

My First Week At Metro

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When searching for an internship for summer 2014, I want to pursue opportunities that would challenge me in a new, exciting way. A friend of mine directed me to Metropolitan Center for Women and Children encouraging me to apply given her own rewarding experience, the wide range of volunteer opportunities, and the flexibility to establish some personal goals and pursue them. Given these aspects, I thought Metro would give me the autonomy to explore some varying career possibilities while also being involved with an organization to which I can feel personally connected and invested.

The Metropolitan Center for Women and Children aims “to break the cycle of violence through advocacy, intervention, empowerment and transformation”.

Located in Jefferson Parish, the Metro Center offers a plethora of services including a crisis line, counseling, shelter, legal advice, medical assistance, and referrals. They also advocate on behalf of victims of sexual assault and human trafficking. Metro works to provide women and families with resources they need to strengthen themselves emotionally and physically. They hope that their survivors can contribute to their communities and that, in turn, the community feels compelled to contribute to Metro's efforts.

After securing an internship with Metro, I first had to participate in 3 2-hour training sessions. The training was super interesting and included topics such as self-preservation, human trafficking, different types of violence, and resources available in the city. I really admired Metro proactively acknowledging that it is emotionally challenging to work with clients in abusive situations. They stressed that taking care of yourself and leaving work at work are essential to remaining mentally and emotionally healthy. I also found their guide to resources available in the city particularly interesting. Metro, given their focus on victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and given their location in Jefferson Parish, cannot help everyone who calls the shelter. Frequently they receive calls from outside of Jefferson Parish or from women simply looking for shelter. While Metro cannot directly help everyone, they try to connect people with resources that better fit their callers' needs. Training consists of a total of 40 hours and I fulfill the next 34 hours by shadowing Metro staff while working.

As an intern at Metro, I hold several different responsibilities. I help with upkeep in the office as well as the shelter. During my first week I worked with the child advocate to sort and organize the children boutique's donations. She is a recent graduate of LSU Graduate School of Social Work and it was really interesting discussing social work as a field of study and the challenges she faced/faces as a student and as a social worker. I also worked on reorganizing the records kept at Metro, filtering out files that predated 2007 and organizing them alphabetically. While a bit mundane, it was interesting to see how far back some of their records went. I hope to expand my responsibilities as time passes with the possibility of beginning a personal project with the outreach staff there.

I hope that working with Metro Center will provide me with the opportunity to work with and for women and children in a capacity I have never experienced. Being a cast member of the Vagina Monologues has helped me to value each woman's personal experience. Through interning with Metro, I want to learn how to become a

better, more active, and more accountable ally to and advocate for all women, each with their own experience. Ideally, I would love to learn how to invest my skills in a way that would help me continuously live out this goal. I am excited to challenge myself in this new working environment and to see what the rest of the summer has in store for me!