

Counseling Clinical Handbook



Department of Health & Human Development

Montana State University – Bozeman



Clinical courses (i.e., practicum and internship) involve the direct counseling of individuals from the community while under the supervision of a licensed mental health professional. These courses are taken subsequent to relevant preparatory academic courses and are progressive. Prior to enrolling in a School, Mental Health or Marriage and Family Practicum, all students must successfully complete the Counseling Skills course (HDCO 521). Prior to enrolling in Internship, all students must successfully complete one or two semesters of practicum depending on the student's program of study and Internship site.

Practicum

Practicum is completed either at the MSU Human Development Clinic (Mental Health and Marriage & Family) or in the school system (School). Occasionally, School Counseling students will conduct practicum work at the Human Development Clinic with prior permission of the School Counseling Program Leader and the Human Development Clinic Director.

Goals:

The goal of the counseling practicum is to assist the student in learning all aspects of performing counseling and facilitating change in another person through the counseling relationship. An emphasis is placed on student to developing their own style of counseling.

Objectives:

1. Demonstrate skills for assessment and treatment planning in a counseling relationship.
2. Apply knowledge and skills in supervised counseling relationships.
3. Develop a level of self-awareness which permits appropriate use of one's behavior in a counseling relationship.
4. Develop ability to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies being utilized in the counseling relationship in order to assess the client's progress.

5. Demonstrate skills for intake interviews, assessment instruments, treatment planning, case management and consultation.
6. Demonstrate ability to utilize theory-based strategies which will guide the treatment process to facilitate client goals.
7. Develop professional manner and responsibility.
8. Demonstrate knowledge of ethical standards and principles with clients, colleagues, and others.
9. Apply counseling skills in various community settings (e.g., schools, agencies).
10. Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of cultural differences and diversity with clients and in other (professional, personal) relationships.

Practicum Hours

Students enrolled in practicum are responsible to record all of their hours accrued for practicum by date and type of hours and have site supervisor or university supervisor verify the information with a signature each month. Direct hours include hours that you are in direct client contact with individuals, couples, or families, or facilitating group counseling either as the sole counselor or co-counselor. Direct hours may also include participating in a treatment planning meeting or teacher-parent conferences (school counseling) with your clients or facilitating a mental health focused seminar for your clients (e.g., a class in the school where you are doing your practicum), providing classroom guidance (school counseling), or appraisal activities. Indirect hours may include writing process notes; reviewing counseling tapes, past records or assessments; writing conceptualizations or treatment planning summaries; conducting research, reading about a client's presenting issues or issues related to the client's history, or planning for a client; consulting with professionals regarding client treatment and care (e.g., staff, previous counselors, psychiatrists, teachers); attending mental health related conferences, workshops or training experiences; and other client related activities. Individual and group supervision, including staff meetings, are recorded as indirect hours.

School counseling students typically enroll in one semester of practicum. They are required to accrue 200 hours of contact time. Forty of those 200 hours must be spent in direct client contact. Marriage and Family and Mental Health Counseling students typically enroll in two semesters of practicum. Over the course of two semesters of practicum coursework, MFC and MHC students are required to accumulate **400** hours of clinical work: **Eighty** of those hours must be **direct client contact**; the remaining 320 hours may be indirect contact.

Because some students have jobs outside of the counseling program that are directly related to counseling and because the Human Development Clinic cannot guarantee enough direct contact hours for all students, the following policy regarding accumulation

of practicum hours outside of the clinic is in effect:

Up to **40** direct client contact hours and **160** indirect hours may be obtained at approved sites outside of the clinic. The program leader will determine whether or not the proposed site is appropriate for a practicum setting. In order for out of clinic direct client contact hours to count, a licensed mental health professional must be employed at the site and be willing to provide at least one hour of supervision for every 10 client hours accrued.

In sum, a total of 200 hours out of the 400 hour practicum requirement may be met outside of the clinic. In the event that a student accrues more than 200 hours at an approved site or sites, he/she may count the additional hours toward state licensure, but not toward the completion of practicum requirements. A minimum of **200** hours must be completed through the Human Development Clinic.

