

- [inaudible] we bring you Ability Radio, You and Your Health. Talking about health issues in the Virgin Islands. And this morning, we're gonna have a very interesting guest and I'm [inaudible] on the lead in, I thought about some of the things I had as perspectives. We're gonna talk about social work. But we request that this is a call-in radio show. If you do call in, there are, don't use any name but the caller's name. No personal texts, no unfounded allegation, no product pitches, no profanity, and we don't give medical advice, so we won't respond to those questions. Any and all opinions are those of the guests and/or of DRCVI, and not of the sponsors which is VI Lottery, Make a Difference program. We also like to thank the radio station 107.9 and call-in numbers are 779-1079 and 713-1079. So, don't be afraid to call in. Again, our topic this morning and with us is Ms. Juliette Millin, a social worker here in the Virgin Islands. Wanna give us a little background information?

- Good morning. My background information is varied as could be. I've been practicing social work for the past 25 years mainly here in the Virgin Islands from the Department of Human Services in all aspects to now Veterans Affairs, the federal Veterans Affairs.

- Okay. And I'll give you a little background perspective. When I was growing up, we feared social workers.

- Yes. They're famous for, the main knowledge people have of social workers is that they come to remove your kids.

- Oh, yes. But also...

- But we are far from that.

- In those days, I used to be a paper boy and I used to deliver the morning paper. It was Cleveland Plain Dealer. And if you recall before Clinton days, they had that program where the mother with children, the fathers couldn't be in the home.

- Correct.

- So, I had the morning paper...

- [inaudible] our system.

- And I was sort of the one who was saying, "Hey, coast is clear." Said, "Hey, there was nobody sitting on the car."

- Correct.

- Looking for them coming out of the house, so that was my little contribution to the, to the guys in the hood.

- Even as a student in my masters' program, one of our professors used to do the, used to do the inspections over the home and he would often say that he would go in the, she, he would inquire from the client if there is any men in the home and they were saying no, no, no. So he would inspect the closet and of course in the closet, there were men's shoes. So how these men shoes got here.

- So days, those were the days when a lot of that was going on.

- Correct.

- And also, I'll be honest with you. I didn't get a really clear picture of what social workers did until I start practicing law. And one of the greatest aspects is trying to keep the family together.

- That's the primary emphasis in the social work as, with a social welfare system is to keep families together because who better than to take care and encourage the children to grow up in families.

- Right, right. So, give us a little bit of information about how social workers assist those residents here in the Virgin Islands, maybe even starting with like Medicaid program because there are a lot of issues with regards to Medicaid and that's the one program that's sort of expanded with the Affordable Health Care Act.

- Correct. Initially, when we have a family, I'm using my past experience of families. And you make an assessment determining the needs. It could be varied. It could be health care. It could be financial. It could be a home. Education. And let's not forget that. So you make that assessment and you make the appropriate referrals. The Department of Human Services tends to house the majority of social needs and meet those needs. So therefore, take for example a social worker in Children, Youth, and Families will make those assessments. And if need be that Medicaid or here in the Virgin Islands call medical assistance, they refer to that office to then make that assessment and see how best they could assist them with their needs.

- Well, how do a person or a family get to that point where they're, you're, you are gonna make an assessment?

- Well, whoever refers--let's say for example a school. The teacher noticed that the child perhaps could benefit from going to the doctor or going to the dentist because most cases, we tend to notice missing teeth or not well taken care of dental issues, you meet with the parents. You find out, well, I don't have insurance. I don't, I can't afford to take them to the dentist. That teacher might refer them to the counselor. The counselor has more knowledge of communities, organizations that might be able to assist and that counselor tends to know their first contact is the intake office of the Department of Human Services who they might refer or have that worker come out to the school to meet with the parents. However that may be, that's the initial contact with the department. Those assessments are made and the proper referrals are then made. Like I said, medical assistance is now housed. It used to be with the Department of Health and is now housed with the Department of Human Services.

- Okay. And so, basically a referral from some source?

- Correct. Correct. Correct. Yes.

- The family to you?

- Uh-huh.

- And then...

- And the family could go in there [inaudible] also if they have knowledge of that office, they could also go on their own.

- Oh, okay, all right. And then, so their major contact would be through the Department of Human Services?

- Correct.

- And well, one of the issues, and I know when I did some work with unions, is the numbers of cases that social workers have. Has that varied, it was [inaudible] very large [inaudible] I was dealing directly with them, what's the case [inaudible] like nowadays?

- I am not quite sure of the numbers. I know they're arranged in the 20s and 30s. I may go even higher and that's a national issue that has always been going because we have more cases than we actually have workers, unfortunately. And so we try to meet the needs as best as we can depending on the priority of the cases and unfortunately, some may slip through and I think that's the importance of having people in the community to assist because not everything could be handled by one agency and that's the importance of social workers knowing other social workers in other areas because not only Human Services houses social workers. We're, we tend to be all over.

- Okay.

- And having that contact could assist in cases where you are not immediately needed but another agency could help out with the situation to resolve before it gets worse.

- Okay. What are some of the other agencies that you may work with?

- Well, you have not only the Department of Human Services, Department of Education have some social workers especially in the Special Ed program. You have the division of the Department of Health has the ZERO TO THREE program, the women's program also. And then you have the Division of Mental Health that does, has social workers and other counselors to deal with mental health issues.

- What about some of the non-profits?

- The non-profits may have, see, this is, this is the important part. We have workers who are doing social service but may not be social workers.

- Okay.

- So you do have the non-profits having like family resource center. You have the one with Felicia Brownlow.

- Independent Living?

- Living, correct, sir. Thank you.

