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These themes might be experienced differently as you move from being a *student to a professional*.

Consider the various levels of expectations (your supervisor, your establishment, yourself) and how you might need to make some adaptation.

THEMES	STUDENT	PROFESSIONAL
Identity		
Power		
Organizational culture		
Quantity of work		
Management of priorities		
Level of autonomy		
Behavior/Self management		
Interpersonal communication		
Discretion/confidentiality		
Team work		
Innovation		
Supervisor		
Management of change		
Professional development		
Leadership Capacity		
Recognition/feedback		

MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM EMPLOYEE TO SUPERVISOR

Becoming a supervisor does not happen just because you change your job title. There is actually a three-phase process you experience that you need to manage to build success in your new role.

- There is an **ENDING** – now that you are a supervisor you no longer do technical work full time. You supervise others, sometimes people who were your co-workers, who do the technical work.
- There is a period of **ADJUSTMENT** – learning what you are responsible for, what you are accountable for and what authority you are given; to achieve expected results from your employees and your physical and financial resources.
- There is a **NEW BEGINNING** – you now lead a team of employees. You now have a “partnership” with your up-line manager to optimize the performance of your employees and the cost-effective use of your resources, to achieve departmental and organizational goals that support the on-going future of your organization.

What you need to appreciate is that everyone who makes a change in role and responsibility takes this journey. What you want to do is move on and complete the journey to the **NEW BEGINNING**. If you can't let go of “the way it used to be” (**ENDING**) and “don't learn about and accept your new role” (**ADJUSTMENT**) your opportunity for a **NEW BEGINNING** may get stalled and your ambition to achieve your personal goals may not get realized.

The following information is an array of ideas and suggestions to help you take primary responsibility for your success in your new management role. Sure, your up-line manager has an important role to play in your transition; but you are also expected to be proactive in taking personal ownership of your growth into your new role.

Accepting the New Responsibilities

The person who has been promoted or hired into supervision finds quickly that his/her new responsibilities require skills and tasks quite different from those required as an individual employee. Usually the new supervisor has the experience, knowledge and skills to understand the technical aspects in the new role.

Supervising other people, however, is a new experience for most new supervisors. Organizational demands, paperwork, internal rules, procedures, policies, practices, external regulations and the need to communicate in all directions, etc. makes the position challenging. However, effective communication and effective interpersonal relations are major influences on the job success of the new supervisor.

THINGS YOU LOSE THE RIGHT TO DO WHEN YOU BECOME A SUPERVISOR

1. **The right to lose your temper** – temper outbursts lead to disrespect for employees and lack of respect for the supervisor by the employees. Supervisors who can't control their temper cannot expect employees to exercise control of their tempers.
2. **The right to be a “buddy” with the employees** – Employees expect and are in fact waiting to see a new supervisor display leadership, help them get the tools and guidance to succeed in their work, look out for their interests and keep them informed about “what is going on”. Not, “kept in the dark”.
3. **The right to say whatever is on your mind** – the caution to “engage your brain before opening your mouth”, is the rule here. Supervisors who too easily blame employees, the up-line manager or the organization for setbacks or failures will be seen as offering excuses not solutions. Also, things said by a supervisor are considered by employees as the opinion of all management. Supervisors must avoid criticizing employees in front of other employees or appearing to criticize other management people or the organization's policies, procedures, mission, values etc. As a member of the management team the supervisor must be seen as protecting the self-respect of employees and the organization. Any criticism needs to be done in private and supported by facts along with suggestions for how to improve the situation.
4. **The right to be against change** – Change is natural part of an organization managing its future. A supervisor must prepare his/her employees for change and be supportive of the change.
5. **The right to “get even”** – Supervisors should never apply discipline as a way of showing “who's boss” or to abuse the power of his/her position. All disciplinary actions need to be based on facts, observed behaviour and seen by others as fair and just.
6. **The right to choose favourites** – A supervisor should always judge employees on their capabilities, skills, knowledge and commitment to quality work. Appearing to favour others for personal reasons will alienate employees and cause the supervisor to lose the trust required to perform as a unified team.
7. **The right to ask an employee to do what you wouldn't do** – To ask an employee to do something dangerous, unethical, embarrassing or something that will result in loss of respect, will create insubordination or disobedience among employees.
8. **The right to expect immediate rewards** – Supervisors must strive to reward employees for meeting and/or exceeding results. For himself/herself the supervisor reward can only come after employees have achieved success and the department or unit has achieved its goals.

