



KAREN AMSPACHER

KAREN AMSPACHER'S SUCCESS STORY

RELAUNCH STATS

Length of Career Break  1.5 years and 4 years

Nature of Career Break  Childcare, family health issues

Time to Relaunch  1 year

CAREER TRAJECTORY

Pre-Break Employer and Job Title

Child Welfare Agency
Assistant Director

Employer and Job Title at Point of Relaunch

Visiting Nurses Agency
Contract Social Work

Current Employer and Job Title

Retired

ABOUT

Karen Ampacher, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker earned her Bachelor's in Psychology from Boston University and her Masters in Social work from Bryn Mawr University. She started her social work career in child welfare until the greater flexibility available to some positions in medical social work prompted her to shift her focus to this field in order to better care for her three children.

Karen took two career breaks, the first break after her first child and the second break after her third child who was born with a critical heart defect and spent the first three months in the hospital. With three kids under 7 years old and a child with significant health issues, Karen's second career break lasted for around 4 years before she relaunched into a part-time contract social work role at a visiting nurses agency.

She later moved into full-time roles at a local hospital including serving as a HIV/AIDS Program Director, Medical Social Worker and Psychiatric Social Worker and as a OIF/OEF Program Coordinator, Social Worker for a PTSD unit, and various roles in Home Based Primary Care Social Work at the local Veteran Affairs Medical Center before she retired in 2021.

HOW IMPORTANT WAS NETWORKING DURING YOUR RELAUNCH?

One of the things about social work is that, it's a profession that by design is to help other people, so of course if you are in that type or professional environment, those around you are going to want to help out. Beyond one's individual motivation to help other people, the setting of social work in and of itself is very much a networking function...you're constantly getting to know different contacts at this nursing home, or at that hospital, or in this department and you're calling up different contacts to try to help facilitate and guide a patient through the system in the most effective way. In doing so, you meet a lot of people and there's always information being exchanged whether it's on the patient's behalf or someone asking "How did you get your role at in the VA? How did you get into the federal system? Can you tell me who I can call?" So later in my career, I would network with people trying to get roles at the VA since earlier in my career, I found out about the job I relaunched at largely through networking in the same way with people I knew from other jobs. So it truly was "through the grapevine" and I think a lot of those in the social work field try to pay it forward however they can.

IF YOU COULD GO BACK IN TIME AND GIVE YOURSELF ADVICE PRIOR TO YOUR CAREER BREAK, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE?

You can't lose sight of you. You have to stick with it and have your own priorities and acknowledge that you're allowed to have your own priorities. Oftentimes in the workplace, external parties do not want you to have your own priorities other than your work. If it is not a friendly environment where you can advocate for yourself and your families priorities, don't stick around. It can be very demoralizing if you don't make that change for yourself. You can have your own priorities...you deserve to have your own priorities.

To read Karen's full success story, visit [iRelaunch's Success Story Archive!](#)