



The Collins Center

Placement Description:

Mission: Promoting healing through compassionate and collaborative services to all affected by sexual harm.

The Collins Center serves the community through its programs:

- The **Crisis Services Program** advocates for those affected by sexual violence through crisis services including a 24/7 hotline, support groups, and medical and legal accompaniment.
- The **Prevention Programs** work to strengthen relationships through education in order to prevent sexual violence in our community.
- The **Counseling Program** strives to provide quality, accessible mental health services in our community.
- The **Child Advocacy Center** is a multidisciplinary partnership promoting the safety and well-being of children through prevention, treatment, and a coordinated response to child abuse.

Intern or Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities:

- General office tasks such as filling, data entry, answering the phone, etc.
- Assist staff with education and prevention via social media
- Assist staff with fundraising events
- Shadow daily staff activities
- Attend crisis and/or case review meetings
- Provide child care during meetings with caregivers
- Conduct research projects under the direction of Collins Center staff
- Work with designated staff members to review materials and produce a case study when required by the placement

Contact Information:

Contact Persons: Allison Acero, Kim Myers

Mailing Address: 217 S. Liberty St, Suite 205, Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Physical Address: 217 S. Liberty Street, Suite 205, Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Telephone: 540-432-6430

Email: allison@thecollinscenter.org, kim@thecollinscenter.org

Website: www.thecollinscenter.org



Read about students' experiences at this site below:

Spring 2024 – D'Angelo

This semester, I chose to intern at the Collins Center & Child Advocacy Center in Harrisonburg, VA. According to their website, The Collins Center aims to “promote healing through compassionate and collaborative services to all affected by sexual harm”. Some services offered in order to do so are Advocacy and Court Prep, Trauma Informed Care/Therapy, Prevention/Education Programs, as well as Group Therapy.

When putting this site as my first choice, I was intrigued about the opportunities to go to court, observe interviews, etc.,. I was also hoping to get some client exposure while being there. However, after talking with my supervisor, she said that it is hard for interns to get that experience at the Collins Center as CPS did not allow interns to have that experience. CPS addressed that due to confidentiality and the age of the children, they do not feel comfortable with interns being involved in these processes, and getting to watch live interviews. In order to get any type of experience, I wrote emails and talked with staff and supervisors. I even took charge and said that I would contact people to get approvals and make some emails if I had to. When I did advocate for myself, was when I got to watch some pre-recorded, old interviews, as well as sit in on one group therapy session. I was also given the opportunity to attend prevention programs with preschool kids, which I really enjoyed. Here, I observed one of my colleagues, Rachel, currently attending graduate school for social work, teach children about feelings, body parts and consent in a way they would understand. When I did not have that experience, I spent my time doing homework and working on their social media site. I created their instagram page, made a post schedule to keep track of when to post what, as well as created graphics to post promoting any events they would be hosting. I spent most of my days there on Canva creating content.

Overall, I feel that my experience was not completely negative, nor completely positive. I really liked all of the staff and how they treated me with dignity, recognition and respect. Though I had many limitations to the type of experience I was able to get, the staff tried their best to include me on all projects and make me feel welcomed. They were also willing to meet with me if I wanted to ask them about their careers. I disliked the fact that I could not get a lot of real-life experience with clients. I think it's a big part of an internship to be able to get that experience, and the fact that it was not very possible at this site made days go by slowly, and for me not to gain much knowledge about the field of forensic psychology and social work like I had hoped for. I do think that the staff could have more plans for the intern, and not leave as much advocating for experience up to the students themselves. I did however learn some useful things that I will take with me. Meeting with staff allowed me to add more therapeutic skills to my skill set that I can use as a therapist. For example, counselors use sand boxes and action figures for kids and adults to use to portray scenes of their life, or that symbolizes their mental state at the moment. Additionally, watching forensic interviews allowed me to truly see the process in which a forensic interview takes place. I watched three different interviews across children of three different age groups. After watching, I was able to assess the four stages of an interview, and the



specific questions that one will ask to transition from stage to stage, or get information needed at each stage. I also learned questions and tactics specific to each age group, and how talking to a 4 year old involved more play and less note-taking, while talking to a teen requires more relationship-building and more mature conversation questions.

Other classes I have taken, especially developmental psychology, helped me pick up on client behavior and patterns across ages in interviews. Especially for younger kids, we can see a sense of egocentrism residing in the interviews with younger children, versus a less selfish approach with older children. Young kids in interviews refer to parents as Mom and Dad, and those in the story by the names they call them. Whereas older children would inform the interviewer the name of the person, and how they relate to the child themselves. The language use and complexity of language use was also very different across age groups.

