

Student of the Year
Samantha Lopez

Samantha Lopez is a native Iowan and finished her bachelor's degree in psychology at Cornell College (Mount Vernon, Iowa) in August, 2012. After obtaining her bachelor's degree, she worked in the field of disability with children and adults as direct care staff and then later as a case manager. Samantha worked for three years in the disability field before deciding to pursue another passion of hers by joining the Youth Advocate Program where she worked with at-risk youth in the Houston and Galveston area. While at the Youth Advocate Program, she worked one-on-one with youth and their families implementing behavior management training, coping skills, social skills, and crisis intervention. It was after her close work with the families and youth at the Youth Advocate Program that she decided to pursue her Master's degree in Social Work in order to acquire a broader set of skills, knowledge, and abilities to help children and adolescents struggling with behavioral and mental health challenges. Samantha is in her final semester of study at the Graduate College of Social Work in Clinical Practice with a specialization of Health and Behavioral Health. Her current GPA is 3.92 and she was honored to be the recipient of the Sandra A. Lopez Scholarship for Excellence in Clinical Practice this spring semester.

Samantha and her husband are expecting the birth of their first child (a girl) this March and will be moving to upstate New York in May following graduation to start their next chapter as a family. In her free time, she enjoys being outside (when it's not scorching hot), walking her two dogs, and playing volleyball. She would like to thank her husband for his continuous support throughout her graduate studies; her mentor and previous field instructor, Dr. Larry Micheletti, for sharing his expertise, guidance, and training as a mental health and behavioral health therapist; and the social work team at Texas Children's Hospital Autism Center/Meyer Center for the incredible support and educational experience they provided during her final field placement.