

George Mason University  
Counseling Program  
Practicum & Internship Handbook

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## **Preface: Using the Practicum and Internship Handbook**

Dear Student,

It is our aim to help facilitate Practicum and Internship (P&I) field experiences that are rich learning experiences. P&I are a culmination of the effort and energy you have put into your program. We have established policies and procedures that will provide a foundation for your P&I experiences.

This Handbook and associated documents will provide you with the information you will need to successfully enroll in and complete the Practicum and Internships field experiences. It is critical that you review this information carefully. You must adhere to all deadlines and procedures outlined here.

The Handbook is organized in three sections. First, there is an overview of the Practicum and Internship experiences. Second, there is a description of the policies and procedures, including the timeline and requirements. Next, there is a list of Frequently Asked Questions.

This Handbook refers to a number of forms that you will need during P&I. You will find these forms along with the P&I Checklist on the Counseling Program Blackboard (Bb) organization site by selecting the Practicum & Internship link. The P&I Checklist lists the paperwork that is due, including due dates and to whom the paperwork should be submitted.

If you have any questions about the policies and procedures outlined here, please contact the Counseling Program Clinical Coordinator. You are also encouraged to work closely with your faculty advisor for guidance throughout the Counseling program.

Sincerely,

GMU Counseling Program Faculty

## Part I: Practicum and Internship Overview

### GMU Counseling Program Mission Statement

The Counseling program is committed to preparing counselors who promote the social, psychological, physical and spiritual health of individuals, families, communities and organizations in order to contribute to the advancement of global wellbeing. The program strives for national and international excellence in implementing a counseling perspective that provides a foundation in basic counseling skills, and focuses on social justice, multiculturalism, international, advocacy, and leadership. It is our belief that a global perspective on development across the life span, and an understanding and appreciation of multiculturalism, diversity, and social justice are integral to the preparation of professional counselors, requiring that professional counselors are prepared to assume leadership roles, be proactive change agents, and become advocates for social, economic, and political justice. The program is committed to accomplish this mission by working through interdisciplinary teams as well as promoting the interconnectedness of teaching, research, service and professional practice. Through this mission, faculty will facilitate a continued tradition of international, national, and regional leadership through the development of collaborative partnerships and projects, research, publications, presentations, consultation, and training. (<http://gse.gmu.edu/programs/counseling>)

### Purpose

Practicum and Internship are the culminating clinical field experiences for students in the Counseling master's program. Practicum is comprised of 100 hours of field experience over one semester. Internship is comprised of 600 hours of field experience across two semesters (300 hours in Internship I and 300 hours in Internship II). These experiences are designed to provide specific on-site opportunities and help the student refine basic and advanced counseling knowledge and skills; demonstrate knowledge of human development; and explore applications of multiculturalism and social justice to their counseling work. The Practicum and Internship experiences take place in approved community agency settings under the supervision of the University Supervisor and a qualified On-site Supervisor. The Practicum and Internship (P&I) experiences are based on current research, practice, and ethical guidelines.

### Goals and Objectives

The Practicum and Internship clinical field experiences are associated with on-campus courses (Practicum, Internship I, and Internship II). The courses and field experiences are designed to provide practical counseling experience for students in school and mental health settings. Students are provided with supervision from both On-Site and University Supervisors during the P&I experiences. The goals and objectives of the P&I experiences will enable students to:

1. *Integrate knowledge of counseling theory, conceptualization, and intervention into clinical practice;*
2. *Demonstrate basic/advanced knowledge and skill competencies per Supervision Agreement and criteria for mid-semester and final evaluations;*
3. *Apply the program mission, including multiculturalism, social justice, and advocacy;*
4. *Respond appropriately to ethical/legal issues, site professional standards, and program professional dispositions;*
5. *Understand and develop the role of a professional counselor;*
6. *Develop program evaluation and prevention program planning and implementation skills consistent with the program, mission.*

## **Professional Expectations during Practicum and Internship**

### **Counseling Program Professional Dispositions**

As counselor trainees, students have additional professional performance standards. The codes of conduct for the American Counseling Association require counselors and counselor trainees to maintain standards of professional competence and possess good moral character. Therefore, the Counseling Program in the School of Education at George Mason University requires its students to adhere to GMU University and Counseling Program Professional Dispositions while in the Counseling program, to include their conduct and behavior while doing their field experiences.

