

HONG KONG, CHINA

Important Facts:

- Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region of China in 1997
- “One Country, Two Systems” formula
- Former colony of the UK (1842-1997)



Official Languages:

Cantonese (89.5%), English (3.5%)

Population: 7.3 million

(Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department)

Size: 1,106 square km

- Hong Kong is the 4th most densely populated region in the world



THE NESBITT CENTRE

The Nesbitt Centre (TNC) is an English-speaking educational day program for adults with a range of disabilities. The centre serves residents of Hong Kong originating from all over the world. Through a person-centered framework, TNC focuses on engaging, empowering, and enriching the lives of people with learning disabilities.

TNC Programs:

- Educational sessions focused on social skills
- Speech and occupational therapy
- Vocational training
- Work opportunities through two different social enterprises (a restaurant and a coffee shop)
- Residential apartment for overnight stays

MY ROLE AT TNC

My global field placement took place over a 10-week period. My role was to work closely with the frontline staff team to assist with a variety of educational sessions. My time was spent facilitating activities at TNC and its residential apartment, as well as helping with outings throughout Hong Kong.

Outcomes:

- Collaborated with a speech therapist staff member to start a weekly Women's Group focused on building healthy relationships
- Planned and facilitated sessions on a weekly basis: well-being, relaxation, social skills, general studies, and production of a newsletter for members in low and high support groups
- Facilitated fitness activities such as swimming, stretching, and yoga at the Hong Kong Football Club once a week
- Planned and carried out evening activities / cooking for members who stay at the residential apartment by sleeping on location for 6 nights in total

SKILLS DEVELOPED

Flexibility:

- In facilitating material for people with different abilities and needs.
- In adapting essential information to make topics more accessible depending on the level of a particular group.

Collaboration:

- When working with members in the planning process for outings and activities.
- When working with staff members, interns and volunteers, each with a unique background and expertise.

Mediation skills between members during verbal or physical altercations

Best practices for working with people who have disabilities, with a focus on Autism and Down syndrome

LESSONS LEARNED

- There are many different ways to promote independence, maximize potential, and empower clients. The best first step is to **initiate a meaningful conversation** and guard against making any assumptions about a person's potential.
- While a client's self-determination and independence are foremost in my mind, I must balance this with the need to ensure that an organization's rules and safety procedures are followed at all times. What worked for me in Hong Kong was consistency and a strong focus on building rapport.
- There will be times in my career where I will be the only social worker on a team of professionals. At TNC, this was often a difficult experience, but in the end this self-reliance helped to build my confidence and flexibility.

CONNECTIONS

Classroom:

- **SW 521** (*IP with Individuals, Families and Small Groups*): In this course, I learned the basics of interpersonal practice, specifically best practices for working with clients with special needs.
- **SW 790** (*Adventure Therapy Mini-Course*): I learned interactive and practical group therapy activities that I was able to directly apply during my internship.

Career:

Working with people who have life experiences different from my own was invaluable. Having a full time experience as a social worker collaborating with speech therapists, teachers, nutritionists and many others will inform how I act in future professional settings.



ADVICE

- Take time to read about the country in which you will live before you go and be sure to ask questions while you are there. Strike up conversations with community members whenever possible.
- Don't hesitate to reach out to your peers/colleagues back in the U.S. during your time abroad for support. Also, journal about your experience, it will be finished before you know it.

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