Advocacy, Group Work, and Individual Counselling with “Helping Young People Achieve”: A Field Practicum Report

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Abstract

This report discusses the experience of a Master of Social Work (MSW) student from the University of Regina in his field practicum placement based at the social agency, Helping Young People Achieve (HYPA) in Adelaide, Australia. Formal group work and community development activities were incorporated in the placement. HYPA focuses on advocacy for young people and the development of opportunity, well-being, and community for marginalized young people in Adelaide. The practicum placement consisted of integrating the social work theory implemented by HYPA in their mission and individual case management approach. These approaches will be examined in this report in relation to ideology, theory, values, ethics, relationships, strategies, skills and encompassing conclusions which envisions future work in the social work profession.
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Introduction

A 450 hour master’s level practicum was completed from January 2014 to April 2014. The international field placement was completed at Helping Young People Achieve in Adelaide, Australia. An international practicum placement was beneficial due to the opportunity to work within a non-profit agency in another country, and to gain different perspectives of social work practice in a community-based setting that is governed by its policies and procedures.

Helping Young People Achieve (HYP A) is a non-profit agency that was founded in 1958. It provides services to vulnerable young people who are at risk of homelessness in the Adelaide region and South Australia. The focus points of the agency are home, well-being, learning, and working. HYP A supports and assists over 5,000 young people each year to access and maintain safe and appropriate accommodation, to reconnect with family, school, employment and the community, and to harness their talents for a positive future (HYP A, 2013).

The practicum experience was a sequential learning model which provided optimal opportunity to receive a full grasp of the agencies policies and programs. During the first two weeks of the placement, theory, ideology and an overall orientation of the agency was provided. The next step was to narrow down the practicum experience into focus points which complimented the practicum goals discussed with the academic supervisor, committee member, and field supervisor. The next steps were to participate as a frontline participant with the agency with the opportunity to take on responsibility, facilitate groups, and carry a small case load in a case management setting. The conclusion of the practicum consisted of preparing this report, which outlines a comprehensive look at the practicum experience and social
work practice. This includes HYPA and social work ideology, theory, values, ethics, relationships, strategies, skills, and conclusions of the practicum experience.

**Youth Pathways and Family Conflict**

The ideologies and beliefs implemented by HYPA are found in their practice with young people on a daily basis. The “Youth Pathways” document that was developed by Johnson (2008) acts as the agency’s foundation of knowledge regarding a range of factors that attribute young people’s entry into the homeless population. These range of factors include family type or dysfunction, sexual preference, mental health status, and ethnicity are commonly cited triggers. Though all elements and factors relating to homeless youth are discussed, emphasis is placed on the family type and dysfunction factor of homeless youth and Johnson (2008) states that it is the most significant factor in youth homelessness.

Australian research frequently cites family conflict or dysfunction as a cause of youth homelessness. Johnson (2008) cites *The Burdekin Report* that notes family conflict features strongly in most studies of young people leaving home. Furthermore, Shaw (2010) indicates that family breakdown can lead to young people either choosing to leave home, or being excluded from home by their parents or caregivers. Johnson (2008) divides the youth who enter homelessness into two distinct categories titled *dissenters* and *escapers*.

A clear distinction can be made between youth who are dissenters and escapers. Dissenters are classified as young people who chose to leave their home due to family conflict underpinned by normative resistance to parental controls and restrictions (Johnson, 2008). Staller (2006) paints a clear picture of society’s image and approach to these young people that has changed since the 1960s. This
perspective changed from dissenter youth being seen as runaway youth who engage in harmless, adventurous behaviours to young people who were at extreme risk to be victimized and to engage in unhealthy lifestyle activities such as drug use and prostitution.

Escapers are described as young people who leave their home due to family conflict that is underpinned by physical or sexual abuse and become involved in the state care and protection systems. Youth who run away from home are now seen as a public problem involving a large population of youth who were vulnerable in their home environment (Staller, 2006).

HYPA utilizes the concepts of dissenters and escapers into their understanding and beliefs about the determinants of youth homelessness. Being sensitive to the building of a therapeutic relationship, HYPA acknowledges that it may be difficult to assess whether a young person entering into the program is a dissenter or escaper. When a young person feels comfortable opening up to their case manager in regard to their family conflict and past relationships, a case manager utilizes the information to provide individualized holistic services which meets the complex social history of the young person.

An immediate action that needs to be taken when working with escaper clients within HYPA is to report possible neglect or physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. During the practicum experience I had the opportunity to take training titled, “Child-Safe Environments: Reporting Child Abuse & Neglect” (Government of South Australia, 2013). This training experience assists professionals to identify a range of indicators concerning child abuse and neglect. This is mandatory training for all staff, placement students and volunteers that are affiliated with HYPA.
This opportunity provided practice frameworks and proper channels to go through when reporting child abuse in South Australia. This involves calling the Child Abuse Report Line, which is a 24/7 service that receives, assesses and records reports of child abuse and neglect (Government of South Australia, 2013).

Conflict at home varies in extent, frequency, and duration for the young people that are involved in the HYPA program. The practicum case management experiences that were observed presented a wide spectrum of need. The range consisted of cases of constant arguments with siblings that lead to the choice of the young person leaving home, to more complex and alarming cases, such as, repeated sexual abuse by caregivers. HYPA acknowledges that while conflict may lead to homelessness, conflict can also be a symptom of deeper problems such as abuse or neglect (Johnson, 2008). Therefore, a young person’s reason for homelessness may initially be assessed as sibling conflict, but once rapport and case management begins, it may be found that the young person’s reason for service is emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

To assist and support homeless youth who have gone through a traumatic past and complex social history, every HYPA site within the Adelaide district has a professional therapist with a graduate degree in social work, counselling, or clinical psychology. The two current therapists that HYPA has on their staff have differing educational backgrounds. One is a Masters prepared in clinical social work (Flinders University), and the other has a Master degree in Counselling (University of South Australia). These two professionals complement HYPA’s holistic model of helping young people.

During the entry screening and assessment phase of case management within HYPA, family dynamics are explored with the young person, seeking their
perspective on their family situation, including their supports and/or lack of supports. During the entry screening of the assessment phases, the case manager utilizes a genogram activity to work with young people and examine their family situation.

Collins, Jordan, and Coleman (2010) describe a genogram as “a family diagram that can be utilized to depict the structure, the nature of relationships, and the appearance of issues that come across several generations” (p. 174). Not only is a genogram a concrete assessment for the young person and the case manager to examine family dynamics, it can also be beneficial for young people to review their family dynamics, positives and barriers in a therapeutic manner (Platt, 2008).

Helping Young People Achieve (2013) describes a genogram in their case management manual as an essential stage in assessment and rapport gathering with a young person. During the practicum placement genogram assessments were completed with young people who were referred to the safe housing services for homeless youth as well as for their case plan in finding vocational opportunities. For example, if a young person is involved in a family that has had multiple generations of homelessness and unemployment, it is essential for the case manager to determine this in order to create an individualized case plan for a young person to become involved in a work placement. For example, if a young person has never observed or experienced or been taught what vocational obligations are, it is unrealistic for them to enter in the work sector immediately without training and the development of employment skills.

By implementing these approaches, HYPA has been able to implement many different educational groups and programs for young people to engage in. Looking at the vocational theme and the multi-generations within families of homelessness and unemployment, HYPA can then assess the young people and provide workshops on
how to get work and maintain work. The knowledge of how the young person’s life may affect their perceptions of working greatly impacts the planning and facilitation of these groups.

Ideology

Who is the Client and Client/Worker Status

Essential to social work practice is identifying and understanding who is your client (Hick, 2012). In their mission statement, Helping Young People Achieve (2013) state:

HYPA provides services and support to assist young people in securing a safe, stable home environment. Our services are designed to address differing challenges faced by young people when needing to find alternative living arrangements, from emergency or crisis accommodation to preparing for independent living and ongoing stability and security (p. 1).

