

September 25th, 2012

1919 West Taylor Street, MC 811
Chicago, Illinois 60612-7250

Subject:

Advocating for Continued Financial Support for the Maryville Crisis Nursery Programs

On behalf of the Occupational Therapy Department at the University of Illinois at Chicago, I would like to commend the team members of the Maryville Crisis Nursery for the 24-hour care they provide to children and families in need in the Chicago Metropolitan area. The nursery runs numerous innovative initiatives to help the parents in the moment of crisis, while providing a nurturing day and overnight environment for the kids, while the parents address the areas of concern. The services are free of charge to children and families. Each child's stay at the nursery ranges from one to three days. Families can utilize crisis care for their children for up to 30 days a year.

The entire Maryville Crisis nursery staff has offered the following learning programs to our occupational therapy students at UIC, in conjunction with the many services the team provides to families in crisis:

1. **Fieldwork Experiences :**

UIC occupational therapy students who request fieldwork experiences at the nursery, have a strong interest in working with pediatric populations in their future careers.

- An extensive year-long advanced practicum experience was organized for a UIC student named Melissa Khosla, who was pursuing her doctoral degree in occupational therapy in 2009. Melissa was able to work with the directors of the nursery to learn about program development and environmental needs of an organization serving children and families. In return, Missy provided the nursery staff with educational programs related to child development and parenting resources.
- Level I fieldwork work experiences were organized for two UIC occupational therapy students (Emily O'Connor and Kathryn Katsaros) for a month during the summer of 2010. The Level I fieldwork students had the opportunity to work with the crisis nursery team to learn how to provide daily programming and complete documentation for the many children staying at the nursery.

2. Urban Allied Health Academy – Student Volunteer Program:

The past two years (2011 and 2012) the Maryville Crisis Nursery team has provided the opportunity for four occupational therapy students (Kristin Kamp, Monal Patel, Brit Whiting and Baily Zobel) to each complete 40 hours of clinical service work. These students had the opportunity to learn about the services and daily programming provided by the nursery to help undeserved families experiencing traumatic life events. The students, in turn, were able to provide the nursery with extra help to plan and run the Christmas programs and Parent Resource Fair for the families served by the nursery.

As a graduate education program striving to provide information to our occupational therapy students about the benefits of involvement in community service, we depend on collaboration programs with community organizations. Our relationship with the Maryville Crisis nursery has provided our students with the opportunity to hear, see, and learn about what works best in the "real world" for organizing programs for children and families in need of support services. The directors of the nursery are always open to developing new initiatives to help others learn how to help community members in need. The fieldwork experiences and volunteer opportunities are so important for the occupational therapy students to see the therapeutic process of community service, and enhance cultural awareness of different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds of different family units before starting their clinical careers. In return, the occupational therapy students can provide the nursery with the latest research on child development, ideas for environment changes to enhance engagement of the children in age-appropriate play, and ideas for pediatric programming to foster cognitive, social, and motor development.

We are certainly lucky to have collaborated with the Maryville Crisis Nursery on the numerous learning opportunities listed above, as these opportunities allow us to integrate the importance of community service in the curriculum of our academic program. We hope to continue the collaboration in years to come. We would like to advocate for the continued funding sources, for the *Chicago: Ready to Learn* - prevention initiative projects, to help support the critical mission of the Maryville Crisis Nursery programs.

Sincerely,



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