

## **The Merits of Rural Practice**

There are many challenges and opportunities for a student to experience in rural Rehabilitation practice. The caseload is varied in terms of age of clients, diagnoses, type of care, and location of service. As all therapists are generalists, there are many opportunities for interaction between clinicians of similar and different disciplines. Rural practice really supports teamwork.

Because the facilities are small and the staff are known to each other, the atmosphere is usually more casual and informal. In rural practice therapists can apply a more holistic approach in their practice; it is common for a therapist to treat and know the entire family of clients through various encounters and settings. As each therapist covers a broad spectrum of services, there are more opportunities for therapists to participate in health promotion and prevention.

Therapists are frequently sole charge so they have management responsibilities in addition to their clinical work. They enjoy the independence and flexibility of working in a small department where the decisions they make can result in immediate changes.

To meet the caseload demands, the therapists are always expanding their knowledge and skills, drawing on the resources of other community service providers, and finding creative, local solutions to complex situations. There is a strong commitment from management in supporting a therapist's need for continued education and professional development. Therapists develop strong networks with in and external to their home communities to support their clinical growth and expertise.

Rural therapists are creative and resourceful, and ready to tackle the new challenges that each day can bring. Many choose a position in a rural practice to develop broad expertise and stay for the slower paced, friendly rural lifestyle.

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