My contribution project focused on implementing education of I-language into programs at the Collins Center. I-language helps children express emotions appropriately, and reflect on those feelings with self-awareness to help children figure out what they need to properly heal. This I-language implementation also benefits interviewers, as it forces children to give detail about their experience of harm. Additionally, this could be a helpful tool outside in the real world, so that they can use I-language to help heal relationships with offenders (if that is a route the child is taking), or let caregivers and loved ones know their needs after this traumatizing Event.

I really wanted to do an educational lesson within our prevention program to teach kids to use I-statements. However, due to there being a strict program that our staff needed to stick to, I could not modify it. I would have created a powerpoint presentation to show children at our prevention program classes/and at schools, teaching kids what I-statements are. I also would have included a short cartoon video explaining this process for smaller children to keep their attention span. We then would have had kids practice as a class, and then practice with each other using various realistic scenarios. In accordance with the work done at the Collin's Center, we can make an example about how "someone touched you inappropriately/ made you feel Uncomfortable." Instead, I did some research about priming. By having this poster hanging up where they can see it, they are more likely to remember and internalize or use it in practice. I therefore used my canva skills I obtained on site to create a poster for each counselor, and one to hang in the advocacy room. I was not allowed to hang one in the interview room.

Overall, I think the Collin's Center staff is filled with wonderful people who are looking to truly help make the most of your experience. I may have a biased opinion, just because over the summer I had another internship where I was able to sit in on individual sessions with kids, multidisciplinary meetings, and even all group therapy sessions. I had so much client experience that I was hoping to get equal exposure at the Collins Center. I do not think that the Collins Center has enough to do for interns at their site, for it to be a site option.

Fall 2023 – Delaney Anderson

For my Fall 2023, psychology senior field placement I had the opportunity to intern at the Collins Center. The Collins Center is a nonprofit sexual assault response and victim advocacy organization whose mission is to "promote healing through compassionate and collaborative



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services to all affected by sexual harm.” The Collins Center is located in Downtown Harrisonburg in the Ice House building, and is a short walk to the heart of downtown.

The Collins Center provides several different services, including: a child advocacy center (CAC), crisis support, counseling, and education and training. The CAC model has systematically changed the way we respond to child abuse. Before the CAC model, a child may have had to speak to 10+ people before they could get the help and care that they need. But, with the CAC model a child comes straight to the Collins Center for a forensic interview (FI) after disclosing allegations of child abuse to a teacher. A forensic interviewer then asks the child in a developmentally sensitive manner about the alleged abuse while a social worker, investigator, and prosecutor watch in another room so they are able to get information regarding the investigation. The CC also provides crisis support through a 24-hour hotline run by the full-time staff during the week, and after hours/ weekends it is staffed by the part time staff, which is made up of: CPS workers, counselors, JMU/EMU advocates, etc. Next, the CC offers trauma-informed counseling services to children and adults. These sessions are free of cost and we also have staff trained who specialize in EMDR therapy. The last service the CC provides is education and training to people and organizations who want to better their response to child abuse. For example, the Collins Center regularly conducts training and presentations at churches, schools, and local businesses.

My role as an intern at the Collins Center included engaging in daily administrative tasks, such as: answering the phones, sorting files, shredding outdated files, and laminating resources for the full-time staff. On a daily basis it was my responsibility to answer any incoming phone calls then figure out who to transfer the calls to. I also had to be aware of any potential crisis calls that may come into our main office phone. I did once answer a crisis phone call that I then had to quickly transfer to a full-time staff member trained in dealing with crisis situations. In addition to administrative tasks, I was able to observe recorded forensic interviews and learn more in-depth about the structure of these sessions, and also the skills necessary to be a successful forensic interviewer. Additionally, I had the opportunity to attend a Coordinated Community Response Team (CCRT) and Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) conference at Eastern Mennonite University. During this conference I attended breakout sessions focused on sexual abuse through the criminal justice lens and culturally-specific sexual abuse for persons with limited English proficiency (LEP). I was also able to learn more in depth on counseling specific skills like EMDR Therapy because I created an EMDR board game for one of our counselors. In addition to EMDR, I learned more about dissociative symptoms and trauma symptoms through completion of tasks given to me by the staff. Lastly, as an intern I attended weekly crisis meetings in which we learned about all the new cases, FI's, and crisis calls that had taken place the week prior.

My overall impressions of this site were very positive. I enjoyed that the staff seemed closely knit as it provided a more personable experience in which I was able to learn some of the stories behind why the staff chose the Collins Center. All of the staff were very welcoming and friendly to me, which made my experience feel very comfortable and positive. My favorite part of the site, however, was getting to become friends with the in office therapy dog, Naia. While Naia is there to provide extra support and comfort to our clients, she also loved getting extra pets from me when she had nothing to do. Another positive of this site was the overall mission of helping those affected by sexual harm, which is an issue I am very passionate about. But, a



disadvantage of the site was that due to the sensitive and confidential nature of why clients are here, I did not actually get much direct contact with clients, other than checking them in for their appointments. A pro that came with that, though, is that I had a very flexible work schedule if something came up, as I never had to meet with any clients. So, although this provided for a more hands-off learning experience, I still feel that I gained a lot of valuable knowledge from my time at the Collins Center.

