

Practicum/Internship Manual

Clinical Mental Health Counseling



**UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH ALABAMA**

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CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING PRACTICUM/INTERNSHIP MANUAL:

Practicum/Internship Overview:

Practicum/Internship Coordinator (PIC): Dr. Yvette Getch is currently the PIC and in that role she is the faculty member responsible for vetting and approving all field sites used by the program and also serves as the key campus-based clinical supervisor. In essence, Dr. Getch guides students through the process of interviewing and placement in a field site. The PIC, or the faculty member designated by the PIC, provides group supervision to all interns throughout the internship process. If faculty members designated by the PIC are required for clinical supervision, the PIC coordinates the selection and use of additional staff. The PIC remains the designated responsible faculty member for the practicum and internship process.

Practicum: Practicum is the initial field experience for a graduate student in the counseling programs and is typically offered in the Summer semester. In order to register for the Practicum class (CED 576 – Supervised Practicum in Counseling), students must have successfully completed proper coursework, and must have earned a grade of “B” or higher in the following courses:

- CED 571 – Foundations of Clinical Mental Health Counseling
- CED 572 - Principles and Theories of Counseling
- CED 584 - Seminar in Ethical and Legal Issues in Counseling
- CED 574 – Group Counseling & Guidance
- CED 586 – Counseling Process & Skills (*typically be taken in the semester prior to beginning practicum*)
- EPY 555 – Tests, Measurement & Evaluation (can be taken simultaneously in summer of practicum)
- CED 560 – Diagnosis & Treatment Planning in Counseling
- CED 566 – Multicultural Counseling (can be taken simultaneously in summer of practicum)

Students may be prevented from beginning practicum if significant concerns exist on the part of faculty as to the student’s interpersonal skills, ethical behavior, professional behavior, and/or counseling dispositions. Such concerns would usually be reflected in feedback provided to students in CED 586 and 574 which are clinical skills-based courses that require students to demonstrate counseling skills in a mock environment. Feedback may also occur as part of advisor feedback, disposition feedback during the program, or the biannual faculty evaluation of student dispositions. See the program’s Retention and Dismissal Policy in the Student Handbook.

Counseling Practicum lasts one semester and requires 100 total hours on-site, 40 of which are spent in providing direct counseling services to clients. Practicum hours must be completed in a single agency/site. Each Practicum site is selected from a *limited* number of pre-approved sites provided by the PIC. Sites not on this list will be approved only on a case-by-case basis and at the PIC’s discretion.

The CMHC Program's Practicum/Internship includes a "matching" process. Students are "matched" to a site. Students are **not** to contact sites except as outlined in the process below. If students have an issue/concern with a particular site, students are to make this known to the PIC as soon as possible so the PIC, program faculty, and student can discuss the concern or issue.

The typical matching process is outlined below:

General Matching Process:

1. A list of preferred practicum sites will be provided to students along with a description of the sites. Typically, students are provided an opportunity to learn about the sites through a meet and greet or other activity.
2. Students provide the PIC with a list of preferred sites and a description of populations they wish to work with, along with a list of 3 strengths and growth edges.
3. The PIC and Counseling Faculty members' combined working knowledge of the sites' needs, experiences sites can provide, and the students' interests, strengths, and skills are all taken into account and discussed. Then students are "**matched**" with **potential** sites (generally 2-3 sites).
4. Students are sent a list of suggested sites with the site's contact information.
5. Students are instructed to email or call the designated contact person at the site to set up interviews from the list of suggested sites provide by the CMHC faculty.
6. Students interview with the potential sites and then e-mail the PIC their rankings of sites and comments to support their rankings.
7. After interviewing the students, the sites send the PIC their feedback and rankings of student interviewees.
8. The PIC and counseling faculty then "match" students to their sites taking into account 1) the student's preferences first, 2) then the site's preferences, and then 3) faculty knowledge of sites and students. Availability of sites and "best" match are considered before final matches are made.
9. The PIC and/or designated counseling faculty then inform students of their assigned Practicum Field Placements.
10. At that point, the student will begin working with their designated site supervisor to complete whatever onboarding procedures the site has, e.g. orientation, background checks, etc.
11. It is crucial that students immediately contact the placement site to begin the necessary background checks and other paperwork required by the sites.
12. Students are responsible for routing appropriate forms and paperwork to site supervisors prior to the beginning of Practicum. The primary form is the Practicum Agreement Form, which needs to be signed by the site supervisor, PIC, faculty supervisor, and the student.

