



MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING WITH CFG

MEET ALESSIO PISANO



INTERVIEW FEATURING:

ALESSIO PISANO
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF
CLINICAL SERVICES
CENTER FOR FAMILY GUIDANCE



A division of CFG Health Network



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Interview By Ted Costa

IN A FIELD WHERE FOCUS AND DEDICATION TO THE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES OF CHILDREN/ADOLESCENTS IS CRUCIAL, IT COMES DOWN TO THE PEOPLE WHO SHOW UP TO WORK EVERY DAY AND HAVE THE PASSION FOR MEETING THOSE NEEDS.

I was fortunate to meet one of these people. CFG's own Alessio Pisano is the Assistant Director of Clinical Services within the CASTLE Program (Children Achieving Success through Therapeutic Life Experiences Program). It doesn't take more than a minute into our discussion to see why the CASTLE Program is successful. It is the caring staff. The following interview with Alessio gives a care-full synopsis of life in his work shoes.

Can you provide some background on your experiences?

I am an Assistant Director of Clinical Services for the CASTLE program with CFG. I have been in the field of Mental Health Counseling since 2004. I have been with the Center for Family Guidance since 2005, where I started working as a group room counselor in the adolescent unit of the CASTLE partial hospitalization program. During that time, I decided to go back to school and earned a Master's of Science in mental health counseling by mid-2009 from Walden University. I was able to have an internship at CASTLE while working full time. The training, experiences, and skill-building I had was immeasurable. Upon graduating, I was able to get my Licensed Associate Counseling (LAC) Credential, and I transitioned from a clinician in training to a clinician in the Outpatient program at CASTLE Outpatient. While working with colleagues and

developing a caseload of over 80 patients, I was able to use the real-life experiences of internship and trainings over a three year period to get 4500 hours of face to face time with patients/clients to earn the next level of licensure as a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). In 2018, I transitioned into the Assistant Director of Clinical Services position while also getting the Accredited Clinical Supervisor credential (ACS) which allows supervision of LAC's that are training and growing their own skill sets to get their LPC. Besides providing supervision to those on their path to getting their next license, I continue to use my bilingual skills to provide services for patients who attend the CASTLE partial hospitalization program (PHP), where a patient can range in age from 3 to 15.

As Assistant Director, I encounter a variety of tasks and duties throughout the day, including:

- ensuring the daily schedule is completed/ revised based on changes
- giving and receiving feedback to counselors
- electronic medical record-keeping through EPIC
- reviewing and cosigning supervisee documentation of their patients
- being a liaison for schools, other programs, and families
- delegating daily tasks
- providing and implementing training for staff
- working on multiple projects to continue the successful implementation

Alessio, it sounds to me like you've put a lot into being where you are today. What drives you further into this career path?

Thanks, Ted – the ability to help anyone overcome a challenge or manage their diagnoses is the most rewarding part of working in the field of mental health counseling. To create rapport with a patient, educate them on coping skills, engage them to build solution-focused interventions that help push towards success is what drives me. Supervising others in the mental health field to ensure ethical, responsible, and helpful practices also drives me to be where I am today.

Tell us about your program.

The CASTLE program helps to stabilize those children that have various mental health and behavioral issues. These behaviors may be preventing them from being successful during a period of development where characteristics, learning, and relationship building are impacted. By providing group therapy interventions, weekly family sessions, and evaluation services with psychiatrists/APN's the patients serviced may increase successful progress as they continue to grow. Three programs are part of the CASTLE Camden program. The most intensive program is the Partial hospitalization program (PHP), where a child is placed on homebound instruction for about 8 weeks to address and stabilize challenging behaviors in the home and school environments. The CASTLE Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) is the afterschool program where children ages 5-12 can attend in the afternoon from 3 pm-6 pm and consist of those children who have been the PHP continuing to hone their skills and work on treatment planning for continued success. CASTLE outpatient is more of a long-term mental health management structured program where children ages 3-18 that require mental health services weekly, biweekly, or even monthly can be seen.

What are some of the best parts of your job, the pieces you enjoy the most?

The relationships with colleagues that are dedicated to the framework of building successful outcomes and continuing to adapt to changes throughout the years is what I enjoy most about the CASTLE program. The successes seen through the work we all do is a large part of what I enjoy most with the career path I have chosen. This is a place where decision-making and adapting to challenges, especially over the last year; create synergy within a team of mental health professionals to ensure success for patients.

That sounds incredible! What are some of the challenges that go along with this line of work?

There are so many challenges, and I do not know where to start! Compliance from those involved, to making sure there is an internet connection to meet through telehealth for a patient. Challenges are part of the day-to-day life at CASTLE PHP. The acuity of patients, the shifts in schedules, and the reframing of what mental health looks like today are parts of the puzzle we are all trying to solve.



I have no doubt you and your team do the best you can to take those challenges on. That may help lead to my next question regarding challenges you face - What advice do you have for people seeking internships in this line of work?

Think about why you want to be in the mental health profession and what area/specialty you would want to develop. Be ready to be in a fast-paced environment that will test your limits and challenge what you have learned in textbooks. The real-life experiences you get to observe will allow you to garner the tools to build a career in the mental health field. This is a field where we never stop learning and be ready to adapt to new challenges with an ability to maintain directions towards specific sets of goals.

Thanks to Alessio Pisano of the CASTLE Program for taking time out of his day to help prepare those entering the field for what to expect. CFG Health Network is a great organization to start or develop your career. If you are interested in learning more about our organization, please visit our website: <https://cfghealthnetwork.com/>.

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