My experience at the Collins Center somewhat influenced or broadened my career goals. Because, as previously mentioned, I had the opportunity to learn more about the child advocacy center (CAC) model and the forensic interviewing process. I very much enjoyed learning about these two processes and was able to recognize the great value behind these two systems, as they dramatically reduce any additional trauma that children would experience if the traditional systems for dealing with child abuse were still in place. While I don't know that I would specifically seek out working for a CAC organization model, I would not be opposed to getting involved in an organization with a similar process in the future. Similarly, before my time at the Collins Center I did not have much knowledge on nonprofit organizations and how they function. But, after learning more in-depth about the structure and meaningful missions of nonprofits, I would seriously consider working for one in the future. However, obviously the hit an employee's annual salary takes from working at a nonprofit is not an extremely motivating factor to work at one.

I definitely think the Psychology major adequately prepared me for the duties and experiences I had at my site. The major's large emphasis on multicultural awareness and social justice within person-environment interactions helped me to be more self aware about the power and privileges I hold, as well as how they could come into play in this context. The Psychology major gave me a better understanding of larger systemic factors, such as the extra barriers different groups may face, and how I can use my privilege to act as an ally, advocate, and activist. Additionally, the skills I learned from counseling psychology allowed me to be the most open, comforting, and welcome presence to the clients that I interacted with.

Lastly, during my time at the Collins Center I was able to complete a contribution project to give back to the site. I was originally going to get involved with SAFE BARS, which is a future educational project whose mission is to train employees of local bars/ breweries on alcohol information, safety measures, and things to look out for to prevent sexual abuse. However, because this program is on hold for the time being, I have instead helped research new educational resources for their Facebook page. I found a wide range of resources including on happiness, relationship dynamics, setting boundaries, consent, and a few other prevention focused topics. However, a large focus of the research I have done is focused on campus assaults and the role that alcohol plays in cases of SA, so that I was still able to engage with the alcohol aspect that I was interested in with the SAFE BARS. Through the research I conducted I was able to create several infographics on alcohol use on college campuses & SA – this included statistics to demonstrate just how widespread this issue really is. Another example of an infographic I created discussed alcohol safety, including knowing the signs of alcohol poisoning, and tips to drink responsibly/ stay safe while drinking.

Overall, my experience at the Collins Center was very positive, educational, inspiring, and meaningful. The mission and positive impact that our site has on survivors of sexual assault, as well as the surrounding Harrisonburg-Rockingham community is incomparable.



Spring 2022 - Aya Nassif

For my field placement for the 2022 spring semester, I had my placement within the Collins Center. The mission statement of the Collins center is “Promoting healing through compassionate and collaborative services to all affected by sexual harm”. The services offered by the Collins Center include Sexual Assault Crisis Services including forensic interviews that is set in multiple languages. Prevention & Education services by the Collins Center include education on assault tailored to the needs of the community including the type of trauma the population is going through. Trauma-Informed Therapy is the last service offered at the child advocacy center given by the licensed counselors who work with a specialization in trauma and treatment for children, non-offending caregivers and adults who are affected by sexual violence.

During my time in the internship, I was able to be in charge of manning the office telephone. My duties with the telephone included taking any crisis calls and appointments by checking through the calendar and then speaking with my coworkers to see whether calls should be transferred to them in order to deal with crisis calls and forensic interviews. Among those responsibilities, I was in charge of printing and laminating any major sources of information that needed to be distributed in the office as well as copying important documents for record keeping.

The biggest contribution I fulfilled through my duties in the office was archiving documents about each case going through the Collins Center starting from the year 2008 up until the year 2021. The process was extremely valuable in that I saw the evolution of record keeping over time and how sexual abuse was being described throughout the years. I was also able to observe several forensic interviews that were recorded and was able to watch them during any gaps in time during my work in the center. Both the advocate and the forensic interviewer of the center were graciously able to give me their time to debrief the forensic interview and the background of each client’s case to help gain a better understanding of how forensic interviews are part of child sexual abuse disclosure. One of the most exciting parts of my experience at the Collins Center was the ability to fully transcribe a forensic interview so it could be presented in court for extra clarity in defense of the sexual assault victim. The Collins Center staff constantly made me feel included and invited in the workplace by being able to participate in both crisis meetings as a form of debriefing weekly cases as well as staff meetings to give me a solid understanding about the inner workings of a Child Advocacy Center.