After all signatures are acquired, the student should make sure each entity has a copy of the forms signed by all. The signature process may also be accomplished through an electronic signature system if feasible. Instructions for this process will be provided during the Practicum Orientation Meeting held near the end of the Spring Semester.

Practicum to Internship: Practicum and Internship are *two distinctly separate experiences*. Students will get two separate agreement contracts signed, first for Practicum, and then, later, for Internship; this is true even if you complete both at the same agency. The Practicum and Internship experiences require separate contracts so that both the student and site have an opportunity to exit the relationship after practicum if they so desire. Lastly, *hours accrued in Practicum cannot transfer and count towards Internship*.

Internship: In order to register for the Internship course, students must have earned a grade of “B” or higher in the Practicum course and submit a completed Internship Agreement contract (signed by the student’s prospective site-supervisor) to the PIC.

Typically, interns complete their internship at the same site where they completed practicum. In rare cases, a student or site does not want to continue the placement after practicum. If this occurs, the student follows the same “matching” procedure previously outlined during the Practicum Matching Process. Internship sites must be selected from a limited number of pre-approved sites provided by the PIC. Sites not on this list will be considered on a case-by-case basis and at the PIC’s discretion.

Internship consists of 600 total hours on-site, 240 of which must be “direct service hours”. Internship hours should typically be completed entirely within a single agency/site. Completing Internship hours at multiple sites is sometimes necessary to meet a student’s professional development goals, but multiple sites must be approved by the PIC.

Internship must be completed within a minimum of two semesters, and a maximum of six semesters.

There are three basic routes to completing these two training experiences. Students’ routes must be approved by the PIC. Routes include: a) you can complete the Practicum and Internship in the same agency, b) you can complete the Practicum and Internship in separate agencies, or c) you can complete the Practicum and Internship in the same agency, but split your Internship across two agencies (you cannot split the Practicum across two agencies). It is important to be aware of the costs/benefits to each of these routes. Again, approval of these routes is at the discretion of the PIC.

Splitting the Practicum and Internship between two agencies is an important option if the student has two separate professional development goals or wants to get clinical experiences in two different settings. Splitting these two experiences is also an important option if the student has difficulty or concerns with their initial Practicum placement which necessitate moving to a new setting for Internship. Note, that the same option holds true for an agency if concerns arise about a student during Practicum that leads to the agency declining to sign a follow-up Internship contract with that student. The PIC will work with both the student and agency if concerns are present and will assist the student in obtaining a new placement if necessary.

On the other hand, completing the Practicum and Internship in one setting also has advantage. Going this route will result in about a 1-year experience (assuming you are logging about 10-13 hours per week during Practicum and 16-20 hours per week during Internship), which provides the student with the opportunity to fully immerse themselves in an agency. This route also may make it easier to find a quality Internship site. Sites often are not willing to accept a student for only a one semester Practicum. This is because the 10 weeks that Practicum lasts is not enough time for the site to integrate you into their culture and policies. In some cases, if a site knows you will only be spending your Practicum experience with them, this may shut you out of more advanced experiences that could occur during Practicum.

Lastly, you can split Internship across two agencies. This has the advantage of exposing the student to a broader range of clients and types of clinical work but may pose a challenge in terms of the increased travel costs and time management stresses involved

A decision to pursue this option must be carefully considered and can only be implemented with the approval of the PIC.

Acceptance to a Practicum/Internship Site

Acceptance as a graduate student in one of the counseling programs **does not guarantee that you will obtain acceptance into a Practicum or Internship site**. This is a separate process from being admitted into the program *or* from making successful academic progress. A detailed guide to the process for applying for Practicum/Internship is provided later in this document.

