



LGBTI RIGHTS IN A CHILEAN JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER



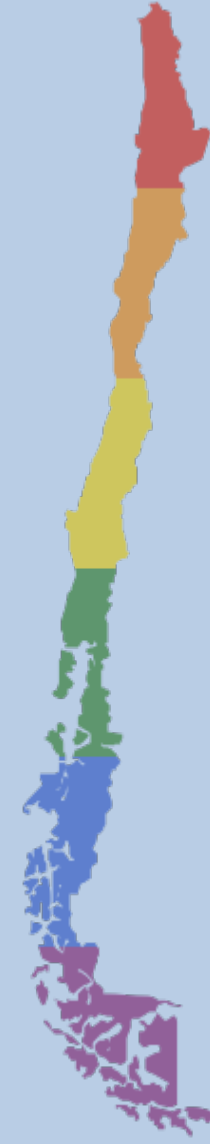
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Santiago is the capital of Chile and is the most populous city in the country, with almost 7 million people living in its metropolitan region.

It experienced a violent dictatorship in the 1980s, and its aftermath still holds strong, as individuals hold their government and society under intense scrutiny. Community organizing is very alive in the country, as students and labor unions often protest against unjust organizational and/or societal policies.



Agency

CIP-CRC Santiago (SENAME) is a juvenile detention center in Santiago that houses female youth who are awaiting to be sentenced or male and female youth who have been sentenced for committing an offense.

Interdisciplinary teams of social workers, psychologists, occupational therapists, and direct care workers work in conjunction to ensure that youth are following a set “routine”, are receiving educational and job training workshops, are enrolled in drug rehabilitation programs, and are meeting their goals to be successfully released into society at the end of their sentences.



Outcomes

The main project that I was assigned at the center was to help design a LGBTI-inclusive protocol to systematize policies and processes that all staff must follow when working with youth from these populations. In order to do so, I carried out the following activities:

- Conducted a focus group with 12 staff members in order to determine best practices and gaps in service provision to LGBTI youth who have been incarcerated in the center.
- Researched literature on theoretical frameworks relating to sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as best practices that juvenile justice facilities have used when working with LGBTI youth around the globe.
- Interviewed staff members and youth to determine their attitudes, perspectives, and special insight on working and/or interacting with LGBTI youth.
- Collaborated in writing and reviewing a LGBTI-inclusive protocol that is to be implemented with youth offenders at CIP-CRC Santiago.



Lessons Learned

- It is important to respect staff members’ perspectives, as they are the ones who mainly understand the best practices of interacting with youth who are receiving interventions and services. However, it is also important to challenge practices that may not be inclusive of diverse sexual orientations or gender identities.
- Cultural and social context are important tenets of the social work profession, especially when working with a new community.
- Take your positionalities into account and make sure to take all necessary steps to ensure that you are being intentional about who is at the table when designing an official protocol.
- Be proactive when entering a new environment!

Classroom Connections

- *SW651 (Planning for Organizational and Community Change)*
This course helped me become more intentional about engaging participatory methods under diverse contexts when organizations and communities are undergoing change – which happened with the development of this protocol.
- *SW648 (Issues in Global Social Work Practice)*
This course gave me a framework of thinking about the nuances of practicing social work in a global context, including thinking about ethical dilemmas and entering and exiting communities.

Skills Utilized

- Throughout my three month placement, I was able to:
- Facilitate focus groups and interviews
 - Increase my capacity to collaborate with different stakeholders
 - Analyze research
 - Use proactive leadership skills and be self-directed Expand my critical thinking skills

Advice

- Learn about the US context and/or equivalent of the work that you’ll be doing abroad. Many staff members will be intrigued to hear about how the work is done in the USA!
- You’ll eventually learn Chilean Spanish, as it is spoken in both professional and non-professional contexts, but it might be useful to have a grasp on some words/phrases before you travel there.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Office of Global Activities in the School of Social Work for the financial support in sending me to Chile. However, this experience would not have been the same without the wonderful staff members at CIP-CRC Santiago who helped make a warm learning environment (despite the winter cold!) in Chile.