Being part of the Collins Center was an extremely positive experience in that the whole staff and group of people working at the Collins Center made a direct point of showing kindness and openness to me as a new addition to the center. The center is always abundant with sweets and chatter about the cases occurring at the center. There is always room for observation at the center as the counselors and advocates speak about some of the issues they are facing within the center on a regular basis. The clarity of the center was extremely valuable in that the advocate, Kim Meyers, was always open to showing me any forensic interviews she felt would be a valuable form of experience. It must be said that the work being done in the center is extremely heavy and can put people in a fragile position. However, my interests were always aligning with the center’s and it felt like both the center and I were on the same page about the level of exposure I should be getting. The forensic interviewer was also extremely valuable in this



process in that she walked me through each step of the forensic interview process. While, I believe I received as much exposure as I could have, there is a lot of confidentiality surrounding child sexual abuse disclosure which makes it of the utmost importance that this information is protected. Therefore, there were limits to what I could hear or know about for the safety of our clients. The nature of the Collins Center is also such that the type of work dealt with is dependent on the cases being reported by Child Protective Services or the Rockingham Harrisonburg Police Department. Therefore, there are times where there are lulls in the workplace or that there is a huge wave of back-to-back appointments within the center.

By working at this site, I learned about the actual process mental health workers go through dealing with child sexual abuse disclosure from a psychological standpoint. Above all, I learned about how burnout is an inherent part of the process and the simple fact that child sexual abuse means that it can be more emotionally exhausting for mental health workers. I had the honor of taking part in a workshop during my time at the Collins Center created by Tend Academy to discuss the different ways mental health workers could avoid burnout. This aspect of my experience gave me the awareness about how to take care of myself throughout my career. It made me cognizant of the fact that there were multiple mental health workers who I had witnessed leaving the field due to their exhaustion and secondary burnout. Therefore, I see taking breaks and reversing my work ethic to be more balanced as imperative to me continuing in my career on a long-term basis.

Being part of multiple research labs in the psychology major gave me a strong foundation for dealing with transcription within the center. I was also grateful to have had a background in abnormal psychology so I could understand the possible mental illnesses the perpetrators could have in order to treat children this way. Having taken both developmental and abnormal psychology courses also let me have an awareness about the consequences children may have mentally going through the trauma of child sexual abuse. It gave me more empathy and an ability to be an active member of any conversation that my supervisor had with her coworker about the active cases going through the Collins Center.

My contribution project for the Collins Center ended up being a pamphlet that I titled “Dear Caregiver, We Care About You Too”. The point of the project was to offer solutions for non-offending caregivers who were possibly going through the mental health consequences of child sexual abuse disclosure. The pamphlet was also meant to be a form of information or education for caregivers to understand the type of feelings they might be experiencing as well. The pamphlet was given to the advocate of the center and set to be distributed as part of a packet that advocates gave to non-offending caregivers.

I will value my time at the Collins Center for the rest of my undergraduate career due to the way it revealed my true interests to me within the field of child development. I realized my true passions for forensic psychology and child advocacy. It was an honor to be part of such a kind, efficient body of work and an experience I will remember as a true foundation for me as I enter the workforce.

Fall 2021 - Erin Cassidy

This semester, I had the privilege of completing my field placement experience at the Collins Center, a nonprofit organization that offers a variety of services to those who have been



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impacted by sexual harm by offering collaborative and compassionate services. The Collins Center's mission statement is to, "strive to eliminate sexual violence and its impact in our community." They offer four primary services: sexual assault crisis services, prevention and education, mental health treatment, and a Child Advocacy Center. The first services offered are crisis support services, which includes a number of resources like the 24-hour hotline and hospital response, court advocacy and accompaniment, short-term crisis support counseling, and support groups. The second service offered is prevention & education efforts, which include a number of outreach programs that are offered throughout the community with the main goal of educating the community and preventing sexual violence from occurring in the first place. Another one of the services provided are counseling services. Mental health treatment is offered by counselors with a focus on trauma-informed therapy that is used with long-term clients. Because the Collins Center is a nonprofit organization, they are completely grant funded. This means that most of their clients are individuals who are in need of mental health services and don't have private insurance. Lastly, the final service is the Child Advocacy Center (CAC), a nationally accredited center designed to create a safe, neutral environment for children to disclose their experiences. Some features of the CAC include conducting forensic interviews—which limits the amount of time that a child has to talk about their experience to other officials—offering family advocacy and accompaniment, education for caregivers, and court preparation.

My personal experience included doing a lot of different tasks around the office. I was offered a lot of opportunities to engage in each type of service offered at the Collins Center. Some of the things I did throughout the semester included taking phone calls, filing current psychotherapy notes and disposing of terminated patient files, working on mini projects for various staff, answering the window when clients and investigators would come in, and supervising children when advocates had to speak with caregivers. Doing these tasks for the staff was perceived to be very helpful and took off any extra workload that they had! A lot of tasks required me to work independently of others, which put me in a position where I had my own tasks that I was responsible for. I also got to experience interactions with clients and as well as other members of the disciplinary team, which included CPS, police investigators, and prosecutors. This allowed me to enhance my communication skills to be able to effectively communicate depending on the situation. I also got the opportunity to do research for our Outreach and Prevention Coordinator and update statistics that pertained to sexual violence for Virginia and the United States.

