

Interning with LCRC

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Abstract

My internship experience was nothing short of amazing. The title of my position was the CAP Reentry Data Collection and Analyst Intern. CAP stands for the Community Action Partnership. This job gave me the ability to work with people in different positions and impact groups that served to improve the lives of citizens returning from prison. Some of the tasks that I had to do were join meetings with impact groups, participate in Lancaster County Reentry Coalition (LCRC) meetings, help create a data collection process, create based on various demographics, and help identify underlying reasons for recidivism based on Lancaster's definition of recidivism. Recidivism refers broadly to reoffending, and common measurements of recidivism include rearrest, reconviction, reincarceration, or a supervision violation. While I didn't know what I could expect from this internship, everything that I did was worth it. This internship gave me an experience that would serve to improve my performance in the field of government after college. It was an opportunity that I was happy to take thanks to my professor. Dr. Carrie Smith remembered me from my Social Statistics class and got me started on the process to work at this internship.

The position that I was given was the CAP Reentry Data Collection and Analyst Intern. This was actually with the Lancaster County Reentry Coalition (LCRC) which was housed at CAP (Community Action Partnership). I started this internship in June. The internship lasted from the Summer of 2021 to the end of the Fall semester of 2021 as I was given the opportunity to continue working with the Lancaster County Reentry Coalition. Reentry, in this context, is when an individual is released from prison or jail to re-enter society. This role had an abundance of tasks for me to do. There were some that I was not able to do until my fall

semester though. These duties being raw data collection through different databases, reading criminal dockets, and working on the resource directory. This was mainly because we did not have the plan that we had in the fall semester, and I had also started a little late due to clearances.

Position and Tasks

In the summer semester, my tasks were to sit in on LCRC meetings, process mapping meetings, speak to other staff to obtain additional information, report any observations from meetings to my supervisor, and search for any other data

elements that would be beneficial in determining gaps in the reentry process of individuals. Some meetings were on zoom while the process mapping meeting was at the Lancaster County Prison. I found myself attending meetings once a week. Process mapping happened every couple of weeks. From these duties I was able to learn about the difficulties that returning citizens faced, see how different impact groups work together and formulate plans for the future, and how staff interact with each other in the workplace. Some of these difficulties could be the inability to afford housing, medical services, food, or applying for jobs. I also worked on trauma-informed care assignments. In the fall semester, it was different. These tasks were to help me develop an understanding of not only the underlying reasons for recidivism but to also try and create a data collection process to identify underlying reasons. Recidivism refers broadly to reoffending, and common measurements of recidivism include rearrest, conviction, reincarceration, or a supervision violation. There were some underlying jobs that I had as well such as responding to State Correctional Institution (SCI) letters. These were letters from returning citizens that I responded to with certain resources and services that are open for them once they are back in Lancaster. Some letters could come from the Lancaster prison while others from prisons outside of Lancaster. Complications arose in the data collection process which forced a change in what was done. My team and I were not able to get the go ahead on the process so we had to shift gears. This came in the form of the resource directory which became the main goal after some weeks of working on the original plan.

When it came to the resource directory, the plan was to make it more comprehensive for returning citizens. This required us to send emails to different

services, look through their websites, and make calls in order to make sure all of the information was there. This was not easy as some services did not have all of their information present for what was needed. We did have documents that would allow us to see contact information of some services, but for others, we had a more difficult time. By the end of the fall semester, we were able to leave the directory in the hands of our supervisor, Carrie Kurtz. Despite how tedious it may seem, working on this directory was worth it.

Expectations

This internship was an opportunity that I received from my professor, Dr. Carrie Smith. I had her for Social Statistics and due to my determination and will to understand the material, she remembered me when the position opened up. I wasn't sure of what to expect besides a lot of work, multiple meetings, and note-taking. While these things were there, I enjoyed every bit of it, from the summer to the fall. The internship exceeded any expectation that I had. In the summer, I was given a better understanding of the reentry process and the barriers that continue to impede this process in the summer. I never expected to type up letters for returning citizens but that is what I did. I didn't expect to meet the warden at the Lancaster County Prison either. By the end, I realized just how much people work to make some kind of change within the justice system at the local level. This internship allowed me to develop a better understanding of the challenges that incarcerated individuals face, while also understanding what challenges are more along the lines of structure than agency. In the fall, I didn't expect our data collection plan to come to a halt. I also didn't expect to work on a resource directory which would prove beneficial for returning citizens. While I expected to learn some skills, a

specific skill that I improved on was communication. There was a moment in the fall portion of my internship where my communication was lacking so I created a document full of details of everything I did during each day I was in the office. This led to more work getting done and nothing being repeated. There was an increase in efficiency because of the necessary steps taken after receiving the criticism that was needed.

This is an experience that I find beneficial for many others to take. You work with great people, receive a thorough understanding of the reentry process and barriers to reentry,

and brainstorm ideas that are necessary in helping returning citizens.