This mission statement provides a clear focus on young people and their participation in the program as the agency’s client. South Australia classifies anyone under the age of 18 as a ‘child or young person”; however, HYPA’s contract provides the staff the opportunity to work with young people aged 15-25. It is essential for HYPA case managers to be cognizant of how the agency’s mandate defines a young person. HYPA case managers must be aware that the young person is the client and direct goals and planning to suit the needs of the young person.

Case management and advocacy for the young people is directed by a ‘client-centred’ approach. Carl Rogers (1959) founded client-centred therapy which focuses on the client’s right to self-direction. A client-centred approach is also complemented; maybe compatible with the Canadian Association of Social Worker’s Code of Ethics (2005) which states, “[s]ocial workers uphold each person’s right to self-
determination, consistent with that person’s capacity and with the rights of others” (p.4). Miller (2011) indicates that a client centred approach is done by, “working with people in need and supporting their right to autonomy and self-management of their lives and/or care” (p. 29).

Within their client-centred model, HYPA ensures that case plans, goals, and action steps are all identified and agreed to by the young person. The young people who are involved in the program take the lead role in developing their individualized case plan and are entitled to self-determination around the services that HYPA provides them. Issues arise when the program has goals that it must work toward that the young person is not yet willing to address or cannot see the value in addressing. When this occurs, the case manager is instructed to review the goals of the program and discuss how it could improve the young person’s well-being. If the young person does not find a benefit, the case manager then takes an advocacy role to find a program that better suits his or her needs.

There are some challenges that HYPA experiences when the government contract for a program defines particulars about who a young person is. As stated before, South Australia defines a young person as anyone under the age of 18, but HYPA’s mandate is to provide services to young people aged 15-25 years. HYPA staff experience difficulties when the government’s mission is to target a particular youth population of Adelaide. For example, the HYPA transitions program, which helps young people find work experience opportunities, has multiple restrictions for a young person to be eligible for the program. Some of these restrictions include: being between the age of 15 and 19, not have completed high school, and must live in a specific geographic area.
These restrictions hold some barriers to goals that HYPA is trying to accomplish with young people. Helping Young People Achieve diligently promote their services and reach out to young people who are marginalized and vulnerable in the community. The staff members would recruit young people by inviting them to be involved in the programs. Unfortunately, the staff members had to turn down two applications during my practicum. The first individual they had to turn down was a 14 year old girl who wanted babysitting experience and eventually wanted to be a social worker. She was turned down due to her young age. The second was a girl who was out of the geographic area. Due to the goal of HYPA funders to target young people aged 15-19 in the Adelaide area, these youth were not able to access the program that HYPA developed.

When these situations happen HYPA does play an advocacy role in the young person’s ability to access other programs. In HYPA’s Case Management Model (2013) advocacy is classified as the primary role of a case manager. It defines advocacy as “the process by which the Case Manager upholds the rights of clients to access services” (p. 15). Wilks (2012) defines advocacy in social work as “the exclusive and mutual representation of clients or a cause in a forum attempting to systematically influence decision making in an unjust system” (p. 2). HYPA case managers will respond by contacting funders and expressing that the need exceeds the contract or they may apply for additional funding for young people who do not meet the eligibility of the program, but could still benefit from the services of the program.
Determinants of Problems

It has long been recognized in South Australia, and in particular Adelaide, that society needs to address the social problem of youth homelessness. (Johnson, 2006). HYPA believes there is a huge gap in the welfare system concerning adequate services and accommodation available to homeless young people. HYPA is constantly expanding their services by advocating for homeless young people by applying for grants to further their involvement in the youth homelessness epidemic that South Australia is facing.

The Government of South Australia has programs and financial assistance in place for homeless youth; however, these services lack the recognition of the barriers that are between homeless youth and receiving the assistance they require. HYPA recognizes this as a significant factor in why South Australia experiences the level of youth homelessness that they do. HYPA is motivated to reduce the number of youth that are on the street by developing programs that meet the needs of homeless youth in South Australia.

The services that are provided to young people by the Government of South Australia are disjointed and have unrealistic expectations put on the youth that are homeless. The Government provides financial assistance, but does not target systematic difficulties young people face trying to rent in the modern and competitive housing market. HYPA is passionate about breaking the barriers that young people experience in the rental market. For example, the Rent-A-Place program offers assistance to young people who are looking for affordable and adequate rental property in the Adelaide region (HYPA, 2013).

Another significant belief that mandates HYPA is their recognition of the trauma and hurt the youth have experienced (HYPA, 2013). Trauma and negative
family dynamics have had a significant impact on a young person’s ability to sustain independence (Johnson, 2006). A significant determinant of a young person becoming homeless is often their family support and whether or not their family system is healthy (Johnson, 2006). HYPA believes and advocates that the young people have the strength and capacity to bring out positive change in their lives. They recognize that the young people that come through their door to access their services have struggled alone to access the services and resources they need to find adequate housing or to be successful educationally and/or vocationally. Therefore, they believe that homeless and other young people not only require financial and housing accommodation, they also require therapeutic and counselling services which helps them in the long term to be a successful member of society.

The final belief that drives HYPA’s work is the recognition of the impact that mental health has on youth homelessness. It has been cited that a significant number of homeless youth are struggling with mental health difficulties that are either misdiagnosed or not diagnosed or recognized at all (Staller, 2006). HYPA is motivated to raise awareness of mental health and youth homelessness. This belief is what drives HYPA to develop mental health awareness and support programs for youth who are experiencing homelessness and mental health issues. Furthermore, HYPA works to advocate for youth with mental health concerns who are not able to live independently. They have a strong relationship with South Australia Health and are able to refer young people with mental health needs to appropriate services.
Theory

Helping Young People Achieve integrates numerous theories into their micro and macro practice that serves young people in the Adelaide region. To understand the foundation of practice with young people that HYPa implements, it is best to begin this area of the report with an overview of HYPa’s “Case Management Model”, then to proceed with social work theoretical frameworks that the agency implements in their practice.

Case Management Model

Helping Young People Achieve utilizes a case management model that all workers are required to follow in their practice. This model has been developed by upper management of HYPa and is reviewed and updated constantly. It is what they consider as a “living document”, meaning it can be edited at any time. According to the Case Management Model (HYPa, 2013), there are three principles to case management with young people.

The first principle to case management is to facilitate personal developments of clients. It aims to assist clients to function independently of the case manager’s support in the future. Furthermore, case management should increase a client’s skills and capacity to take control over their life. This primary objective shows a clear understanding that HYPa case managers should be aiming toward preparing the young person to proceed independently after the client’s program has been completed.

Not only does this involve case managers to provide the life skills, emotional skills, and resources for the young person to be successful independently, it also requires the case manager to ensure a healthy and sensitive termination process. During my practicum experience at HYPa, different termination approaches were
applied and adapted to the individualized needs of the youth. In the initial stages of
the case management process, goals were set with the young person. Many of the
young people established a goal with their case manager to not require services of
HYPA in the future. If this was accomplished the termination phase is self-directed by
the young person and easier to be mutually facilitated by the case manager and the
young person.

Some of my case management experiences during the practicum showed
resilience from young people in the initial stages of assessment that they were able to
proceed without the support of HYPA. Glitterman and Germain (2013) discuss the
importance of creating a temporary relationship between the young person and
professional. They stress the importance of making this a clear goal of the social
worker/client relationship in order to not create distressing feelings related to former
losses or relationships in his/her life (Glitterman & Germain, 2013).

One way to prepare young people for the termination of the case is to
emphasize the objective of independence. This should be done during the first
meeting (Glitterman & Germain, 2013). This strategy was observed throughout my
practicum with guidance of HYPA staff. It had two benefits. The first benefit was that
it prepared the young person for the termination and understanding that the helping
relationship was temporary. The second was that it provided an opportunity to assess
the young person and to see how the termination of the relationship may affect them.