My most memorable experiences at the Collins Center were being able to observe forensic interviews and sit in on crisis meetings and staff meetings. As mentioned earlier, the reason why forensic interviewers are so useful is because they limit the amount of time that a child has to talk about their encounter. Forensic interviews take place in a separate wing of the office, where there is an interview space with an adjacent observation room. In the interview room, there is a microphone and two cameras that send feedback to the observation room where members of the multidisciplinary team like investigators, child services, and our family advocates sit and observe. I liked getting the opportunity to observe forensic interviews because it showed a great integration between MDT members and the Collins Center. Interviews were also a great way to witness firsthand what forensic interviews are capable of, and they also gave me a chance to listen to the story of the client. I also had the opportunity to attend staff meetings. The executive director, Maria, makes it a very important point for everyone to talk about their



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weeks and what they have been feeling. She is very conscious of the work the staff have to deal with and the idea of burnout and compassion fatigue, and so I really liked that staff had the chance to be in touch with their emotions and if they felt comfortable, to share with the group. During crisis meetings, we went over hotline calls and cases that were picked up over the previous weekend and any updates over current cases the staff were working on.

A great advantage of the Collins Center is that there are several different areas of work, but everyone works together. There are a few different professionals who work at the center, primarily counselors, family advocates, and forensic interviewers, as well as outreach prevention and grant & practice coordinators. I loved this integration between the staff and how they have the opportunity to work with and help one another. For someone who may not know what they want to do with their psychology degree, the Collins Center offers a few different paths of work that may help narrow their interests. I've always known that I didn't want to pursue counseling, but with a minor in criminal justice, I did want to look into work that still incorporated something to do the justice system—and in this case, the Collins Center allowed me this opportunity to work with victims of sexual assault. Another advantage, which I think is by far the best, is the comradery of the staff. If you are looking for a warm, fun environment, I highly recommend doing your field placement at the Collins Center. From the first week, I felt comfortable being myself and asking any questions that I had about what goes on at the center. From their kindness and work ethic to their humor and helpfulness, I felt that I could fit right in. Every single person at the Collins Center brings a brightness and calmness that is especially needed for the subject matter that is seen every day. Though the subject matter that is dealt with at this site may be seen as a disadvantage, I think of it more as an advantage to see if you're able to work in that environment and whether this subject of work is something that you can handle.

I learned a lot of important information from my field placement site. One of the most valuable pieces of information that I have learned, is the importance of these services to survivors, especially because of the prominence of sexual violence in the community. As a female college student, I feel like I made myself more aware of the danger of sexual assault occurring and consciously thought about that threat, but I really did not think about danger and just how common it is for those who are younger. It is a different experience knowing you are working with survivors and seeing them with your own eyes, not just hearing about it. I really couldn't have asked for a better placement site, as the Collins Center confirmed my wanting to work in this field and desire to be in a helping position for survivors. I also have become interested in the idea of pursuing forensic interviewing or some sort of advocacy work, a path that I would have never thought about without being able to observe interviews and see the work that staff members do. It was really helpful knowing about mental disorders and the primary disorders that victims of sexual assault tend to have. I learned about different disorders in abnormal psychology, and this experience allowed me to better understand symptoms that our clients were going through, and what goals they were working towards in their therapy sessions.

Like I've mentioned earlier, it is truly disheartening to realize how often sexual violence occurs. At the beginning of my placement, I became really invested in the idea of how kids from all age groups are not properly educated on the important topics surrounding sex education, such as consent, boundaries, healthy relationships, etc. So, for my contribution project, I worked on a resource binder called the Education Library, which has an abundance of resources, programs, and activities surrounding these topics that are divided by age/grade level. The library was made



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so that resources could be looked at easily and quickly grabbed by any staff members to use. The binder is to be utilized by any staff member or community member who is looking to incorporate more comprehensive education programs surrounding sex and consent.

On a last note, I am extremely grateful to have completed my field placement at the Collins Center. I have never felt more welcomed and am so grateful for the opportunities that I was given and the friendships that I left the site with. My placement solidified the work I that wanted to do, and I really appreciated the passion the staff has about their work; it really showed me how I can work in a field that I feel passionate about.

