Courtney Cason

History

I have always known that I wanted to go into a profession of helping people. From an incredibly young age, I always felt inclined to help people. What drove me to social work was the experience I had as a child. I grew up in a very poverty-stricken situation. There were times without food. There were times where I had been treated differently because of the need to separate me from other students because of headlice. It was traumatizing and embarrassing. I remember as a child my brothers were always in trouble with law-enforcement. Initially, I thought I wanted to go into law-enforcement, or some type of criminal justice related field so that I could help individuals in that facet. My brother’s experience really shaped who I am today. My mother engaged in years of opioid use complicated matters. I remember seeing my mother, more times than not, passed out from her substance use. This behavior left my brothers and I unattended to. They were involved with juvenile officers and spent much of their youth in juvenile detention centers. To this day, my brother’s have served time in jail and prison. I feel like I used my mother and brother’s situation as a driving force to go the exact opposite way.

There were not many individuals in my life who offered love, support, and encouragement. However, I know today that this is what children need to thrive. I am very thankful to be where I am today. Resiliency is a key piece of my story and who I am today. When I started college, I thought I was going to go straight through social work. However, when I entered my bachelor’s degree, I decided to go the route of criminal justice. It just kept tugging at me. Once my undergraduate studies were finished, I went into graduate school majoring in criminal justice. The human services field is where I have spent my entire adult working career. Further, criminal justice, has provided me a unique experience when serving as a member of the mental health court panel. While serving as a member on this panel, I was able to have a dual perspective. During this time, I went back and forth, ultimately, deciding just two years after finishing my graduate studies, I wanted to go back to school for a master’s in social work. I really felt like that is where my passion lied. This has brought me to where I am now, finishing up my MSW, and working as a director for mental health services. I absolutely love my job. So why pursue another degree? Well, that is simple, I wanted to grow and feel like I have the skills to help me succeed as a clinical director in the mental health field. I felt like I could not get those skills without getting my master’s in social work. Further, I want to be able to have client involvement again, so having my license makes all the sense.

MSW Learning Experiences

I feel empowered by all the courses that I have taken throughout my MSW journey. I have worked the past five years as a qualified mental health professional due to receiving an exception from the Department of Mental Health. This designation has allowed me to provide provisional diagnosing within the comprehensive assessments to further capitalize on my skills. All the knowledge I had was self-taught by reviewing the DSM-V. The course DSM-V and Psychopathy truly helped me piece things together more intricately. Further, I was able to look at diagnoses’ I have never reviewed before. This course taught me so much. I also feel like the Social Work Skills course provided me specific social work skills, such as reflecting, summarizing, probing, empathizing, and active listening which helped me understand how to interact with a client. Over the years, I have worked many times with clients, however, after taking this course, I felt like it set me up for success. Additionally, I feel like understanding the code of ethics and understanding how to make decisions with an ethical-based framework has helped me, even now within my current employment. It has been worth the time, energy, money, and sacrifice. Even now, in field practicum, having client involvement, has reminded me why I have gotten into this profession. I have gotten far removed from direct client involvement through my role as a director. I have determined I want to lead professionals and be involved with direct client care.

Theoretical Perspectives

I have acquired a good foundation of CBT within the SSW. I am significantly drawn to dialectical behavioral therapy. In the past, I have worked on a DBT consultation team as a caseworker. I have been fortunate enough to rejoin in my final practicum experience. I appreciate and value this framework for many reasons, such as the non-judgmental piece, emotion regulation, distress tolerance, interpersonal effectiveness, and mindfulness. I practice these behaviors in my personal and professional life daily. I believe it is an evidenced based treatment modality that can help individuals not die from suicide. As an individual so passionate about working with individuals who have severe and persistent mental illness that impacts their quality of life, I truly value DBT. I have always been drawn to the work that therapists on the DBT consultation team deliver. These individuals are available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week for coaching calls. These coaches are literally lifelines to individuals who are fighting to stay alive. Coaching calls provide individuals a means to talk through potential self-harm and find skills to utilize when they are struggling. I’m drawn to working with adults who have S&PMI. I find that DBT is a valuable treatment modality that I could use in the future along with my social work skills. My social work skills include the ability to help draw on clients’ strengths and help identify vulnerabilities. A strength-based approach is so valuable to meet a client just where they are. This would allow me to serve this vulnerable population once again as an advocate for DBT.

Short Term Learning Goals

My short-term learning goal is to feel like I am fully prepared to take the Association of Social Work Board exam. I think much about this exam and what it means to me. I want to feel prepared to become licensed. I have invested a lot into my MSW by soaking up all the social work skills and now applying them in my professional practice. I want to feel confident and prepared as I become a licensed social worker.

Professional Goals

My career goal is to have direct client involvement again by seeing a few clients; specifically, by providing dialectical behavior therapy. Further, by contributing to the theoretical knowledge base of the social work profession through practice-based research. I think about my growth as a social worker. By learning and adding to my skill set through continuing my education as a social worker, I will be committed to lifelong learning. Additionally, the ability to draw on client strengths and apply theories of human behavior is one of my strongest skill sets. I plan to further explore leadership roles within Compass Health Network. I believe I poses skills to be a leader and create change within Compass Health Network on a human advocacy level. This would be my 10-to-15-year professional goal. Why settle for what you have now when you can reach for the stars.