The second principle of case management according to the Case Management
Manual is the advocacy of client’s rights (HYPA, 2013). Advocacy is an essential part
of social work practice and is upheld in social work code of ethics in both Australia
and Canada. The Australian Association of Social Workers (2010) indicates that one
of their goals is to “achieve human rights and social justice through social

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development, social and systemic change, advocacy, and ethical conduct of research” (p. 7). Furthermore, the Canadian Association of Social Workers in their Code of Ethics (2005) states that, “[s]ocial workers advocate for fair and equitable access to public services and benefits” (p.5). The case management model developed by HYPA stresses the participation of case managers to facilitate client’s access to services through referral and advocacy.

During my practicum experience, I utilized advocacy as a primary focus of the practice and service provided by HYPA. Case managers participate in advocacy at all levels of the agency and from the initial stages of the professional relationship with the young people. Advocacy was utilized to obtain housing and access services and employment. In the transitions program, which is a program transitioning young people from school to employment, advocacy is a vital tool in preparing the relationship between the young person and the work placement.

Work placements are difficult to find in Adelaide, and in particular the suburb of Elizabeth where the office is located. It is a low-income suburb with few work opportunities and families who are marginalized by multi-generations of poverty. After multi-generations of poverty, a learned helplessness permeates within the family household (Barrett, 2013). Young people from these situations have little confidence and often are not socially equipped with the skills necessary for approaching employers and seeking a job. In the “Transitions Program” of HYPA, the team contacted employers to speak on behalf of young people about the skills and dedication they could bring to their company. With a supporting reference, the young people are better equipped to find employment despite their barriers of poverty and location.
The third and last principle of the Case Management Model (HYPA, 2013) is that case management is purposeful. “[A]ctions of case managers address the specific needs of the client” (HYPA, 2013, p. 5) and that “[t]he interventions should reflect evidence-based, best practice and must balance client need with available resources” (HYPA, 2013, p. 5). Young people access case management from HYPA for various reasons. It is the responsibility of the case manager to identify those needs with the client and to ensure that they are utilizing the best practices and social work theories to suit that individual young person.

The Case Management Model (HYPA, 2013) is not a linear process. It does begin with an “Entry Screening” phase when the young person first enters the program, but all the phases can be revisited and it is not necessarily in any sequential order. Figure 1 provides a clearer picture of the model and its emphasis on varying sequence between stages of the case management process:

Figure 1: HYPA Case Management Model
As previously stated, case management at HYPA begins with an “Entry Screening” phase. HYPA (2013) describes entry screening as a component of the model that ensures that all people who contact HYPA are placed in the right service which is most appropriate for their needs. The intake workers gather information about the client’s presenting issues, identify what support they are seeking, provide clear information about what HYPA can offer, and provide information about other ways in which the individuals could obtain the needed services.

Referral practice is an essential part of social work practice to ensure clients are receiving the best possible services available (Hick, 2010). HYPA (2013) indicates that if a case manager determines that HYPA is not able to offer the services required, case management should refer the young person to another agency with better suited services. Segal, Gerdes, and Steiner (2012) describe referring as a process to enhance a client’s access to service by improving awareness and knowledge of services and assisting in removing barriers to the services.

Goldstein, Meihls, and Ghoshana (2009) indicate that clinical social workers should have advanced and thorough knowledge regarding the resources in their regional location. This provides the social worker the ability to ensure that the client receives optimal services for the individualized needs of that individual and his/her situation.

I experienced an example during my placement working with a homeless female aged 16 with a 6 month old baby. Helping Young People Achieve was providing her accommodation services in a hotel. A hotel was used because other housing agencies that HYPA clients often access do not provide accommodation services to both a mother and a child. At the time, the case manager was unsure of what referral would be appropriate for her situation. He consulted his clinical
supervisor for assistance and she was able to develop some possible planning opportunities and goal setting that could be implemented with the young person. This involved contacting a community-based agency known as AngliCare to put in an emergency referral for their residential housing program for single mothers between the ages of 16-25 years.

After the entry screening phase with the intake case manager, and if it is determined that the young person’s needs can be met by a HYPA program, he/she is referred to an internal case manager. With his or her case manager the young person goes through the stages in a sequence, until a safe and efficient exit planning/discharge planning can occur (HYPA, 2013). To ensure a smooth and healthy exit transition from services, a case conference is usually held with the young person, outside support (ie. social workers, family, etc.), and the HYPA worker.

The case management model developed by HYPA (2013) indicates that workers should incorporate social work theory and approaches into their practice. These include strength-based theory, motivational interviewing, solution-focused therapy, and narrative therapy.

Strengths-based Social Work Practice

HYPA incorporates a strengths-based approach in their service delivery to young people. Strengths-based practice focuses on “the strengths already possessed by the client and those found within their environment” (Barker, Humphries, McArthur & Thomson, 2010, p. 23). Barker et al. (2010) discuss strengths-based practice in working with young people who are at risk for homelessness and indicates that “best practice evidence” suggests that this approach enhances the effectiveness of intervention at any level.
The strengths-based perspective has received much attention from the 1990s on in social work practice and literature (Poulin, 2009). It has become a focus-point in practice and was a dramatic departure from the traditional approach, which focuses primarily on client problems and social history. When young people come to social workers with problems or issues that they would like to resolve, there is a tendency to attempt to resolve the problems or issues and to view the young person from a deficit perspective (Poulin, 2009). This, however, provides little input from the young person and appreciation of how the young person perceives their situation (HYPA, 2013; Poulin, 2009; Hick, 2010). It also provides a negative perspective on the young person and limits the social worker’s ability to focus on strengths, and puts an emphasis on underlying weaknesses and limiting the potential of the young person (Poulin, 2009).

When a strengths-based perspective is not used, social workers are more prone to perceive clients negatively. This may include seeing clients as a collection of problems and labels. Hammond (2010) also emphasizes that a lack of a strengths-based perspective has other traits that do not work well in social work practice, such as, it focuses on the “can nots” as opposed to the “cans”, ignores the potential effect of facing adversity, utilizes prescribed programming as opposed to individualized approaches, and obscures the recognition of a person’s unique capabilities and strengths.

A strengths-based perspective is vital in working with the young people at HYPA. Due to their social status, family situation, and often exclusion from school their self-esteem levels are low. A strengths-based approach has shown evidence of success in engaging in youth with low self-esteem and learning difficulties (Guindon, 2009). Saleeby (2002) discusses three principles of strength-based social work
practice that is implemented in working with young people. These principles are an efficient way to examine how HYPA utilizes the strengths-based approach in their practice and are discussed below.

The first principle is that every individual, group, family, and community has strengths. Regardless of the situation, every person, family, and community possesses assets, resources, wisdom, and knowledge that can be explored by the social worker and the client (Saleebey, 2002). To efficiently discover and explore strengths with the client, it is essential that social workers are genuinely interested in the clients and respectful of their perceptions of their own experiences (Poulin, 2009). During the placement, I practiced and observed the discovery and exploration of strengths with clients numerous times in the transitions programs.

When I met with young people in the transitions program to develop a sequential plan for developing a work experience, the first question that I asked during the intake process is what strengths the young person believes he or she may have. If the young person has low self-esteem or is resistant to offer strengths, it is my responsibility to seek knowledge and assets the young person may have. This involves asking the young person if he or she have previously worked. If the young person has previously worked, I explore what were the strengths the young person possessed at that job. I will also explore what the young person believes he/she learned from that placement and how he/she has transitioned to strengthen the young person as a worker.

The second principle discussed by Saleebey (2002) is that trauma and abuse, illness, and struggle may be injurious, but they may also be sources of challenge and opportunity. It is essential that the social worker does not minimize the emotional and physical scars that come from a painful traumatic experience when conscious of this
principle (Saleeby, 2002). The social worker helps the client see that he or she can use the experience to learn and grow rather than continuing on with a self-defeating perception or see themselves as a victim of failure (Poulin, 2009). This is essential practice when working with young people during their emotional development, due to the probability of their self-esteem being hindered after trauma, abuse, and other struggles.

HYPA utilizes this principle during their intake phase and their direct practice in the transitions program to find work in the community. During the assessment phase of practice the case manager collects a social history from the young person in order to help him or her determine some of the past struggles the young person may have and how these presently may affect him or her (HYPA, 2013). In the transitions program many of the young people have left school due to difficulties with peers. This often involves the young person being bullied by his or her peers in a school setting and have removed themselves due to emotional trauma and abuse.