- Yeah.

- And then I know you have, you yourself have a social worker in your organization.

- Well, we have applicants, say, who perform a different function and that's one [inaudible] that's what...

- Correct. But I know her as a social worker. It's, that's what I'm saying. In different organizations, they carry different titles.

- Oh, I see.

- Yeah.

- Okay. And what do you see is the main work of a social worker? If you go or someone who's young now wants to go to college to become a social worker, what can they expect?

- Well, in a, in a bachelor field, they're mainly doing a lot of case management which to me is the center, is the heart of social work, to do case management. It prepares you to manage any type of cases and if you do, want to go further in your studies, you have that broad knowledge of what

social work is all about because you might learn something in school in the book, but not every case can be dealt with in the same way. So, the expectancy of you working with these cases with the knowledge that you learned in school but then apply into what society in itself has to provide to you, it's helpful. I think you do more learning after school than you actually did in school.

- Oh, okay. Well, let's take a quick break and then we'll get right back to case management.

- Okay.

- All righty. Good morning. Ability Radio is here and thank you for tuning in. We were just discussing matters with Ms. Juliette Millin, a social worker here in the Virgin Islands. And you were talking about case management?

- Yes. I was saying that case management is the core of social work. It is the introduction especially for those with a bachelor's degree to come into and gain some experience or more education because while you're in school, especially for social work undergraduate, you do a lot of field placement because the value of working in the field helps you with the essence of what social work is all about. And like I say, case management is very important. I had a different history with all of that because when I came into social work, I came with a bachelor's degree in psychology.

- Okay.

- Never did field placement. So field placement, that's why it plays a lot of value in the case management and the field placement practice because you are able to see the essence of how you're helping, what you need to do to help, and the contacts needed because social work is not something that you could do by yourself.

- Okay.

- You have to learn to work with others, colleagues. Not just with the families but other colleagues because it's, takes a toll.

- I see.

- It takes a, it takes a real toll and for you to survive. And like I said, I came in the infancy of human services when it was created in 1987. I had graduated in 1988 and I went to work for the Department of Human Services in the Children, Youth, and Families office, and at that time Children, Youth, and Families did everything from adoption to juvenile justice. Anything concerning families was held in that office and each worker had the experience of working the very cases of adoption, protective, foster care, pre-delinquent, and delinquent.

- Okay.

- And so it helped me a lot. But then after three years, I think I had enough experience to then decide this is what I wanted to do and I went off to grad school and acquired, attained a masters' degree in social work.

- Oh, okay. So, coming in the entrance level, you can come in with varying degrees?

- Well, at that time and I think still some of them because there's a contention now in the Virgin Islands with the social work licensure. In its originality, they had an ability to accept non-social workers but they're looking towards moving like stateside of only having those with degrees in social work. So, the move is creating some challenges for the department because as you know, the university doesn't have accredited social work program.

- Okay.

- Which is essential for feeding into them the licensure portion here. So, you either are coming from the States with your BSW or working and the challenge here is that you're attaining a BA or BS here. I think it is a BS.

- So it would be a bachelor's in social work?

- In science, with a concentration in Social Work.

- I see, I see.

- Yes.

- And sitting, we were just going through some of the issues but I was looking at, you mentioned family services.

- Correct.

- Wanna give a scope of what those family services include?

- Well, like I said, with the time we had adoptions, we had protective services which is, let's say from the example, the Department of Human Services, the initial contact for protective services is that intake, the division of intake has intervened in the case and if they need further assistance for the family, be it that they remove the child, be it that the family would need some services to remain together, then they're referred to the protective division to do ongoing services, to try their best to keep that family together because it's very important.

- Okay. When you say protective services, are you talking about like abuse and neglect?

- Correct.

- Or neglect?

- Correct, correct. Oh.

- And one of the other areas that we get a lot of walk-ins is homeless persons. What sort of services are provided here with regard to homeless persons?

- Well, it tends to fall within the same realm. They try their best to find assistance with programs to keep those families together, be it either with a shelter like Bethlehem [inaudible] Shelter or Family Resource Center to then do long-term placement. Those issues tend to be a little difficult here in the Virgin Islands because the resources are so slim with the long term. So it's a little, not a little. It's very challenging, with those families because you try your best to find the placement and placement is not always available. But with grants that other organizations have been finding like Catholic charities, Methodist outreach, some assistance could be done with them.

- Well, we don't really, maybe don't see it here a lot but there's been, because of the housing crisis in the United States, one of the biggest issues in the school system is children who are homeless, families living in cars or living around, where they don't have a address to be in a school district.

- Correct, correct. We haven't gotten to that point as yet. And so basically we try to work with those other organizations, like I say, Catholic charities, Methodist outreach, here in Saint Tomas Family Resource Centers and I'm quite sure that in, probably in Saint Croix you have the Women's Coalition and the like to assist.

- Okay. And the other big area which I am aware of as well is caregiving in seniors. What are some of the services that are available here in the Virgin Islands through the Department of Human Services?

- Caregiving is another challenging situation here because it takes a toll as, I remember having knowledge of working with CBU. They used to have a home base program and going on to meet with families who probably recently had surgery or had a stroke and they require assistance. And so you, to make those assessment to then make the proper referrals, I would often refer them to the caregivers' program that Human Services has. It is very, it's a very good program and I base that on experience, personal experience because my mom used to partake in the initial stages and she found that it was very valuable when you meet with other caregivers who are going through the stress of caretaking and not having enough resources to having other individuals who understand what you're, what you're going through. It was very helpful. And then at the caregivers' program, they not only assist with their stress, they also provide points in how to deal with the...