

*Once in a lifetime there is a student that crosses your path that from that first placement interview you see great passion for the “work” of social work. Kaeron Williams is a student that has forever changed my expectations of ability Florida International University student interns. Kareon’s spark leaves the Energizer bunny looking like he needs a shot of double espresso.*

*Kaeron’s placement at Family Central provided her hands on experience with multiple Family Support Programs. Her challenge was managing three task supervisors and Field Instructor that demanded excellence in all documentation. I am sure she still suffers from red pen trauma.*

*Kaeron weekly duties during the first half of her placement included but no limited to servings as parent consultant assisting parents through the process of their child’s evaluation for developmental concerns. She worked in Family Reunification program designed to ensure stable placements for infants and toddlers affected by substance abuse. Kaeron provided therapeutic visitation for family members.*

*Initially very reluctant to work with convicted drug felons based on preconceived ideas seen on television and portrayed in movies had pervaded her thinking. . She used her hours in supervision to reflect on her reluctance. She researched information about the corrections systems, fathers and the impact on families that have a family member incarcerated. Ultimately she agreed, although very reluctantly.*

*Kaeron initial assignment was to co-facilitate an evidenced based program. The goal of the program is to lay foundations and provide skills for the fathers to begin rebuilding family relationships to ease the transition back to their family. Kaeron’s plan was to get the experience to write the papers and be done.*

*From a strength based approach, Kaeron’s was full of anxiety before we left for the facility. As we entered the work release facility and began the check in process to begin the work. As the door closed and we handed over our identification and locked our cell phones away. Kaeron transformed into a fully confident and self assured social workers. One that reflected not an “intern” but that of a well seasoned social worker.*

*As the men begin to enter the group room, she easily engaged the men and formed initial rapport and trust over a mutual love of basketball. The Heat and the Championship season provider much fodder to build and role model appropriate relationship skills and compromise. Kaeron had blossomed from the office bound social workers to a dynamic group social worker.*

*Kaeron is deserving of recognition as the intern of year for her ground breaking work in a men’s work release facility and establishing a family event. Kaeron led the fathers through the process of planning the entire day. Everything from invitations to food cooked to how to say goodbye again was facilitated by Kaeron. We both learned a thing or two about substance abuse culture and events in April.*

*This day was huge success; all of the families came with their caregivers, along staff corporate office. No one could imagine the impact of this event. Fathers reunited with their children after more than 5 years of no contact. Caregivers agreed to allow for more communication with the father. This event served as model for replication across their other facilities.*

*Based on a strong belief in power of group; and her first hand experience with the transformative power of groups, Kaeron became the first student at FIU to complete her capstone project on a client called "group". Her presentation required very strong analytic skills, acknowledgement of gender bias, and her own preconceived ideas. Her delivery I hear was flawless, her evidence rock solid and no questions were ask about the content.*

*Kaeron had spent a year earning the letters MSW. Her commitment to learning and stretching beyond the traditional expectations along with her passion, dedication and skillful execution of critical social work skills make it both my privilege and pleasure to nominate Kareon Williams for the Student Intern Award.*