

Lewis & Clark College

**Professional Mental Health Counseling Program  
Practicum Manual**

# Professional Mental Health Counseling Program Practicum Manual

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## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The practicum program is designed to provide a beginning clinical counseling experience for Lewis & Clark graduate students. Practicum students have been trained in basic counseling skills, including the consistent use of micro-skills as well as a basic understanding of client issues. Students have also taken classes in: Introduction to Professional Counseling, Research Methods, Theories of Counseling, Life Span Development, Diversity and Social Justice, Practical Skills, Child/Family Counseling, Diagnosis, Counseling Interventions with Adults, Group Counseling, Counseling Interventions with Children, and Ethical/Legal Issues in Professional Counseling. The practicum is taken concurrently with Assessment, Addictions, Clinical Reasoning and (second semester) Trauma/Crisis Counseling and Career Counseling. The practicum provides for the development of counseling skills under supervision. Successful completion of the practicum requires adequate demonstration of the basic counseling competencies and skills and completion of required hours. Students must complete a one semester supervised practicum experience that totals a minimum of 100 clock hours. The student's practicum includes all of the following:

1. 40 hours of direct service with clients, including experience in individual counseling and group work, performed at the Lewis and Clark Community Counseling Center over a period of (at least) two semesters;
2. weekly interaction with an average of one (1) hour per week of individual and/or triadic supervision which may occur as live supervision at the LC Community Counseling Center;

3. an average of one and one half (1 1/2) hours per week of group supervision at the LC Community Counseling Center;
4. evaluation of the student's performance throughout the practicum including a formal evaluation after the student completes the practicum.

The practicum is the initial clinical experiential component of the degree program. It provides the opportunity to develop the therapeutic relationship and basic counseling competencies under intensive supervision from CPSY faculty. Placement at the LC Community Counseling Center allows for live supervision, immediate feedback, videotaping of all sessions, the opportunity to watch other students in live observation, a wealth of supervisor and peer feedback, and the acquisition of training and knowledge working directly with clients from the community.

During practicum, students spend at least 100 hours performing activities associated with the practicum over two semesters, with 40 hours consisting of direct service with clients. Students should be proactive in monitoring the number of hours that they have over the two semesters, paying close attention to completing at least 40 direct client hours at the end of the second semester of practicum. Students might be encouraged to pursue a secondary, site-based practicum during their second semester of practicum at the LC Community Counseling Center in order to gain experience and assure that they will complete the 40 direct client hours.

## **PRACTICUM REQUIREMENTS**

### **DIRECT SERVICE HOURS**

The following requirements were established by Professional Mental Health Counseling Program faculty and standards set forth by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. A total time commitment of at least 100 hours is needed to complete the practicum. Typically, practicum counselors can expect to spend between 6 hours per week at the LC Community Counseling Center over a period of two semesters. These hours are divided into the following activities: direct service, supervision, and "other" activities.

**Direct Service:** Face-to-face interaction with clients either individually, in groups (including psycho-educational groups or human development skills training), in consultation, or in other activities involving working with clients. Fifteen hours should be in group work if possible.

**Supervision:** An average of at least one hour of supervision a week with your site supervisor, much of which will consist of live supervision and immediate feedback. There will also be 1 -1/2 hours a week of group supervision.

**Other Hours:** Activities such as observation, training, completing paperwork, assigned homework, outside reading, case conceptualization, etc.

Students may begin their practicum after a faculty advisor has signed off on their completion of all pre-requisite courses, the Professional Development Portfolio, and a criminal background check. The practicum placement may start at the beginning of any semester, will be two semesters long, and will then typically be followed by the two semesters of internship at a site in the community.

### **Professionalism**

Given the clinical nature of the class, students are expected to demonstrate professionalism in demeanor, attire, in supporting classmates, accepting and giving constructive feedback, completing paperwork in a professional and timely manner and showing openness to supervision. Students should not miss any class/client sessions without imminent need.

### **Paperwork**

**Practicum Placement Form and Practicum Agreement:** Students are required to read and understand the practicum placement form and the practicum agreement. These documents outline the objectives, duties, and responsibilities of the practicum placement and provide information essential for evaluation and supervision.

If significant changes to the provisions of the agreement occur, an amended agreement must be completed and filed with the department.

**Proof of Insurance:** Students are required to provide proof that they personally have professional liability insurance by providing the department a photocopy of the certificate page of the policy.

- Becoming a student member of the American Counseling Association enables one to obtain malpractice insurance at no cost.
- Students failing to provide proof of insurance will not be allowed to see clients at their practicum site.