When this occurs, discussions with the young person may be focused on the healthy environment of work placements and policies implemented in these environments to reduce the bullying. To assist a young person who had quit school due to bullying, I assisted in identifying that their awareness and experience of bullying as a positive strength to move forward stronger. This was done by advising the young person that he/she would be a positive asset as an advocate for workers who are experiencing issues who are bullied.

The third principle outlined by Saleeby (2002) states that social workers should not assume the limits or capacity of a young person and to always take the young person’s aspirations seriously. This principle stresses the need for the social worker to take all their clients’ goals seriously and to assist them in working toward
their aspirations. The strength perspective is a perspective of hope and possibilities. In order to practice in this manner, social workers must believe in the young person’s change, growth, and self-actualization.

Young people are asked in the transitions program what their ideal job or career would be. Most of the young people had a good understanding of self-actualization and indicated they would like to work in realistic careers for themselves. They are also asked where they would like to see themselves in six months. The case management is then structured around their goals and timeframes they have. If the goals are more difficult goals to achieve, such as owning a business, then sequential planning is utilized with more attainable short term goals. This may include: taking business courses at a local college, working in a business of interest, or working on English and math skills used in business.

Motivational Interviewing

Motivational interviewing (MI) has been applied by social workers in many areas, such as, work with adolescents in school settings, homelessness, reduction of HIV/AIDS, interpersonal violence and vocational rehabilitation (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Due to HYPA’s involvement with young people who are homeless, struggling with school, or looking for vocational opportunities, it is clear why MI is utilized in its practice. MI can be defined as “a client-centered, directive method for enhancing intrinsic motivation to change by exploring and resolving ambivalence” (Hohman, 2011, p.3). It utilizes skills that convey empathy and encourage clients to consider and plan change.

Motivational interviewing does not incorporate unique ideas about how problems develop. The attention of MI is focused on how the change actually occurs
with the young person (Walsh, 2013). Walsh (2013) indicates that according to MI change can only occur if a client is willing, able and ready. The client must see the importance of changing, is confident about changing, and is ready to change. Furthermore, because MI assumes that change can occur quickly, the attributes of the social worker are significant to the change process, and a client’s arguing for change increases the likelihood that it will occur.

When utilizing MI in social work practice, it is essential to keep in mind the initial intervention goal which is, “to build clients’ motivation when they are not willing to change, rather than focusing on actual behaviour change” (Walsh, 2013, p. 259). MI focuses on building clients’ motivation to change their situation rather than the behaviour that is influencing the situation. HYPA utilizes this by assessing and asking the young person what his/her perception of the problem is and working toward motivation to take action by developing strategies to address the problem (Walsh, 2013; HYPA, 2013).

MI is built on the work of Carl Roger’s (1959) client-centred therapy, which has been discussed previously in this report. Motivational Interviewing is founded on three aspects that constitute its mandate. These aspects are collaboration, evocation, and autonomy support. These aspects are essential components for the social worker when implementing MI into his/her direct practice with young people. Hohman (2011) provides an explanation of these three aspects that constitute MI.

The collaboration aspect views social workers as working together with clients rather than in a hierarchical relationship. With this perspective, it suggests that social workers are seen as helpers who work with young people to understand his/her goals, motivators, and ambivalence (Hohman, 2011). This compliments the Saskatchewan Association of Social Worker’s (SASW) Code of Ethics (2005) emphasis on
autonomy, self-determination, and seeing the client as the experts of their own situation. An emphasis on this aspect is that social workers are not experts but guides. It is the social worker’s obligation to provide information and advice with the young person’s consent (Hohman, 2011).

HYPA utilizes the collaboration aspect of Motivational Interviewing on different stages of practice. In the assessment phase, the case manager seeks to assess information based on the young person’s point of view. After the assessment phase, he/she seeks out possible resources to suit the young person’s needs (HYPA, 2013). For example, the young people in the transitions program were referred to the program by their HYPA case manager. When I was working as a case manager in the transitions program, youth would indicate to me that they would like to find a job so they can find and maintain accommodation. I would provide information about transitions to employers with the young person’s consent. A consent form is required by all case managers who are referring young people to the transitions program or any other service that HYPA provides.

The aspect of evocation “supports our eliciting or drawing out from clients their thoughts and ideas regarding goals and methods of change” (Hohman, 2011, p. 6). Hohman (2011) describes this strategy as not seeing the young person as being “in denial” but as struggling with ambivalence regarding changing a certain behaviour. For instance, if a young person comes to HYPA who is struggling with substance abuse issues which hinders their ability to attend work or hold a steady job, they may use the substance as an escape from their problems.

This situation must be assessed by the case manager to recognize the needs of the young person in order to be successful vocationally. The social worker can work in a guiding role to evoke from the young person his/her own motivation for change
in the substance abuse. This process may include exploring her or his true desire to hold a steady job, be a positive member of the community, and attend other positive supports for young people in unstable home environments.

The third and last aspect of MI is autonomy support. This aspect emphasizes that young people are ultimately the ones who make their decisions (Hohman, 2011). Social workers may not always agree with the decisions that are made by the young people, but they must respect the inherent dignity of the young person and their right to make their own choices, unless it puts themselves or others at risk (CASW, 2005). The aspect of autonomy support is emphasized in practice on many levels of the case management model (HYPA, 2013).

During the early stages of the practicum, I had the opportunity to participate in arranged home visits of young people who are disengaged from school and work. The purpose of the home visits was to promote the service of the transitions program of the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program to young people. FLO is an educational policy in South Australia where the young person, once they have turned 16, can choose to opt out of the mainstream educational system and use their education budget for a learning alternative that better suits their individual needs and goals. The flexible learning options vary and may include a ‘hands on’ education environment where the young person may learn a range of occupations from hairstyling to music production.

During the home visits, it occurred to me that the young person was sometimes disengaged and not interested in the program. I discussed the two programs of alternate education and indicated the benefits of participating in the programs. However, if the young person was not interested, I respected the choice and respected the young person right of self-determination. In these situations, I provided
the young person with options by leaving my business card and a registration form for each program. I also indicated that if the young person came into the office, he/she could be assigned a case manager to assist him/her with the registration process and the transition into either of the programs.

During the home visits that I was involved with, I found it difficult for the young people to access the services to the HYPA office. Even though the agency provides young people with bus passes to access the HYPA office, many of them live in remote areas which do not offer public transit services. With approval from management, it was determined in these cases home visits would be provided to the young people once a week, to continue contact and provide the youth with information and resources on educational and vocational resources.

The home visits are used as a positive opportunity to reach out to the young people. The case manager would not arrive at the house without consent and would always ask the young person for permission to come by and talk to him or her about resources and options that would suit his/her needs. If the young person refused the service of a home visit, autonomy and the freedom of self-determination would be respected and no home visits would occur from HYPA. Since HYPA’s practice is MI based, she/he would see it as a hindrance and detrimental to the helping relationship if the worker pushed his/her values onto the young person, or if the worker put consequences such as not permitting a bus pass for the week if the young person did not participate in the programs (Hohman, 2011).

To complement the four aspects of MI, there are also four principles that social workers utilizing MI should be aware. These four principles are express empathy, develop discrepancy, roll with resistance, and support self-efficacy (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Expressing empathy is done by the social worker accepting the
client’s feelings and perspectives without judging, criticizing, or blaming. This is an essential component of professional social work practice and is outlined in both the Canadian Association of Social Worker’s Code of Ethics (2005) and the mandate of the Australian Association of Social Workers (2010).

Developing discrepancy is a difficult task that social workers face in all areas of practice. It is essential to be particularly sensitive to clients who are young people and have been through traumatic experiences (Johnson, 2006). The practice of developing discrepancy refers to how to best present a reality that may be harsh or unpleasant so that the young person can confront it and change it (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). It is essential for HYPA staff to utilize this discrepancy due to the traumatic histories of many of the young people with whom they work. This is usually done by developing a positive rapport and a trusting relationship with the young person before beginning to propose what the harsh or unpleasant reality is that exists in that young person’s life. The young person will then feel more confident in confronting reality and changing his or her situation with the social worker.

