

RECEIVED  
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J. Goldman

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To Whom it May Concern:

My experience in the field of social services includes working with a vast range of provider agencies. My internships during graduate school gave me experience with every age group, need, and socioeconomic status. I worked for one year at the Metacomet Elementary School in Bloomfield Connecticut as a counselor for 3rd and 4th graders as well as teaching a social emotional curriculum called Second-Step. My second year internship allowed me to work at the Department of Children and Families in Torrington Connecticut. This internship gave me the opportunity to shadow and assist employees in investigations, court proceedings, home visits, and interviews etc. My general social work studies focus allowed me to choose courses that would give me greater understandings within a wide range of employment; for example I took several courses with a focus on school social work to be able to obtain and maintain my license to practice social work and guidance counseling positions in public schools (071 License). I also took a course on geriatric social work to better be able to work in environments that served senior populations, and my masters thesis project was an in depth study of the opioid epidemic in America and mental health. During my graduate studies I also studied abroad in Quito Ecuador to better understand social services and mental health services in other countries. During graduate school I maintained a grade point average which granted me a member of Springfield College School of Social Work Phi Alpha Honor Society.

After receiving my masters degree I worked at the Devereux Glenholme School in Washington Connecticut as a social worker to students with a variety of needs providing individual, group and family counseling, writing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), implementing equine therapy and being a student advocate.

Prior to my graduate studies I was an active volunteer from participating in Y.W.A.M (Youth With a Mission) New Orleans summer 2006 to Y.S.O.P (Youth Service Opportunities Project) New York City 2002. I built homes in Dominican Republic with the Village Mountain Mission project, 2003, 2005, and as a team leader in 2010, 2011, 2012. I was accepted into Americorps NCCC\* (National Civilian Community Corps) and worked with Green Light New Orleans in New Orleans, Louisiana, Habitat for Humanity in Mobile, Alabama, the Urban

League in Sacramento, California and Coachella Valley Housing Coalition in Coachella, California. During Americorps training I received American Red Cross: Fulfilling our Mission: Translating Compassion American Red Cross: Shelter Operations and American Red Cross: Mass Care certifications. By completing extra hours of volunteerism during my efforts with Americorps I was a recipient of the Bronze Presidential Volunteer Service Award.

There are several new programs increased hours would allow me to implement and/or make more accessible to our community. Firstly, I have become involved in the Opioid Task Force through Wamogo Regional High school. This is an important task force that addresses opioid and other drug misuse and ways that we can prevent the continued spread, and treat the epidemic we currently face. Through connections with the Western CT Coalition I have organized a Narcan use training in our community, as well as opioid prevention education events, however these events may have to be rescheduled due to COVID-19. I hope to receive CHOICES training through the Western Connecticut Agency on Aging. This five day training provides in depth classes on navigation of Medicare and Medicaid, which will help me to effectively assist residents as they navigate these complicated topics. Don Murphy has also been working hard to implement a weekly meal program on Wednesdays which I hope to be more involved in to engage with the community further and provide resources during the lunches, we have many opportunities for speakers to present on available resources. I am researching further trainings on how to best become an agent for the elderly and be more effective as an ally for veterans.

As I stated, these are examples of new programs I would like to begin in our town, in addition to the programs my office is already responsible for such as the food pantry, energy assistance applications, our holiday programs, prescription assistance, back to school backpack programs, resource matching for clients, referrals to therapeutic supports, assistance with applications for SNAP, Care 4 Kids, Neighbor to Neighbor funds, Good Neighborhood Fund, Blue Horizon Health fund, referrals and connections to Western CT Area Agency on Aging, VNA and Chore Service referral, and even simply checking in with individuals on a regular basis to ensure their basic needs are being met.

Below I will provide some clarity on the efforts of the programs I currently run:

Fuel Assistance: Throughout the winter season I work with CEAP (Connecticut Energy Assistance Program) to submit applications for fuel assistance for any and all resident who qualifies. I also have worked to try and establish the ability to access operation fuel as an added resource although they have not complied yet. We also have our own fuel bank which I worked to establish by applying for grants through the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation and we also have access to the Northwest Corner Fuel Bank which I help clients to apply for and receive funds from when necessary. I have also applied for (and received) grants from the Northwest CT Community Foundation the past two years to help serve our community as well as acting quickly to receive the emergency grants they offered for COVID-19.

Community Projects: In efforts to engage the community as a whole I have organized many events with the Warren School as well as the Warren Church Community Childcare Center from Halloween events to Valentines Tea for seniors and pre-k students; I work to consistently and eagerly engage with as many groups as possible to teach people about what the social services office does to serve the community as well as teach the youth about ways to help. As part of these efforts I also began the program "Comfort Kits" which is a way to access those in crisis.

Food Pantry: I run the Warren and Washington Food pantry which includes but is not limited to: organizing volunteers, delivery of groceries, grocery shopping either online, in stores or at CT Food bank. Distributing foods from the pantry every week from 10-12, keeping track of needs on the shelves and checking in with residents. Before I arrived in this office we had not yet had a clear established partnership with CT Food bank and I have been able to create that connection which allows us to now have fresh and frozen foods available for the pantry. I established a connection with Food Rescue US which delivers us fresh foods regularly. I have also established a connection with the Warren CSA program to be able to provide fresh produce and eggs to residents from local Warren farms in town through donations. Running the pantry also includes paperwork for CT Food bank and keeping track of donations.

COVID: In the COVID-19 epidemic I have worked to increase the hours at the pantry, establish a mask makers program to distribute masks to residents in need, work to create the grocery and prescription delivery program which includes establishing a connection identifying the need, distributing a way to purchase items and properly billing. I established a connection

with United Way to provide cash payments to families with children affected by COVID-19. And as mentioned previously, I quickly acted to apply for the emergency response fund from Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation Grant. I have created consistent updates to be shared on the website to provide information for residents that is specific to Warren, and printed and distributed a newsletter from my office. I have also worked to check in with clients who may have increased needs at this time.

Based on my range of experience in the field of social services and education, commitment to continued training and education in my field such as attendance of conferences like T.E.A.R.S (Timely Elder Abuse Resource Services), online educational seminars, certifications received since being in this office such as my LMSW License and mandated reported certificate, and my loyalty to the community and the town of Warren I respectfully request an increase in salary. As of Dec 15, 2019, the average annual pay for the LMSW jobs category in Connecticut is \$62,935 a year. This salary is congruent with a pay rate of \$32.26 per hour which I ask you consider as you determine a pay increase.

I truly appreciate and enjoy my job as the Social Services Director of Warren. It allows me to give back to the community that helped shape who I am today as well as practice in the field I have spent so much time and energy studying to be successful in. If I am able to receive a raise which helps balance the childcare costs I would be excited to take on an added day (up to 15 hours per week). Taking into account the original proposed budget salary, the salary study response, and the Connecticut average LMSW salary and my education I would request an hourly rate of 28.25.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these requests.

Kindly,

Melissa Woodward, LMSW