

Mayra Vargas

Works at:

RISE Family Services

Position Title:

DDD/DCS Family Specialist

What do you do at RISE?

RISE is a foster care agency that has a direct contract with DCS (department of child safety). As a family specialist, I am assigned between 15-24 foster families. I specifically work with homes that are licensed to receive DCS children, children with developmental disabilities, or adults with developmental disabilities. When a case manager needs to place a child in a foster home, they call agencies and find a foster family that best fits their needs. Once a child is in the home, I visit them monthly and get updates, and help out in any way I can. The other aspect of my job is helping those interested in foster care get a license. I conduct interviews with potential foster parents and decide if they are good candidates. If they are, I meet with the family 3-4 times (2-3 hrs. each session) and write a "home study" about them. This can be a tedious part of the job, but it's the most important. I gather all the information on a family, and then analyze the information in order to write a 20-25 page analysis on the family to turn in to the state.

Favorite Part of the Position:

One of my favorite parts is getting to follow a foster child's case. I do visits in the foster home to see how the child is doing, I attend court to see how the case is going, I attend child family team meetings and get updates on how they're doing in therapy, visits with biological family, medication, and more. My other favorite part is adoptions. Getting to see a child be adopted either by family or foster parents is the sweetest part of my job!

How Did FSHD Classes & Internships Prepare You for this Work?

I believe that my FSHD classes helped for every aspect of this job. When I write a home study on a family I really use the knowledge I gained in all classes. For example - I am currently writing a report on an individual who is getting licensed because her grandchildren were placed with her overnight and she is

struggling. With her, I have really seen the reality of a skipped generation household and the many effects it has on her and the children. I write my report from this point of view so that the state can comprehend that she needs to be licensed to meet the financial needs that this has put on her. For other cases, I get to see different parenting styles, living arrangements, sleeping arrangements, relationships, food, clothing, etc. I think FSHD classes have helped me because rather than comparing one family to another I try to understand why a family does things in such a specific way. With the children themselves, from an FSHD perspective I can understand some of their needs and behaviors based on attachment theory.

How Did You Find This Position? What Was the Application Process or Interview Process Like?

I found the position on UA's handshake website. I found an "early intervention specialist" position with the same agency, which led me to find the position I am in now. The application process was very simple. I turned in a resume, cover letter and application. During the interview, I was asked about my education background, how it was related and how it could be utilized in the field. I was also asked about previous job and volunteer experience. The agency was looking for someone who had some experience working in the community. Lastly, I was asked additional information related to ethics, professionalism, language and willingness to travel. I was offered the position about 5 days later.

Tips for Students Interested in Pursuing a Position Like This:

My main tip would be to get involved outside of school. FSHD courses help IMMENSELY, and they prepare you to apply what you've learned in class to situations within the work environment. There is nothing like getting familiar with the community you are interested in before getting a job. My other two tips would be: Learn how to be self-motivated and organized. I work 40 hours a week but I create my own schedule based on the needs of my families, sometimes I work from home, the office or a random coffee shop and it can be messy. You really have to be self-motivated and organized to get the job done.