Solution-focused Practice

Solution-focused practice is an approach that has been proven beneficial to working with youth and adolescents (HYPA, 2013; Johnson, 2006; O’Connell & Palmer, 2003). Solution-focused social work practice is defined by O’Connell and Palmer (2003) as an approach that builds upon client’s resources. It aims to help clients “achieve their preferred outcomes by evoking and co-constructing solutions to their problems” (p. 2). The social worker attends to the young person’s favoured futures rather than to their problematic history (O’Connell & Palmer, 2003). Solution-
focused therapy has a major emphasis on clarifying what the young person wants to happen in his/her life and to seek out strategies to bring it to a reality.

Along with interventions, the social worker’s tenor and stance is seen as an important aspect of the solution-focused approach. With a solution-focused approach, the overall attitude of the social worker should be positive, respectful, and hopeful (de Shazer, Korman, Trepper, McCollum & Berg; 2006). de Shazer et al. (2006) indicates that the social worker should be aware that there is a general assumption that people are strongly resilient. Therefore, it is asserted that small increments of change lead to large increments of change. Furthermore, social workers must also believe that people have the strength, wisdom, and experience to create their own change. When working with a solution-focused approach social workers must be cognizant that the client is able to both identify his or her change and have the abilities to follow through on the change that is desired.

There are many reasons why social workers and individuals working with young people choose a solution-focused approach. Wheeler (2003) discusses the advantages of solution-focused therapy when working with children and young people with behaviour problems, non-school attendance, soiling, anxiety, depression, and eating disorders. He further indicates that solution-focused social work practice with young people enhances the young person’s self-esteem, self-understanding and empowerment (Wheeler, 2003).

Solution-focused practice is congruent with the Canadian Social Work Code of Ethics (CASW, 2005) due to its focus on client self-determination and creating his/her own goals and ideas of success (O’Connell & Palmer, 2003). One of the biggest issues in solution-focused therapy is challenging the structure of the power in the client/worker relationship. Solution-focused practice transforms the power
relationships between the worker and the client to ensure the client feels empowered. The social worker focuses on goals driven by the young person in collaboration with the social worker. At HYPA, the young person determines the definition of success where he/she self-evaluates on a scale of 1 to 10, providing the social worker with a better understanding of what success means to the client/young person (Wheeler, 2003).

Solution-focused approaches are utilized in many HYPA programs and were included in the practicum experience. For example, group work with the transitions program began with an icebreaker which utilized the scale question of solution-focused practice (O’Connell & Palmer, 2003). This strategy was most effective when the scale was focused on a single skill or trait rather than the young person’s entire progress in the program. Rather than asking the young person to rate his/her progress in the program on a scale of 1 to 10, asking him/her about specific skills was much more effective rather than their progress within the entire program. For example, asking the young person to rate his/her confidence in writing a cover letter on a scale of 1 to 10 was much more effective than asking them their confidence in the whole program.

During the practicum experience, the miracle question was used to assist the Youth Leadership Team develop their Mission, Vision, and Culture. A HYPA group facilitator and I developed an educational group with the Youth Leadership team to define the goal of their leadership to the young people of HYPA as they move forward. This group activity involved education on what Mission, Vision, and Culture defines in an agency.

The Youth Leadership Team was created by eight young people who have moved from various HYPA programs, and now mentor and assist young people who
are currently involved and new to HYPA programs. The *miracle question* in solution-focused therapy involves the young person exploring what his/her desired outcome is by the social worker asking him/her if everything was perfect and ideal and what would that look like (O’Connell & Palmer, 2003). The leadership team was having some difficulties developing a Mission, Vision, and Culture. The miracle question helped this process and was utilized as a brainstorming exercise.

O’Connell and Palmer (2003) also describe how solution-focused approaches can be used as an evaluation mechanism for social work programs. It can assist social workers in determining how they can best serve their clients in meeting their goals. This approach also furthers the social workers’ ability to determine the client’s self-assessment of their progress. It also allows social workers to determine what the clients would like to work on to gain more confidence, and to be more self-sufficient (O’Connell & Palmer, 2003). I participated in this practice in the transitions program evaluation. This evaluation was used to observe the effectiveness of the program. The evaluation consisted of five scale questions which asked the young people to rate the group program on a scale of 1 to 10 on various elements. Questions such as, “the training today made me feel more confident in job interviews” and “I feel confident to seek employment in the community” assisted the facilitation of the group programs and were also used as a tool to develop future workshops for the young people in the transitions program.

Another positive exercise in a solution-focused social work approach is looking for previous solutions with the client (de Shazer et al., 2006). Looking for previous solutions involves the social worker exploring with the client the problem or a similar problem that has happened in the past, and determining what were some effective ways the person solved or dealt with the problem. When a client cannot
determine a previous solution to the problem, it is effective to explore recent examples of exceptions to their problem. de Shazer et al. (2006) describe an exception as a time when the problem could have occurred, but did not.

Looking for previous solutions was effective in one to one sessions with young people during my practicum experience. Exploring a reoccurring problem with a young person can be difficult for the young person who is experiencing frustration due to the reoccurrence or struggle with the issue. However, approaching it from a solution-focused approach, where the social worker focuses on previous solutions rather than the problem itself, allowed the young person to think more optimistically. I used this intervention with a young man who was having difficulties living at home with his father and was looking for accommodation elsewhere. Rather than focusing on his reoccurring violence toward his father, which would bring out anger, sadness and resistance, it was more effective to explore with the young man exceptions to the violence. This provided him the opportunity to explore effective strategies that he used which resulted in no violence, such as, leaving to stay at a friend’s house.

Narrative Therapy

Narrative approaches to social work practice ask the client to be the “narrator” of their story and to share it with the social worker during one to one sessions. This storytelling provides an opportunity to identify barriers from the client’s perspective. By identifying barriers in a story-telling approach the social worker and the client can sequentially seek possible patterns of behavior or how the problem continues to arise in the individual’s life (White, 2007). It is an approach that assumes people are the experts in their own lives.
Narrative therapy is the last component of HYPA’s case management approach that is discussed in this report. Counsellors who use a narrative approach, much like person-centred therapy, aim to encourage knowledge and skills for living and for the client to identify what needs to be done for transformation and positive change (Payne, 2006). An essential component to a narrative approach, which is unique from other approaches used by HYPA, is the focus on problem’s effects on people’s lives rather than problems as inside or apart of people. Furthermore, narrative practitioners create distance between the problem and the person who it is affecting (White, 2007).

During “one on one” sessions for young people who are seeking work experience in the community, separating the problem from the person helped the young person to distance themselves from the issues and see the problem more clearly. Young people would describe barriers to their difficulty in finding employment and would identify them as traits, such as, “I can’t read”, “my maths are bad”, or “I use drugs too often”. By rephrasing, the young person could see themselves separate from the problem. Reframing the thought of not being able to read to the skill of reading is important, since reading is essential to a job; it was beneficial for the young person to understand that not being able to read affects his or her probability of being employed.

Stories in narrative therapy are made up of events, linked by a theme, occurring over time that the client sees as important aspects or stories in their lives. It is the social worker’s role to look for clues to knowledge and skills that run counter to the “problem-saturated” story (White, 2007). With collaboration from the social worker, the goal of the narrative approach is to find stories of intentions, hopes, commitments, values, desires and dreams which run counter to the problem. White
(2007) believes that with curiosity and exploration of these positive stories the client’s perception can become more positive and change can occur.

It is believed that narrative therapy has been proven beneficial for counselling young people who are experiencing family dysfunction and have no place to live (HYPA, 2013). Often when young people first come to HYPA, their stories are filled with turmoil and very little hope. They have left home due to family dysfunction or conflict with their parents and are homeless without income. HYPA case managers and social workers are advocates for the young person and utilize a client-centred approach to their practice. Young people’s reasons for leaving home and whether or not they have a safe living situation are traumatizing for the young people, and is often framed with the problem being the focus point of their experience and the young person rather than the environment. HYPA staff, without offering empty promises or hope, attempts to reframe the young people’s “problem saturated” story to one of hope.

