



## **M.S. IN CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING – ONLINE PROGRAM COUNSELING PRACTICUM AND INTERSHIP OVERVIEW**

As part of the educational experiences for the Masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) Program, students complete a minimum of 700 hours of field-based clinical experience. These clinical experiences are called Practicum and Internship and are completed at a program-approved site. Placement sites align with each student's specialization and students work with the Practicum-Internship Coordinator to determine which sites will be the best fit for them.

In the semester prior to when a student will start practicum, students reach out early in the semester to the Practicum-Internship Coordinator to begin the placement process. Students who are located 50 miles or more outside the greater Milwaukee, WI area will explore potential placement sites in their area via the internet and share the site information with the Practicum-Internship Coordinator. Then, the Practicum-Internship Coordinator will contact potential sites and begin the site approval process.

Practicum is a one semester, 100-hour, field-based clinical experience that occurs prior to internship. Of the 100 hours students accrue, a minimum of 40 hours is direct client work, while the rest of the hours are accumulated through "indirect" work (e.g., supervision, case meetings, paperwork). Practicum is intended to be an introduction providing counseling services, and appropriate student activities consist of observation of sessions, preparing paperwork and other case material, attending disposition team meetings, and direct service in the form of individual and/or group therapy.

Internship occurs after Practicum has been completed. Students complete a minimum of two consecutive semesters of Internship, accruing at least 300 hours each semester, resulting in 600 total internship hours. For internship, a minimum of 120 hours of the 300 hours per semester are direct client work, while the remaining 180 hours are indirect work. Internship is an extension of Practicum in that students build on the roles and responsibilities they began during that time and increase in their abilities to practice counseling independently. Internship is intended to reflect the comprehensive work experience of a professional counselor appropriate to the designated program area. All students are required to obtain personal liability insurance for practicum and internship and provide documentation of their policy before being permitted to begin their practicum/internship experience.

Please note that at the time of matriculation to the program, all students will be asked to complete a caregiver background check. This process must be completed before a student is given permission to register for classes. Issues that might arise from the background check must be considered in the context of practicum/internship placement as well as eventual licensure, and the program director will discuss this with the student to determine how to proceed.

Applicants and students should be aware that in order to pursue licensure as a counselor post-graduation, criminal arrests or convictions may impact or impede an applicant's ability to become licensed. Because the types of charges that may impact licensure vary by state, we recommend that individuals who have an open arrest or conviction, or any concerns regarding a background check, consult with the state licensing board in their state and seek professional advice about their individual situation.

### **Practicum and Internship - Responsibilities of the University**

1. Assume full responsibility for the administrative duties with the academic requirements of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Practicum and Internship, including approval of the site and experience, maintaining on-going and direct communication with Agency representative, ensuring that student are academically ready to begin the clinical experience, and grading.
2. Provide information regarding the CECP Clinical Mental Health Counseling program and curriculum in order that the Agency may properly plan and execute task assignments and supervision. Specifically included are the university calendar, student handbook, and the Practicum and Internship Handbook.
3. Designate one CECP faculty member each academic semester who will be the instructor for the student and who will communicate directly with the site supervisor by telephone contact and at least one site visit. The instructor will lead and facilitate weekly Clinical Mental Health Counseling Practicum or Internship class/group supervision (2.5 hours/week). The instructor will provide biweekly consultation during Practicum (and consultation as needed during Internship) with the site supervisor during the semester in which the student is completing her/his practicum/internship.

### **Responsibilities of the Practicum-Internship Site**

1. Designate one clinical staff person as site supervisor with appropriate graduate degree and an independent mental health license. This person will be an employee (part time, full time, or contracted with the site) of the site where the practicum will be conducted. The primary site supervisor must be a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), or a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT), Licensed Clinical

Social Worker (LCSW), or a licensed Psychologist or Psychiatrist. The supervisor must be licensed for a minimum of three years and have training to supervise.

2. Ensure that student meets their minimum hours requirement (100 total hours for practicum and 300 total hours for each internship semester).
3. Ensure direct client hour minimums are met. For Practicum, at least 40 out of 100 hours are devoted to direct services and for Internship, at least 120 out of 300 hours (for each semester) are devoted to direct client services.
4. Provide at least one-hour direct individual and/or triadic supervision on a regularly scheduled weekly basis.
5. Provide opportunities for the student to engage in a variety of counseling activities under supervision and for evaluating the student's performance. Suggested activities include individual counseling, group counseling, intake Interviewing, assisting with report writing, consultation, career counseling, assisting with programming, individual supervision, group or peer supervision, case conferences at staff meetings
6. Provide student with adequate work space, telephone, office supplies, and staff to conduct professional activities;
7. Provide supervisory contact which involves some examination of student work using video tapes, observation, and/or live supervision.
8. Provide written evaluation at mid-term and end of the semester of student based on criteria established by the Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology.
9. Allow the student to attend weekly practicum class session and once a month department colloquium for the duration of their clinical experience.