Supervision & Evaluations:

During both Practicum and Internship, you should have the opportunity to get feedback from your site supervisor on your counseling practice through the use of audio or video tapes of your counseling sessions. At some agencies feedback via tapes of your counseling work will not be possible due to legal limits or agency policies, and in such case the supervisor may sit in on your sessions and evaluate your work through that means.

During both your Practicum and Internship experience, your site-supervisor will be asked to evaluate your work formally on several occasions. Your supervisor will also complete a comprehensive on-line evaluation at the middle and at the end of the Practicum experience as well as provide biweekly feedback to the faculty practicum instructor on your performance. At the end of both practicum and internship experiences you will be given the opportunity to provide formal feedback through an exit survey sent to you after your graduate. The internship exit survey will ask several questions about your experiences at the site including your experiences with your site-supervisor. During your practicum and internship experience you will have weekly opportunities to provide your faculty group supervisor feedback about your field experiences as well.

During Practicum you will attend a regular 2.5-hour mandatory group supervision class each week. One hour each week of this class will be focused on didactic coverage of advanced counseling issues and 1 ½ hours each week will be focused on providing you with group clinical supervision of your practicum counseling duties. Attendance to group supervision is mandatory. Finally, you must receive 1 contiguous hour of clinical supervision from your site supervisor each week throughout your Practicum and Internship experience. If you fail to receive the individual supervision for more than a week this should be reported back to your Practicum or Internship instructor.

During internship you will attend a 1.5 hour mandatory group supervision meeting each week. This meeting focuses solely on group clinical supervision of your internship counseling duties. Attendance to internship group supervision is mandatory. Finally, you must receive 1 contiguous hour of clinical supervision from your site supervisor each week throughout your internship experience. If you fail to receive the individual supervision for more than a week this should be immediately reported back to your Practicum or Internship instructor.

Liability Insurance:

Prior to beginning a Practicum and throughout the entirety of the Practicum/Internship experience, students must have professional liability insurance. You will be asked to provide proof of insurance before being cleared for participation in Practicum/Internship, and must supply proof that the insurance has been renewed if your Practicum/Internship Experience lasts beyond one year. You can obtain such insurance from any of the following groups:

- Alabama Counseling Association
<http://www.alabamacounseling.org/insurance.html>
- American Counseling Association –
<http://www.acait.com/>
- American Mental Health Counselors Association -
<http://www.cphins.com/>

Telemental/Telebehavioral Health Training:

All students are required to have a minimum of 6 hours of telemental/telebehavioral health training prior to beginning practicum. The PIC or designated program faculty will provide information on appropriate training opportunities during the fall semester of students' first year. Students are encouraged to complete the training as soon as possible because trainings, particularly free trainings, are time limited. While the program faculty will provide information on the training in the fall, if students fail to complete the training, they may be required to find equivalent training on their own.

Planning for Practicum/Internship:

Your graduate program is designed to be as flexible as is possible while still providing you with a rigorous and high quality set of training experiences in professional counseling. There

are several considerations that a student must take into account upon entering a graduate program concerning how they will complete their Practicum/Internship field experiences. During roughly your first two semesters of the program while you are enrolled in your didactic coursework (if you are attending full-time, e.g. four classes per semester), you can likely work full-time or part-time and attend classes at night. While this is *possible*, that doesn't mean it's easy. However, upon entering your Practicum and Internship sequence you can expect to be devoting about 12 hours a week (during practicum) and 15-17 hours per week (during internship) to your learning and counseling work on-site each week. If a full-time job or part-time job substantially or completely limits you to doing practicum/internship hours at night or on weekends you will be severely limited in the available sites that can accommodate such a schedule, and your ability to accrue hours in large enough amounts each week is extremely limited. This may result in the inability to accrue enough hours to graduate on time. Additionally, during practicum students are typically taking two classes in addition to practicum and 3 classes in addition to Internship.

To complete the 600 hours required of Internship across two semesters (completing the Internship in only one semester is not allowed), you will need to average about 16 hours per week on-site. It is almost impossible to find a site that can offer that level of hours outside of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. time window. Also, and again, sites that would agree to this are frequently sites that do not meet the program's expectations anyway. So, you are left with two choices:

1. Continue accruing 7 hours or so per week, which will allow you to complete your Internship hours in about 4 semesters or 21-24 months. You must complete your Internship within 2 years.