During my experience at the crisis unit of HYPA, a single mother who had just turned 16 and was seeking accommodation for her and her eight month old baby, described her story which was problem-saturated and full of self-blame. She was disappointed in her ability to find a healthy relationship, her inability to have a healthy relationship with her parents due to her partner, and felt guilty about being in an unsafe situation with her baby for a long period of time. The story can be reframe with hope, by exploring with her why she may have stayed with her abusive partner for so long, and why she has finally gathered the courage to leave an unhealthy situation. The young woman was provided with education on abusive and dysfunctional relationships, as well as information on support groups and services for women leaving an abusive relationship. She was also provided a safe and nurturing
environment to live and raise her baby. Her success story was encouraging and helped me see the importance and value in HYPA’s approach.

**Values**

Before discussing values in a social work context or within Helping Young People Achieve, a clear definition and understanding of values will be presented. Pattison and Pill (2004) discuss values in professional practice in social care. They discuss values from a psychological domain of attitudes and beliefs. Values are closely related to ethics in social work practice and ultimately shape the profession’s mission and as well provide social workers with a framework of priorities (Reamer, 2006). Values are a part of everyone’s personal and professional life (Pattison & Pill, 2004). I would define values as a set of beliefs and attitudes which guide an individual’s actions in her or his relationships and behaviour.

The items that HYPA values as important aspects of a healthy life style can be seen in their four focus areas of successful living. As indicated by HYPA (2013), “HYPA’s services are aligned to four primary priorities in a young person’s life: Home, Wellbeing, Learning, and Working” (p. 2). This shows a clear picture of what HYPA values as priorities in a young person’s life. It is beneficial for services providers, such as HYPA, to share these values with the young people who access their services. If there is a “clash” in values it is highly unlikely that the young person will find benefit to the services that HYPA provides to assist young people in these four areas.

It is essential that social workers ensure that their personal values compliment the agency to safeguard that they will have a positive relationship with the agency and the clients. When personal values clash with an agency’s professional values, it is
difficult for the social worker to work effectively and rewardingly (Reamer, 2006). HYPA provides ethical training which encourages new employees, practicum students, and volunteers to review all documents and beliefs the agency holds. This training ensures that the working relationship will be positive and the individual who is entering the agency as an employee, practicum student, or volunteer will have a positive relationship with HYPA.

HYPA believes that, “without the appropriate support to address their personal issues, too many young people fall through ‘the cracks’” (HYPA, 2013, p. 1). A value of HYPA is that young people have the right to achieve their potential. They believe that their role is to close the gaps and support young people to change their circumstances so they can live full and productive lives within their communities.

When working with young people, HYPA’s primary value is the belief that all young people have potential and that they should have autonomy to decide their own future. This value is evident in their policy documents and day to day practice. It complements the person-centred approach and both the Canadian and Australian Social Work Code of Ethics. (Rogers, 1959; CASW, 2005; AASW, 2010). From the intake phase to the exit planning phase of case management, the young people are provided with the opportunity to determine and evaluate the services that are accessed (HYPA, 2013).

Flexible Learning Options (FLO) is a service which encompasses the value of self-directing one’s future. FLO is an opportunity for young people who struggle with staying in school until year 12 (Government of South Australia, 2011). Young people are encouraged to participate in the intake assessment process. The struggles may be for many reasons including relationship issues, health issues, or learning difficulties.
The FLO program upholds the value of young people’s voice and ability to shape their own future. During the assessment phase of the FLO case management process, young people are provided with checklists of activities they would like to take part in. This assessment encompasses all aspects of HYPA’s cornerstones of home, well-being, learning, and work (HYPA, 2013). This assessment ranges from attending a technical college for classes such as construction, to accessing a fitness program, or working on mental health concerns.

As discussed by Reamer (2006) if values clash between parties who are involved in an objective, it creates barriers for all parties to reach that objective. I observed a clash that occurred in the FLO program between the young person, the parents, and the FLO ideology. Some parents believe that their children must attend school to be productive and successful. This conflict is due to society’s belief that mainstream school’s framework should work for all young people. However, I experienced many young people who were not successful in the mainstream school system, but were able to develop work skills in HYPA programs and go on to be successful in jobs in the community.

Ethics

HYPA provides case managers with ethical guidelines to practice in their case management model (HYPA, 2013). Furthermore, HYPA supports and funds professionals who are apart of separate professional bodies, such as, the Australian Association of Social Workers, which obligates their members to abide by their ethical code and guidelines (AASW, 2010). As an international student, I had no difficulty practicing and supporting the Code of Ethics from both the AASW and CASW. I discuss my practice below.
Ethical Considerations for Students

Ethical considerations need to be examined in the context of the professional within the environment. I wish to examine the ethical issues from a student’s point of view and not as an employee of the agency. It is important to examine the practicum within the context of Value 6 of the Code of Ethics (CASW, 2005) which examines the social workers competence in professional practice. Two principles can be discussed in relation to the practicum placement which are, “[s]ocial workers uphold the right of the clients to be offered the highest quality service possible” (p. 8) and [s]ocial workers strive to maintain and increase their professional knowledge and skill” (p.8).

As a placement student, it was essential to keep a focus on the principle that clients have the right to understand the type of services they are receiving and ensure highest quality possible. Therefore, in the initial stages and building rapport with the young person, I indicated that I was a student. If the young person is uncomfortable with the situation, Value 6 of the Code of Ethics (2005) should be upheld and the young person should be directed to full service from an employed case manager. During my work at HYPA, I ensured that all clients I worked with were aware that I was a graduate student completing my field hours. I did not experience any situation where a client was uncomfortable with receiving services from me.

However, it is important to take a look at the multiple dynamics of ethics within a student placement. Value 6 also indicates that “[s]ocial workers contribute to the ongoing development of the profession and its ability to serve humanity, by participating in the development of current and future social workers” (CASW, 2005, p. 8). The development of future social workers into practice is essential to ensure the
profession is developing individuals who practice at their highest competence and most ethical manner. For their professional development, it is essential for students to be participants in social work practice wherever possible. However, clients’ rights and their case plans always have priority in ethical practice. If they do not feel comfortable working with a student, this choice should always be respected (Parrott, 2010).

Social workers have an ethical and professional responsibility to further the profession by participating in the education of social work students (Australian Association of Social Workers, 2010). This responsibility also falls on social work agencies (Parrott, 2010). HYPA contributes to the education of social workers by taking on students and developing training opportunities for them within the agency; I believe it ensures the young people are receiving optimal services which follow the Australian Association of Social Worker’s Code of Ethics (2010).

Within the practicum placement, intensive student training was provided which involved topics such as an overview of HYPA’s beliefs on ethical practice and ethical practice in regards to being a placement student. This training provides students the education necessary to ensure ethical practice as a placement student. A major focus was boundaries and discussions that students should have with young people they are involved with. This included some key information to provide young people while a student is building rapport. All students are required to indicate to the young people that they are placement students. Placement students are also required to attend weekly clinical supervision with a case manager to debrief any ethical considerations that may be arising in a group work or individual setting.
Ethical Dilemmas

A unique relationship is developed between the young people and their case managers. It differs from other agencies that the young people encounter due to the emphasis on advocacy and relationship development. The young people often confide to their case managers about situations that are going on in their life that they have shared with no other professional. The helping relationship and advocacy encourages their sharing. This relationship is beneficial for working with youth in a professional manner. Due to the sensitive nature of the unique relationship that HYPA case managers develop with their clients, considerations need to be addressed to ensure ethical practice.

I experienced an ethical dilemma concerning the establishment of healthy boundaries while maintaining a positive and trusting relationships with clients, due to young people’s high desire to develop friendships. The Code of Ethics (2005) states that, “social workers establish appropriate boundaries in relationships with clients and ensure that the relationship serves the needs of the clients” (p. 7). Furthermore, Reamer (2013) indicates that “[s]ocial workers must maintain clear and unambiguous boundaries in their relationship with clients” (p.109).