**The GMU Counseling Program's Professional Dispositions are as follows:**

#### **Professional & Ethical Attitudes and Behaviors**

1. Demonstrates the ability to express thoughts and feelings effectively and appropriately through sound judgement that promotes social justice and diversity.
2. Demonstrates respect, honesty, integrity, confidentiality, and care for others.
3. Demonstrates an understanding of ethical and legal standards/codes.
4. Accepts responsibility for decisions and actions.
5. Does not copy or plagiarize (all work is student's own).
6. Is able to work and understand working with others that have different beliefs without imposing their own values on others.
7. Is on time and present for classes, meetings, and/or appointments.
8. Written work and assignments are timely and well written.

#### **Multiculturalism & Social Justice**

9. Demonstrates an appreciation, commitment, and value for human diversity in words and behaviors.
10. Displays behavior that is sensitive to age, gender, sexual orientation, language, ability/disability, culture, religions, race, ethnicity, and nationality.
11. Acts as a social justice advocate for a just world on behalf of students, self, and profession.
12. Recognizes and respects dignity, worth, and rights of all people and individuals.

#### **Professional & Personal Growth**

13. Actively engages in activities, learning, development, and reflective practices to facilitate ongoing professional and personal growth.
14. Is able and willing to flex or adapt to changing circumstances, unexpected events, new ideas, people and situations.
15. Demonstrates tolerance for ambiguity.

#### **Self-Awareness & Self-Care**

16. Demonstrates an ability, willingness, and awareness to self-reflect honestly and objectively on their own belief systems, values, needs, biases, and limitations on the effects of "self" on their work with clients including barriers in promoting social justice and diversity.
17. Is able to recognize one's own limitations and barriers including those in promoting social justice.
18. Demonstrates an understanding of the importance of caring for self and follows through with this practice.
19. Maintains appropriate boundaries.

## **Interpersonal Relationships & Collaboration**

20. Is able and willing to cooperate and collaborate with peers, professors, supervisors and other professionals respectfully and effectively, including group projects.
21. Is able and willing to receive and integrate feedback from faculty, supervisors, and peers.
22. Values and demonstrates effective interpersonal and intrapersonal communication.

## **Ethical Obligations**

All counselors, to include University Supervisors, Students, and On-Site Supervisors, are bound by the professional ethical standards and practices of the American Counseling Association (ACA). University and On-Site Supervisors must also adhere to *ACA's Code of Ethics, Section F: Supervision, Training and Teaching*. See the ACA Ethical Codes for detailed information.

## **Eligibility Requirements for Practicum and Internship**

Prior to enrolling in Practicum, students are required to:

- *complete at least 30 credits hours of specific Counseling Program coursework.*
- *obtain faculty advisor permission.*
- *have and maintain an overall GPA of 3.00.*
- *meet all professional disposition benchmarks and earn a **Satisfactory grade in Practicum to enroll in Internship I.***
- *meet all professional disposition benchmarks and earn a **Satisfactory grade in Internship I to enroll in Internship II***

## **Coursework Permitted During Practicum and Internship**

Practicum: EDCD 610, 619, 626, 628, 652, 658 and elective requirements

Internship I: EDCD, 610, 619, 626, 628, 652, 658, and elective requirements

Internship II. Electives and 628

## **Combined Internship I&II**

Students *may be* able to complete Internship I & II in the same semester. Combined internship I&II entails 600 hours on site during internship. Approval for combined internship is required from the program advisor/or Clinical Coordinator. This option is contingent upon availability of an appropriate placement and is not guaranteed.

Students must apply to complete internship I&II in the same semester on the CEHD internship application.