Ways to Help Yourself through the Transition

1. Clarify and confirm your new responsibilities, accountability and authority with your up-line manager.
2. Clarify and confirm the department or unit goals and objectives with your up-line manager, share with your employees how you intend to contribute to these goals and how you want to involve them in contributing their efforts to achieving these goals.
3. Get to know your employees on an individual basis. Be careful not to “invade their privacy” but do get to know their likes, dislikes, needs and wants, and to an extent their life outside work. This insight will guide you in adapting your leadership style and building a one-to-one relationship based on trust and mutual respect.
4. Find someone (your up-line manager, an experienced supervisor or managers) from whom you can “learn the ropes” and get objective advice on handling the challenges in your new role.
5. Praise yourself as you make the incremental adjustments and improvements to becoming a fully competent supervisor.

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STUDENTS AND PRACTITIONERS

Child and youth care: The transition from student to practitioner

Sharon Moscrip and Adrien Brown

The transition from child and youth care student to child and youth care professional can be an anxiety producing experience. This article will identify challenges regularly encountered by beginning practitioners in order to provide a frame of reference for entry into child and youth care employment. Anticipating and preparing for these events may facilitate an easier transition into the world of work.

Evidence suggests that levels of involvement and types of concerns experienced by child and youth care workers change noticeably during the first three years of employment (Sutton, 1977; Phelan, in press). Sarata (1979) examined three phases of work experience of new cottage parents. Initially, the new employees were preoccupied with mastering standard operating procedures. During the second phase they tended to compare their work attitudes and philosophies to those of co-workers and supervisors and in the third phase, the major focus was their appropriateness for and commitment to the child care role.

Sheahan et al. (1987) identified three developmental stages that residential child care workers within one institution seemed to move through. Each of the stages is described by approximately twenty worker behaviours characteristic of the stage. Beginning workers are given a copy of these behaviours upon commencement of employment. The intended goal is to reduce worker frustration, anger, and disappointment around predictable events and to provide an opportunity for supervisory intervention in a supportive manner based on the worker's particular stage of development.

Research examining actual phases in moving from student to professional is limited. Sarata (1979) states that "most observers of child care practitioners have failed to distinguish between working in the role, and the process of beginning employment or adjusting to the role" (p. 298). A successful adjustment to initial employment is seen as critical if the worker is to continue practicing in the field.

Seeking and Accepting Employment

Finding work

The challenge of finding full-time employment in child and youth care often begins towards the end of a student's final practicum. In addition to broadening awareness, skills, and knowledge, the practicum provides an opportunity for students to make professional contacts. That is, a positive impression generated in the mind of a field supervisor may open "employment doors" to the student's future.

As graduation approaches, the student begins to assess the job market realizing that the graduate in many parts of the country is entering an employers' market. A number of employment areas have suffered cut-backs in government funding of social services and it is not unusual for employers in major urban areas to receive a large number of applications for a single vacancy. Applications are often received from persons whose qualifications exceed the job requirements both in training and in field experience. Subsequently, students who are at last relieved of the pressures of academic competition with classmates may now find themselves in an even tougher competition for jobs.

This situation permits employers to make additional requests of candidates. For example, an agency director may ask a prospective employee to give a commitment to remain employed with the agency for two years. The employer, however, may only be able to offer minimal job security due to dependency upon renewal of government funding each fiscal year and the availability of contracts. The successful applicant may more readily agree to a solid commitment in an uncertain environment given the intensity of competition.

Typically, students seek employment in their area of specialization or interest. Depending on level of training, workers are qualified for a broad range of jobs. However, given the

scarcity of employment opportunities in some regions, the tendency may be to apply for child care related positions in which they have less adequate training. The flip-side of the "tight" job market are those regions that desperately need well-trained child and youth care graduates and employ them readily but, given the extreme need, place them in positions demanding skills and knowledge beyond their years. In either situation, employment in an area for which one has little experience can be an unsettling prospect.

Relying solely upon traditional job search strategies appears to be inadequate in some of today's job markets. Results from Atkinson and Glassberg's study (1983) indicate that the largest percentage of jobs were obtained through personal contacts (38.6%) rather than through newspaper advertisements (19%). One may conclude that child and youth care students who make professional connections and establish a network of contacts in the field will have an advantage in finding employment. Making contacts with other professionals, gaining experience, and establishing a reputation are all benefits gained through practica and volunteer work. Seeing the value in these experiences and taking advantage of the opportunities they may provide gives an added edge to the beginning job search.