It can be a difficult task establishing appropriate boundaries with the young people while at the same time serving their needs. Boundaries are an essential part of social work practice and HYPA trains their case managers to establish boundaries during the initial stages of their relationship. Even though the boundaries are discussed, it is easy for attachment to occur due to the nature of the relationship (Reamer, 2013). These attachments or personal interest in the social worker/student and the client may result in young people asking questions of a personal nature such as if they are in a committed romantic relationship.
I sought guidance and supervision about this ethical dilemmas from my clinical supervisor (Parrott, 2010). The guidance and supervision provided me with clinical insight and support as well as provided me with the support to be aware of the dilemma and circumstance. This intervention ensures that if the matter worsens, I am protected and supported by the agency and changes in case management can occur. This process will ensure that the young person can still receive professional services after a boundary issue with a worker is resolved.

Social media was seen as a major impact/difficulty in keeping professional boundaries when working with young people in a community-based organization. HYPA is not the only agency which has experienced this difficulty, and as a result, literature has been written on social work and ethical considerations with social media (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2014). The Canadian Association of Social Workers (2014) discusses the positives and negatives of social work practice with social media. Though it is a positive way to link into potential resources for clients and network with other agencies for partnering opportunities, modern day technologies continue to challenge the social work profession to think critically about professional and personal boundaries, self-disclosure, dual and multiple relationships, privacy, and conflicts of interest within an ethical framework (Johns, 2012).

HYPA experiences a juggling act regarding utilizing social media as a support in connecting young people to resources and maintaining appropriate professional boundaries. During involvement with the Youth Leadership Team, social media was seen as a tool to connect the team and ensure that communication and planning could be done strategically. A Facebook page was developed for group members to join and to post updates on activities and items that they were working on for the group. For example, the Youth Leadership Team was busy planning youth week and delegated
tasks for each member to accomplish before the group met again. The Facebook group was used as a tool for the individual members to express how they were doing on their weekly tasks and/or if they needed assistance from other members or the group facilitator.

Relationship boundaries were an evident ethical struggle when creating the Facebook group to coordinate the Youth Leadership Team. The young people involved in the leadership team were able to find the facilitators on Facebook and were able to make a friend request if they chose. This conflict was avoided by planning ahead with the young people about boundaries and coming up with “ground rules” for the group. The group agreed that it would not be appropriate to add any of the facilitators as “friends” to Facebook, but if they both consented, members of the groups could add each other. There were some youth that requested not to be added and that was respected by the group members. The group agreed to be respectful of everyone’s requests, and if anything came up that made anyone in the group uncomfortable, boundaries would be reviewed again and the group would discuss how a Facebook group can be a positive communication tool. Privacy settings were also discussed for members who wanted to keep all their items of Facebook private from other groups.

**Relationships**

Hennessey (2011) states that, “[s]ocial work is carried out within a network of human relationship” (p.1). This was evident in HYPA where multiple relationships influence the progress and success of the young people. The relationships between the workers and clients experienced in the practicum placement at HYPA were social work based, and focused on advocacy, empowerment, and self-determination for the
young people who are homeless and unemployed. Group work and one-to-one
counselling sessions were provided to the young people who access the services and
support of HYPA. With the utilization of both group work and one to one sessions,
some unique relationships between social workers and the young people were evident.
Furthermore, HYPA also influences the relationship the young person has with the
community.

Client/Worker Relationship

All social workers work in structures under which their agency operates. This
involves an explanation of the cultural contexts of the client, the agency’s values and
beliefs on relationships with clients, and how the agency functions within other
societal contexts which may influence the clients they work with (Hennessey, 2011).
HYPA provides training to the new employees and practicum students including an
overview of how the agency views relationships with clients should look like. This
relationship is seen in their culture and the relationship between the worker and youth.

The Case Management Model provides case managers at HYPA with a
general guideline of what a relationship with a client should entail (HYPA, 2013).
HYPA also encourages case managers to utilize their personal skills and attributes to
enhance the clinical relationship with the young people. The emphasis is that case
managers utilize their ‘self’ in their clinical work with young people and to be sincere
in their relationship with the young people (Hennessey, 2011).

I observed client/worker relationships throughout my practicum experience.
Individual case managers had different approaches, personalities, and strategies in
how they approached clients. All case managers were able to adequately follow
through on service plans by utilizing their unique styles and skills. Some were
systematic in their approach, guiding the young people through the goal setting forms
and timelines. Other workers were freer and less structured in their approach. In my
work at HYPA, I found myself using more of a free structured approach due to what I
saw as complex individual needs of each client. I felt that using a more free structured
approach allowed the case management process to use a wide range of client skills
and abilities.

A factor in the relationship between clients and workers is the dual roles that
the case managers often have within the agency and the young people. The case
managers are both the young person’s group facilitator for group counselling sessions
as well as their case manager for one-to-one counselling sessions. This situation
occurs frequently and is not unique to HYPA. The Guidelines of Ethical Practice
(CASW, 2005b) states that “[s]ocial workers take care to evaluate the nature of dual
or multiple relationships to ensure that the needs and welfare of their clients are
protected” (p.12).

The dual relationship of group facilitator and one-to-one counsellor was
beneficial to the young people. During the initial sessions of a group program called
“understanding my emotions,” the lead facilitator and I indicated to the young people
involved that they will be designated a co-facilitator as their counsellor for one-to-one
sessions. This action was a positive opportunity to develop rapport with us during
group work and to enhance their relationship and comfort levels in one-to-one
sessions. Although it was observed as beneficial during the practicum experience,
some young people felt uncomfortable with this dual role. The lead facilitator and I
discussed the situation and assured the youth that the confidentiality and counselling
would not be compromised and they seemed more reassured.
Agency and Community Relationship

An essential part of HYPA’s practice is encouraging and facilitating client integration into the community. Multi-systems practice is a term to describe social work practice which involves several systems with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities (Hardina, 2013). Due to the high level of community involvement in the act of advocacy and community development, it is essential for social workers to have a positive relationship with the broader community. It is especially true if it is a tight and closed community.

Due to the fact that HYPA is located in a tight suburb, many of the young people are familiar with one another, and often are familiar with more than one case manager. It is essential for social workers to be aware of how they may be perceived in the community. If they are not able to adequately connect with the young people, it is likely that the community as a whole will be hesitant to access the services and resources that the agency is providing (Hardina, 2013).

The development of strong communities is also a vital part of social work practice. Strong communities play a protective role in human development and the general well-being of the individuals within the community (Shulman, 2009). HYPA is active in the development of the suburbs of Adelaide in their practice. During the placement, several community events were hosted by HYPA which targeted less developed areas of Adelaide, such as, Elizabeth and Playford neighbourhoods. Events hosted included “HYPA Active” which involved the agency partnering with semi-professional sport organizations of Adelaide to provide young people with a day to meet local athletes and learn how to play the athlete’s sport.

Another community project that I experienced during the practicum was the development of a National Youth Week festival for HYPA. This event was a
collaborative process with the Youth Leadership Team to develop activities for young people. Activities involved advocacy in the community, by raising awareness of youth homelessness. The Youth Leadership Team set up a couch on the sidewalk which invited individuals of the community to speak on tape about what youth homelessness meant to them. This action was developed into a video that told of their personal struggles of homelessness. The video was played at a National Youth Week event with the Youth Leadership Team to answer questions and further raise awareness of the issue of youth homelessness in local communities.

These projects strengthen the relationship between the agency and the community by providing the community awareness of what services HYPA provides, while at the same time providing the community with resources to strengthen and further develop its youth. With the organization and participation, the community is able to further develop its inherent strengths and resources and its capacity to positively address its issues (Shulman, 2009).