### **Responsibilities of Practicum-Internship Student**

1. The student will be enrolled in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Practicum or Internship course and will attend all classes for the duration of their practicum/internship experience. Student will continue working at their site until the end of the semester, even if they complete the required minimum hours prior to the conclusion of that academic semester.
2. The student will complete an initial learning agreement ("PLA" for Practicum; "ILA" for internship) at the beginning of each semester, and a revisited PLA/ILA end of each semester.
3. The student will complete a weekly hours log and obtain site supervisor's initials/signature for each week. Original copies of the hours log will be submitted to the course instructor at midterm and the end of the semester.
4. The student is responsible to schedule site visits that include the student, course instructor, and site supervisor. Practicum requires two site visits (beginning and end), while each semester of Internship requires one site visit.

5. The student will take responsibility for ensuring that the site supervisor has been provided a copy of the course syllabus each semester, a copy of the Practicum and Internship Handbook and evaluation forms to be completed at the end of each semester, the supervision agreement has been signed by all parties, and the initial PLA/ILA and revisited PLA/ILA has been reviewed and signed by all parties.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

- Q** Do I have to find my own site and placement for my Practicum-Internship?
- A** Students in Marquette's Online Clinical Mental Health Counseling Master's Program work with the Practicum-Internship Coordinator to determine appropriate clinical placements. For students within 50 miles of the greater Milwaukee area, the Practicum-Internship Coordinator will ask you to apply for a Practicum-Internship experience within the wide array of established sites we have available, following a similar process as students in the in-person CMHC program. For students outside 50 miles of the greater Milwaukee area, students will identify potential sites via internet research and share potential sites with the Coordinator. Then, after conversation with the student, the Practicum-Internship Coordinator will contact agreed upon sites to start the site approval process. The Practicum-Internship Coordinator will ensure that your placement meets program standards and aligns with your specialization.
- Q** Will I get my first choice of the Practicum-Internship site I want?
- A** Students engage in a rigorous application process for each Practicum-Internship site to which they apply. This application process minimally includes submitting a cover letter and curriculum vitae (CV), as well as engaging in at least one interview. Students may or may not receive an offer to complete their Practicum-Internship at their "first choice site." However, we will continue to work with students until they receive an offer from a site.
- Q** Can I complete my Practicum-Internship where I work?
- A** Students do not complete their Practicum-Internship where they are employed. Practicum-Internship is an experience distinct from their employment so they can diversify their experiences, have a supervisor specifically designated for their program learning, and expand their professional network. Although there are sometimes paid Practicum-Internship opportunities available, they are rare in the field.
- Q** Can I complete my Practicum-Internship at multiple sites?
- A** Our program is structured so that students complete Practicum-Internship at one site. This benefits students in that they engage in a prolonged experience at one site, have the ability to increase their responsibilities and roles over time, and develop longer-term relationships with clients and staff. Sites benefit, too, in terms of

reaping the benefits of the substantial initial training they provide and students' increased contributions to the site.

Q Is it possible to work full-time while enrolled in Practicum-Internship?

A Working full-time while enrolled in Practicum-Internship is a personal choice that depends greatly on the flexibility of students' employment, life responsibilities, number of other courses being taken simultaneously, and personal needs. We require students to prioritize Practicum-Internship scheduling in order ensure they complete their required hours each semester. We encourage students to reflect on and discuss their process with the important people in their lives so they can make the best decision for them.

Q Why is it important for my supervisor to be licensed for at least three years?

A Learning to become a counselor is a developmental process, both while enrolled in your training program and after you graduate! The first few years post-graduation while counselors work toward licensure is a critical developmental time in which they begin to "come into their own," concretize their theoretical orientation, and solidify their practice. Once counselors obtain their licenses, they settle into their practice and complete continuing education, often including training to become clinical supervisors. Having a more seasoned professional who is trained to supervise are essential components to increasing the benefits you receive during supervision, ultimately ensuring a solid training experience.

Q The state where I want to eventually practice requires 1000 hours of Practicum-Internship while I am enrolled in my counselor training program. Is it possible to complete this requirement in Marquette's counseling program?

A Yes. Many students complete three semesters of internship rather than two. A third semester of internship will count as one of your program electives so you do not have to take additional coursework above the required 60 credits. Please remember it is a student's responsibility to learn about the licensure requirements of states in which they eventually plan to work.