

CASE STUDY

Submission of a Case Study is Required for Advanced Standing Applicants (1000 Words Max)

Drawing upon your BSW/BASW practicum or social work experience, please describe a case (individual, family, or group) with which you worked directly. Write a case summary addressing the following elements. If you do not have direct experience, you may use the case provided to develop your case study. If you are using the case provided, please propose an appropriate intervention for (D) and how you might evaluate your intervention for (E).

- A. Client description, including age, race, ethnicity, gender, and other relevant sociocultural factors (use a pseudonym and appropriate disguise to protect the identity of the client)
- B. Presenting problem(s)
- C. Contributing factors: what are the factors (biological, psychological, sociological, and spiritual) that might have contributed to the presenting problem?
- D. Intervention: describe your intervention and why you chose that intervention strategy.
- E. Evaluation: How effective was the intervention? What have you learned from this case? What would you do differently in retrospect?

Advanced Standing Application Case Study

Case: Selena*

**This is a composite case created from several cases. All names are pseudonyms and all identifying information has been disguised to ensure confidentiality of the cases used in this composite.*

Agency Description

You are an MSW intern at South County Wellness, a community-based behavioral health agency that serves individual and family clients in the greater South King County area. The program where you are interning within the agency serves children, youth, and families and has a contract with local public schools (K-12) to work with their students.

Selena's Story

Selena is a 16-year-old biracial student at a public high school in Auburn, WA. She is identified as female and has no known disabilities according to her school records. Selena was born and raised in New York City and lived there until moving to Auburn this past January. She currently attends a local public high school in Auburn as a junior. Selena's parents, Olivia (age 45, Filipina), and Anthony (age 41 at death, African American), divorced when Selena was six years old. They co-parented Selena and her older brother, Michael, until five years ago when Anthony, an army veteran and a contract worker, was killed in an accident in Iraq. Selena currently lives with her mother and her maternal aunt's family (aunt, uncle, and their daughters, a 13-year-old and a 15-year-old) in a suburban neighborhood in Auburn. Michael (age 20) is a sophomore at City University of New York and lives in Queens, NY, and lives with two friends/roommates.

Selena was referred to your agency for counseling by her school guidance counselor as part of the school's Community Alternatives to Suspension (CATS) program. The referral states that Selena

was reported to school personnel for fighting with three other students during lunch a week ago. Several students who witnessed the fight reported that Selena “threw the first punch” at Kelly, another junior. Two other students who are Kelly’s friends claimed that they were trying to break up the fight rather than fighting with Selena. One witness reported that Kelly and her friends had been taunting Selena shortly before the fight broke out. Kelly and her friends claimed that they were acting in self-defense but acknowledged that they broke school rules. They apologized to the vice principal and were given in-house detention (staying after school hours) for three days. Selena, however, refused to acknowledge or apologize for the infraction. In fact, she refused to talk to school personnel. It was not until the vice principal told Selena that he would need to request her mother come to school that Selena was willing to cooperate with the school’s disciplinary procedures. When presented with CATS as an option, Selena agreed to go to counseling at South County Wellness in order to avoid suspension. According to the referral, Selena’s guidance counselor has been concerned about Selena because she often skips classes and does not seem to perform to her abilities (e.g., her grades at her previous school in NYC were much higher than they are at her current school). The guidance counselor suspects that Selena “may be depressed, using drugs, or both.”

Selena reports that she was “just fine” until she moved to “this gawd-awful place (meaning Auburn)” and “have to deal with these stupid people all day, every day.” When asked what prompted their move, Selena revealed that her mother (Olivia) had lost her job as a store manager at a local boutique in NYC two years ago. The boutique closed because the building where it was located had been sold to a developer who turned it into a high-priced condo building. Olivia was not able to find another full-time job and could not afford the rapidly rising rent in NYC with her temporary/part-time jobs. Eventually the family was facing eviction, and Selena’s aunt invited Olivia and Selena to move in with her family in Auburn so they would not have to worry about the rent. (Michael opted to stay in NYC since he had already started college there.) Olivia is studying for real estate agent licensure in hopes that it will help her secure a more stable and higher-paying career. Selena realizes that her mother did not have the resources to stay in NYC but still feels frustrated and sad as she misses “my city where there are plenty of Black and Brown people, unlike here” and “where I could take the subway anywhere I want to go instead of having to rely on someone giving me a ride.”

When asked what instigated the fight, Selena states, “You can put up with all that nonsense for only so long; I am so sick of that ish, non-stop, 24-7. I wish I could just be back in the City (NYC) where everyone was chill and not all up in my business.” It is slowly revealed that Selena has been bullied at school, on the school bus, and on-line by her classmates for the last three months. The bullying centered on Selena being considered different (“weird”) in various ways from other students at the school, most notably in terms of her gender expression. Selena identifies herself as “genderqueer” and likes to “experiment with different looks so people can't pin me down as feminine or masculine.” She is highly artistic and likes to make her own clothes and jewelry, which she wears proudly. She states that she considers herself somewhat eccentric (“in a good way!”) but that it was never a problem in NYC. She had a close group of friends who were also eccentric and artistic and enjoyed working on various art projects together. However, she feels completely out of place with no friends or allies in Auburn. She feels as though everyone strives for conformity in her new town, leaving little room for individuality or creativity. She states that even her cousins (who, according to Selena, are “all about Taylor Swift”) treat her like an alien. She feels suffocated and isolated.

Selena states that in the last few months some girls at her school have been making “nasty, hateful” remarks about her in person and on social media. She tried to ignore them but feels that she

has no escape from them, which led to her cutting school and feeling helpless. She often feels too upset to sleep well at night, leaving her feel groggy and irritated in the morning. Although she had good grades in NYC (A's and B's) and hoped to study film-making in college, she no longer cares about school. She considered dropping out of school entirely but feels bad that this would disappoint her mother when her mother is already going through such a difficult time. She states that she sometimes uses marijuana to make herself feel better but cannot easily access it because she has little money and few contacts here. She admits taking liquor from her aunt's pantry and filling the bottles back up with water; she finds that drinking liquor numbs her emotional pain. When asked what she would like to see happen, she states, "my only hope is to somehow go back to NYC so that I can just be myself and be with people who understand me and love me for who I am."