

Explanation of AWP

A Woman's Place opened its doors in 1981 as a safe place for women and children to go to in a time of need. Since, AWP has expanded and now offers a safe place to stay along with services of counseling, safe planning, legal advocacy, child and youth programs, outreach, and many other resources to help clients achieve safety and self-sufficiency. AWP works in conjunction with many other agencies to provide clients with even greater support.

Kara Murray
A Woman's Place Internship
Summer 2011

dish3906@bears.unco.edu

A Woman's Place



Completed by: Kara Murray

My Experience

My experience working as an intern at A Woman's Place was a unique opportunity. One of the best parts of the job was interaction time with the clients and their children. Actually getting to know the clients and their stories was much different than just reading information out of a textbook. I also learned a lot about legalities of domestic violence when I went to court with the legal advocate. I will say, though, some days at the house were rather slow and monotonous. A lot of times what needs to be done is organizing and cleaning around the house, so I spent a lot of my time doing that. Some of my time went to watching clients' children for them when they were in meetings with the advocates too. Overall, I thought it was a very rewarding experience and I was able to make some really great contacts.

What I Learned

Although some days were slow at the safe house, I did learn quite a bit while working at AWP. Something the staff stressed was to listen to clients and let them know that, as advocates, we were concerned for their safety and wanted to provide them the best help possible, but to never give them advice since we weren't experts. We were to ask only open-ended questions. For instance if a client said she had experienced physical violence, ask the client, "What kind of physical abuse have you experienced?", and not a leading question like, "Did your perpetrator ever hit you?" Another thing I learned firsthand is just how frustrating it can be when you've helped a client as much as you possibly can, and they end up going back to their perpetrator. I was informed it takes, on average, 5-9 times for a woman to leave an abusive partner for good. While this is frustrating, there are a variety of

factors, from financial issues to social support, which make it hard for a woman to leave an abusive partner. One of the biggest lessons I learned while working at AWP is to always push boundaries when it comes to learning. What I mean by this is I constantly asked if I could go to court with the legal advocate, or if I could take a crisis call or do a client intake. The staff won't necessarily ask you to do those things, so if you really want to learn and be engaged in interaction with the clients, you must ask and constantly push yourself along with others. The staff was more than happy when I asked to let me do something other than cleaning or organizing, but you must be proactive. If you're confident and actively seeking time with the clients, your experience will be much more rewarding.