Internship

Internship Placement Overview

Students will be allowed to enroll in an internship course only after successfully completing one or two semesters of practicum, depending on the requirements of their particular counseling program. Typically, Marriage and Family and Mental Health Counseling students complete two semesters of practicum while School Counseling Students complete one semester of practicum prior to enrolling in internship. Students will only be allowed to enroll in internship during their last two to three semesters of study, depending on the requirements of their placement site. All internship placements must meet the approval of the intern's program leader.

Internship placement sites must meet the following requirements:

- An on-site supervisor who is licensed as a mental health professional must agree to meet with the student in a supervisory capacity an average of once per week throughout the duration of the internship. Supervisors for school counseling interns must hold the appropriate certifications for their field.
- The site must provide opportunity for the student to see an adequate number of clients. For example, Marriage and Family and School Counseling students must accrue 240 hours out of the 600-hour internship providing direct services to clients. Approximately 120 of the 240 direct hours must be couple, family, or relationship oriented. Mental Health Counseling students will need to spend 360 hours of their 900 hour internship in direct service work.
- Adequate space that allows for confidential counseling sessions must be provided to the intern.

At no time will an intern be allowed to see clients on the premises of the internship site without someone (e.g. a supervisor, another student, or another professional) also being on site. Some students may wish to pursue an internship in a private practice setting. This will only be approved if the above conditions are met. On some occasions,

a site will be able to offer clients but not supervision. These sites may be approved if an appropriate off-site supervisor is obtained and the intern adheres to the aforementioned policy regarding not seeing clients alone.

Internship is an important step in the development of a counselor in training, and there is an expectation that once approved for internship, the student will be able to act professionally and with a degree of autonomy. Interns should remember, however, that they are still in training and are, by no means, ready to counsel without supervision and consultation. At no time may a student in the counseling program engage in her/his own private practice, and at no time will students be allowed to engage in counseling practices without being enrolled in an appropriate clinical course (i.e., practicum or internship). Students who violate any of the professional ethical guidelines (from ACA, AMHCA, IAMFC, ASCA) or any of the clinical policies found in this Clinical Handbook or the Counseling Graduate Student Handbook will be removed from the counseling program.

Internship Goals

To offer field experience to counseling students as an integral part of the educational process.

- The student will be expected to assume full responsibility for his/her duties at the site and will receive competent supervision by a professional staff member.
- The student will develop a comprehensive view of the internship setting and gain skills and knowledge specific to the community setting (e.g., agency, school).
- The student will be able to test the adequacy of his/her training and determine the level of interest in future employment in a similar setting.
- The student will be expected to perform all responsibilities in a professional and ethical manner.

To offer benefits to cooperating internship sites.

- The internship site has input into the training procedures for counselors.
- Professional development and cooperation between the internship site and MSU is stimulated.
- The internship site is in a position to offer additional professional services.
- The internship site has the opportunity to evaluate a prospective employee.

To offer benefits to the counseling programs at Montana State University.

- Students gain the opportunity to experience counseling in a community setting.
- The counseling program receives feedback from the cooperating internship sites regarding the relevance of training offered by the internship site.
- The counseling program becomes more visible and more credible within the community.

Internship Eligibility Requirements

A student must meet the following requirements to be eligible for an internship:

- Be near the completion of an approved counseling program.
- Have completed three credits (minimum) of practicum experience.
- Approval from his/her committee chair to enroll in an internship.
- Have liability insurance.

Time & Academic Credit

Students may enroll for 2-6 credits of internship. In order to fulfill the master's degree requirements, students must complete 600 hours of internship (6 credits). Students must accrue a minimum of 100 hours for each credit of internship (i.e. 3cr. = 300 hrs.). Students are encouraged to enroll for three credits for two consecutive semesters.

