A DAY IN THE LIFE

Blog Written By: Jessica Plante (HSSP, Politics, Theater; 2016)

Blog Reviewed By: Shayna Jacoby (Biology, HSSP; 2016) Ildiko Kemp (HSSP, 2015)

Each day when I arrive, the first thing I do is check my email. Because I work on a number of projects, I have emails from college career center administrators, recruitment and hiring managers, or my colleagues. Sometimes the emails have to do with cake – I like those emails. For the first three weeks of my internship, my post-email daily routine was going to the training office and working with a program called SmartBuilder to make training programs for Riverside Community Care (RCC) employees. I had a binder full of the information I needed to create the program and I’d spend my day plugging it into presentations and formatting them to look nice. Since the main training program was a healthy eating program, my supervisor thought my input as a vegetarian would be invaluable. Twice during the first month, I went on site visits. I only recently started doing recruitment work (i.e., getting applicants into positions), and I’m still getting the hang of it.

In recruitment, there are always a number of priorities to balance, so my day never has a set schedule. A fair amount of what I do now is checking new hires’ references...and, a lot of the time, reaching references is the hardest part of recruitment! When I manage to get in contact with a reference, the conversation can last as little as five minutes or as long as an hour. When I’m not doing reference checks, I’m searching for candidates. This is probably how I learn the most about what actually goes into the mental health care workforce (at least at RCC). At any given time, RCC has about 100 job openings across Massachusetts!
Reflecting on what I’ve done so far, I think I’ve had two significant accomplishments. The first was creating the healthy eating training program. While I had all the information for the presentation, I had the formidable task of figuring out how to present it to the employees at RCC. The presentation I designed forms the basis of all the healthy eating training for everyone at RCC! This was a huge responsibility. My second accomplishment was the first time my supervisor let me know that someone for whom I did a reference check was hired. Doing a reference check may not seem that important in the grand scheme of things, but that experience really drove home that what I do directly impacts whether or not someone gets the privilege of working at/for/with RCC.

Overall, I think the skills and experience that I have developed as an HSSP major are aiding me in this internship. I know about how mental health care issues affect the people who have them. Through this internship, I can complement my knowledge of how a patient is affected with the care that is necessary to help. On a broader level, this internship lets me understand the complex undertaking of providing and managing high-quality mental health care. Additionally, I know what would be required of me if I ever decide to go into direct patient care.

My work at RCC demonstrates (at least to me) that a health care organization’s success is a long-term process that involves significant commitment from all involved, even if what any one person does seems, at first blush, simple and insignificant.