OR

2. Begin planning from the moment you enter the program for how you will complete the Internship process. Specifically find a way to make it so that you will have a significant number of hours available each week during the two semesters of Internship, and, ideally, most of this time would be available during 8 am. – 5 p.m. working hours. This may mean cutting back to a part-time job, using loans, applying for a department assistantship etc. Whatever the strategy, doing so should allow you to complete your Internship within 2 semesters.

Bottom Line: The quality Internship sites with highly trained site-supervisors that serve clients in an ethical and professional manner between the hours of 6 PM and 6 AM and on Saturdays and Sundays are few and far between. Students need to be realistic about this aspect of your training from the time students begin the program, and plan accordingly. Your academic program is committed to making sure you become a highly skilled, conscientious, and professional counselor who will be able to serve clients effectively. Accomplishing this goal often requires that we place a higher priority on quality training opportunities than we do student convenience. Unfortunately, these two important priorities often conflict at the point of the Internship process.

Internship & Course Registration:

Practicum and Internship must be completed back-to-back, e.g. if you do your Practicum in the Summer semester, the Internship should begin during the following Fall and continue during the following Spring semester.

Students cannot accrue hours until a Practicum or Internship Agreement Form has been completed and turned in to the PIC and until you have begun attending the Practicum or Internship class. Often, students do not complete all the required hours in the semester(s) in which they are formally registered for the Practicum or Internship class.

If this occurs during Practicum, the student may be approved to register for the subsequent Internship class by Internship Coordinator if an Internship Agreement has been signed by the Practicum site or some other site. The student would continue accruing Practicum hours at the Practicum site during the next semester, they will receive a grade of “P” (in progress) for Practicum until the 100 hours (40 must be direct hours) of Practicum are completed. The student could then, assuming an Internship Agreement has been executed, immediately proceed to begin accruing Internship hours.

If a student needs to continue accruing Internship hours after the semester in which they were registered for the Internship class, they will also need to register for at least 1 hour of the Internship class until they complete their hours. Internship must be completed within six semesters and over a minimum of two semesters. Students must attend the mandatory group supervision class for each week they are in a clinical setting.

Applying for Practicum/Internship:

Step 1 – Practicum Application and Matching Process

You will receive information about the practicum process from Practicum/ Internship Coordinator (PIC) during the first half of the spring semester prior to beginning your practicum. The PIC and program faculty will gather information to assist in finding the the placement that best meets your goals and needs. The PIC has a list of pre-approved Practicum/Internship sites you can rate (see the matching process on p.3). Once you have provided the information requested, you have then formally applied for placement in a Practicum site. Students should meet all the deadlines set by the PIC and program faculty so that matching to a site can occur in a timely manner. Delays on the part of the student may result in the inability to be matched to their preferred sites and/or may delay the beginning of their practicum and the acquisition of needed hours.

Students who decide they would rather not complete their Internship at their Practicum site must communicate this desire to the PIC at least **30 days** prior to the beginning of the semester in which their Internship will begin. The PIC and program faculty are not able to guarantee an internship placement at a different site nor is the PIC able to guarantee the student will complete internship in a timely manner. The PIC will work with the student to attempt to find

an alternative internship site that meets the student's needs. The student will need to interview with potential sites and the sites will provide input to the PIC regarding how well the student fits/matches the site.

Step 2 - Site Approval:

Approved Sites: The Internship Coordinator has arranged relationships with a number of pre-approved Practicum/Internship sites. These are sites that the PIC has determined provide the best clinical training opportunities. A list of these sites will be provided at the outset of the field placement process in spring semester of each year.

Do not call these sites on your own there is a process in place for applying to these sites. If there is a site on the list that you are unable to serve as an intern for some reason, please notify your PIC or program advisor as soon as possible and inform them of the conflict or reason that this site would not be an appropriate match.

