Intern Presentation

Rokhaya Kane
Introduction

Hi, my name is Rokhaya Kane. I am a senior at The University of Maryland Baltimore County. I will be graduating this semester with a Bachelors of Arts in Public Health and Biological Sciences. Upon graduation, I will be attending the Gillings School of Global Public Health at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill where I will be pursuing a Master’s of Public Health with a concentration in Global Health.

Fun Fact: I am an international student from Dakar, Senegal.
Neurodiversity at Work Responsibilities

1. Provided in-person services at the Spinal Cord Center on Mondays and Wednesdays.

2. Attended and led the virtual CDS sessions on Thursdays and Fridays.

3. Filled out service notes weekly for community members in the virtual and in-person sessions.

4. Created Weird Celebration slides for the daily virtual sessions.

5. Designed Daily Professional Development presentations (DPDs) on various topics including mental health and SMART goals.

6. Created weekly schedules and sent out family communications weekly on Fridays for two community members.
Interview Candidates

Karen Hartlove
Inpatient Rehabilitation Team Coordinator, Child Life and Therapeutic Recreation

She is a big Maryland Terps fan!

Joe Wilson
Employment Services Coordinator, Neurodiversity at Work

He is a musician and loves making video games too!

Joshua Yutzy
Community Member, Neurodiversity at Work

He loves playing video games and is really good at Lego!

Joan Warren
Parent, Neurodiversity at Work

She loves traveling, swimming and skiing!
Overarching Themes from Interviews

→ Diversity & Inclusion

→ Team

→ Community members
WHAT SETS KENNEDY KRIEGER APART FROM OTHER ADULT SERVICE AGENCIES IS ITS MEANINGFUL, PURPOSEFUL LIFE FRAMEWORK.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS HAVE THE AUTONOMY TO REACH THEIR GREATEST SENSE OF INDEPENDENCE BY BEING ENGAGED IN THE COMMUNITY AND INTERACTING WITH OTHERS.

SHE LIKES THE MOTTO OF “NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US” FOLLOWED BY KENNEDY KRIEGER WHICH ENCOURAGES FULL PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS LIVING WITH DISABILITIES.

SHE VALUES THE ABILITY TO MEET THE FAMILIES SHE SERVES WHERE THEY ARE AND OFFER SUPPORT IN ANY WAY POSSIBLE.
One of the factors that attracted Joe to Kennedy Krieger is the people that work here. He likes how dedicated and passionate everyone is and values listening to his coworkers’ ideas and being mentally present in staff meetings.

Karen shared that the staff is committed and passionate across all departments at Kennedy Krieger. She likes working with a dedicated team of individuals who have a mission and a vision.

The staff is engaged, excellent and dedicated. “We definitely need more people who are passionate about serving the neurodiverse community and better promotion of these roles in high schools.”
Theme 3

JOE

- "The community members are the heart and soul of Kennedy Krieger".
- He loves working with the community members and seeing them succeed.

KAREN

- She loves working on an in-patient unit at Kennedy Krieger; you get to follow patients' progress and support the family throughout the journey.
- Just like Meaningful Community Services, her department offers individual and community outings for members as well as a parent lounge.
- It's all about the patients and their families!
Takeaways

- Humility and patience are key values to have both in the workplace and in life.
- Never assume you know what people need. It is important to actively listen to whoever you are helping to know the best way you can support them!
- Teamwork is highly beneficial for both the organization and those we are serving. It gives room to more efficient and impactful work and there's so much we can learn from one another.
- Equality, diversity and inclusion are the foundations of a successful society.
- Never underestimate what individuals living with disabilities can do!
Enhancing the Neurodiverse Workforce

NOKHAYA KANE & AMINA ARUBAKER

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND BALTIMORE COUNTY, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY AND PUBLIC HEALTH

