

Dimension's Reflective Paper

Aid to Women Internship

My internship at Aid to Women was a fantastic experience. Aid to Women is a faith-based crisis pregnancy center that provides free pregnancy tests and counseling to women in need. In addition to supporting women who may be pregnant, the organization also serves mothers in need of material, spiritual, and social assistance. They do so by offering individual counseling services, running a food pantry and clothes closet, and teaching classes that cater to a variety of interests, such as sewing, aerobics, cooking, Bible studies, and parenting.

The initial goal of Aid to Women was to provide counseling services for women who may be pregnant. To this day, Aid to Women provides pregnancy counseling to hundreds of women each year. In 2005 alone, 605 pregnancy tests were administered to women by 25 volunteer counselors. The typical client is single (73%), white (74%), and between the ages of 20 and 24 (39%). Clients are counseled by local volunteers, such as myself, who underwent a 40-hour, intensive training geared specifically for counseling potentially pregnant women. Classes and the Equipped to Serve manual stress the importance of making positive contact with the client, reducing her anxiety, focusing on the immediate issues, fully exploring the client's options, evaluating her resources/support system, and following up on the client to provide additional support if necessary. The goal of the counseling center is not to "save babies" or protest at abortion clinics, but to fully explore the client's options and to make sure she makes her own decisions based on accurate information. Like I said, I underwent this training and was

able to enter the counseling room with clients to hear their stories and test results. I never was able to counsel; however, with more involvement in the future I will be able to continue with my training.

I also worked intensely in the department of Client Support, which provides additional support to women and their families through the Earn While You Learn Program. In exchange for attending one of the many classes offered at Aid to Women, clients are not only given each week material goods, such as food and clothing, but also free childcare during class hours. Classes cater to a variety of interests, including sewing, aerobics, cooking, Bible study, computers, Post Abortion Stress recovery, prenatal-newborn, and parenting. I participated in this area by working with clients one on one at in the food pantry and clothes closet, attending courses, and maintaining the work areas by stocking shelves and unloading donations.

A third area I worked in was Prevention Services, which is predominantly concerned with working with other local agencies, schools, and churches with promoting abstinence education. I attended various city-wide meetings, including the Health and Wellness Taskforce, which is currently developing sex education curriculum for area schools. In addition, I visited other organizations such as A.S.A.C. and Four Oaks to learn more about their relationship with Aid to Women.

I learned a lot about what I'd like to do in the future from this experience. I have already applied to graduate schools; however, I must admit that it felt so nice to be able to say everyday that I was headed off to work. The change of pace in the workforce is dramatically different in comparison to Cornell. I love school. I'm a great student, constantly on the go, looking for something to do. At Aid to Women, slowing down was

my biggest adjustment and after I was accustomed to it, it felt very nice. I also realized that I really like working at a social service agency. My sites have been on counseling for so long, but I think I need to experience the workforce before I commit myself to a doctorate program. I will keep a Masters in mind, however.