Student-Selected Sites: Student selected sites are generally **not** an option. If a student has an extreme circumstance which he or she believes necessitates utilization of a training other than the pre-approved sites, they should make an appointment with the PIC to discuss this as soon as possible. Student-selected sites will **rarely** be approved, **if ever**, and only on a case-by-case basis at the **discretion of the PIC/Practicum Internship Coordinator**.

Practica & Internship at Your Job: First, internships at your job will only be approved if you work at one of the pre-approved practicum/internship sites, or if the slots at the pre-approved sites have already been filled. Such placements at a student's current place of employment are generally frowned upon and are rarely approved. The reason is obvious: We do not want to encourage dual relationships and we want the intern to learn NEW skills. Most people already know how to do their job—we want them to learn something new. If you want such an Internship to be considered you must meet with Internship Coordinator. Such a Practicum or Internship experience will only be approved if the slots available at the pre-approved sites have already been filled for that semester, or if the student is already an employee at one of the pre-approved sites where they are trying to do their practicum or internship. Just because these conditions are met does not mean a practica or internship will be approved. To obtain approval for a Practicum/Internship at your place of employment you must meet with the Practicum/Internship Coordinator and a much more detailed Internship Agreement must be drawn up that makes exceedingly clear that the following criteria are met:

1. The student has an exceedingly clear set of time allotted each week to take part in clinical counseling services that are **BEYOND** their current skill set and are activities that are in **no way a part of** their current job description.
2. Your practicum/internship site supervisor cannot be your normal job supervisor/boss or in any way currently hold some type of supervisory role over you at your job.

3. The Practicum/Internship Coordinator must have the utmost confidence that the site-supervisor in this situation understands the professional identity and standards of training for professional counselors and is confident that the student can obtain the necessary practicum/internship hours within the allotted time and that there is no overlap between the current job responsibilities and then internship responsibilities.

Typically, the PIC will not approve practicum/internships at the student's current place of employment.

Step 3: Interviewing with a Site.

After you have provided the information requested by the PIC and program faculty, the Practicum/Internship Coordinator will e-mail you an approved list of sites and contacts at those sites for you to set up an interview. Typically, students interview with 2-4 sites. (see p. 3 for the specific process).

Once the student receives the approved list of potential sites, the student should notify the PIC immediately if there is an issue with a site on the list. The student is NOT to contact the site directly and withdraw from the interview process. Due to the process in place, it is important that the PIC handle issues involving withdrawing from interviews or other issues.

A note on interviewing; treat this as a job interview. Dress appropriately and act professionally. Cursing, putting down other agencies, arriving late, acting disinterested, and arriving unprepared for the interview reflects poorly on you and also on our counseling program. A good training site will ask you questions about your basic assumptions and theoretical stance and your past experiences as well as about your professional identity. Don't be surprised if questions about hypothetical cases are also asked.

Remember you are also interviewing the site and should attend to how well you seem to fit with the site's culture and the nature of the work the site performs including their client population. It is also good practice to ask about the supervisor's style of supervision.

Step 4 – Matching with a Site

After all interviews are completed, each student will email the PIC their rankings of the sites at which they interviewed. If a student is unwilling to accept placement at a particular site they should rank that site last and indicate that this site is not being considered. It is helpful if the student includes a comment OR if there were concerns during the interview, the student can indicate that they wish to speak with the PIC about the site and the reasons it is not a good fit. **All sites also submit rankings of the students they interviewed. Sites can also choose to not accept a student.** The Practicum/Internship Coordinator then tries to match the student with their highest ranked site taking into account the site's rankings of students AND the knowledge the PIC and program faculty have about the student, the site opportunities, the site supervisor, and the number of practicum/internship students the site allows. The final decision of where a student matches ultimately rests with the judgment of the Practicum/Internship Coordinator.

There are a limited number of approved sites. Thus, making a good impression during the

interview is important. Additionally, our sites all provide unique opportunities and have been vetted to help make sure that interns acquire the experiences needed to develop their skills and meet the requirements of practicum and internship.

