

Lakeville South High School

Academic Decathlon Team Advisor/Coach

Description of Position: Develop a team of students of diverse academic abilities to gain knowledge of an academic curriculum developed by the United States Academic Decathlon. This advisor/coach will build a unified team to work together on the ten different academic events to maximize individual and team placement at all levels of competition.

An academic team advisor/coach needs several skills to be successful. Communication skills were important to develop the program. School administrators had to be convinced that the expense of the program would not exceed the benefit to the students. Working through the budget with my site supervisor was a challenge, especially with the current financial condition of the schools in the state of Minnesota.

To form a team and facilitate practice schedules requires strong organizational skills. Coordinating schedules with school staff and students, arranging meeting rooms, and getting approval from the school board for an overnight field trip involved detailed paperwork and timing. Motivating students to attend practice, read and study the materials, and take their role seriously was interesting and required creativity. Finally, team-building skills were necessary to keep the students involved and ready to work hard.

The strength of this internship is the satisfaction of giving to the community, especially to students. As a coach/advisor, there is an opportunity to facilitate lifelong friendships among the team members and to be a part of an incredible learning experience for the students involved.

The most significant learning experience for me was learning to motivate both students and administrators to continue involvement with the program. I would recommend this internship to others who are interested in working with adolescents and schools.

Lewis House

The internship I participated in was at the Lewis House. The Lewis House is a safe home for women and children who have experienced domestic violence to live in until they can get back on their feet again. I served several positions including assisting in art therapy, kids club, preparing/planning activities, observation, analyzing and reflecting child behavior. The types of skills a person should have before beginning this internship are knowledge of domesticated abuse, communication skills, extraverted personality, and understanding. Strengths of the internship include diversity, observations of people of different race, culture, language, age, and sex. It is a great place to form bonding relationships. Some weaknesses would include poor communication through employees, poor organization and participation. Most significant thing that I learned is that children are easily influenced and need proper guidance. Most children just need support and someone to really listen to what they have to say. I would recommend this internship to students who are interested in domestic violence and have knowledge of it.

Youth program counselor - American Indian Family Center (AIFC)

My job was to advocate for the Native American youth that were in our summer youth program and children that were in a crisis.

I think the skills that one needs to work within this community are leadership skills, optimism, endurance, nurturance, cultural openness, creativity, and to know that things need to evolve to make a better place for the families and the people who work there. There was a saying “this is how it has always been done” it a term that I have heard in Native American organizations. One day I want to change that to expression to “what can we do to make it better.” I know people are going to read this and think that I believe that the Native American programs are not high-quality, but that is just the opposite, I am amazed by all the things offered to the Native American community by the Native American community. I just think there is room for improvement in how things get done our to better manage the families of our community. This was a wonderful experience because I got to the see the inner working of what my Native community has put forth. I would recommend this internship to others because our community I believe needs the input of other ethnic groups beliefs, values and commitment to their culture it would give us examples on how to improve our culture in a positive and more economical way.

I think one of the best experiences that I got from working with these children was seeing their selfless acts. We were bowling and I watched children that had money share their food and drinks with their teammates that did not have any money. It did not matter if they were a boy or a girl they laughed and played and ate together. It was nice to see the how children at times are different than adults. I have to say the one thing that I learned is that it is one thing to for work for children and another to work with children and I believe that you really need both experiences for you are going to have anything do with children. Because I believe the child will teach you how to act on their behalf.

Hospice Volunteer with Allina Home Care, Hospice, & Palliative Care

As a hospice volunteer with Allina my job was to visit with patients who were terminally ill with a life expectancy of less than six months. I would travel to homes or care facilities where the patient resided and perform a variety of tasks. I would usually provide companionship and support, but I also read to patients, did light housekeeping, went grocery shopping, and provided support for family members.

The most important skills that a person in this position needs are compassion and patience. A lot of time is spent listening, conversing, and just sitting. Alzheimer's patients are the most difficult because they repeat themselves and often don't know what's going on. At times I would sit for hours and just hold a hand.

This would be a good internship for someone going into counseling. Many of the same skills are used in both fields. The training was excellent and taught me not only how to work with dying people, but also how to deal with grief that I have suffered. The biggest weakness in this internship is that it is difficult to put in the necessary hours. Usually you only get two or three hours a week unless you have many patients.

The biggest learning experience that I received was that I learned to deal with my own fear of death and with the death of my mother. The training answered many questions and eased my fears. Many patients have taught me to face death with calm and dignity. I now look at death as a natural part of life, not a scary unknown.