Spring 2021 – Katie Shiflett

This past semester I had the opportunity to complete my field placement experience at the Collins Center. The Collins Center is a nonprofit organization that provides a variety of services to survivors of sexual violence. These services can be grouped into four categories and all work in service of the Collins Center's mission, which is to strive to end sexual violence and its impact in our community. The first category of services offered by the Collins Center are crisis support services. Crisis support encompasses a broad range of services, including access to a 24-hour hotline number, hospital accompaniment, and short-term crisis support counseling. The Collins Center also provides education and prevention services. These services strive to stop sexual violence before it begins by offering age-appropriate presentations to various community groups. The Collins Center also provides counseling services to survivors of sexual violence. Trained professionals deliver trauma-informed counseling using a variety of therapeutic techniques. The final category of services that the Collins Center offers is the Child Advocacy Center (CAC). The Child Advocacy Center is a child-friendly setting where children who have experienced abuse can safely talk about their experiences. Conducting forensic interviews, providing family advocacy, and coordination with a multidisciplinary team are all components of the CAC.

My personal experience at the Collins Center involved lots of different tasks. During my first week, I was required to complete a number of training including the Office for Civil Rights training and mandated reporter training. The early stages of my internship also involved reading through the intern binder, which included information about the sexual assault response team (SART) and some additional resources about domestic and sexual violence. I also frequently engaged in administrative tasks like answering phone calls and the doorbell when clients or local law enforcement would come into the office. This gave me the opportunity to interact directly with many individuals and allowed me to practice my professional communication skills. In addition to this, I was able to engage in the process of disposing patient files. I was also able to practice my research skills as part of my field placement experience. On days where there were no meetings scheduled or forensic interviews taking place, I would research various topics related to child advocacy centers and sexual violence. One of the mini-projects I worked on was finding different psychological assessments that CAC's use and compiling them together for clinicians to consider using. This involved finding and detailing measures, compiling general and psychometric information for them, finding whether they required trainings, and what the cost would be to implement them. I also researched other physical and mental health resources in both Harrisonburg and in surrounding communities, so that individuals at the Collins Center would have a comprehensive resource to reference when they need to make referrals.



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One of the experiences I valued most during my field placement was observing forensic interviews and attending staff meetings. Observing forensic interviews entailed sitting in the observation room adjacent to the interview room and watching a trained interviewer ask children specific questions about their disclosure of abuse. Members of the multidisciplinary team would also observe these interviews. Attending staff meetings entailed either observing weekly crisis meetings, where new hotline calls and forensic interviews were discussed so that next steps for each client could be determined or sitting in on biweekly staff meetings that touched more on the daily functioning of the office. During my time at the Collins Center, I was also able to watch children who were in the office for forensic interviews. Staff would often meet with caregivers before and after the interview took place; while these meetings were occurring, I would sit with the child and either play or talk to them.

One of the biggest advantages to interning at this site is the wide range of experiences they offer. As a person who entered field placement feeling uncertain as to the direction they wanted to move in with their psychology degree, this site helped me narrow my interests down significantly. The Collins Center allows you to dip your toe into many different worlds, including the world of nonprofits, legal, and counseling. Another huge advantage to this site is the work environment. The environment the Collins Center has constructed is one based on community and respect for one another, as well as friendship and lots of laughter. The people at the Collins Center are incredibly friendly and welcoming; they easily make you feel like part of the team and bring copious amounts of joy to the workplace. One would not imagine such a happy environment for the work that they do, but every individual who steps into that office brings such a positive light with them. I truly cannot think of any disadvantages of interning at this site, but I think the work the site deals with is something that should be considered. It is difficult to hear some of the experiences of clients, but self-care is prioritized at this site. Therefore, while I think the difficulty of subject matter should be considered, I would not consider it a disadvantage.

I learned a lot of useful information during my time at the Collins Center. I think the most important piece of information that I learned was just how commonplace sexual violence is and how the legal system we have often works against survivors of sexual violence. Sometimes this working against comes from red tape within the system prohibiting movement forward and sometimes it occurs because of a lack of awareness of trauma and its impact from the general public. For me, this demonstrated the importance of the work the Collins Center does and highlighted the value of counseling in helping individuals who have experienced sexual violence. This learning influenced my career goals in that it has pushed me towards pursuing counseling as my future vocation. In connection with these interests, I chose to focus my contribution project on factors influencing the efficacy of trauma therapy. After some research, I specifically examined the impact of connection and empowerment on treatment efficacy. To put these factors in play at the Collins Center, I helped create a list of materials that could be used to send therapy bags to child clients unable to come into the office because of COVID. I also created a comprehensive list of resources for the head clinician to use during group therapy services, which involved identifying themes common to survivors of sexual assault and finding resources (like media clips and different activities) that touched on these topics.

In closing, I am extremely glad that I completed my field placement experience at the Collins Center. Not only did it help me in narrowing my professional interests, but it also gave



me a deeper appreciation for the field of psychology and the good that can come from it. The Collins Center itself feels welcoming and the staff help make it that way. Those working at the Collins Center care genuinely and deeply about those they serve. Their passion and dedication to their work is inspiring and makes this experience incredibly meaningful. I would not trade this experience for anything and am so appreciative for the opportunity to intern at the Collins Center.

