



Berry Street Childhood Institute: Melbourne, Australia

Nina Jackson Levin | Global Activities Scholars Program | Field Placement

The University of Michigan School of Social Work

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"Berry Street was formed on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.

We pay our respect to their Elders, past and present, and to all the traditional custodians of land throughout Victoria."



LOCATION

Melbourne, Australia is located in the state of Victoria, which is the southern most state, the second most populous, and the most politically liberal. It is home to art, food, and culture from around the world. Australia has a total population of nearly 24 million, with 26% of the population born overseas. The country bears a history of British colonialism that has greatly impacted First Nation's peoples and implicated their communities into the welfare state.

GLOBAL FIELD AGENCY

The motto at Berry Street foster care agency is "We never give up." This has been true since the organization's inauguration in 1877. Each year, the agency serves up to 27,000 disadvantaged children, young people, and families through foster care, education, advocacy, donation drives, and trainings. The Childhood Institute is a research team within the agency that develops youth based programs, curricula, interventions, conferences, and policies. The goal of the institute is to ensure that "All children should have a good childhood."

SKILLS BUILT

- Practice in Management of Human Services tasks and responsibilities
- Build skills related to Children & Youth
- Participate in trauma informed trainings, seminars, and conferences
- Engage in nonprofit administrative operations and responsibilities
- Collaborate with teammates and supervisors to discuss ideas, conflicts, and successes within the agency
- Evaluate effectiveness of service delivery and think creatively about new strategies

LESSONS LEARNED

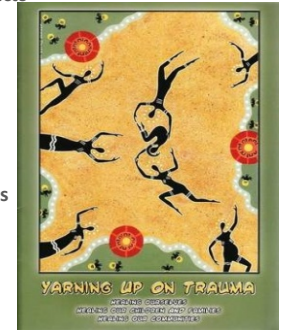
- Respond on a national scale to complex social issues that impact children's experience of childhood in Australia
- Collaboratively build and share knowledge
- Encourage public dialogue and mobilize leadership to make changes for children
- Think critically and creatively about systemic successes and failures of child welfare in a post-colonial nation state.

ADVICE

- Melbourne is a historic and multicultural city. Get out and explore as much as possible!
- Participate in the Integration Seminars with University of Melbourne School of Social Work Students. It's a great way to meet international friends, peers, and colleagues.

PROJECTS

- Focused on needs of children in out of home care through trainings, focus groups, and team meetings
- Assisted University of Melbourne faculty in research initiative geared toward identifying and vocalizing needs and strengths of young people in foster care in Australia
- Transcribed agency's Substance Use Policy document into an accessible procedural manual for foster carers
- Created guidance worksheets for foster carers to support health and well being of pregnant women in foster care
- Analyzed participant evaluations from foster care training workshops and presented recommendations to Senior Managers
- Communicated with international scholars for the purpose of initiating fellowship contracts
- Completed trainings on:
 - Alcohol & Other Drugs
 - Trauma, Loss, & Grief in the Developing Child
 - Yarning Up on Trauma with Indigenous Communities
 - Life Story Therapy
 - Being Heard in the Foster Care System



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