## **School Counseling Students**

*Students must have completed their practicum placement at a different level than internship as at least 100 hours at an Elementary site and 100 hours at a secondary site are required by the VDOE. Approval for combined internship is required from the program advisor/or Clinical Coordinator. In order to do Internship I &II in the same semester, CEHD internships must obtain permission from the school division to make sure the required number of hours can be fulfilled; this is not guaranteed.*

Students must apply to complete internship I&II in the same semester on the CEHD internship

application. Once approved, students must enroll in EDCD 794 & EDCD 795 concurrently.

### **Clinical Mental Health Counseling Students**

Completion of combined internship is totally dependent on the needs and opportunities for client contact hours at the clinical mental health site. While this may be a possibility at some sites, the required number of hours may not be able to be fulfilled at others. *The ability to complete a combined internship is not a guarantee.*

## **Opportunities for Long Term Substitute Positions and Paid Internships**

### **School Counseling**

School Counseling students *may* complete their internship hours via a long-term substitute (LTS) counseling position. These positions are advertised and managed by the school divisions, and the regulations regarding qualifications for counseling long term subs differ between divisions. Students *may not* request to be placed in a LTS position on their application for internship but may apply for a LTS position if such an opportunity arises *prior* to their placement at an internship site. Student must gain approval from the program and complete a LTS form (Bb) to be signed by the student, site, and clinical coordinator.

### **Clinical Mental Health Counseling**

CMHC students *may be* paid by the site for Practicum, Internship I and/or II. Paid placements are rare, but possible. *The state does not allow unlicensed clinicians to be paid for direct clinical hours.*

## **Understanding the P&I Experiences**

### **Primary Role of the Counselor**

The American Counseling Association (ACA) states that the primary responsibility of the counselor is to respect the dignity of the client and to promote the welfare of clients. Counselors are specialists in human behavior and relationships who provide assistance to clients through a variety of interventions (ACA website: <http://www.counseling.org/>). Student Counselors will gain experience in this process and will also learn about the culture of community agency sites.

### **Phases of the P&I Experiences**

The structure of each student's P&I experiences will vary greatly. However, there are three broad phases that the Student Counselors can expect during the P&I experiences.

Phase One: Orientation & Observation. This includes a physical tour of the site and introductions of staff. The Student Counselor should be given a clear sense of office routines, regulations and policies, including work hours, absentee policies, use of equipment, and interaction with other staff/personnel. The Student Counselor should be instructed in record-keeping techniques, scheduling procedures, and additional counselor duties specific to the site/department. It is during this first phase that the Student Counselor may shadow and/or observe the On-Site



Supervisor (or other site counselors) as appropriate, which could include clinical intakes, assessments, groups, family, and/or individual counseling sessions, classroom guidance, etc. Phase Two: More Responsibility. After completing an orientation phase (the length of which will depend on the needs and regulations of the site), the Student Counselor should build his or her client/student caseload under direct supervision of the On-Site Supervisor. It is expected that the Student Counselor will move toward leading sessions independently. The Student Counselor should conduct individual counseling sessions, plan and lead small group counseling sessions, conduct assessments, and engage in staff conferences and professional development. For SC students, this may also include engaging in intervention team and special education meetings, MTSS, PBIS, faculty meetings, etc. Activities should be consistent with the Student Counselor and On-Site Supervisor's assessment of the student's level of skills. At no time should the Student Counselor's caseload exceed her/his competence level. The On-Site Supervisor is expected to monitor the nature of clients assigned to the Student Counselor and consult with the University Supervisor on this matter, as needed.

Phase Three: Closure. During the Internship experience, the Student gradually withdraws from his/her responsibilities at the site and engages in closure activities.

### **One Semester Prior to Practicum: Applying for P&I**

Students must meet with their advisor, and then complete the CEHD online application in the semester prior to starting practicum. Deadlines are strictly enforced.

- **Spring Practicum Applications** are due by 5:00 pm on the last business day on or before September 15.
- **Summer and Fall Practicum Applications** are due by 5:00 pm on the last business day on or before February 15.