Spring 2021 - Abby Colyer

The Collins Center's mission statement is "striving to eliminate sexual violence and its impact in our community." In an attempt to meet their goals stated in their mission statement they have four main groups of services they offer. Their first service is that they offer sexual assault crisis counseling and have a hotline service that anyone can use at any time. Anyone can call to talk about their trauma or get answers as to what they should do next. Their second service is prevention and education services. This includes programs in schools talking about consent, good vs. bad touches, and how to talk about your body. It also includes awareness of the prevalence of sexual assault. Their third service is that their therapists can provide trauma-informed counseling sessions which includes trauma informed cognitive behavioral therapy. They have been trained in how to serve clients who have dealt with trauma in their lives. Their fourth, and most used service, is their child advocacy center. The child advocacy center is where children who are alleged victims will visit for a forensic interview. The interview is held here because it is child friendly, neutral, and allows the child to only be interviewed once since it is recorded. After the interview, the caregiver will be spoken to, given resources, and told about next steps in the process.

At The Collins Center I was able to do a few things. I was there to do clerical duties such as emails, answer the phone, disinfect the office, and organize when needed. I performed research for my supervisor and other staff members in the office. Whenever they needed to find information on something, like a voice recording device, I would research different sites and compile a summary of all the ones I found. This helped them focus on their duties as therapists, advocates, or forensic interviewers. I was able to observe forensic interviews and weekly crisis meetings during my time. For forensic interviews, I would sit in the observation room with advocates, CPS, and/or law enforcement. After the interview I would ask questions as to why certain questions were asked and some were not. Crisis meetings were weekly to discuss past hotline calls and forensic interviews and to plan for upcoming forensic interviews that week. One of the main reasons I was there was to help start the process of expanding their services to Page County. I initiated contact with many hopefully future partners of the Collins Center. I also compiled a list of resources of mental health resources in Page County and basic information about the area itself.

An advantage of working at the Collins Center is how small the office is. I was able to form genuine connections with staff members because we worked closely with one another. Everyone was encouraging of projects I was pursuing, and I felt good walking into and out of the office every time. Another advantage is since the Collins Center works in with a multidisciplinary team, interns get to meet a lot of different people. It was neat hearing different perspectives from



prosecutors, law enforcement, or child protective services workers. The only possible disadvantage is that you hear a lot of negativity that you have to push aside since you are the professional helping a client. The staff does an amazing job of addressing negativity and will have constant meetings to make sure their interns mental health is good.

One aspect of the Collins Center I learned about was how victims and caregivers actually act during an interview and their time at the center. There are a lot of stereotypes of how someone who has been sexually assaulted will act and they are usually not correct. Many victims I've seen aren't crying or screaming like how they might be portrayed in the media. They are composed, they tell their story, and they leave. They also act like this before and after therapy sessions.

I am attending law school next year and wanted to pick a field placement site based on the type of law that I would possibly want to pursue. I took criminal law with the prosecuting attorney for Harrisonburg who deals with sex crimes and internet crimes against children. After taking that class I knew that it could be the path that I could pursue. I wanted to make sure that it was something I could mentally handle since the topic is very dark. After my semester at the Collins Center, I'm sure that I would be able to work these types of cases because I want to stand up for the victim and show that the justice system can be on their side. I want to be a voice for them when they feel silenced.

My contribution project was based around getting music incorporated in therapy sessions at the Collins Center. It helped that one therapist loved to play guitar and write songs and another therapist almost had a completed minor in music during her undergraduate years. To begin I researched the benefits of music therapy with individuals who have experienced trauma. I shared my ideas with my supervisor, and he strongly encouraged me to pursue this idea. I found instruments that would be best used for children, as well as adults, and got them donated through friends and family. After obtaining the instruments I made each therapist a binder with resources on their instruments, research on music therapy, and how to write songs in a therapeutic way. I also had friends come over and created a video of myself performing a drum circle. I created an online file which included my home video and YouTube videos of how to play some of the instruments. The therapists will begin using the instruments in the coming weeks and hopefully will be able to use the drums in a drum circle once their support groups are back in person in the fall.

After spending a semester at the Collins Center, I know I made the right choice when applying for field placement. I have a new mindset on the topic of sexual assault that I plan on advocating for in the future. I will never forget my experience and will cherish the memories forever.