I would recommend this internship to anyone who has a lot of empathy and patience. It is the most rewarding volunteer work that I have ever done, and I have learned so much more than I have given.

Child Life Specialist

This internship was completed at Children's Hospital in the Emergency Department & Inpatient Units. The main functions as a volunteer at Children's Hospital are to help provide a welcoming & safe environment for children who are patients of the hospital & their siblings. Implementing diversionary activities & interacting with children in a safe atmosphere assists the Child Life & Nursing staffs to promote a feeling of well-being among hospitalized patients & their families. Facilitating safe play experiences with patients & siblings, aiding in the upkeep of play materials, assisting Child Life with preparation of activities & materials, holding crying babies, & providing "breaks" for parents whose children are in the inpatient units of the hospital are a few of the duties a volunteer is asked to perform.

Having previous experience with children of all ages & a basic knowledge of child development are beneficial to this internship since volunteers are on their own with children most of the time. Self-direction is also crucial for this internship.

Working with children in a safe & fun environment & helping families during a stressful time are benefits of this internship. If you really want to have the opportunity to observe what a Child Life Specialist does, however, this is not the ideal way to go about it. There are little direct observations of the Child Life Specialist. If you want to gain an idea of what working in a hospital setting is like, I would highly recommend this opportunity.

Of all my experienced working in the ED and Inpatient Units the most rewarding and noteworthy were the times I spent with siblings whose brother or sister were in the hospital for one reason or another. Keeping the sibling distracted and occupied not only helps them, but the parents are often very grateful to have one less worry at the moment.

I learned a great deal during this experience. The most significant was how to direct children while giving them choices. What I learned is that if you give children free reign of the playroom and supplies available, some of them will want to do EVERYTHING. If you limit their choices to 2 or 3, it is much easier to keep a handle of the situation. The children tend to be more amenable when they are given choices on what to do and rarely question why they have to choose between the options given.

Harriet Tubman Shelter

I worked at Harriet Tubman Domestic Abuse Shelter in Minneapolis. My position at Tubman was called Family Advocate. I worked at the crisis desk that is also the welcome desk where I handle crisis calls from all over Minnesota. I screen for intakes, walk-ins, the resources for women living in the shelter like job, housing, food and clothing resources, and also handle tons of little odds and ends. I meet with women one on one to do intakes, goal planning, gather resources, and counsel. I attend groups- there is a house meeting, a spirituality meeting, a parenting meeting and a domestic violence meeting and I sometimes get to lead them.

Before starting at this internship a person should have a little knowledge of strength-based, positive, and systems models of psychology theory. Community psychology was a very useful class to take before this internship.

Strengths and weaknesses of this internship are that it is challenging! It is fast paced. It is sometimes depressing, it makes a person aware of the need to detach in order to be able to help a person more. Strengths include getting experience in group work, one on one work, mediation and crisis situations.

There were several significant learning experiences in this internship. The first of two that come to mind are getting to lead a group and trying to figure out how to keep it on topic, positive and even-flowing. The second is learning detachment from empathizing with people in terrible situations.

I would recommend this internship to other students that want the intense learning opportunity of working with people in abuse and in crisis. It is challenging and full of a variety of learning experiences.

Elementary School Psychology/Behavioral Modification Internship

My internship consisted of working at Longfellow Elementary School with school psychologist Linda Smaller. Longfellow Elementary School, located in Saint Paul, is a diverse, inner-city school consisting of about 65% African American children, 20% Asian children, and 15% white children and children of other ethnicities. Poverty greatly affects this school, as about 85% of students are on the free or reduced lunch program. This school's students are plagued with many behavioral issues, and physical aggressiveness, bullying, and theft are major problems throughout the school. Ms. Smaller and I work with students in kindergarten through third grade, and another psychologist works with fourth through sixth graders.

Ms. Smaller has been recognized throughout the state for her success at creating and implementing an elaborate behavioral modification program in which student's behavior is closely monitored and rated on a daily check sheet by their teachers. By doing well behaviorally and earning points on their check sheets, they can earn reward time with Ms. Smaller and me, where we work on crafts, play games, and discuss their personal challenges, problem-solving strategies, accomplishments, and goals. In some cases, especially those involving students who steal, students can earn small toys or candy along with their reward time.

As an intern, I assist Ms. Smaller in the daily check-in process in the mornings, where each student picks up their check sheet and earns reward points for returning any signed check sheets from their parents. We encourage the students to have a good day free of problem behaviors and also assist in supervising breakfast and the arrival of students. As well, I also help with the checkout process at the end of school where we visit third grade classrooms, add up their points, and briefly discuss how they did behaviorally during the day. Throughout the school day, I pull students from their classrooms to give them earned reward time and conduct informal counseling. Additionally, I supervise students who have problems hitting or bullying at recess and lunchtime, and support them during the difficult transition back into the classroom.

