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Preceptorship Report #1

My time at the International Institute of Minnesota over the past month has been mainly a positive experience. It's hard to believe that it's already March and I am writing this first report on my experience at the Institute. My main objectives of this report is to talk briefly about the types of work I have been doing and my general feelings on this experience. I have been involved in all kinds of activities during this month of interning. Sometimes I have been doing typical office work such as reorganizing files or the donation room. Other times I have been assisting clients such as scheduling appointments or updating resumes to help them find work. My favorite activity to have been a part of has been helping with The Cultural Orientation, or Life in Minnesota class. This class is very health education relevant, as it teaches new arrivals on how to live the best life possible in not only Minnesota, but in the United States as a whole. The topics vary each week but each class covers a different part of US culture. One week was health week where we went over dressing for cold weather, dental hygiene, and how to determine whether an injury requires only at home care, or if a trip to the ER is needed. Another week we talked about employment and education in the US, and the importance of being on time to show respect. This class I get to be around several new arrivals and around several languages. Each class time, interpreters for non-English speaking clients are brought in or called to make sure the information is understood. Another activity is called Bus Buddies, where you take clients around the city by public transportation to show them how to get to various places, such as work or the grocery store. This has been good for me as well since I had never taken the bus or light rail before. It was a little scary at first not knowing the public transportation system well, but I had to remind myself that I know the dominant language around the Twin Cities and most clients do not, so it shouldn't be a problem for me to speak up if we got lost.

When I look at my proposal of involvement, I am doing some duties I had listed such as helping with a class very relevant to health education and will be giving an overview of motivational interviewing to some staff members soon. I'm happy Motivational Interviewing was an interest to the people in the resettlement department. It's something that could be helpful for clients, since the shift to living in a new country can be overwhelming at times, and they may encounter difficulties they feel trapped in handling themselves. Some objectives in my proposal haven't been touched, but I am seeing opportunities to reach them. I haven't been doing much health education planning yet, but soon we will be discussing a potential health fair at the Institute. At the last Female Genital Cutting meeting, we just scratched the surface on talking about planning this fair, but I see big potential to apply the Seven Areas of Responsibility in our process, in making sure it is an interest to everyone at the Institute and the appropriate health concerns are included in the potential organizations we invite.

My first day at the Institute, I got a very detailed overview of the work the refugee resettlement branch of the Institute does. I can say I learned more about the journey of refugees in the first 10 minutes of my first day than I did in my 16 year school career combined. Although I am mainly around coworkers in the resettlement department, my lunch breaks have allowed me to get to know people from all departments. There is also currently a five week health challenge going on where anyone can participate by setting three goals for the five upcoming weeks.

So far this experience has been a positive one. Being a month into this preceptorship experience, I feel like I connect with the people I work around very well. Everyone is from a different background, and many have personal connections to the work the refugee resettlement branch of the Institute does. It's a great feeling knowing everyone here respects one's differences. Often, I will hear five different languages being spoken around me, many of which I am not familiar, but I love it since it has allowed me to be exposed to languages in areas of the world I have not had contact with. I also enjoy how no days are the same. There are some days where I have more office work, but the Institute

partners with different organizations which hold meetings that I am welcome to attend if of interest. One meeting that I attended was the White privilege meeting presented by Minnesota Literacy Council. Minnesota Department of Health also holds various meetings related to public safety that I am welcome to leave the Institute and attend. This preceptorship is very open, and I feel I am getting a say in the types of work I do.

Like I expected, the preceptorship experience would come with some challenges. One of the concerns that has been on my mind from the start has been the attitude of our current government towards new Americans looking to start a new life. I learned on my first day that the President is the individual who sets the limit on how many refugee arrivals can occur within a given year, which has been drastically cut under the current administration. The limit on new arrivals means less work for the Institute which can lead to limited intern work. The government also affects services that all clients rely on such as food stamps or any other government assistance program. These are essential resources for clients and it's tough to know the current government has considered cutting funding or cutting entire public assistance programs.

The experience so far at the Institute has been positive. It has been different from what I expected, but it has been a learning experience for myself as well as the Institute having a full-time intern. In the beginning, I was a little skeptical as to how much of the work I am doing applies to public health work. But I've realized that all the work the Institute does plays a role in the Seven Areas of Responsibility. The whole resettlement process involves multiple stakeholders all working together to accomplish the goal of helping the client be successful in their new life in a new country. But various barriers such as psychological and physical barriers contribute to how a client will respond to stakeholders' efforts. The 90 day resettlement window is basically a long health education program that always needs to be tweaked to fit the needs of a client. Being just over a month into this preceptorship, I realized that I've already developed some skills I would have shyed away from in the past. I'm now

comfortable making calls to various people, as I've called taxis, clients, and interpreters, all with communication in several languages. Being around so many different languages also is giving me some motivation to learn more of another language. Most of the languages here I am not familiar with, but Spanish is a common language at the Institute that I studied a long time ago. Hearing it around me gives me more confidence to look into the language again.

My concerns lie mainly outside of the work I am doing here. Commuting to the Institute has been the most challenging because of the weather patterns over the last month. Waking up early knowing you may have to drive over an hour is a tough start to the day. Interning full time unpaid is obviously tiring but I am starting to worry about burning out near the end. I also work full days during the weekends since I am still responsible for rent due in La Crosse. This doesn't leave much time for down time since I am also trying to study for the upcoming CHES exam in April. I've been doing my best to stay healthy physically and mentally, but hoping some nicer weather will arrive soon, and possibly help my winter blues mood. I'm excited to see what the next couple months will bring here at the Institute as it's been an enjoyable month.