

Family Mentorship Experience Overview

2006-2007

Coordinator: Elaine Ogburn, Family Mentorship Specialist

As part of the clinical and community-based practicum, trainees participate in a Family Mentorship Experience in which they are paired with a family of a child with a developmental disability. Through monthly telephone calls and five or more visits during the year, which may involve home visits or participation in other family activities, the trainee has the opportunity to experience and understand the realities of rearing a child with a disability. Each family decides with the trainee what type of activities would be beneficial. Activities may include, for example, a visit to a clinic, a trip to the grocery store, attendance at a school IEP meeting, an afternoon at the pool, helping out with dinner/evening/bedtime one evening, or lunch at a fast food restaurant. The family benefits as well because they may be able to participate in activities that may be difficult alone with their children, and they appreciate the opportunity to share their lives, experiences, and expertise with professionals who will be working with families like themselves.

Participating families are diverse in culture, socioeconomic status, and structure as well as in the age and disability of the child. They share a desire to help train professionals and a willingness to be open in their lives. In order to benefit from this diversity and broaden their experiences, trainees meet twice during the year to share what they have been learning through their family mentorship relationship, and they participate together in Blackboard (internet) discussions twice during the year. They practice respect and maintenance of families' confidentiality throughout these activities. Trainees also record their experiences and reflections in a confidential journal, which is reviewed twice during the year by their faculty advisor and the Family Mentorship Specialist, or share their experiences and reflections in the context of a confidential discussion group attended by their faculty advisor and the Family Mentorship Specialist.

In the process, trainees gain a "real world" perspective: they become sensitized to how families live with a disability, they come to appreciate the strengths of and diversity among families, and they recognize the similarities to families who do not have a child with a disability. The Family Mentorship Experience opportunity contributes to their becoming leaders in promoting family-centered care.

The Family Mentorship Experience counts as 30% of the grade for one practicum credit hour during the Spring semester.

Objectives:

1. To become sensitive to how families live with a disability in order to consider the family and its routine when developing treatment plans and interventions in your professional capacity.
2. To appreciate family strengths and recognize the family as the expert in their child, in order to promote parent-professional partnerships.
3. To recognize the similarities to families who **do not** have a member with a disability, in order to see families who **do** have a member with a disability as part of the community.
4. To appreciate the variety in families.
5. To develop leadership in promoting systems change among professional peers regarding family-centered care.

Components of the Family Mentorship Experience 2006-2007:

1. Family Mentorship Experience orientation: Thursday, September 7, 4:30-5:30 p.m.
2. Picnic for trainees and families: Saturday, September 23, 4:00-6:00 p.m., Huguenot Park.
3. Five face-to-face visits with your mentoring family between September and April.
4. One phone conversation a month to stay in touch with your family.
5. Journal to record your observations and reflections on the visits you are having with your family, to be turned in for review by your faculty mentor and FME faculty member mid-year and at end of year
-OR-
Journal discussion group meeting mid-year and at end of year to share FME experiences and receive feedback from the group, 4:00-5:30 p.m.

Journals are due and journal discussions will be held on:
Monday, December 4
Thursday, April 19
6. FME training session in issues around chronic illness/death/grieving: Thursday, October 5, 4:00-6:40 p.m.
7. Two group discussions of your FME with your fellow trainees (in addition to journal discussion groups mentioned in #5 above):
Monday, January 29, 4:00-5:30 p.m.
Monday, April 30, 5:00-7:00 p.m.
8. Participation in Blackboard (web-based) discussions on specific FME-related topics/questions twice during the year (plus a practice activity). Postings will be due:
Monday, October 2 (practice activity only)
Monday, November 6
Monday, March 5
9. Written evaluation of FME at end of year, due Monday, April 23.
10. End-of-year picnic with mentoring families, Saturday, May 12, 4:00-6:00 p.m., location TBA.