**Criminal Background Checks:** All students will have completed a national criminal background check during their first year of graduate study.

**Documentation of Practicum Hours:** Students are required to document the time spent in activities related to the practicum. Both Daily/Weekly Record Forms and the Semester Summary Report of Practicum Hours must be turned in by the end of the semester.

**Evaluation:** Practicum counselor performance is continuously monitored and evaluated by the practicum supervisor. Formal written evaluation of each student's performance is required at the end of each semester.

Students are evaluated according to competency guidelines and outcome assessments for the development of clinical skills and professional counselor qualities. These competencies reflect

the mission and training philosophy of the Lewis & Clark Professional Mental Health Counseling Program and are aligned with competencies established by the Council for Accreditation in Counseling and Related Educational Programs for Community Counseling Programs.

In this evaluation process, it is important to keep in mind that the Lewis & Clark Professional Mental Health Counseling Program frames all therapeutic work as connected to the broader project of recognizing and addressing issues of social justice. This means that factors such as the following are acknowledged as essential in considering how the forces of power and oppression impact the well-being of each individual and the relationships in their lives: physical ability, culture, race/ethnicity, social and political forces, socioeconomic status, exile/migration, religious and spiritual beliefs, language, education, gender, sexual orientation and age.

### **Supervision**

Group supervision is required in order to provide general academic supervision to students around issues of ethics, standards of care, student counselor growth and development, case conceptualization, treatment planning, development of theoretical orientation and other relevant topics. The faculty practicum supervisor's primary responsibility is to assure the welfare of the clients along with providing opportunities for counselor training and growth. The student's performance is continuously monitored and evaluated by the practicum supervisor. While the needs of the practicum counselor are always important, client welfare will always also be a primary concern.

Practicum class requirements and course content may vary according to instructor, but they have a common set of learning goals and objectives, with comparable emphases and quantity of requirements.

#### **Practicum Supervisors will provide:**

- Weekly class meeting/group supervision with practicum students. Contents will include:
  - Supervision of group feedback on client issues
  - Discussions, support, and supervision for practicum counselors in their development as counselors
  - Understanding the supervision process and determining appropriate professional and personal content (boundaries) in supervision, such as issues of professional development, countertransference, and personal content appropriate for supervision
- Live and/or individual/triadic supervision averaging an hour week for each student
- Conflict resolution consistent with ethical standards of the counseling profession
- Monitoring of practicum counselor progress toward completion of the practicum requirements
- Regular ongoing feedback to the student. This includes giving feedback and voicing any concerns about stress levels and/or emotional well-being. In some cases, the practicum student may be required to limit or suspend his/her practicum placement. This decision is the responsibility of the faculty practicum supervisor in consultation with the Clinical Director.

- Periodic review of practicum counselor work samples including live supervision, review of transcripts and videotapes, written case summaries, and co-signing of all client paperwork and session notes
- Final evaluation of practicum counselor performance for purposes of meeting standards and requirements for the Lewis & Clark Professional Mental Health Counseling program, including both the awarding of academic credit and the approval of the student's move to the internship level. Determination of the successful completion of practicum will be based on demonstration of adequate skills and counselor competencies, adherence to ethical standards and appropriate resolution of ethical dilemmas, and a total of 100 hours of service, with 40 hours being direct client contact.

### **Practicum Student Responsibilities**

The primary purpose of the practicum is for students to gain supervised practice and clinical experience to help develop and integrate the skills necessary to become professional counselors. Important aspects of the student's role and responsibilities are highlighted below:

**Welfare of Clients:** The basic assumption underlying all agreements between students and host agencies/schools is that the primary responsibility of all involved is to ensure the welfare of clients. Client welfare always comes before practicum counselor needs.

**Being a Supervisee:** Another important aspect of being a practicum counselor is the role of supervisee – a person who is open and receptive to the comments and critiques of his/her work by the practicum supervisor and peers who are also part of your practicum section:

- The role of counselor in training requires the student to demonstrate a willingness to be supervised and to receive the supervision provided by both the on-site supervisor and the faculty practicum supervisor. This includes:
  - Developing an understanding of the scope and purpose of supervision
  - Engaging in a working alliance with supervisors
  - Attending all supervision sessions
  - Accurately communicating content and scope of counseling sessions in supervision
  - Maintaining an openness to feedback in supervision, and following through on directives of supervisors
  - Willingness to complete extra reading and or extra work required by supervisors when needed
  - Seeking supervision in a timely manner about individuals who are at risk (full disclosure to supervisors of risks to client welfare)