In preparation for the interview questions may arise about the job requirements and one's suitability for the position. The interview process requires a careful balancing act. The applicant realizes there are inherent risks in using the interview to explore whether or not the job will be suitable while wanting to appear enthusiastic and committed to a job they know very little about. This can lead to frustration if there has been little opportunity for information exchange as often occurs in newspaper advertisements where an anonymous box number is given by an employer who wants to avoid being overwhelmed with inquiries. Although there may be initial frustrations and disappointments associated with the employment search, there is also an accompanying sense of excitement in beginning to practice in the field in which so much preparatory time and energy has been invested.

Readiness to practice

Along with the initial excitement, novice child care workers need to grapple with the complexities of the new job and will likely have questions about their career readiness. A general lack of confidence or a feeling of being in over one's head may accompany this experience. For example, "I've spent two years studying to be a child and youth care worker and I'm still not sure I'll be able to do the right thing, at the right time, with the

right child." The graduate now realizes that the prior focus on learning has changed to one of accountability for the specific client interventions. The responsibility of intervening in another human's life can be overwhelming and beginning workers may see their approach as one of trial and error. Whereas this lack of clear focus can be confusing, with experience comes a clearer perspective and understanding of the process of intervention (Sheahan et al., 1987). Developing clear theoretical application in practice only evolves with time and with field experience.

A common tendency for beginning workers is to assume responsibility for client successes and failures. As a result workers may find themselves on emotional "roller-coasters" peaking when they perceive client success and "zipping down into the chasm" with lack of client progress. Ownership of client progress may subsequently result in the tendency for workers to contribute to client dependency. Not only do clients tend to become dependent on their workers for experiencing success, but also beginning workers often depend on clients for meeting their needs to be loved and admired (VanderVen, 1979). This need to be accepted can interfere with the worker's ability to set clear limits particularly if in the setting of limits the worker risks rejection by the child. The following case illustrates this type of dilemma faced by a beginning worker:

Friday afternoon, when left alone with a class of six adolescents in an alternative school, the youth care worker was approached by a youth complaining of a stomach ache. He had already had two timeouts, and one more would result in a suspension. Intent on avoiding unnecessary conflict, the worker carefully weighed the options. Should the youth stay in the class and risk an inevitable suspension or would it be better to let the youth go home early and avoid further confrontation? After 'careful' consideration the youth was permitted to leave. Five minutes later smoke filled the classroom; the student had set the school on fire as he left. The child care worker had the following thoughts: 'I should have known something like this would happen! If only I'd paid attention to his nonverbal behavior.'

Two issues emerge from this example. The first is the worker's choice of intervention, which was based somewhat on avoiding conflict or rejection; it was easier to send him home sick. The other issue is the worker's questioning of her own level of competence. New workers often believe they should know what to do in every situation. Learning to take a positive view of mistakes by accepting and learning from them is a necessary part

of adapting to work in child and youth care.

The beginning practitioner needs to be prepared for the processes involved in learning new skills quickly rather than expecting to be thoroughly versed in all areas (Baer & Federico, 1979). Assessing skills needed to function effectively in any position and then identifying how and where to get these skills is a key aspect to success in child and youth care work. Reading up-to-date publications, attending and participating in workshops, conferences, and post graduate courses are additional opportunities for fine tuning or further developing the necessary skills.

Defining the child care role

Professional child and youth care has expanded rapidly over the last three decades moving from an almost exclusively institutional base to a broad range of services and programs (Denholm, Ferguson & Pence, 1987). As a result of the expansion of services to children and families the focus and definition of child care work has changed dramatically. However, the continued professionalization of child and youth care workers has often been held back as agencies define their standards of practice by whom they hire. Although there may be intensive academic training available now, many agencies still tend to hire inexperienced and untrained personnel. This practice clearly affects the status of the profession.

Child and youth care workers who are new to the field may move into a new program where they are the only child and youth worker employed. They may be without a statement of philosophy, theoretical premise, or frame of reference for the role and yet are expected to define their role within the program, to the community, and to other professionals. Lack of role clarity can make it difficult for novice workers to present clear statements about who they are and what they do. A child and youth care worker may move into a setting where other professionals are unsure of the role and mandate of the profession and thus are unsure of the contribution that a child care worker can bring to a team or agency.

Perhaps one of the most prevalent situations in which lack of role clarity is evident is the school setting. Workers often walk a fine line in trying to clearly define their role without affecting the teacher's role by performing teaching tasks yet still being viewed as a supportive person within this environment (Denholm & Watkins, 1987). Clearly, part of

the challenge for the new worker is to educate and inform fellow workers of their role, skills, and professional value. The new worker thus needs to become confident and assertive about role clarity and which functions they are, or are not, willing to perform.