Step 5 - Practicum or Internship Agreement Form

There are two separate forms, one when solidifying your acceptance into a Practicum and a separate form when solidifying your acceptance to continue your Practicum as an Internship at the same site, or if you are switching and completing your Internship at a separate site. Even if you are continuing your training on to Internship at the same site, a new Internship Agreement Form must be signed. Remember that Practicum and Internship are two separate “contracts” between the university, the student and the site.

The Process of Getting the Practicum/Internship Form Completed (we will review the process during the Practicum Orientation Meeting and any changes to this process will be explained during this meeting).

1. Student receives acceptance at a Practicum or Internship site, which as previously been approved by the PIC. Student is notified of the match by the PIC.
2. Students should then provide the program secretary with the following information:
 - a. Name of agency
 - b. Name and credentials of their site supervisor including the site supervisor’s licenses and certifications (i.e. LPC, NBCC, etc)
 - c. Semester Practicum or Internship begins
 - d. Expected Dates of the Practicum/Internship Experience
 - e. Expected average number of hours per week the student plans to spend on-site during the Practicum (usually 12 hours a week) or Internship (usually 16-18 hours a week)
3. The program secretary will prepare 3 copies of the form, have the PIC sign all 3 copies and then route the form to the supervisor and then communicate to the student when the form is ready for the student to sign. (This may be accomplished electronically with electronic signatures).
4. Once forms are completed and signed, the student should make an appointment with their site supervisor to review the form and ensure that the form is correct and that all signatures are present. The student will leave one form with the site supervisor and the student should make sure that the Program Secretary has a fully signed form to place in the student’s file.
5. Forms should be completed before the student signs up for practicum/internship OR the student should receive direct permission from the PIC to register for Practicum/Internship before a signed agreement is on file with the Program Secretary.
6. The student can only begin accruing Practicum/Internship hours once the semester for which they are registered for the course has begun. Students can begin accruing Practicum/Internship hours when they are either 1) currently registered for Practicum and have a **completed, signed, and submitted** Practicum/Internship Agreement form, or 2) are already registered for Internship. Remember though that the Internship must last two semesters at a minimum. See below for a more detailed description of when Internship hours can be accrued.

Excess practicum hours cannot be counted as internship hours.

Overall Timeline for Practicum Placement Process

1. March – Internship Coordinator meets with prospective practicum students and goes over the interview and match process.
2. March/April – students schedule and complete interviews with a minimum of 3 sites
3. Approximately Mid-April – students and sites submit rankings
4. End of April- notification of matches is given by first week in May at the latest.
5. May – students get Practicum Agreement Form signed and copies turned into the Program Secretary and PIC. Students complete all orientation activities for the site.
6. June 1st or thereabout – student begins practicum
7. July 1st or thereabout – student and site supervisor discuss their standing and whether they will be offered to stay on for internship at the site.
8. July 7th or thereabout – site supervisor completes the Mid-Point Practicum Evaluation form.
9. August 1st – student ideally has Internship Agreement Form signed and turned in by this point, or has been informed they will not be accepted to stay as an intern and the Internship Coordinator begins process of finding an alternative Internship placement.
10. August 15th or thereabout
 - a. Student completes 10 weeks of practicum accruing 100 hours on-site. All practicum logs signed by site supervisor are turned in by student to Livetext.
 - b. Student completes and signs the Practicum Hours Summary Log & makes sure it is signed by supervisor, then uploads it to LiveText.
 - c. All required tape/live observation forms are turned in by student/supervisors and submitted in LiveText.
 - d. Site supervisor has completed the Final Practicum Evaluation form and Final Disposition Evaluation Form and submitted these in LiveText.
 - e. Student has completed the Student Disposition Form and Student Evaluation of Practicum Experience form and submitted these to LiveText.
11. August 15th – December 1st
 - a. Complete roughly 300 hours of internship; all hours logs up to date
 - b. Site supervisor completes the Mid-Point Internship Evaluation in LiveText
12. By December 1st (or therabout) Fall Internship Hours Summary Log is completed with signatures and uploaded to LiveText.
 - a. Two counseling tape reviews are completed and in Livetext.
 - b. Final Fall Internship is Completed in LiveText
13. December 1st – May 1st
 - a. Complete the entire 600 hours of internship; all hours logs up to date
 - b. Site supervisor completes the Spring Mid-Point Internship Evaluation in LiveText
14. By May 1st (or therabout) Spring Internship Hours Summary Log is completed with signatures and uploaded to LiveText.
 - a. Two counseling tape reviews are completed and in Livetext.
 - b. Final Spring Internship Evaluation is Completed in LiveText
15. Student completes the Program Exit Survey and Student Evaluation of Internship Experience forms.

