

Directing a (Hopefully) Successful Internship Program

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I. Benefits of Having an Internship Program

- a. We're able to provide low-cost/free services to a large number of clients/couples/families
- b. The ability to provide a high-quality training opportunity to 2-4 master's level interns per year
- c. The internship program helps keep the seasoned staff fresh by being able to teach the interns and view counseling through their eyes
- d. Our staff is able to learn through the interns' participation in our staff meetings (MySpace ethical issues; emo)
- e. Interns have taken on valuable projects, such as a client satisfaction survey, resource notebook, updating internship manual, organizing audio/video resources, research for writing projects, etc.

II. Challenges of Having an Internship Program

- a. Choosing interns that are the "right fit" for our agency
- b. Working out interns' schedules with client demand hours
- c. Making time for quality supervision and availability for questions/preparation in the midst of a busy schedule with my own clients
- d. Variability of maturity/experience of interns
- e. Anticipating client demand for interns in order to provide interns with required hours for their programs in time for them to graduate
- f. Compliance with intern's program specifications regarding supervision, hours, etc.

III. What I've learned About How to Create a Successful Internship Program

- a. We've had successful interns who were 60 and 23; life experience and maturity make a tremendous difference in the interns' quality
- b. Our interns are regarded as full members of our staff
- c. We are continuously working to improve our internship program through updating our internship manual, training, and continuing education opportunities for our interns
- d. A successful internship program takes investment in time, energy and some resources from the entire staff and agency
- e. The contributions of interns can make these investments of time and energy and resources well worth it, and can tremendously expand the ability of the agency to provide much-needed services to the uninsured or underinsured population
- f. Myself and my counseling and clerical staff have enjoyed being involved in the early stages of our interns' careers, and we keep in touch with many past interns
- g. Our interns have taken on their own clients, and have done a very good job
- h. Supervising eager interns is a lot of fun, and it's been very satisfying to be able to build into the lives of new counselors/social workers
- i. Despite not paying our interns, I make sure that they know they are appreciated, and our agency provides them with a student membership to AACC, continuing education opportunities and attendance to a conference of their choice (within reason), and a Barnes & Noble gift card upon the completion of their internship as a thank-you.