

## THURSDAY CAREERS CHATS

Date of Session: 3-22-12 Title of Session: Social Work Careers

Alumni Presenter: Jill Damiani Class Year: 2001

Title: Social Work Supervisor, Bridges to Health Employer: New Alternatives for Children

### Notes from Session:

#### Background

- Graduated in 2001 with a major in anthropology
- Worked in hospital administration for five years after graduating, and simultaneously pursued her MSW part-time (she recommends doing graduate school full-time if you can afford it)
- While in graduate school, she had two internships: prevention and play therapy
- Graduated with her MSW in 2006 and began working as a Foster Care Social Worker at New Alternatives for Children. She worked for 3 ½ years in that role and now works as a Social Work Supervisor for New Alternatives for Children's Bridges to Health program. (The program provides auxiliary services to children in foster care to help them remain in the appropriate living situation).

#### Foster Care Social Work

- Typical turnover for that type of position would be 18-24 months – can be very emotionally draining (hobbies, friends in the workplace, etc. all help to overcome the emotional stress...some social workers even see therapists to help avoid "secondary trauma"...it's important to be able to figure out ways in which you can get through the day-to-day without being weighed down by what you're seeing and hearing on the job)
- Great exposure to the social services field, good first position (interact with schools, court social workers, attorneys, etc.), helps you refine what you want your social work career to look like
- She worked 60+ hours as a Foster Care Social Worker (about 30 % in office and 70% in field...court, meetings, families). She could have used more office time because there's a lot of paper work in social work.
- It's NOT a 9-5 job, which she views as a perk
- Home visits can be awkward, but it's the most enlightening component of the assessment
- Supervision in these types of positions is really important – look for a position that will offer at least an hour a week with your supervisor (to talk about your feelings and needs and to help you work through things so you can best help the family)

#### Where Social Workers Find Employment

- Corporations – EPAs (companies provide mental health services to employees)
- Hospitals, schools
- Child welfare (prevention, foster care, adoption, post-adoption, etc.)

#### MSW

- Will outline different components of social work: research, policy, direct practice
- Helps prepare for licensing
- Learn social work "lingo," non-verbal cues, approaches, etc.
- Will have internships as part of the program. If you're interested in hospital social work or school social work, do one of your internships in those areas to help with marketability – it can be difficult to get jobs in those areas.
- There are some social services jobs that don't require a master's, but they might provide less support than what you'd want as a social worker

#### Marketability

- They look for people open to constructive criticism, team players/collaborative skills
  - Connections in the field are important (both on the job and for job searching)
  - Volunteer work is great to get a foot in the door (to find out more about an agency, for networking, to gain marketability).
- Internships are less common for undergraduates, they're usually reserved for graduate students.

#### Look for jobs:

- o Socialservice.com
- o Idealist.org
- o Child welfare board of major cities