Fall 2020 - Casie Marra

This semester I was given the opportunity to complete my field placement at the Collins Center & Child Advocacy Center. At the CC, the staff work towards fulfilling their mission of promoting the safety and well-being of individuals by striving to eliminate sexual violence and its impact on the community. The Center is a private, non-profit organization that works with clients that have been sexually assaulted in Harrisonburg and the Rockingham county area. They



offer sexual assault crisis services and trauma-informed therapy for these individuals as well as advocacy. Their Child Advocacy Center is a safe, neutral, child-friendly environment where victims of child abuse can talk about their experience with a trained staff member. They offer trauma therapy, court advocacy, and have a specially designed forensic interview room. Representatives from their Multidisciplinary Team consist of staff members, law enforcement, Child Protective Services (CPS), and advocates that come together to provide a thorough and efficient investigative process. In addition to crisis services, the Collins Center provides prevention and treatment programs that aim to strengthen the community through education and mental health services.

The majority of my time at the Collins Center was spent handling and performing administrative duties. As an intern, I had my own desk and cubicle area where I would complete most of my tasks. My administrative tasks included answering the phone, responding to emails, filing, copying, and scanning documents, and answering the door for clients. I had prior experience with office duties and menial tasks, which made these responsibilities easier and more manageable. If I was ever confused on a task, I would often ask the appropriate staff member for assistance or clarification, in which they were always willing to assist me and answer my questions. Other administrative tasks I fulfilled included creating and conducting surveys for clients and working with Microsoft excel. These assignments were typically very minimal and self-explanatory, but staff members would make their expectations clear and direct.

Another opportunity I had while completing my field placement at the Collins Center included observing forensic interviews. I was able to sit in the observation room with a staff advocate as well as the detective and CPS worker that were assigned to the case. In the observation room, we would watch the forensic interview on a large screen and discuss the client's responses to the interviewer's questions. Typically, these interviews would last about an hour and I was able to debrief with staff members afterwards and ask questions about the case. This specific opportunity provided me with great learning experiences and allowed me to fully understand the significance of conducting forensic interviews. Unfortunately, this was a limited opportunity due to COVID-19, but I was still able to observe at least 3 interviews in my time at the Collins Center.

Another opportunity I had at the Collins Center was sitting in on weekly crisis meetings with the staff. The staff would meet via Zoom to discuss ongoing cases, forensic interviews, and any recent on-call responses. The meetings were facilitated by the associate director at the Center and all staff members would participate in discussion. As an intern, I would mainly just observe and listen to the cases being discussed. If I ever had any questions relevant to crisis and crisis management I was always encouraged to hop in on discussion and ask any questions that I had.

My overall impression of the site was incredibly positive and provided me with beneficial learning experiences. The staff at the Collins Center were always welcoming and were willing to educate me on various topics, which contributed greatly to my overall learning experience. There



were many advantages to interning at my site, which outweigh the few disadvantages I experienced. In the beginning of the semester, I was able to create my own schedule and hours that allowed me to efficiently manage time between field placement and other courses I was taking. This semester was very different compared to others due to COVID-19 and was challenging for me in other aspects as well. The Collins Center was always willing to cooperate and be flexible with me if or when I needed to make any adjustments to my schedule. Another advantage of this site was the hands-on experience with the services the Collins Center offers. Being able to observe forensic interviews was incredibly eye-opening and informative. It helped me understand the significance of the Child Advocacy Center and how its services positively impact children and families who have experienced trauma. Furthermore, having three therapists in the office was advantageous because our discussions further educated me on therapy and counseling. Although my responsibilities were often administrative, I had experiences that helped me develop my role as an intern and allowed me to fulfill all my tasks efficiently.

There weren't many disadvantages to interning at my field placement site. One disadvantage I experienced at my site was having to be self-reliant in terms of some administrative duties. There wasn't specific training provided, but I was given an intern binder where I could refer to my responsibilities and expectations. However, there were a few times throughout the semester where someone would call in panic or distress and I was unsure of what to do. When this would occur, I would try and keep the phone call as brief and to the point as possible, asking for the individual's contact information and taking down their message. Oftentimes though, I was able to put the individual on hold and figure out who the appropriate staff member would be to take the call.

I learned a lot about myself and the professional work environment during my time at the Collins Center. Prior to beginning my internship, I wasn't sure if counseling was the career path I wanted to take, but my experience at the Center has increased my interest in the field. I also learned a lot through my contribution project, in which I focused on art therapy and its benefits in treating survivors of trauma. Non-expressive therapy has been proven to help and be beneficial in situations involving trauma. Therefore, I decided to take my research further and create a mandala binder for the site that allows clients to engage in mandala activities, utilize anxiety reducing coloring pages, and take control of the creative process.

Overall, I am incredibly appreciative of my opportunity to work with the staff at the Collins Center and am thankful for the various learning experiences I was able to be a part of. All the staff members were encouraging and supportive towards my willingness to learn and take on an active role at the Center. Although this semester presented unique challenges, my supervisor was reassuring and provided me with a variety of learning opportunities that contributed to my experience in a positive way.