The most significant learning experience of my internship involved a student I will call R. who had severe behavioral problems. Bullying, physical aggressiveness, and theft were among R.'s issues, although with the challenge that she did not trust many people, especially adults who were not African-American as she was. When I first met R., she would not talk to me or hardly look at me in the eye. After trying various methods with her to help her change her behaviors, including the methods Ms. Smaller had instructed me to attempt, I finally discovered an approach that helped her and I earned her trust as well. From this student, I learned that various methods have different success rates for different students, and therefore, you have to get to know each child individually and modify the techniques you use according to their personality and needs.

Before beginning this internship, I would advise that people have some experience working with children in a formal or informal situation. This could be a person's own children, nieces and nephews, friends' children, or babysitting experience. No matter how it is obtained, a person should have some working knowledge of what children are like, how to talk to them, and the patience that it takes to deal with them. An individual who has never been around children might be very shocked and overwhelmed by this experience. The strengths of this internship were that it was very hands-on and I was very involved in participating in the behavioral modification program. Additionally, Ms. Smaller was very professional, helpful, and encouraging throughout my time at the school. Because of this experience, I believe that I have a very good idea of what it would be like to work full-time as a school psychologist. It is difficult for me to think of weaknesses of this internship, as the only frustrations I encountered were due to issues that school psychologists face everyday, such as: budget cuts that lead to limited available resources, teachers resistant to accepting help for the children in their classroom (even though they ask for help), parents who do not want help for their children, and children that are resistant to change. Again, these were not necessarily weakness of the internship, but rather weaknesses of the job. To any psychology major that is considering working with children, particularly in an educational setting, I would recommend this internship. The knowledge that I have gained from this internship was more than could ever be obtained through traditional classroom learning. Although undeniably challenging and rewarding at the same time, my internship at Longfellow Elementary School gave me knowledge that I believe is invaluable.

Internship at EAC (Employment Action Center)

My internship at the Employment Action Center Started in the spring and ended the summer of 2008, and it was in the Family Stabilization Service program, which is a program set up for people under the MFIP, (Minnesota Family Investment Program) but who are not making significant progress. Employment Action Center is place that provides employment services for people from diverse cultures (Refugees from Somalia, Burma, etc.) and background (Battered women). These people comprise of 60% to 70% females and 30% to 40% males. These people are from I chose EAC for my internship because their program services are Psychology orientated. So being a student majoring in Psychology, this internship fits my intellectual strengths.

The strength of EAC is their ability to provide job counselors from diverse cultures to solve the issue of language barriers. The weakness of EAC is their inability to find and hire job counselors with Psychology background because most of the counselors are ignorant of the psychological systems that some of their clients go through. That is why I had a presentation on how to recognize and handle a client with a Psychological condition. (Depression)

The most significant experience for me was contributing to the development of a wiki website for the new Family Stabilization Services Program (FSS) by gathering Psychological and general resources for both EAC staffs and clients in the program. I learned about the intake process for the FSS clients by observing the process. I also attended a presentation by a practicing Psychologist on Psychological disorders. I learned how to assist these clients with their job search, how to use language translation software etc.

Finally, I think EAC is a good place for any Psychology student commencing on a community based studies because of the real life situations that he/she will encounter and how they relate to the knowledge acquired from the classroom.

I interned at **Dakota Woodlands**, which is the only short-term housing facility for women and children in Dakota County. As an intern there I worked primarily with the family or case managers. The case managers are those who assist the residents with basically all their needs which encompass a wide variety of duties; they log about their behavior, help them make goals, sit in on social worker meetings, and provide lots of listening, along with other tasks. I think the major skill that someone needs to have before beginning this internship is compassion; you need to want to help.

Although you may not agree with many of the choices these people have made in the past you need to want to help them change, or at the least not judge or belittle them. I think a strength of this internship is how much one-on-one time you get with individuals and families. It really helps to develop not only your listening skills but also ways in which you formulate sometimes difficult questions. I think a weakness of this particular internship was that there wasn't very much structure. They allowed me to kind of choose what exactly I got out of it, which turned out to be great, but was something that I had to get used to in the beginning.

I think the most significant learning experience in this internship was really learning how people got to this point in their life of being homeless. No two stories are the same and everyone comes in with many different life experiences as well as different issues they need to sort out. This can include substance abuse issues, lack of education, and no support network.