While this lack of role clarity can be difficult for some it is nevertheless one of the most appealing aspects of this profession. Unlike other professions, the child care role has flexibility and provides child and youth care workers with the freedom to adapt their service to meet the "real" needs of the children and families with whom they work.

Supervision

The beginning worker may be reluctant to take complete advantage of the expertise of the supervisor. Instead, supervisory sessions tend to be used to prove one's competence and supervision time may see the worker attempting to convince the supervisor of his/her proficiency and commitment rather than gaining support and information related to the job. The benefits to be gained from supervisor feedback on areas of weakness or inexperience may be lost as confidence building takes precedence. This focus on competence at the expense of self examination may relate to the fact that mistakes now take on a new meaning as they may affect one's reputation as a professional rather than simply indicating areas of focus for student learning. With this shift in emphasis, the novice practitioner can become fearful not just of making errors but of these errors coming to the attention of the supervisor.

One aspect of professionalism is having a rationale for clinical intervention. Beginners naturally question their level of professionalism yet need to remember that whether they feel qualified or not, the job has been entrusted to them. At times there may be self-doubt, a feeling of being ill equipped to offer assistance or support to their clients. The beginning practitioner may not realize that this self-doubt surfaces at times for all those in the helping professions.

Sarata (1979) describes the initial months of first employment as a lonely time where "the workers find it difficult to request assistance for themselves and often relegate concerns and frustrations to another time" (p. 27). The beginning workers' inability to articulate their concerns often limits their capacity to obtain the type of peer support needed in the early stages. As Sarata comments, "maintaining a supportive atmosphere for discussion will not always be easy because a new worker's preoccupation with basic procedures will

be less than intriguing to more experienced workers" (p. 33).

Another area of supervision that can create difficulties for the beginning worker is the worker's confusion with regard to the many roles performed by the supervisor. Workers may be requesting assistance as to the effectiveness of an intervention or simply identifying weak areas in order to request feedback and support from their supervisor while the supervisor may be in the process of evaluating the workers' competence. Therefore, both workers and supervisors need to reach joint clarity about the purpose and structure of supervision and each others' expectations.

Agency structures

Another area facing the novice child and youth care worker is the development of a thorough understanding of the agency functions, policies, procedures, rules, politics, and power structures, and an understanding of how these functions are related to their own role. As Fassett (1978) noted, "discovery of these realities without adequate preparations has had devastating effects on many of our new, eager and creative talents" (p. 54). However, the new practitioner is rarely aware of, or prepared for, these realities when commencing employment.

The worker's limited perception of the agency may be traced to what Egan (1986) calls "the shadow side of organizations." These are the covert rules and complex sets of mutual understandings which are not written in any policy handbook yet often govern how employees behave and how procedures are followed. An example of such a covert rule would be that no employee shall talk directly to the Director about a case without first consulting the program supervisor. The new worker usually stumbles over such covert rules through trial and error. Nevertheless, the worker's effectiveness will be influenced by the ability to quickly assess the informal agency structure. A program that may initially have been perceived as restricted by the routine of tradition, may in fact be a program held in place by a series of interrelated expectations cemented by years of practice. This view is supported by Fassett (1978) who commented that "untold energies are spent in attempting to reconcile what practitioners view as a conflict between their professional ethical structure and the demands of agencies" (p.54).

VanderVen (1979) described beginning child care workers as having "a feeling that administrative action and policies actually erect a barrier to the spontaneity and freedom

they feel the children need and they can provide" (p. 104) That is, the position taken by the agency may seem antithetical to the workers' perception of human service needs. Subsequently, "new workers develop a sense of 'self-hate' from seeing themselves as purveyors of negative factors" (Fassett, 1978, p.54). Learning to deal with disillusionment when the realities involved in services to children and families offered by various agencies be-comes evident can be difficult. Due to political, economic, and social factors, clients' needs will not always be foremost in service planning. The worker who feels responsible for poor service offered by agency constraints may feel helpless and victimized, identifying with the client and thus becoming less effective as a worker.

To increase effectiveness the child and youth care worker, rather than feeling like a participant in a system that is self-serving, may choose to work towards becoming a political change agent. For example, rather than complaining about the elimination of a program the option to contact the news media and publicly advocate for the continuation of the service, to participate in a cost-benefit analysis of this program, and to release these results to the public can be constructive alternatives. Thus involvement in political change strategies may assist in maintaining a level of idealism and active commitment to services for children and families regardless of the program content.

