

Interns Gain Skills in Clinical Services

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Speech-language pathology graduate student Brigid Crotty (right) administers a test to a young child.

The Center for Persons with Disabilities at Utah State University is an internship site this semester for four students who are working with the Clinical Services division.

According to Vicki Simonsmeier, one of the co-ordinators of the Autism Diagnostic Clinic, two doctoral students in psychology and two graduate students in speech-language pathology are currently completing internship hours.

The psychology students are a big part of case management and follow-through, Simonsmeier said. They are being trained on the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS), a commonly used assessment tool.

"The both want to work with students," Simonsmeier said. "The ADOS makes them very employable. They are now trained in all four modules. Not everyone comes out of their program with that."

The USU students present cases on Fridays during staff meetings and lead the discussions, pulling together the information from all the other assessments including physical therapy and occupational therapy evaluations.

The two speech-language pathology students are on a steep learning curve because they will only spend one semester at the CPD, Simonsmeier said, and they are both first-semester graduate students.

"They are so new into their programs and we plunk them in the middle of this team," Simonsmeier said. "They are

working on diagnostics and the correct interpretations. They also attend staffings and present their findings. They will leave here in a semester very skilled at administering 10 to 12 different standardized tests."

Brigid Crotty, one of the SLP students, said she thinks her experience at the CPD will be beneficial because it is an interdisciplinary environment.

"Having the opportunity to work alongside professionals from different fields, such as psychology and occupational therapy, will give me a broader view of the different approaches to working with individuals with disabilities," she said. "So far, the most important thing I've learned is to appreciate the gravity of a diagnosis, and really take the time to consider all options before arriving at a diagnosis."

The students all have individual meetings with their supervisors every week for debriefing and one-on-one supervision and teaching.

"They will have a really good skill set when they leave here," Simonsmeier said.