Note: Applications are not accepted during the summer. Thus, as noted above, Fall Practicum students should complete the following requirements during the Spring semester prior to Practicum.

- **Advisor Meeting:** You must meet with your advisor during the semester prior to submitting your practicum application. You should make this appointment well in advance, as advisors may have limited availability. You must bring the following supporting materials to this meeting: your resume, goals statement (SC only), unofficial transcript, and program planning sheet. You must also come prepared to discuss your top three practicum site choices. After you have received your advisor's approval, you may complete the official online two-part application indicating that you are eligible to enroll in Practicum:

<https://cehd.gmu.edu/epo/student-internship>

Please note that it is the student's responsibility to meet all deadlines for practicum.

- **P&I Meeting.** You must attend a MANDATORY P&I meeting during the Fall/Spring semester prior to your Practicum (no meetings are held in the summer). The location, date, and time of the meeting will be sent to your GMU email address.

## Requirements During P&I Experiences

### Liability Insurance

Student Counselors must purchase their own professional counseling liability insurance policy prior to beginning practicum. You must maintain this insurance the entire time that you are enrolled in field experience. You can obtain liability insurance as a student member of the American Counseling Association (ACA), the American School Counselor Association, or another provider of your choosing. You must have liability insurance before you can work with clients at your site. **Submit a copy of your insurance to your University Supervisor during the first-class meeting and then post to Blackboard.**

### Site Visit

The Student Counselor will help to schedule a meeting with both the On-Site Supervisor and the University Supervisor. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the progress of the Student in his/her clinical field experience, including strengths and areas of growth. Any concerns about the Student's progress will be thoroughly discussed during this meeting.

### Recording Requirement

All students must be permitted to tape at least two counseling sessions per semester, as this is a requirement for the Practicum and Internship courses. These recorded sessions can be individual, small group, or family sessions. Consent forms are available in the Practicum and Internship Required Forms folder on Bb. *If a separate consent form is also required by the site, both the GMU consent form and the site consent form must be signed.* All recordings shall be kept confidential and students must follow all guidelines set by their site and the Counseling Program. Recordings must not be uploaded to any "cloud" based personal device and must be destroyed at the end of the semester. The University Supervisor will provide more specific instructions in class.

### Minimum Hours Requirements during P&I

The program has requirements for on-site hours and direct client hours during each semester of P&I as follows:

**Practicum:** 100 on-site hours; 40 direct client hours

**Internship I:** 300 on-site hours; 120 direct client hours (minimum of 85; see below)

**Internship II:** 300 on-site hours; 120 direct client hours

***Total Hours in P&I: 700 on-site hours; 280 direct client hours***

In **Practicum**, a maximum of 30 hours may be carried over to Internship I.

In **Internship I**, the minimum direct client hours allowed in order to pass Internship I is 85 (rather than the 120). However, the total 240 total direct client hours in Internship I and II must be reached by the end of Internship II, so the Student Counselor must make up the missing hours.

**Direct Hours.** Direct client hours are face-to-face client interactions. Per the Virginia Board of Counseling, direct hours must be face-to-face hours, meaning that client contact that is not in person (e.g., phone contact) does not count as direct contact.

**Weekly Hours.** Plan out the number of hours per week you need to complete in order to meet your hour requirements (keeping in mind the possibility of client absences and unexpected closings).

- In Practicum, you should expect to be on-site for approximately 8 hours per week, and to have at least 3 direct (face-to-face) hours per week.
- In Internship I and II, you should expect to be on-site for approximately 20 hours per week, and to have at least 10 direct (face-to-face) hours per week.
- The minimum number of hours spent on-site at one time is to be **no less than a 3-hour block of time.**

**Group Counseling.** All students must facilitate or co-facilitate at least one counseling group during their Internship II semester in order to be evaluated on group facilitation skills. Make sure you discuss with your on-site supervisor and plan ahead to meet this requirement. Based on site needs, you may be evaluated early during Internship I (not during Practicum).