Life During a Practicum & Internship

Beginning to Accrue Hours

You can only begin accruing Practicum hours once...

- a) You have the Practicum Agreement form signed by all three parties and have returned a copy to the PIC.

AND

- b) You are actively enrolled in the Practicum course, i.e. the semester in which you are enrolled in the Practicum course has begun.

You can only begin accruing Internship hours once...

You have the Internship Agreement form signed by all three parties and have returned a copy to the PIC.

AND

- c) A grade has been posted for the Practicum course, i.e. you cannot accrue Internship hours until you have completed Practicum. Any hours beyond the 100 required for Practicum that are accrued during the Practicum semester do not apply to the 600 hours required for Internship, i.e. Practicum and Internship hours do not mix.

Hours Log: You will use a standard hours log, made available from the Practicum and Internship Coordinator (included in the appendix). Each student should make their own copies and turn in one each week to document their progress. Turn in your log every week at your group supervision meeting, not all at once near the end of the Internship. Additionally, students enter their hours into LiveText every week. Your LiveText Entry and Weekly hours log should match. Your Internship site-supervisor **should sign each log**. The site-supervisor is attesting that you have actually performed the amount of time you have specified and engaged in the type of activities you have specified. This documentation is crucial as it documents your practicum and internship hours.

Students are **required** to report their hours each week and keep their total hours up to date so the faculty supervisor and the PIC can track student hours as close to “real” time as possible. If students’ hours are below certain thresholds the faculty supervisor and/or PIC will follow up with the site and the student.

Required Total Hours:

- 600 total hours, 240 of which are spent in providing direct counseling services.

What are Direct vs. Indirect Hours? “Direct Service” is defined by CACREP as, “interaction with clients that includes the application of counseling, consultation, or human development skills. In general, the term is used in these standards to refer to time spent by Practicum or Internship students working with clients”. Furthermore, “counseling” is defined by ACA as, “The application of mental health, psychological, or

human development principles, through cognitive, affective, behavioral or systematic intervention strategies, that address wellness, personal growth, or career development, as well as pathology”.

Therefore, any service provided in the presence of the client can be considered “direct service”. This is a broad category including clinical services such as individual/group counseling/psychotherapy, as well as non-clinical services such as psychoeducation, skills training, case management etc. Sites will vary in the degree to which the opportunity for you to provide counseling/therapy services is present. Some sites consist of a much larger proportion of non-clinical “direct services”. Your academic program greatly values and will give precedence to sites at which formal mental health services are being offered, e.g. traditional individual and group counseling/psychotherapy, and at which students will have substantive opportunities to observe, learn and eventually autonomously provide such services.

Completing an Internship at a site with fewer opportunities of this kind could limit your established competencies upon graduating from this program. Your academic program will only endorse you for professional practice in areas in which you have established evidence of competence during the course of your study. Bottom line: you should think carefully about choosing a site that matches your interests, and which will give you opportunities to establish the competencies you think you will need in your particular career path. The PIC and program faculty will help you evaluate the approved sites during the matching process. Great care is taken to select site that meet a variety of intern clinical experience needs, but interns must also realize that some sites are highly sought after and can only accept a few interns.

A note on observing the provision of direct services; observing others providing counseling services is **not** considered direct service during either the Practicum or the Internship experience, but this practice is encouraged. Particularly during the Practicum observation of senior counselors is a common method of allowing the student to begin to become comfortable with the clinical setting and counseling work.