The idealism of beginning practitioners is an attribute that can provide energy and drive in advocacy for children and families and in working with demanding and difficult clients who, because of their experiences, are resistant to developing relationships with professionals. Keen, fresh perceptions can serve to revitalize an existing program. However, a critical aspect is the skill with which new workers share these perceptions and suggestions for change. Too much enthusiasm may be perceived as criticism of the program's inadequacies, thus putting other staff on the defensive. The challenge for the beginner, then, is not just to identify program areas that need changing but to advocate for these changes in a way that staff feel supported rather than criticized. Over time, novice child and youth care workers will come to understand the adage, "real change takes time." Moreover, they will likely discover how best to work with colleagues to influence policy and program in order to bring about realistic and effective changes which in turn bring better service to children, youth, and families.

Conclusions and Implications

Issues and challenges facing beginning child and youth care practitioners have been

presented. Awareness of these issues and challenges may assist in facilitating a smooth transition from the years spent in study and academic preparation to employment within the work force. The following is a list of suggestions which may assist students about to undergo this transition:

1. Join a Child Care Association. Often child and youth care workers work in isolation and need the support, professional identity, and information provided through contact with their professional community.
2. While you are a student, begin a professional network that will help you with your job search and support system after graduation.
3. Do not expect to have all of the skills necessary for the ever-changing role of the child and youth care worker. Chart a course for your continued personal and professional development. Evaluate whether you have the skills needed and, if you do not, ascertain where and how you can obtain them.
4. Have your name put on mailing lists for training seminars, workshops, conferences, and retreats.
5. Become proactive in soliciting support and feedback from your supervisor and from your colleagues concerning improvement in practice skills. Often colleagues will resist giving unsolicited feedback, yet when approached will offer valuable suggestions and insights.
6. Develop interests and friendships outside of work that provide support and help replenish your energies. This will assist your need to create a balanced lifestyle, and provide a "clean break" from the job.
7. Find people to talk with who understand and support your work. When things are going well and when problems arise, have someone you can share with who will listen, share ideas, and offer supportive understanding.

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From Student to Professional: Making the Transition

by Jennifer Trifari, MSW

It's been a little over two months since I graduated from New York University and began my first job as a social worker. My internship was at a child day treatment program where I provided individual, group, and family therapy services to latency-aged children. Since graduation, I have begun working at a child welfare agency providing case management and therapy services to children and adolescents. All of my case management cases are kinship care, which means that the children are placed in the home of a relative. My therapy cases are a mix of children who are in kinship care and children who are in the traditional foster care system. After being at my job for a little over two months and transitioning from being a social work intern to a social worker, I have noticed some similarities and differences between the two roles.

What's the Same?

One of the biggest similarities that I have noticed is that with both my internship and my job, there was an orientation period. Last year, all of the social work interns had to attend a one-day orientation to become familiar with agency policy and procedures, including the paperwork. When I began on the unit, I was encouraged to take time to observe the program in order to get to know the other staff members and clients and become familiar with how the program operated. At the agency I work for now, new social workers spend a week or two accompanying current workers to various meetings and home visits. In my case, for three weeks I "shadowed" the social worker who was leaving and whose caseload I assumed responsibility for. This proved to be invaluable to me. My internship was in a mental health setting, so some of the responsibilities differed. For instance, at my internship I never needed to supervise visits between children and their natural parents or go to court. I appreciated having an experienced person with me the first time I assumed these responsibilities.

When I began working, one of my concerns was that I wanted to be in a situation where there would be opportunities for me to improve my intervention skills, to acquire new skills, and to learn more about the services other agencies can provide. Thankfully, I have found this to be the case. As I shadowed the worker whose cases I assumed responsibility for, I used that opportunity to observe how she interacted with the clients and the different interventions she used. Furthermore, when calling other agencies, if I found someone who was willing to talk to me for any length of time, I used that opportunity to learn more about the services they provided. For example, I have been attempting to locate housing resources for one family. The first agency I called could not provide this service, but was able to refer me to another agency. I used this opportunity to find out more about the services that agency does provide and how its program "fits in" with services offered by other agencies. This was information that neither the child protection services worker nor I had been aware of.

Both the agency where I completed my internship and the agency I work for now provide a variety of training opportunities. At my internship, the intern coordinator arranged weekly seminars on a variety of topics, including medications, child sexual abuse, and ethnicity and family therapy. As interns, we were invited to attend grand round seminars that were held for the medical school.

