

Empowering the Minds of the Future for Youth in Guatemala

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Lessons Learned

- ❖ Education creates a space to address mental health stigma and improve access to services.
- ❖ Advocacy efforts create a ripple effect. Even seemingly small efforts matter when promoting equality and fighting injustice.
- ❖ Embrace discomfort and maintain flexibility. Its not often easy, but its worth it. ¡Vale la Pena!

Classroom Connections

SW 504 – Diversity and Social Justice.

This course exposed me to the complexity of diversity and challenged my understanding of my positionality. I recognized this influence as I worked with individuals, families, and the communities in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala and appreciated this course's introduction to a constant reflection of privilege, oppression, and diversity.

SW 560 – Community Organizing.

Entering, engaging, and exiting a community proved a crucial component to a global field placement. This course prepared me for international community engagement.

SW 629 – School Social Work Interventions.

Anything can be used as an intervention if used to prompt, discuss, and debrief relevant information. At Mentas I used art, photography, games, and nature as intervention modalities.

Advice

Consider taking language courses if applicable, even for a week or two. Additionally, pursue immersion opportunities by engaging with the culture and community to better complement your learning experience.

If it seems challenging, pursue it. The only constancy in life is change and change leads to growth.

Outcomes

- ❖ Provided afterschool academic support while assessing mental health.
- ❖ Engaged students in social emotional learning through art and adventure.
- ❖ Launched back to school fundraiser to support incoming students affected by deportation.

Skills Developed

- ❖ Bilingual therapeutic intervention and conflict resolution facilitation
- ❖ Global organizational networking and collaboration
- ❖ Non-profit administration and management

Career Connections

As an aspiring school social worker, this experience taught me to be prepared and let students lead. Regardless of the material I prepared, students arrived with different backgrounds, barriers, and interests. I gained skills in reading the room and adjusting my work with each student based on their unique strengths and needs. Additionally, I hope to use my increased proficiency in the Spanish language to support Spanish speaking communities in my future practice.

Quetzaltenango, Guatemala

Quetzaltenango exists as Guatemala's second largest city located in the western highlands. With a large indigenous population, Quetzaltenango is more commonly referred as Xela, its Mayan translation.

- Over half of the Guatemalan population are Indigenous while only 6% make up the University population
- 40% of students do not pass primary school
- 80% of classrooms exceed maximum student enrollment
- 100% of schools lack school supplies and access to textbooks
- 92% of domestic violence cases go unprosecuted

Global Field Agency

Mentes Para El Futuro - Minds for the Future

An organization in Guatemala offering professionalized and integrated mental health services, educational support, advocacy and scholarships to private schools for children and families living in poverty.

- 100% of students failed at least one grade level before receiving Mentas services.
- 100% of Mentas students graduated.

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