

Client Care Promise

“Above and Beyond guarantees that no client will ever experience a compromised or degraded counselor experience regardless of whom they are paired with”

The **Intern Program** at Above and Beyond

According to one of our most relied upon and credible guiding organizations, SAMHSA, behavioral health disorders will surpass all physical diseases as a major cause of disability by the year 2020. Worse than this is the evidence-laden fact that the substance-abusive populations we serve at Above and Beyond are virtually 100% diagnosable with Co-Occurring Disorders (those having one or more substance abuse disorders and one or more psychiatric disorders at the same time) which tends to complicate their healing and return to full functioning members of society.

Faced with these inescapable realities, Above and Beyond has committed to building a highly educated, stable, experienced, and diverse behavioral health workforce as a top priority. Our unique Internship Program has been specifically designed to insure our clients of the highest level of competency, no matter whom they are paired with, and at the same time equip college students from the most lauded colleges and universities in the Chicagoland area with a structured program that specifically serves their educational needs while providing them with supervised and unparalleled direct client contact.

With a full-time LCSW on staff, dedicated solely to the selection, training, and supervision of all Interns according to the stringent guidelines of the Illinois Department of Financial & Professional Regulation (IDFPR), Above and Beyond is proud to call its Intern Program one of its most original and differentiating characteristics.

Benefits to our Clients

Without this exclusive program, we would not be able to make our “Client Care Promise”. It would not be possible.

Since Illinois does not require Substance Abuse Counselors to graduate from programs that have any particular accreditation, counseling can legally be provided by a myriad of acronymic titles like CAAP, CRSS, CADC, NCRS, SAP and many others, all of which are credible, honorable credentials requiring testing to acquire, but do not meet Above and Beyond’s higher standards of requiring a Master’s Level of Education in Mental Health or Social Work or equivalent with additional verifiable training in Substance Use Disorder.

Many of our clients despair of their uncertainty of the qualifications of their past, failed recovery attempts because their counselors did not seem to have the experience necessary to help them. Not so at Above and Beyond because of our commitment to provide the **“Highest quality of evidence-**



informed or based substance abuse counseling and treatment available anywhere to the populations who need it the most, regardless of their economic status or ability to pay for these services.”

Benefits to the Interns

Besides the life-altering experience of being in direct daily contact with street addiction, the Above and Beyond Internship Program shows highly accomplished students how they can reduce the negative impacts of mental illness and substance abuse through a variety of fields. In addition to offering a structured, experiential internship program directly immersed in substance use-disorder, we also offer many other project-specific internships which are directly connected to our mission, but not clinical in nature. A partial list of Internship focuses might look like the list below, but we are very open to any creative intern ideas, dissertations, original research, or out-and-out outlandish clinical relationships:

- Substance abuse and mental health prevention and treatment, which includes:
 - Screening
 - Intake
 - Orientation
 - Assessment
 - Treatment Plan coauthoring with clients
 - Counseling using Motivational Interviewing with attention to Attending Behaviors
 - Client Education
 - Referrals, linkages, and alternative resource sourcing and maintenance
 - Record Keeping (our EHR is Kipusystems.com)
 - Consultations with other professionals
- Federal, state, and local government policies and regulations
 - Administrative track students and interns working with 501C3 processes
- Program administration, operations, and management
- Journalism, story capturing and creative writing
- Research and data analysis (collecting and using our evidence strategically to enhance quality, client satisfaction, and therapeutic outcomes)
- Communications and social marketing
- Healing garden design and maintenance (we have a raised bed garden space)
- Development, Fundraising, Grant writing and Event Planning

In addition, the industry tradition of misusing Interns for purposes other than what their programs specifically call for is completely side-stepped. Weekly supervision is assured and program requirements are meticulously recorded. Audio Visual recordings are made of counseling sessions for use in clinical discussions so that improvements can be made and clients are never used as “guinea pigs” in the education process.

Testing and interviewing is required prior to acceptance and there must be cultural compatibility (as indicated in an important www.cindexinc.com survey) before we will bestow the honor of being able to serve the neediest street populations of Chicago. Worth noting is our commitment to halt any



behaviors that we do not consider to be conducive to the healing of our populations as discerned by the program supervisor. We train our interns with very open minds, but if there is a refusal to act compassionately towards the human beings we treat, or evidence of being able to learn, change unwanted behaviors, and improve clinical abilities, then we will reintroduce the intern back into the world away from us in as compassionate and caring manner as we are capable of. The well-being and ultimate healing of our clients is of paramount importance to our pledged mission so anything that would threaten it will be removed immediately, with every attempt to reduce any harm to the intern and the school who introduced them as a secondary consideration.