The agency that I work for now also offers a variety of trainings, which staff members are required to attend. These trainings include those required by various regulatory agencies, as well as continuing education seminars and weekly play therapy seminars. Moreover, the agency is part of a consortium that provides a variety of training opportunities, most of which count for licensure renewal. In order to obtain satisfactory job evaluations, staff members must have completed a certain number of training hours.

What's Different?

As I make the transition from a social work intern to a social worker, I have noted several differences as well. One of the major differences that I have noted is that as a social worker, I have more independence in my job. For instance, at my internship, my supervisor reviewed all of my paperwork. At my job, my supervisor checked all of my paperwork at first, but now she checks only certain paperwork. Also, while I consult with my supervisor on my cases and, in certain circumstances, we plan together how to proceed, now I make a significant number of decisions independently.

Another difference is that there is a greater intensity to the work day. The work I did at my internship was definitely intense and required a lot of physical and mental energy. A significant portion of the day was spent with the children, often attempting to avert a crisis. I also provided individual, group, and/or family therapy to three children. It took a while to learn how to juggle the different responsibilities, but eventually I did. In this sense, there is a similarity between the role of student intern and the role of social worker. However, now it does feel that there is a greater intensity—more things are happening at once. This may be the result of maintaining a larger caseload and also of being at the agency five days a week instead of three.

Making the Adjustment

In making the transition from social work student to social worker, I have found it helpful to have regular supervision, to use any resources that are available at the agency, to develop a life outside of work, and to maintain contact with people who are making a similar transition. At my agency, social workers receive an hour of supervision a week from our supervisor and are expected to meet with the psychiatrist one time per month for supervision focusing on providing therapy. This has helped me not only become oriented to the agency, but to maintain some sanity as I assumed greater and more diverse job responsibilities. My supervisor has been great in helping me prioritize what needs to be done and to feel more confident and comfortable with the job requirements. Unfortunately, I am aware that some agencies do not offer supervision that frequently. When I graduated in May, my professors strongly recommended that when interviewing we ask what supervision we would receive and to pay for it ourselves, if necessary. This was excellent advice.

I have also used resources that are available at my agency. Informally, this has sometimes meant venting to my officemate or another worker. It is something that all of us have needed to do once in a while. Formally, this has meant using other agency resources. In one instance, a client of mine was having surgery. While I was able to be there for the day of the surgery, I was not able to go out to the home a day or two later to see how things were going. I was, however, able to have a member of our foster parent support team go to visit the home. This put my mind at ease, because I knew that the family was receiving some extra support at a difficult time and it allowed me to address other responsibilities.

In addition, given how stressful the job can be, I have become involved in a variety of activities outside of work in order to maintain my mental health. While I found this to be helpful when completing my internship, it has been even more important as I have been making the transition from student to social worker. For example, I have begun to attend creative writing workshops and poetry readings. These are activities that I used to enjoy in high school, but became less involved with after I entered college. Writing has begun to once more serve as a great release for me and provides me with an opportunity to meet a variety of people. I also started reading novels again, began exercising, and am looking to become involved in other activities in the area. By having a life outside of work and learning to leave work at work, I have found that mentally I have felt "more together," which puts me in a better position to address the problems and issues that my clients raise.

Finally, I have found it helpful to talk to other people who are making a similar transition, as well as those who have already made the transition from student intern to social worker. By talking to other people in a similar situation, I have found that I felt less isolated and have been better able to keep things in perspective. By talking to other people who have already made a similar transition, I am reminded that the adjustment period does not last forever and that the transition from social work intern to social worker can be made successfully.

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Summary

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Allied health graduate program – supporting the transition from student to professional in an interdisciplinary program

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The transition from student to professional is challenging. Training programs provide discipline specific skills but do not adequately develop the interprofessional, team focused and work ready clinicians needed for the current workplace. In Australia, a formal graduate year is common in nursing; however, structured programs to support the student to professional transition are uncommon in allied health. This paper reports on the first year of an innovative program designed to address this gap. Fourteen new graduates at Northern Health in Melbourne, Australia from the disciplines of occupational therapy, physical education, physiotherapy, podiatry, social work and speech pathology participated in twelve, 2-hour sessions over a ten-month period during their first year of professional practice. These facilitated sessions aimed to foster reflective practice, peer support, to develop professional characteristics and provide an interdisciplinary forum for sharing experiences and learning. The paper outlines graduates and facilitators experience, together with the impacts for the health service.

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