### Evaluation

Each semester, a midterm and final evaluation of the Student Counselor will be completed by the Site Supervisor, and a final evaluation will be completed by the University Supervisor. Should a Student Counselor score below expectations, the Clinical Coordinator will be notified, and a remediation plan may be determined in conjunction with the University Supervisor. The student's advisor will also be notified to ensure that the remediation plan is met.

### Start and End Dates for P&I

Student Counselors are permitted to begin working at their sites one week prior to the first University Supervision/On-Campus Course and one week after the last University Supervision/On-Campus Course. Student Counselors are not permitted to see clients individually prior to the first University Supervision/On-Campus Course, but they are encouraged to visit the site and complete any necessary training and orientations during this time. *Students are expected to stay in their site for the entire semester.* If students complete their hour requirements early, they are still expected to report to their site until the end of the semester in order to provide continuity of care for their clients/students.

### Term Break Hours

Student Counselors may accumulate 30 **indirect** hours during the winter break between Fall-Spring placements and during the summer semester (**CMHC Only**) between Spring-Fall placements (**for a total of 60 INDIRECT term break hours**). The hours will count towards the Student Counselor's hours for the semester following the break in which they were accrued. The Student Counselor **must receive approval** prior to beginning these hours from the On-Site and University Supervisors via the **Term Break Agreement form**. Any additional hours worked outside of the approved 30 hours cannot count towards the P&I hours; however, they may count toward future licensure so students can choose to record these hours separately. Student Counselors should discuss the expectations for work during the winter or summer breaks with the On-Site Supervisor prior to beginning the P&I experiences. Sites differ in their protocols, and some may require Student Counselors to continue providing services during breaks.

### Weekly On-Site Supervision

The weekly supervision meetings are critical for the Student Counselor's growth. It is during these meetings that the On-Site Supervisor focuses on the Student Counselor's areas of strength and areas for growth. It is also a time to review the monthly log, to ensure that a variety of experiences are occurring over the duration of the semester. Students will meet with their on-site supervisor for individual or triadic supervision **every week for at least one hour, for a total of 15 hours per semester**. Students should log weekly supervision meetings in the log of hours.

The American Counseling Association (ACA) provides ethical supervision guidelines within its *Code of Ethics* for University and On-Site Supervisors.

### Weekly University Supervision/On-campus Course

All three field experiences have an accompanying on-campus weekly class that will meet for **at least ninety minutes weekly**. Student Counselors meet with a University Supervisor (GMU instructor for the course) and Student Counselors also enrolled in P&I for group supervision. The purpose of this class is to develop counseling skills, present case studies, and reflect on field experiences. Along with participating in group supervision and processing client cases, Student Counselors will be given assignments by the University Supervisor. *Class hours count toward the field experience hour requirements and should be logged as group supervision.*

### Information for On-Site Supervisor

Students are expected to inform their On-Site Supervisor about the requirements of the P&I. At the beginning of the semester, students should give their On-Site Supervisors the **Information for On-Site Supervisors** document, which can be found on Bb. You should also let your On-Site Supervisor know about the forms that will require their signature (Supervision Agreement, Mid-semester Evaluation form, Final Evaluation form, and Logs of Hours). Provide these forms (in either electronic or paper copy depending on Supervisor preference) to your On-Site Supervisor well in advance of any deadline. Also discuss the site visit, supervision times, minimum hours, start and end dates, and other relevant expectations as laid out in the handbook.

Each On-Site Supervisor may receive a monetary stipend (\$200) from George Mason University at the end of the semester. Paperwork for processing Supervisor stipends is located on Blackboard. Please provide this paperwork to your On-Site Supervisor. On-Site Supervisors must complete this paperwork within 30 days of the last day of practicum or internship and return it the College of Education and Human Development in order to receive their stipend.