Evaluation

Your site supervisor will complete at least four evaluations of your counseling work:

1. at the mid-point of your practicum,
2. at the end of your Practicum,
3. at the mid-point during your Internship and
4. at the end of your Internship

In addition, during the Practicum experience either your site supervisor or a USA supervisor will directly observe or review your counseling work via audio/visual recording and provide written feedback on your counseling skills on 4 separate occasions. The site supervisor typically fills out an evaluation of the student’s counseling session via LiveText. This same process is expected to occur at least twice during each semester in which the student is active as an intern at a site as well. For the typical student this means that a minimum of 8 written evaluations by a supervisor will be generated based on reviews of the student’s counseling work either through direct observation or audio/visual tape review. In all of these cases, i.e. evaluation forms or observation of counseling, the student will be provided the supervisor’s feedback in addition to the Faculty Supervisor/PIC’s feedback.

Practicum – Individual/Triadic Supervision

During your initial practicum you will be assigned a site supervisor by the agency. This supervisor will meet with you individually or with you and another trainee (triadically) once per week throughout your practicum. This supervision must be one contiguous hour per week.

Practicum – Biweekly Consultation with Site Supervisor

During your Practicum the PIC or another designated counseling faculty member will consult by phone or email with your site supervisor twice each month to discuss your progress in Practicum and any concerns or dilemma that have arisen. In the weeks that this consultation does not occur, the site supervisor will be sent a brief internet questionnaire that asks them to rate your performance across a range of broad domains of professional counseling practice. The site supervisor will complete a lengthier internet rating form near the mid-point and near the end of the Practicum semester.

Practicum & Internship - Weekly Group Supervision

As long as you are actively accruing Practicum or Internship hours you are required to attend the weekly group supervision/class meeting. At the Practicum level, this supervision occurs during your 2.5 hour long Practicum class, for which the instructor will vary. At the level of Internship students will attend a 1.5 hour weekly group supervision with their PIC or designated program faculty member (the Instructor of the Internship class). Attendance is required and students are expected to miss no more than 2 supervision sessions in a Fall or Spring semester and only 1 supervision session in a Summer semester.

Professional Dress & Conduct

Counselors-in-training are expected to behave as counseling professionals. All students in Practicum/Internship are to dress and act ethically and professionally at their sites.

Once you are working on site, remain focused on your career goals and help the site meet its goals as well. Have an attitude of excellence. At any time that the site's instructions for you disagree or conflict with the Practicum/Internship instructions, notify your University supervisor immediately.

ACA Ethics Code

While serving as a practicum or internship student this is your opportunity to see clinical counseling practice in action as well as ethics in action. As part of your agreement with the site you will agree to abide by the ACA Code of Ethics (having already completed your ethics course) and to seek consultation from site or faculty supervisors when an ethics issue arises. Failure to abide by the code or seek appropriate consultation could affect your standing in the program or lead to an individual remediation plan if unethical behaviors or poor ethical decision-making emerges as a problem for the student.

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**Informed Consent for Clinical Mental Health Practicum/Internship
Procedures.**

University of South
Alabama Department of
Professional Studies
Clinical Mental Health
Counseling School
Counseling

Candidate's Name:

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to discuss expectations of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Practicum/Internship Expectations, Process, Dispositions, and Procedures. I also acknowledge that I have read, reviewed, and understand what is expected of me in complying with these dispositions, policies, and procedures. I understand that the CED program faculty are responsible for providing ongoing performance appraisal and evaluation feedback throughout the training program, Additionally, I affirm that I have reviewed and understand university policies and procedures as described in the Student Handbook the "Lowdown." My signature below is evidence of my promise to demonstrate the appropriate dispositions and to adhere to said policies and procedures.

As a counselor-in-training, I agree to follow the *ACA Code of Ethics*, and adhere to applicable laws, regulatory policies, and other rules and policies governing professional staff as practicum and internship placement settings.

I agree to fully participate in the courses and curriculum set out by the program faculty and to abide by the student dispositions as outlined in the Student Handbook.

I attest that I have received a paper copy of the CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING PRACTICUM/INTERNSHIP MANUAL and I also understand that this manual is available on the Counseling Program's Website.

Student's signature

Date

Faculty Advisor's signature

Date