

CAREER EXPLORATION QUESTIONS: Latoya Samuels Mentored Internship Coordinator at the New York Foundling

- How do you spend a typical day or week? Is there such a thing as a typical day? There are no typical days. When servicing teens in foster care there are always unexpected variables. On Mondays all the weekly tasks are loaded into the system. The interns have their daily tasks, but the variations arise from personal issues that they often experience.
- How did you get into this line of work? Was yours a typical career path? What other paths did you consider? Ms. Samuels' career started at Seamen's Society and then Administration for Children's Services in case management and child abuse investigations. She planned to attend nursing school but that never materialized because she did not have the financial resources at the time.
- What kinds of skills are needed for your job? Ms. Samuels reported that she spends most of her time listening without thinking about a response. You also have to be willing to help, empathize and be patient. The work can be frustrating because you may find yourself trying to convince a person to strive for a goal and they have already given up. She reported that you often find yourself being gingerly realistic. Interns are often required to do research on the requirements and expectations of specific careers to encourage them to set realistic goals. She stated that you are often addressing mental health concerns and trying to ensure that the interns are addressing the issues that may be impediments to their future employment. She reported that she has learned to be a saleswoman because the interns are working with a mentor who may need

ongoing encouragement. She reported that must ensure that she is supportive to both the interns and the mentors. She stated that the mentors can be sometimes frustrated with the interns lack of stability and she must remind them that the youth are in foster care and constantly addressing personal issues as they arise.

- What is your work environment like? How would you describe your colleagues? She stated that the job is now completely virtual, and she has been working from a remote location in Alabama. She stated that that she does not really have a work environment because most people in the office are now working remotely. She stated that as a social service agency she would normally be working with other social service providers. The office would generally consist of case managers, case aids and other preventive service workers. She stated that she still communicates with the colleagues who are mentoring the foster care youth in the program.

- What are some of the things you like most/least about your job? She stated that what she liked the most about her field was knowing that wherever she went she would always find employment. She also specifically enjoys the freedom the position has given her to plan and design the program. She reported that she has control of her budget and appreciates that she can compensate the foster care youth and encourage them to prepare for the future. She stated that she has felt useful and knows that she has been impactful in the lives of the foster care youth in her program. She has enjoyed working for a supervisor that trusts her and does not micromanage. What she likes the least is the fact that she does not work with colleagues. She has been a one person staff and her supervisor does not actually assist in tasks. She stated that she is responsible for everything and often feels like there is too much expected of her. She stated that taking a vacation is difficult because she does not have any backup and would literally be responsible for planning her coverage when she goes. She stated that there are emotional days

when she feels the weight of her expectations. She stated that the reports and the redundancy are also aspects of the jobs she likes the least.

- What kind of work schedule does this career require (overtime, weekends, freelancing, travel, etc.)? The position will be marketed as a weekday full time position, typically 9am- 5pm. There are no planned weekends, but she often will prepare reports on weekend. Ms. Samuels stated that she will sometimes use the weekends to review her budget, but this is not required. She stated that she will usually have contact with the foster care youth as needed even if she is not performing tasks for work. She stated that she does not like to let them down and will often respond when they contact her. She stated that if there is a task to be done, she will ensure that it is complete.

- What is a typical entry-level position? What about starting salaries? What advancement opportunities exist beyond the entry level? Typical entry level position at the New York Foundling is Case Aid or cCse Manager. The starting salaries are typically around 38- 45k annually. The New York Foundling provides a variety of voluntary services and there are many advancement opportunities. The position that Latoya currently has is somewhat unique. They have programs that are supported by grants and special budgets and these programs allow for more variety and input from the coordinator.

- How do you like your overall career and lifestyle? Ms. Samuels reported that she was pleased overall but would like to spend more time on self-care. She stated that because of her own upbringing she has a special understanding for foster care youth and was able to inspire them. She stated she feels useful and that is important but there are days when she considers walking away. She stated that she honors her commitments and has felt that this field has far too many

commitments. She has considered getting a job for pure financial reasons and finding a way to help this population in another capacity. She stated that she the thought comes and goes and she continues to plan and ensure that the her task are completed.

- What advice would you offer me if I chose to pursue a career in this area? CAREER

PREPARATION/JOB SEARCH QUESTIONS: She stated that I should make sure that I want to devote this much time, and energy to a job. She stated that when you work with human beings that being off-duty was different. She stated that things are always happening, and it can be very hard to put things down. Ms. Samuels is neither married, nor a parent and reported that she has wondered how she would have juggled additional household responsibilities. She stated that I need to work on my listening skills and remember that everyone does not want advice, no matter how perfect.

- What kind of education/training does one need to get into this field? Can you recommend specific graduate programs? Social work training is needed for this field. They will hire any prospective employer with a bachelor's degree in any human services field. Normally an MSW would be required for this position but she was hired with 13 years of experience.
- Is on-the-job training available/required? They provide continue education credits yearly. They also provide staff trainings to ensure that the staff remains current on new laws and policies.
- How are job openings publicized in this field? What trade or professional journals do you read? She reported that she did not read any professional journals regularly. She stated that they have mandatory training and they will often be asked to review and discuss pertinent articles during the trainings. She stated that aside from training she does not read journals unless there is a memo and article attached sent via email.

- How do most people get hired in this organization? Are some methods more effective than others? People are hired because they are referred by friends. The company pays a financial incentive to promote employee referring future employees. They also broadcast job openings on employment websites.

- Do you offer internships? She is currently overseeing the internships for the youth in foster care, but they also have MSW interns at the agency.

- Are candidates for full-time employment considered from the intern pool? Yes, there have been interns who eventually came to work at the agency

- Are there opportunities for part-time or freelance work? Yes. The position she is working now has fluid parameters and budget that is always expanding. They have pilot programs that arrive often due to new funding and initiate programs funded by the city.

- How competitive is the entry-level job market in this geographical area? • They pay salaries along the median range. The New York Foundling is considered competitive because they are a big agency and they have many different programs and positions. The position was based out of the Queens location office and the salary would not be very impressive for that location. She has been staying in Alabama and reports that the salary is considered competitive in her current location.

- Can you think of other jobs that would enable me to combine my skills in reentry and my interests in at risk youth? She suggested a program where Family Functional Therapy was used as an intervention of at-risk youth. This therapy occurs in the home environment and is intensive and based on the whole family.

- What is the employment outlook in this field? How is this industry doing? What are the emerging jobs in this career area? This field will always exist. They introduce a new model occasionally, but there will always be people in need of social services. They have downsized after pandemic and many providers are working remotely. The services are still being provided. They have new initiatives and funding for trafficked youth. They change in accordance with the law and the needs of the community. They provide additional services whenever additional funding is available.

- Whom would you recommend I contact for more information? She directed me to the New York Foundling website to look over the new employment opportunities.