Internship Enrollment Procedures

The following steps offer a guide:

- Contact your advisor prior to pre-registration to discuss your internship and to secure their approval for enrollment in an internship experience (HDCO 576).
- Select an internship site, interview, and be offered a position the site. Clear the site with your internship university supervisor and obtain internship forms.
- Complete the Internship Prospectus with site supervisor in consultation with your university supervisor prior to registration.
- Pick up a restricted enrollment card from the HHD office during registration. A completed Internship Prospectus or memo from the university supervisor will be necessary to secure the restricted enrollment card.

Selection of Internship Sites

Internship sites include agencies, schools and other appropriate settings (with university supervisor's approval). Essential requirements for a community setting to participate include:

- Subscribe to the basic purpose of the internship program,
- Indicate a willingness to function within the intent of the program,
- Demonstrate a capability to utilize interns productively,
- Provide licensed mental health professionals or credentialed school counselors to supervise interns, and
- Be willing to help implement individualized intern objectives which offer a variety of experiences.

The selection process for the cooperating internship sites is outlined below:

- A student or the university supervisor may initiate the first contact to determine the agency's or school's interest in the internship program.
- The university supervisor will contact the agency or school, explain the program, and determine the appropriateness and commitment of the agency or school (based on the requirements indicated above).
- An approved site has responsibility for final selection of an intern. This process may be competitive and based on personnel hiring procedures of the agency or

school.

Role of University Supervisor

The university supervisor's role is one of organizing, planning, consulting, and evaluating. The university supervisor is responsible for:

- Identifying appropriate community settings for the program.
- Insuring appropriate students for internship.
- Evaluating individualized plans for the interns to insure appropriateness.
- Consulting (by phone or visitation) with the field supervisor or intern if it is deemed necessary.
- Evaluating all input for student's grade and assigning the final grade.
- Evaluation of the internship program.

Role of Site Supervisor

Site supervisors must be credentialed school counselors or licensed mental health providers who have at least two years experience in the mental health field. University supervisors may serve as site supervisors when other supervision is not available.

The site supervisor helps the intern prepare a realistic plan for the internship experience based on the intern's abilities and in accordance with the university's graduate student program. Site supervision of the intern may take different forms including individual meetings, group meetings, case conferences, and informal contacts.

The site supervisor will be asked to complete an evaluation form, provided by the university, concerning both the intern and the program. The university supervisor will conduct a telephone or on-site interview. Site or university supervisor may arrange additional contact.

Internship Program Development

The scope of the internship is broad. Areas of potential involvement include direct service (face-to-face) contact and other counselor functions. A minimum of 240 of the 600 contact hours must be direct service (face-to-face) contact. During any semester of internship direct service hours must constitute 40% of the total hours accumulated.

Interns will work with the site supervisor to design an internship experience, which includes schedules and areas of involvement. It is important to schedule sufficient direct service hours. The university supervisor serves as a consultant to both parties and is the final authority on the appropriateness of the agreement. A wide range of valuable experiences can be planned for the intern. Planning will direct the intern toward experiences that will develop ability and stature as a professional, consistent with the established program goals. It should also direct the intern away from continuing assignments that involve unnecessary repetitions, routines, and clerical chores.

The intern will prepare a Placement Contract signed by the intern, site supervisor, and university supervisor. This form is to be completed and submitted at the **beginning of each** semester (unless the internship site conditions of the contract remain unchanged). A copy of the form should be given to the site supervisor, university supervisor, and retained by the intern.

Activity Logs

Interns will be responsible to keep daily logs recording the activities they engage in and the amount of time spent in each. Direct Service and Other Counselor Function hours will be kept on separate logs. The log of time spent in activities will be used to make a final summary of internship activities, which will become part of the intern's permanent record.

Summary

Internship is a clinically applied course in your program of study. There are numerous forms and paperwork associated with your documentation and evaluation that will be distributed to you by your internship university supervisor. Internship is where we expect you to integrate and apply many of the concepts and strategies that you have learned throughout your program of study. We have the highest expectations regarding your performance and professionalism in your role as counseling intern. Most graduates report that internship was their greatest learning experience in graduate school. It is where you will learn how to transform information into experience and consequently where you gain knowledge about the counseling field. We encourage you to apply yourself fully and begin becoming a professional counselor.