

Internship: Case Management Experience

Lutheran Family Services, International heartland Center

I have worked for Lutheran family Services LFS, International Center of the Heartland ICH for six months. I worked as a Client Specialist especially with Sudanese communities. Working for LFS connected me with Sudanese families experiencing domestic violence, abuse, separation and low income status. I am Sudanese by nationality and have lived in Omaha, Nebraska for 10 years of my residency here in the United States.

The higher-level responsibility that required learning of new professional was working with a family with domestic violence issues. I was assigned to work with this family. They are married and with four children. They came to the United on August of 2002. The man has been jobless for quite long time. Her wife is employed at Tyson Food Company. Their three kids go to elementary school and the little stay home with dad.

In Sudanese culture the man cannot cook nor doing any household work. It is a woman responsibility. Now in the United States the household work or any duty should be shared equally between the husband and wife. Their problems arise for not sharing duties in the house. The woman goes to work in the evening. She expects her husband to look after kids and responsible for the household work. Her husband never anticipates accepting any responsibility in the house. He said he is the husband and a head of the house. He is not supposed to do household work. His wife wants him to do some work when she is at work. She told him to leave the apartment because he is not helping her. She comes home tired for 8 hours work. When she comes home from work at 12:00 midnight she has to cook and make children go to bed. The children do not get enough sleep. They feel sleepy in their classes.

One morning they got in a fight because her husband never listens to her. She called the police and wanted her husband to leave the apartment. The police asked her whether she wants to abandon him. She said that she does not want him in the apartment but he can come and visit his children. She said there is no reason for him to live in the apartment while he is not helping me. The police told the husband to leave the apartment. He left the apartment and went to his cousin apartment.

Two weeks later the husband called the Lutheran Family Services, International Center of the Heartland to help him apply for General Assistance with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. He had an appointment to come and I started the case file process. When he came to the office my Supervisor assigned me to help him apply for assistance. He has limited knowledge in English to communicate. I am Sudanese by nationality and from the same tribe (Dinka) with him. When I sat down with him to open a case file he said that his wife and the police banned him not to see his family. He said that his wife has been abusing him. She asked him to do house work, though they are woman duties and responsibilities. Because he failed to do the house work his wife called the police and police told him to leave the apartment.

I open a case file and listed items that he needs assistance including transport, food, rent and others. As far as his assistance goes we have connected him with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services wants prove of income or pay stuff from his wife. This is a difficult part because he is not talking his wife any more. His wife WOULD never pickup or answer phone calls. We wrote the letter to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to take off his food stump portion since he is no longer living with his family. They accepted our request and approved his assistance. They

have provided him with bus tickets for transportation, food stamps, and cash assistance. I am still working with Section 8 Housing for him to get an apartment. His life is balanced now

A month later he came back and said that he is hearing voices. These voices say they will kill him and his family. He sees people dying with hunger. I took him to the psychiatric doctor. The doctor said that he has behavior problems. The doctor prescribed medicines and he failed to take them. Last Week a Client Specialist, Medical Provider and I met to discuss how the client should stay on track. We talked about many things to make sure he makes positive progress. As we met with him, we noticed that he is not staying on track to take his meds as prescribed by his Medical Provider. We believe it is important to meet with him every two week to make sure he is taking his medication. I have seen no changes made regarding his inability to take his medication on time.

This client is difficult to work with because he never agrees on one thing. He believes he knows everything. His demands are high and they cannot be reached at once. He wants you to give him a ride wherever he wants to go. He comes to the office without an appointment and wants you to give him a ride home. These few things make it difficult for us to work with him and give him the support he needs. When I open his case file, I made it clear to him that the Lutheran Family Services, International Center of Heartland works with you to make sure that you are healthy and live a better life in the community.

I learned that this client has a higher demanding attitude. He believes his interests are supposed to be met. In order to work with this client, he needs to be able to understand, be able to have meaningful communication and be able to listen to the information that is given to him. We will continue to monitor his medicines schedule. We believe by taking his medicine in a timely manner that this will enable him to improve.

I believe that Sudanese men should never mistreat their wives based on their traditional beliefs. Here in the United a husband and wife should share work equally. When someone goes to work and the one at home should do the house work. As immigrants to this great country I believe it is important for Sudanese families to care for one another. It is also important to know the language to be able to communicate with people. Knowing the language will help them find jobs, create friendships, improve your knowledge and learn the culture. I always advise my Sudanese families to utilize this opportunity to be able to go to school or find work to help their beloved ones here in the United States and back home in Sudan.

Therefore, the Sudanese communities should educate themselves and be able to understand one other need. Many of them came to the United States for refuge because there is war in their own country. They shouldn't be fighting against themselves. I am glad to work for Lutheran Family Services, International Center for the Heartland because I am able to meet with Sudanese facing family crisis. I have learned and gained knowledge about issues facing Sudanese communities here in the United States. I would be willing to meet with our Sudanese community organizers and advise them about eradicating domestic violence among families. I think we need to have a community resource center where we teach families to stop abusing their beloved ones. If the Sudanese families want to live here in the United States I think they need to follow the law.