**Strategies and Skills**

HYPA implements a number of strategies and skills in their approach of working with young people. HYPA understands the diversity and is sensitive in their approach of assessing the individual needs of each young person who seeks their services. Their practice involves techniques on multiple levels to ensure that young people are being provided with a program approach which best fits their needs. HYPA implements three major strategies in their practice which are advocacy, group work, and individual counselling.
Advocacy

HYPA social workers, case managers, and staff emphasize advocacy. Advocacy begins in the early stages of the young person’s involvement with HYPA and continues thoroughly throughout the case management to closure (HYPA, 2013). Wilks (2012) describes advocacy in social work as an exclusive and mutual representation of clients or a cause that attempts to systematically influence decision making in an unjust system.

The upmost important principle of advocacy involves the understanding of what the individual or client wants and ensuring the worker has his or her consent to advocate on his or her behalf (Wilks, 2012). This process involves the social worker looking at the situation and ensuring that his/her values do not conflict with the client’s values (Wilks, 2012; Pattison & Pill, 2004). To ensure that this is done, HYPA staff are required to review consent forms and have the young person sign that they wish to receive services. This consent must be completed each time social workers and case managers advocate on behalf of their clients.

Advocacy is done in a number of ways which represent a process of affecting or initiating change either with or on behalf of a client (Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried & Larsen, 2006). This process includes obtaining services or resources that are not being provided to the client, modifying or influencing policies or practices that adversely affect groups or communities, and promoting legislation or policies that will result in the provision of requisite resources or services (Hepworth et al., 2006).

The primary goal of a program called Trace-A-Place is to assist the young person in acquiring accommodation and resources required to live safely and self-sufficiently. This advocacy involves working with rental agencies and speaking on
behalf of the young person who is not able to find housing. This situation is often due to leaving an unstable living environment in an emergency and having no rental references needed to access housing. Due to the combination of their age and the lack of references, landlords are hesitant to rent accommodation to young people who have left unstable environments. Trace-A-Place combines education, rent preparation, and advocacy for young people who will be renting in the community. It is a basic human right to have adequate shelter and the opportunity to live self-sufficiently.

Advocacy is often represented in literature as a strategy more closely aligned with macro and policy practice. McLaughlin (2009) discusses the role of advocacy in clinical social work and determines that it is on both macro and micro levels. Another example of this advocacy role is applying for grants and funding from the South Australian Government for new services. During the practicum placement, I experienced macro level advocacy through the involvement in the National Youth Week Awareness Events. I completed grant and funding writing for community events to develop awareness of what youth in homelessness look like and what they need to succeed. Applying for grants is a level of macro advocacy. A primary goal is to make those in power aware of situations and the importance of making those situations visible. It is important to make the issue a public issue, where the community at large is responsible to change the social imbalances (McLaughlin, 2009).

Group Work

Group work was a significant strategy utilized and developed during my practicum placement. Jacobs, Masson, Harvill, and Schimmel (2012) provide a detailed explanation of a number of different types of group work. I was involved in
an educational and a therapy group that provided me with a learning experience in facilitating and co-facilitating groups for me.

Facilitating a math skills education group was completed during the placement. Jacobs et al. (2012) indicate that often education groups do not have an exact number of sessions or time available. However, this education group was structured by HYPA as weekly (an hour every Monday). This group provided assistance on basic math skills. The group consisted of four young people who had dropped out of school and expressed difficulties in learning math skills.

This program provided an opportunity to develop curriculum and sequential planning in a group work setting. The group was developed by first completing a goal work sheet with the young people who attended the program. They were able to discuss three specific goals that they would like to achieve from the group. They were also able to discuss what they found most difficult in learning math in a school setting and some ideas of why they believe they may have been unsuccessful in a traditional classroom setting.

There were some issues that arose due to the lack of an entry screening process. Sands and Solomon (2003) states that, “the recruitment and screening process is informed by decisions that have been made about the nature of the group, the target population, and the group size” (p. 15). The math skills group had no prerequisites or preliminary conditions.. The case managers at HYPA were to simply refer any young person on their case load who expressed difficulties in math, whether it be in a vocational or educational setting. Because there were no established prerequisites, the young people had a diversity of backgrounds and math skills.

I felt that the group was successful. A co-facilitator was introduced to the math group which was divided into two groups. Although there was a risk of losing
confidence for those placed in the lower functioning group, it provided a more efficient method of instruction. We incorporated an evaluation process at the end of every session (Jacobs et al., 2012). This feedback involved reporting to the case managers who referred young people to the program. The evaluation included both the positive and negative aspects of the student’s experience. If the program was failing the student then more suitable resources or services could be accessed or changes made.

I was also involved with a counselling and therapy group during my practicum placement. Counselling and therapy group are groups where members come to the group because of certain social or emotional problems in their lives (Jacobs et al, 2012). The group consisted of four young people and the first stage of the group involved building rapport with one another. This rapport was done by introducing social activities and games such as board games, sharing stories, and a mini talent show where each young person was to share something he or she was proud of.

The leadership model for this counselling and therapy group consisted of an active, creative, multi-sensory, and theory-driven approach. The facilitator of the group and I provided the group with a wide variety of exercises which focused on using the individual strengths of each group member. This was done by creating a systematic approach to projects, and assigning specific responsibilities to each member of the group which encouraged the members to use their strengths most efficiently.

Utilizing different strategies in the group provided an opportunity for an approach that best suits their needs (Jacobs et al., 2012). As the counselling group evolved, activities which involved community integration were introduced. The group participated in sporting events and joined a youth group which focused on physical
activity. Social skills and self-esteem continued to be the main focus of the group throughout its duration.

Individual Counselling

At HYPA, individual counselling is not a primary service; however, since there are so few counselling services in the geographic area, HYPA does attempt to provide some counselling. Sometimes clients self-refer themselves to the counselling services available at HYPA.

Sometimes case managers refer individuals to counselling services during the assessment phase of the Case Management Model (HYPA, 2013). Reasons for assessment for counselling services can involve the young person showing signs of depression, having difficulties relating to peers, and self-referral. In order to ensure a single-role relationship is provided to clients, it is believed that it is best to refer counselling outside the agency. At HYPA, this ensures that the primary goal of case management is implemented and HYPA case managers are not participating in a dual role.

Riggall (2012) indicates that there is a difference between being a counsellor and using counselling skills. Counsellors undergo professional training to help people who are experiencing psychological difficulties in their lives (Riggall, 2012). Though many social workers are not counsellors, social workers use skills that are counselling skills in their practice (Lindsay, 2009).

Counselling techniques such as solution-focused therapy and motivational interviewing are efficient in case management at HYPA to motivate young people to engage in education and vocational opportunities. Though case managers do not engage in structured counselling practice, counselling skills are still utilized in case
management at HYPA. Professional development opportunities have been developed by HYPA for case managers that involve education on counselling techniques and are beneficial in case management.

Conclusions

My international field practicum placement for the completion of a Master’s of Social Work from the University of Regina with HYPA provided me with unique training opportunities. These opportunities furthered my clinical experience working with homeless youth in both individual and group counselling settings. As well, I worked on a macro level of practice that involved advocacy and community development. The practicum placement provided a full encompassed view of how HYPA operates and helps disadvantaged youth overcome barriers that prevent them from reaching their potential and optimal quality of life.

Completing a practicum placement with HYPA enhanced my skills in integrating theoretical knowledge in practice on a micro and macro level of social work practice. Working with young people who experience barriers to work and education provides an opportunity to enhance one to one clinical skills and goal setting with clients. At the same time, it provides an opportunity to develop advocacy skills in the education system.

Group counselling and group work is not an easy skill to achieve as a developing social worker. The practicum placement at HYPA provided extensive opportunities to be involved in group counselling and group work opportunities. Being involved in the development of a Youth Leadership Team provided extensive experience and education on developing a long-term group that focuses on advocacy and awareness for young people who access HYPA services for homelessness, work,
and well-being. Group counselling opportunities that consisted of working on such issues as self-esteem, depression, and social skills provided the opportunity to further develop my skills in facilitating group work and being an effective group facilitator.

Overall, the experience at HYPA has increased my awareness and sensitivity to difficulties our young people encounter as they transition from child to adult. I will approach my social work practice with new knowledge and skills rooted in an empathetic understanding.
References


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