

# Bridging the Gaps



## Understanding the Lives of the Adult Wellness Program Clients

Student Interns: Chloe Johnson, University of Pennsylvania, School of Dental Medicine

Academic Preceptors: Joan I. Gluch, PhD, RDH, PHDHP, University of Pennsylvania, School of Dental Medicine

Community Preceptors: Beverly Bradley, Case Manager, Hall Mercer

Angelo Cirrincione, Case Manager, Hall Mercer

Steve Niederriter, MBA, Assistant Director of Operations for Outpatient Behavioral Health Services, Hall Mercer

### COMMUNITY PARTNER



Hall Mercer is a community mental health center that is affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania Hospital. The center aims to better the lives of those affected with mental illness or developmental disabilities by broadening their acceptance and advancing their care. A wide range of services are provided to both children and adults with an emphasis on caring for the underserved.

<https://www.med.upenn.edu/hallmercer/>



### BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

- First outpatient mental health center in Philadelphia established in 1965
- Allows mental health patients to simultaneously receive treatment and retain relationships with family and friends
- Initiated as part of the Kennedy Administration aiming to humanize mental health patients
- One of Philadelphia's eleven community mental health centers
- One of Philadelphia's five crisis response centers

### TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

The Bridging the Gaps student intern helped with the Adult Wellness Program by taking daily attendance and checking in on the clients. They led and assisted with the daily activities that are a part of the program. The student intern built crucial relationships with each client in order to understand their background and individual needs. The intern also created an oral health presentation and distributed oral hygiene kits with the goal of educating the clients and improving their oral health.



### ACCOMPLISHMENTS/ CHALLENGES/ JOYS

- Accomplishment: Opening the patients' minds about oral health care and emphasizing the effects of oral health on overall health
- Challenge: Reading all the medical histories of each client and trying to understand their daily struggles and perspectives on life
- Joy: Getting to know the personalities of each client and being personally thanked by clients for my time spent at Hall Mercer this summer

### REFLECTION

My Bridging the Gaps experience this summer exposed to me a whole new population I had never worked with before. Before I started my work at Hall Mercer, I didn't know what to expect when working with individuals with disabilities; however, from day one they made me feel more than comfortable. I was so excited to come into Hall Mercer every day to see what the clients were up to and to hear more of their stories. I built so many deep and meaningful relationships with clients and staff that I hope will continue throughout my time here. I know that my experience at Hall Mercer will help me tremendously when working with patients with disabilities in my future. They taught me so much that I will carry with me through dental school, in my career as a dentist, and beyond.