### Additional Relevant Information

#### Submitting Initial Application for Practicum

After your plans for practicum have been discussed with and approved by your advisor, you must fill out the two-part online application found at: <https://cehd.gmu.edu/epo/student-internship>. *The application is due on Feb. 15 to start practicum in the Summer or Fall, or September 15 for Spring.* Applications will be processed by the CEHD Clinical Practice Specialist and an electronic copy will be provided to your advisor. If you have questions after you have submitted your online application, you may contact:

Clinical Practice Specialist  
George Mason University – College of Education and Human Development  
Educator Preparation Office  
2300 Thompson Hall MSN: 6C13  
4400 University Drive Fairfax, Virginia 22030

You may contact the Clinical Practice Specialist by phone (703-993-9777) or email (internsh@gmu.edu).

### **Graduation Applications for Students in Internship II**

The Graduation Web Site is <http://registrar.gmu.edu/graduation/index.html>. Students who expect to graduate in January and/or May should file an on-line “intent to graduate” form by the due date indicated on the Registrar’s graduation website. Additional questions regarding graduation procedures should be directed to the CEHD Office of Academic and Student Assistance (OASA): <http://cehd.gmu.edu/oasa/>.

### **Licensure**

Information on becoming a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) in Virginia can be found at: <http://www.dhp.virginia.gov/counseling/>. The licensure process handbook can be found at: [https://www.dhp.virginia.gov/Forms/counseling/LPC/LPC\\_Licensure\\_Process\\_Handbook.pdf](https://www.dhp.virginia.gov/Forms/counseling/LPC/LPC_Licensure_Process_Handbook.pdf). Additional state licensure information can be found at: <http://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/licensure-requirements>.

Information on becoming a Licensed School Counselor in Virginia can be found at: [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school\\_counseling/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_counseling/index.shtml).

## Part II: Practicum and Internship Policies and Procedures- Clinical Mental Health Counseling

### General Steps for Securing a Placement and Approval of Site

- 1. Consult with the Clinical Coordinator and/or your Advisor.** *Note that Student Counselors are responsible for finding their own placements.* Your advisor and Clinical Coordinator are available for support and guidance, and the program provides resources (e.g., Site Database, below) to assist you with your search. It is suggested you begin this process up to 12 months in advance of your intended practicum start.
- 2. Review the CMHC P&I Site Database and Research Possible Sites.** This database is a list of sites with whom our program has worked closely and regularly requests GMU Counseling student applicants. It is available on Bb and is regularly updated as information becomes available about sites. Note that you can use this as a resource, but that *you are not limited to these sites.* **Internship Announcements** are also regularly posted on Bb and provide more detailed descriptions some of our most popular sites.
- 3. Complete the CMHC Site Approval Form.** After you have identified, applied, interviewed, and accepted placement of a site, you must complete the Site Approval form (on Bb) and turn it in to the Clinical Coordinator for official placement confirmation. *This form is due on April 15 for a Summer practicum start, July 15 for the Fall, and November 15 for the Spring.*

### Important Notes

The faculty strongly encourage students to select agencies, hospitals, or community-based counseling organizations for their P&I placements. Often, these practices are better equipped to provide diverse supervision experiences, supportive practice environments, diverse modalities, and sufficient client contact hours. If a student is interested in a private practice, this request will be vetted first before being referred to the Clinical Coordinator for a final decision. Please review the following guidelines to determine if the private practice of interest may be permitted:

- 1. The practice should be a group practice.* That is, there must be multiple licensed clinicians (e.g., LPC, LMFT, LCSW, Psychologists) who work in the practice in order to provide supervision coverage should your site supervisor be unavailable.
- 2. There should be a diversity of experiences offered.* This would include multiple modalities (e.g., individual counseling and group counseling), and service options (e.g., sliding scale services, pro-bono services, and/or community outreach/programming)
- 3. Ethical practices must be upheld.* Client insurance may not be billed for the counseling services provided by practicum or internship students.

Students may not complete a field placement at his or her immediate work site. The only exception to this: You have been designated a role that is distinctly different from your current role and your field placement supervisor is not the same as your immediate work administrator and/or supervisor. **You must obtain faculty approval** by discussing this with your advisor or the Clinical Coordinator.