INTRODUCTION

Individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities have the ability, willingness and desire to be an asset to any workplace, yet their national unemployment rates remain high. The Neurodiversity at Work department, offered at Kennedy Krieger Institute, is charged with changing this dynamic. The purpose of this program is to support individuals with disabilities using a person-centered approach and several community programs are in place to work with those who need them, including Project SEARCH and CORE Foundations. CORE Foundations supports individuals with disabilities as they obtain and maintain meaningful employment and community engagement for lifelong success (Core Foundations, 2020). Project SEARCH is a 9-month transition program for individuals of all ages supported in their job training through integrated workplace rotations, career exploration, and mentoring. It is an experienced staff (Project SEARCH, 2020). Individuals in both programs will have the ability to enhance their employability and independent living skills, leading to a more diverse and inclusive workplace and community.

BACKGROUND

- Neurodiversity is looking at each individual as a unique person and highlighting the unique areas of thinking and interacting with the world around us.
- Neurodiversity is not a deficit but rather an untapped resource which promotes better inclusion of individuals and their uniqueness.
- There is a significant lack of neurodiversity in the workforce with at least 75% of individuals living with a disability being outside of the labor force.
- As a result, the government and private sector invests in services which impacts one’s mental wellbeing, independence, self-esteem, and sense of belonging, whereas those who are without work are left dependent on family members and external support such as the government for social and economic development.
- Because of the growing, recognizable need to serve the neurodiverse community by promoting independent living, the Kennedy Krieger Institute’s Board of Directors started an initiative in launching the Neurodiversity at Work Department where person-centered services form the direction of service provision.
- Person-centered services refer to services that are in alignment with the person’s own goals and abilities and emerge from employment to voluntering and social opportunities.

RESEARCH METHODS

- We collected data from Kennedy Krieger Institute’s website and database to analyze the outcomes of each program and compared to other national agencies offering employment services to the neurodiverse community.

RESULTS

Labor force participation rates for those with a disability increased in 2021.

DISCUSSION

- From 2020 to 2021, there was an increase in labor force participation for individuals living with disabilities from 10% to 21.5% which can be attributed to the growth of neurodiverse support programs.
- Kennedy Krieger, for instance, has expanded significantly over the past few years and has gone from serving 300 community members to approximately 2,000 people in many different ways.
- While institutions like Kennedy Krieger focus on connecting community members to services, other organizations such as the National Alliance on Independent Living (NAIL) target recruits to hire and retain workers living with disabilities. They develop training and hiring programs to give employers the tools they need to hire and accommodate neurodiverse individuals.
- The Stanford Neurodiversity Project (SNP) develops a unique framework which targets both populations: neurodiverse job-seekers and employers.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Most statistics collected at the federal level do not currently differentiate between disability other than those used for determination of Social Security benefits (whether SSD or SSDI such as blindness and End Stage Renal Disease), so it is difficult to tell how much of the disability statistics are reflecting the neurodiverse population. There needs to be a non-marginalizing way to determine the disability so that it is possible to accurately determine whether a person is a member of the neurodiverse population if the desire is to provide more widespread use of programs such as those developed by Kennedy Krieger Institute.

REFERENCES


We thank Dr. Rebecca Colangelo of Kennedy Krieger Institute, Prof. Meryl Coates, and the UMBC Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Public Health for their support.
Letter to Future Interns

Dear Future Intern,

Congratulations, you should be proud of yourself and excited to get to experience this amazing opportunity. Kennedy Krieger is a unique place to intern at and over the next couple of months, you will learn plenty from both staff members and community members. It is normal to feel nervous or anxious as you embark on this new journey and try to navigate your role as a trainee. But remember to believe in yourself, you got this and you are exactly where you belong! Get to know the people you are working with, whether that be community members who you are offering services to or colleagues who you work with. Ask them about their experiences, what works well for them and see how you can improve your own skills. Be open to putting yourself out there and trying new experiences. And lastly, always communicate! The leadership team is pretty flexible, understanding and willing to help. So do not hesitate to reach out.

Throughout your internship, you will grow as a future leader and public health professional. I wish you the best of luck and hope you enjoy your time at Kennedy Krieger.

All the best,
Rokhaya.