**Records:** Practicum counselors maintain records in accordance with LC Community Counseling Center norms.

**Additional Responsibilities:** Expectations of student counselors also include the following:

- Adopting an attitude of attending to client welfare as a counselor's primary responsibility
- Adhering to the ethical standards of the American Counseling Association
- Adhering to the legal mandates of the state of Oregon
- Consistent and punctual attendance
- Following agency policies
- Appropriate client termination or transfer
- Maintaining appropriate documentation as outlined by the site and the college confidentiality guidelines
- Maintaining personal liability insurance (\$1 million per occurrence, \$3 million aggregate)
- Following detailed expectations as outlined in this manual
- Completion of ***all*** documentation at end of practicum

## **LEGAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES**

Students are expected to practice within the Code of Ethics of the American Counseling Association and follow the laws affecting the LC Community Counseling Center. Students must know and understand the ethical codes and be aware of the laws affecting their practice before beginning to see clients.

As counselors in training, practicum counselors must tell clients that they are counseling under supervision and provide the client with the contact information for the supervisor.

### **Relevant Issues For Practicum Counselors**

**Competence:** The ACA guidelines for an ethical practice mandate that counselors practice within their areas of competence. Competence is demonstrated by obtaining education and supervised practice. Students must complete all of the academic prerequisites for the practicum, including all courses in diagnosis and treatment, before beginning their practicum.

**Informed Consent:** Informed consent must be given by clients. An informed consent form must be signed either before seeing clients or during the first session.

**Limits of Confidentiality:** During the first session with a client, practicum counselors must discuss limits of confidentiality. These include:

- Reporting child abuse or neglect, elder abuse, or dependent adult abuse
- Reporting clients' intent to do harm to themselves or others
- Releasing records in a legal proceeding in response to a judge's order
- Testifying in a court case where a client's mental state is a condition of the case
- Discussion of the client with the supervisor and/or with peers during group supervision

**Disclosure of HIV Status:** Oregon and Washington laws prohibit disclosure of an individual's HIV status without written permission. This includes disclosing a client's status to the supervisor(s).

## SELF-CARE

Practicum can be a stressful time. Sometimes students find themselves in emotional turmoil resulting from listening to the concerns of so many people. It is important to **make** time and **take** time for self-care.

**Concerns About Self:** Practicum counselors concerned about their level of stress and/or emotional well-being should consider:

- Being more attentive to personal needs
- Addressing concerns with their site supervisor and/or the faculty practicum supervisor
- Seeking out therapy to help resolve issues brought up by practicum experiences
- Limiting or suspending the practicum if the distress continues

**Concerns About Peers:** Practicum counselors concerned about the level of stress and/or emotional well-being of another practicum student should:

- Approach the student directly and express their concern
- Encourage the student to follow the steps for self-care outlined above, including discussing problems with the faculty practicum supervisor
- In the case of continuing concern about a peer's welfare, if it seems that the faculty practicum supervisor is not aware of the problem, discussing your concerns with the faculty practicum supervisor

## Finalizing the Practicum Placement

Once you have completed and submitted your portfolio, a Placement Plan Approval Request form must be completed and turned in to the CPSY office. The purpose of the Approval Request form is for the Clinical Director to do a final evaluation of your readiness for practicum placement. It is only after this evaluation that your placement at the LC Community Counseling Center is "officially" approved. Most of the time, placements are approved without difficulty, but approval is **not** automatic.

Next, you will submit a Practicum Section Preference form. This form lists the times and the supervisors of the available sections of practicum. You will be asked to rank-order your choices of section. Efforts will be made to accommodate that 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choice requests for section, but at times we may need to assign you to 3<sup>rd</sup> or even 4<sup>th</sup> choice.

After you have received notification of the section to which you will be assigned, you may submit the Practicum Agreement. If you do not know the name of instructor assigned to your section (i.e., if WebAdvisor lists the instructor as Grad Faculty), leave that part of the agreement blank when you submit it. The Practicum Agreement specifies the activities/responsibilities of the practicum counselor, the dates of the practicum agreement and responsibilities of the LC Community Counseling Center.



In the event of significant changes at the practicum site, an amended contract must be completed and be on file with the CPSY office.

Placement at a site becomes “official” only after all forms have been submitted and approved.

Signed practicum contracts, proof of insurance, and completed Clinical Review forms (aka Portfolio Review Forms) are due no later than six weeks prior to the start of the semester.

***Under no circumstances will anyone who does not have all of their paperwork on file be allowed to see clients or attend the practicum class; and any student who has an incomplete in a class which is a prerequisite for practicum will not be able to start the placement.***