

# **Summary Report for Overseas Placement in Michigan (Summer Placement from June to August 2016)**

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## **(1) Introduction**

1.1 Catholic Social Services (CSS) was established in May 1959 in Detroit by some of the community leaders with the purpose to provide support for the disadvantaged families regardless of their race, faith and social-economic status in the society. It is a private, non-profit organization, anchored upon the faith-based philosophy, believing that social service is an essential component of the mission of the church.

1.2 The period of 1950s in the United States of America (USA) had undergone significant changes, especially in the development of industrialization which paved the way for Catholic Social Service of Washtenaw (CSSW) to render support for individuals and families during the period. CSSW's objective was to advocate for the poor, the powerless and the oppressed, preventing the deterioration of individual and family life which in turn would enhanced and improved the quality of life.

1.3 CSSW provides a variety of programme and services to the community, a division of 6 arms, comprised of (i) Counselling, (ii) Foster Care and Adoption, (iii) Food and Health, (iv) Parenting and Families, (v) Seniors and finally (vi) Collaborations and Partnerships. During my internship I was mostly involved in co-facilitating the separate group work conducted for perpetrators of domestic violence for both genders who were mandated by the Court. I was also engaged in doing home visits for the programme on Nurturing Families Programme (NFP) for cases with borderline issues of child protective concerns. Occasionally, I would helped at the Food Bank to distribute food rations for low income families registered with CSSW.

## **(2) Brief Account of the work assignments**

2.1 After every group work conducted, we will make a brief account of what were some of the observation and assessment made about the participants. This will be

discussed as a team of facilitators during the debrief session and make a note for recording purpose. This helped to track the engagement and progress of individual participants in the sessions and report to their individual parole officer.

2.2 In the NFP, needs assessment will be made after every home visit to discuss about the families' situation and the follow up intervention to ensure the child's safety and well being continuing living with their current caregivers. There was a case that the family was undergoing crisis where we have assessed the child's living environment and well being were being compromised. The officer in charge who brought me for the home visit had taken immediate action to inform her supervisor and then tighter supervision was enforced to ensure the child's safety. However, the family was not receptive and the child was subsequently assessed suitable to be placed in alternative care with his maternal grandmother.

2.3 I have designed a Chinese translated signatures to display at the food of the Food Bank as some of our clients were Chinese Nationals and they could not read English words nor understand English Speaking volunteers during the food distribution. With the Chinese signatures, they could recognise the food type and decide if they need the food for themselves. Moreover, my interpretation has also delighted them due to familiarity in language.

2.4 For the case in NFP, we have exercised the theoretical framework and practice models in intervening to ensure the child's safety and well being. In view of the young age of the child, aged 3, he has limited capacity to ensure his own safety or even to request for help. He was observed with clothing that smelled, unkempt presentation and living in an environment with cluttered items lying around the house of exposed used and unused diapers, toys, food and cigarette butts. According to Erik Erikson theory, the child at this age most dependent upon the caregivers for basic needs, warm, love, care and concern and with the kind of care rendered, the child's care needs were significantly compromised which rendered a Task-Centred Practice (TCP) and Crisis intervention to intervene. The officer worked with the family to establish specific measureable goals, such as cleaning up the house and providing them with nutritious food supply. This enabled collaboration between client and officer to create specific strategies to reach the achievable goals. However, the situation failed to improve and

crisis arise when the child was noted with unaccountable mark on him which rendered an immediate alternative placement under kinship care.

2.5 The assessment was based on the observation and the parents' commitment to work towards ensuring the child's safety. However, the parents shown limited commitment and was nonchalant towards the child's placement out of family care. In view of 2 weeks of close supervision and involvement through NFP, the child was placed with his maternal grandmother with parental consent.

### **(3) Reflection on professional and personal growth gained from this placement**

3.1 Personally, I am much enriched with the liberated lifestyle and openness in the Western dynamics. As an Asian living in an environment influenced by the Confucian dominance society, I was nurtured to suppress what is to be individual but a role I play in the respective systems surrounding me, be it the family, work place, social circles and even on social media. However, in the Western society, I need the liberation to be yourself and expressing one's pleasure and delights in a non-threatening and accepting way. Despite that, it did not approve for an undisciplined and lawless attitude or behaviour in me. Instead, I learnt to strike a balance to embrace the individuality in freedom to express and at the same time, keeping a boundary of conduct for our Asian uniqueness and culture.

3.2 I was professionally impressed with the abundance of resources such as food and finances avail to help the needy families as compared to the Asian dynamics I was exposed to. The Asian cultures emphasised on family's intervention in family's affairs which government played a limited role in family's matters unless it threatens the safety of one another. However, in the Western society, the States has great control and autonomy to intervene and support. In view of that, seemingly families maintained distanced in providing care and support for one another but primarily dependent on State's intervention which could be exhaustive on the government's funding and reserves. I was also inspired by the extensive reliance's on theoretical framework to support their social work and substantiate with social work models in dealing with social issues. With this, social work was significantly important in case

management in comparison to other professionals working together. Social Workers are a recognised profession in many of the Western countries comparing with the Asian countries.

3.3 I had an amazing and wonderful journey in this internship, be it work or making friends with my colleague and new friends I met, especially time spent with my agency supervisor, Mr Larry Voight. His teachings had inspired me to grow professionally as a social worker and also as a person. He always say the following words to me. “Listen without Knowing” which suspended all my assumptions and “Make new Mistakes” which made me conscientious about every mistake encountered and also to embrace every new thing I learnt. Thank You Larry, a person whom I will always remember.

