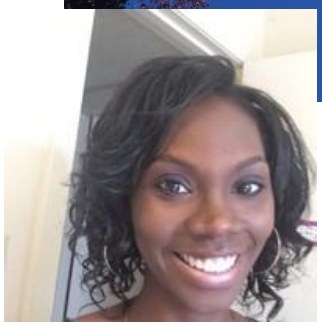
Fall 2023





Name: Tiffany Jones
Major: Social Work
Job Title: Career Coach
Graduation Year: 2013

Tiffany Marcia Jones is a Career Coach with America Works of Tennessee. She shares that every day in social services can be vastly different contingent upon the population served. Read on to see how Tiffany is making a difference!

What is the day in the life like at your job?
I work with the Department of Human Services with their Families First recipients to ensure they meet the weekly work/education requirements to continue benefits. In each session we focus on goals (i.e. financial, educational, mental and physical health, relationship, spiritual) that the family has set, and we discuss everything ranging from steps that were made during the previous week to any setbacks. I reserve one day a week generally for various agency meetings and networking with community partners.

What do you love about your job?
One of the things that I absolutely love about my job is that you get to see first hand an individual or an entire family going from being vulnerable and many times having a hopelessness to thriving. You get to see families and individuals stepping into purpose after coming to the realization that they were created for so much more.

What is challenging about your role?
When you see clients that you once worked with end up in the news headlines for something negative. You tend to replay the sessions that you may have had with them and the potential that they had. It is very difficult to see clients fall victim to their environment never rising above.

What are the benefits of working in this field?
There are several benefits to working in the field of Social Services; one of which is the ability to work in so many different areas. When I first started my career in Social Services I worked in a level IV girls' facility (locked down) in the clinical department. I transitioned with that organization two more times, one to a Family Intervention Specialist where I provided in home therapy and crisis calls and the second time as a Mentor Specialist where I went out into the community speaking at various companies encouraging their employees to give back to their

community either by a financial donation or becoming a mentor. Since leaving that agency I have had opportunities to work under various grants where I worked with the homeless population, in the school system and with entire families. The field of Social Services can provide an array of opportunities.

What experiences did you have that prepared you for this role?
Beyond personal experiences I was able to complete two internships that provided me with great hands on experiences. The first internship was with the Juvenile Justice system in Memphis, TN and the second was as a Clinical Liaison Intern where I was able to gain clinical experience.

What do you see happening in the future for these types of careers?
There will always be a need for the field of Social Services regardless of budget cuts or anything else. The Bible tells us that the poor will always be with us and there is great truth in that. Social services may be shifting the manner in which services are rendered and the eligibility for such, but these types of careers will always remain in existence.

What should a student know about your field?
There are two pieces of advice that I tend to provide to students who are interested in this field. The first is that you must always maintain your compassion for others to be effective. Once you feel your light of compassion beginning to dim you must step away even if it is for only a season. You can cause more damage to an individual than help if you lack compassion. The second piece of advice regarding working in the field of Social Services is that it is
imperative that you have boundaries set in place. Boundaries are not only for clients, but boundaries are also for co-workers and whatever agency you are employed by. It is important to remember that while you are employed by your agency you must know what you are able to do and when to say no. You will always be disposable to wherever you work but you are not disposable to your family and friends so learning to say no is gravely important. Crisis will
always arise in this field sometimes on an hourly basis but sometimes you must let someone else handle the crisis to maintain work/life balance. Never let an employer take work/life balance away from you. Boundaries are vital.

What advice do you have for a student considering a career in your profession?
For a student who is considering a career in my profession, I would advise you to pursue licensure. You can be licensed on both a Bachelor's and a Master's level. Licensure will open doors that one would not ordinarily have as a Social Worker. It will also allow you to negotiate for higher salaries!