Interns are required to participate in Above and Beyond's "Staff Wellness Program" and must fulfill all the requirements of it just like the permanent staff. This does NOT mean attendance at Wellness Meetings is mandatory, but an alternative must be designed so that the benefits of the program can be realized. Our Wellness Program is designed to prevent and/or combat "Compassion Fatigue" or what we might well call "Second-Hand Trauma" due to the constant exposure to toxic stories we are exposed to. Therefore, participation is a fundamental requirement so that we can collectively keep our supply of Compassion available for our Client populations, who require an insatiable supply.

Every intern must achieve a Primary Certificate in REBT that meets the criteria of the Chicago Institute of REBT. Above and Beyond offers free Primary Certificate weekend Practicums several times a year, so all interns would be expected to participate in these as a requirement.

Upon completion of every Above and Beyond Intern (Cooperative Education) Program there will awarded a framed Certificate of Completion which can be displayed proudly and will represent a lifelong adoption into the Above and Beyond family!

Benefits to the Schools which provide the Interns

The schools we work with are very vocal regarding the credibility and uniqueness of our program and they serve as our most virulent references.

Working individually with each school to prepare a custom curriculum that fits the coursework and expectations of each institution so that all parties know what to expect (most important of all, our clients) while surprises and unwanted outcomes are avoided. Our MOU's (Memos of Understanding) with the finest schools in the Chicagoland area represent one of the most consistent and diverse student intern inflows in the state, requiring each student to meet rigorous minimum standards in order to assure the high level of competence and adaptability that our clinical protocol demands.

Although we primarily work with Master's equivalents in education, we also welcome all levels of CADC's seeking our unique experiential internship to whom we dedicate a fixed percentage of opportunity. We feel strongly that all walks of professional pursuit must be acknowledged and given a chance.

Benefits to Above and Beyond's Ability to Provide Consistent Quality Care

One of the organizational advantages to providing structured, high-quality intern experiences is the opportunity it gives Above and Beyond to select and develop our future talent based on direct



observation and interaction over time. We'll make fewer mistakes in the acquisition of talent. It gives us the opportunity to evaluate and screen potential employees prior to making a full-time position offer, which leads to financial savings while maintaining our guarantee to our clients of top talent. Eventually, we expect to convert more than half of the top intern talent into full-time hires (who will assimilate faster to their new roles and have shorter learning curves than external hires).

Our groundbreaking Intern program:

- Provides more freedom for our professional staff which helps us all to avoid their burnout, and allows them to pursue creative or more advanced projects.
- Affords us a flexible workforce that is more capable of being woven into a fabric of talent that covers us capably from the front door to the back door, creating optimal efficiency.
- Increases staff retention rate.
- Assists us, as an organization, in application of the latest strategies and techniques in the field.
- Maintains connections with colleges and increases visibility on campus.
- Promotes community involvement ☑ which is an excellent public relations tool.
- Recruits other students and generates enthusiasm.
- Creates awareness of the field for future hires.
- Insures the Interns that their time will not be abused and that they will be treated in the most professional manner.
- Gives back to the community by teaching their prospective work force.

Everyone wins: our clients get a guarantee of being exposed only to the best proven talent in the marketplace; our interns are guaranteed of not being mistreated or receiving a “less than” level of training; our linked schools who provide the Interns are assured of a structured, customized experiential program that will churn out well-seasoned, balanced, and trained professionals; Above and Beyond is graced with a steady flow of über-qualified, highly-educated candidates who can be vetted before hire.

Short Addendum Regarding a Germane but Little-Known Trend

Not all of our interns are youth. We have seen an uptick in the average age of intern applicants that reflects paradigm changes in the lives of those who have been touched by substance use disorder, either directly or indirectly. A great many otherwise accomplished citizens are choosing to embark upon new journeys in the “afternoons of their lives” which enhances our clients experience by pairing them with counselors who bring with them a wealth of valuable life experience.