

Project SAVE Saves Lives - Reflections at the Halfway Point

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Today marks my seventh week interning with Project SAVE and I can't believe how fast time flies! I've already learned so much. Over the past few weeks, I've gotten into a routine: how to maneuver through crazy New Orleans construction to get Downtown, the names of many of the staff we work with at Civil Court, and where everything is located in our renovated office, just to name a few. Most mornings, I accompany the attorneys to court where I do everything from supporting clients, assist with filing and getting copies, pulling records, and watching the court proceedings. Even though I have sat in on many Protective Order hearings, there is

always something new for me to learn. In the afternoons, I typically assist with clerical work and sit in on client interviews.

I'm happy to announce that I've already completed 2 of my learning objectives. One of my completed learning objectives for the summer was to observe, from start to finish, the role that Project SAVE plays in assisting clients with receiving permanent protective orders. For at least 1 client, I was to sit in on all meetings between the client and the attorney, assist with filing all pertinent legal documents, observe the court proceedings, and complete the necessary motion to withdrawal paperwork. In June, we assisted 24 new clients and I was able to observe firsthand the role the legal system plays in offering protection to those survivors of domestic violence. Due to the nature of our work, I can't share the names and stories of our clients, but on one of my first days at my internship I was able to sit in on a interview with a college-aged woman who was seeking protection for herself and her son. With the assistance of Project SAVE, she was able to receive a civil injunction and temporary sole custody of her minor child. This is just one example of the many clients we work with. I have also observed clients receive 6 to 18 month protective orders and temporary use of the family home. For another client, we had a 4 hour status conference between the judge, our client, and the defendant to resolve issues stemming from their prior consent judgement. In addition to these learning objectives, I have been developing my professional skills which is something that I can transfer to all aspects of my life, from my academics to my leadership in campus organizations to my future career plans.

Through my internship with Project SAVE, I have gained a deeper understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence and the role that comprehensive services play in assisting victims and their families. Additionally, I'm learning just how prevalent domestic violence is in our community. Part of my clerical work consists in helping compile the monthly reports and client profiles. Our clients come from a wide variety of backgrounds — married and unmarried, young and old, African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, and Asian. Just to give you an idea of our client demographics (from 2014): 90% are female, 74% are African American, 54% are between 26 and 40 years of age, 66% are never married, and 29% have annual incomes under \$10,000. This demonstrates that, in order to stop the cycle of domestic violence, community organizations need to integrate themselves into all parts of the city and provide comprehensive services and education.

The skills and knowledge I have gained from this internship have deepened my desire to pursue my Master's in Psychology and attend Law School. Project SAVE has shown me that my passion lies with assisting underserved women and families! Before interning with the organization, I could not have imagined the extent of the need that exists within the New Orleans community to provide legal services to victims of domestic violence and I am so thankful to have found an organization that has taken the time to mentor, educate, and encourage me to follow my academic and career dreams.

I like to stay busy but when I'm not interning with Project SAVE or working as a Research Assistant in one of Tulane's Social Psychology labs, I love to visit the farmers markets (check out [Crescent City Farmers Market](#)) and explore Uptown. There is so much to do in the city and summer is the perfect time to do that since I'm not taking classes. New Orleans loves holidays and my roommate and I celebrated the 4th of July in style with BBQ, fireworks, country music, and a Zephyrs game! New Orleans is a great place to be over the summer and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

It's already July and I only have a few more weeks left with Project SAVE, but I can't wait to share more about my internship with you!