's passion for their field of study can grow.

Future Advice

To the students considering whether to do an internship:

- Take the chance to do something new; it will help build new connections, learn beyond the books, and potentially find a career for after college.
- Always take the opportunity to better understand the population one wishes to work with. Appreciating their perspective and life stories can create more of a passion in someone.

Acknowledgements/References

I would not have been able to do this internship without the help of my professor, Dr. Hildebrandt. She made this opening known and assisted in getting it set up.

I also would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Suzanne Richards. Throughout the internship she put time and effort into my learning and assured that I was doing everything to my full potential.

This internship would also not have been possible without the numerous staff members who were willing to take me under their wings. They showed me what ChildServe was truly about and how amazing the organization really is.



All pictures and information were taken from the ChildServe website, with permission from Alexis Warden (AlexisW@childserve.org).
I am not an official representative of ChildServe.