I would recommend this internship to other students but I think you should go in prepared. I came out of it with so much more knowledge than I went in but this is definitely not an atmosphere that everyone wants to work in, where you work where these people live. There was another student this semester doing a similar internship who came out of it hating it so I think you really need to understand what you'll be doing to make this commitment.

St. Anne's Place

I completed my psychology internship at St. Anne's Place in North Minneapolis. St. Anne's Place is an emergency shelter that provides short-term housing for up to sixteen women and their children. The programs at St. Anne's Place focus on providing support services for parents and youth activities for their children in order to help them develop the necessary tools to become stable. The small residential setting enables St. Anne's to work individually with these families and link them to the resources they need in order to achieve independent living.

My role at St. Anne's Place was that of a shelter intern. The purpose of my position was to assist the staff with providing direct services to the residents of St. Anne's Place and manage the daily activities of the St. Anne's Program. Some of the essential functions of my job was to assist the staff with individual, group and family counseling to residents, intervene in crisis situations, govern office interactions, take and conduct crisis and business calls, document medications taken by residents, promote effective communication between residents and staff, cook meals for the residents and assist and provide childcare for the mothers when necessary.

A person who interns at St. Anne's needs to have tough skin, and is use to crisis, dysfunctionality and working with individuals who are disenfranchised and feels hopeless. Interpersonal communication skills are a must. One of the strengths of the internship is you are providing housing, meals, and services to people that are in great need therefore it gives you a sense of pride. The weakness of the internship has a lot to do with what hours you can work. If you work full-time and have to intern at night and on the weekend, the support services, group meeting and such that a Psychology student would want to be a part of is not available on certain days therefore you find yourself cleaning up, doing administrative tasks and interacting with the residences and staff without learning anything. Another weakness is the shelter staff at this time is not well trained and many of them are new. They do not take their jobs or responsibilities serious and at times they just want to sit around and do nothing. As a student you're there to learn and the evening and weekend shift often feels they are there just to babysit the residents and gossip.

To be honest I did not have one significant learning experience at the internship. I did learn that I am highly capable of dealing with the type of residents that are at the shelter and that clinical or counseling psychology is definitely the field I want to go into. I learned that there is a need for available psychologists to help these women and new programs need to be established that cater to the demographic of women in the shelter. I would only recommend this internship site to a student that had the ability to work days where they could be a part of the day to day operations and services that the shelter offers.

My internship was at a one of the residential homes for adults with developmental disabilities for **Phoenix Residence, Inc.** My specific position was to work with the supervisors at the specific house and help them with tasks typical of what a QMRP (qualified mental retardation professional) would do there. These tasks included things like visiting with residents, writing programs for their daily living, and attending meetings with their case managers, guardians, and day program workers in order to make sure they were being allowed the best care possible and that the state requirements were being handled properly by all people involved.

-What skills should a person have before beginning this internship?

One major skill to have would be to have the capacity to work with people and to be willing to try something new. In order to get anything out of this internship, you definitely need to be able to take the initiative to go out of your element and interact with people you may not be all that comfortable with.

-What are the strengths and weaknesses of this internship?

There were two major strengths involved in this experience. For one, it forced me to do something I have never tried before and may have never tried if I wasn't offered or forced on me in this internship. Another strength of this program was that it allowed me to be more upfront and trust my abilities because the manager assumed and expected a lot from me.

As for weaknesses, it was very disorganized. The timing of the program was also very difficult because it conflicted with my school and work schedule. It was hard for me to be around when the residents were around (which I would have really liked but they were at a day program during the morning and early afternoon and that was around the time when I started work). It was also difficult to get all the hours I needed in an organized manner because there was so much stuff going on all the time (examples: emergency room visits, people being sick).

-What was your most significant learning experience in this internship? What did you learn?

The most significant thing that I learned was that people with developmental and physical disabilities are not as different from me as I had previously thought. When anything is different or strange to us, it is hard to believe there are any similarities between these things and ourselves. I fear the unknown, so it was really cool and beneficial for me to get over these fears, immerse myself with people different from myself, and then find out all the similarities that really do exist between me and them.

-Do you recommend this internship to students? Why or why not?

I do recommend this internship to others, but I would also recommend starting early. Because there isn't a typical, organized internship program at Phoenix, a lot of things can come up and it may be difficult to get your hours done in a structured fashion. I think that it is important to understand the amount of work that people do in this field and this internship is a neat way to meet a lot of cool people (managers) dedicated to help others in need.