

Cara Murasaki

Second Interim Report

The past month at International Institute of Minnesota has been similar to the first month here. In March, I've had more activities to do, but I've also gotten to travel away from the Institute more. Like I mentioned in the previous report, Bus Buddies is a program where volunteers show clients how to take the bus to various locations. With nicer weather, clients were more likely to not cancel bus appointments and learn the bus route. One week in March I had four bus trainings which I showed clients how to get home and to work. Each bus training was different as each client spoke various levels of English, and some trips required multiple busses. The clients who spoke no English required me to use various communication strategies so they would understand the bus route such as pointing and using hand signals. The bus trips with multiple busses were the most challenging as getting off the bus and getting onto another can be tricky to know when to signal the driver to stop and communicate this to the client. Another day I helped with a last-minute relocation in which I helped a client move out of her apartment and assist her at the airport. I have also really started to plan out a health fair the Institute will be hosting in May. It was brief discussion in the beginning of March, but now we've been heavily promoting the event around the Institute as well as partner organizations we may refer clients to. I've been the main person contacting various health services and had some success in contacting local health organizations which will attend the health fair this coming May. I've also been doing more work when it comes to refugees and their files, making sure their information is kept confidential and the files are organized.

As for changes to the Proposal of Involvement, I won't be the one going over Motivational Interviewing. Right when I had informed staff of its use, a Refugee national organization introduced a lesson that went over MI. The training was a two-part online forum so

I'm not sure how the quality compares to an in-classroom experience. But this doesn't mean I am not willing to answer any questions about MI if case managers want more information. Next Monday is the meeting when I was supposed to teach about MI, but I'm sure there will be discussion on whether the training was helpful or not.

For positive aspects, a lot has stayed the same. Every day is never the same with some days being more office work while other days I am traveling away from the Institute building. More people at the Institute are aware of my presence and will ask me for favors if they feel I could be of good help. Later in April, I will be helping with a job fair we are hosting at the Institute for students related to the types of classes taught such as assistant nursing jobs, dietary aides, housekeepers, and others. My last Friday before leaving the Institute I will be helping with Festival of Nations, a yearly event put on by the Institute that celebrates all cultures. I feel this will be a good last major activity before finishing up a couple days the following week.

As for specific problems, I have not had any with any work or any person. Everyone at the Institute is very passionate about the work they do which helps create a welcoming environment to all people. I've even become friends with clients who come by the Institute, whom I hope to keep in touch with even after I leave the Institute.

My general feelings about the experience have also stayed the same as I've had a great time here and would recommend it to anyone looking to work around a diverse environment of people where differences are celebrated. At the Institute, it's easy to find people to connect with who are different than you. But when we all leave the Institute, society norms divide us when out in public such as racial or religious discrimination. The Institute is place where these differences are not barriers. I also feel like I've become a more open person while being at the Institute. Coming in here, I considered myself very open as that was a major reason why I decided to

intern at the Institute. I was an active member of diversity organizations at La Crosse and was an advocate for diversity training for all staff members on campus. Being around St. Paul I've gotten to try different types of foods I hadn't experienced, and now I feel I ask around the office more for recommendations on good restaurants. I also am more aware of resources around the Minneapolis/St. Paul area when it comes to public health and community health education not only for clients but for my own future work.

For improving the agency, it's a good thing that I have to think really hard about this. It's been an awesome experience here in the Refugee department. If I had to critic the Institute, one thing I can think of is more communication on work I could do in the mornings. I usually am one of the first people to come into the office and others do not start trickling in until a little later. Maybe having better communication with my supervisor on jobs I could start in the morning would be beneficial if I do not have a long-term project to work on. Another critic is potentially on the forms we sign before we start interning. Having a car is useful but not being reimbursed for gas money is something that could be addressed. Interns are not paid here at the Institute, so I feel having a form to sign stating that gas money is on you and won't be reimbursed is a good idea to make clear right from the start. Another comment I have is not really a critic but a suggestion. The Health Education Program here is focused primarily on Female Genital Cutting (FGC) in which the educator does a great job at organizing and evaluating. I feel the health education program has potential to grow greatly at the Institute. Other topics could be addressed that are of concern to clients. I can't say which topics but by doing a needs assessment, topics that are a concern could be revealed through gathering confidential primary data, and a program could be implemented to specifically address this topic.