Students are not permitted to accept in-home counseling positions for P&I. Due to the nature of in-home positions, supervision structure, and liability concerns, students may not utilize these positions toward their P&I requirements.

Student Counselors are expected to complete all three semesters of field experience at the same site. Should this not be feasible due to an extenuating circumstance, the Student Counselor must discuss concerns with the University Supervisor and Site Supervisor by midterm (week 8) of the semester so that appropriate mediation, notice, and/or transition plans may be determined. The Clinical Coordinator must also be notified. The Student Counselor should discuss the process for securing a new site with the Clinical Coordinator and is still responsible for meeting all deadlines and requirements for site approval.

**Note that Internship I and II are offered only in the Fall and Spring. Practicum is offered in the Fall, Spring, and Summer.**

### **12 to 6 months Prior to Practicum**

**Prepare yourself for the search.** Because the P&I search for CMHC students is somewhat like a job search, you are strongly encouraged to use job search skills to facilitate this process. Students are particularly encouraged to conduct informational interviews, have their resume and other application materials reviewed, and review interview tips and/or conduct a mock interview. For details and services, consult with GMU's University Career Services ([career.gmu.edu](http://career.gmu.edu)) prior to beginning the search process.

**Research and identify possible sites.** Because the stated deadlines **must** be observed for finalizing your P&I placement, it is critical that you allow enough time to interview with potential sites and await their decisions. *A minimum of six months is recommended to choose a site and complete the application process for P&I.* Many sites in the area are quite selective, and you will be competing with other students in helping-related degree programs both in the metropolitan area and elsewhere.

**Consider timing.** If you plan to complete Internship I in the Spring and Internship II in the Fall, you may have fewer site options due to the fact that many sites prefer students to work from August to May. Their concern is the continuity of service for the welfare of the agency and its clients. Sites may be willing to accommodate a Spring/Fall placement if you agree to continue providing services over the Summer break. This should be discussed prior to the placement with the On-Site Supervisor. A maximum of 30 hours completed over the Summer (or during the Winter break between Fall and Spring) may be counted towards your Internships. See the section of Term Break Agreement for more information.

**Selecting a Site:** It is recommended that you visit community agencies of interest prior to deciding where you would like to apply. Here are some general recommendations:

- **Your Criteria:** Reflect on your professional goals and determine what criteria are important to you in a site placement. Consult with your advisor or Counseling program's Clinical Coordinator for assistance with this process.
- **Agencies:** Determine what agencies are of interest to you. Review the CMHC P&I Site Database for a list of agencies where GMU counseling students have completed

P&I before. Do your own search online or through your contacts for agencies that may meet your criteria. Fellow GMU Counseling students who have preceded you are also a great resource.

- **Relevant Information:** Gather relevant information about the agencies. You may want to conduct informational interviews at several agencies of interest. Consider carefully what your needs are and what questions you should ask before making your visit. Then, schedule an appointment with the potential site supervisor, the volunteer coordinator, or the director of the counseling program. Evaluate both the nature of the agency and the type of supervision you will receive before deciding on your placement.

Topics to discuss include:

- Client population serviced (should be diverse per program mission)
- Types of services provided (should include group/family, not just individual, per program mission; Internship II MUST include at least one group counseling experience)
- Hours of service
- Supervision available (1 hour per week from a person who meets criteria on Site Approval Form)
- Ability to meet hours and direct hours requirement; process of being assigned clients
- Applications process and timeline
- Requirements for placement (Such as: Is a TB test required? Are any trainings required?)

**Follow-Up with Agencies.** It is appropriate to follow-up with all agencies that you contacted. You may want to do so via phone and email if you are unsure about which mode of communication is preferred by the site. Notify the agency you have selected of your intentions and notify other agencies that you will not seek a placement with them. Thank you notes or emails are recommended. This is important in order to maintain positive relationships between the Counseling program and local agencies, and also for your own professional networking.

**Determine Site Approval.** Your site must meet the site approval criteria outlined on the Site Approval Form. You should review this information when gathering information about sites.

### **One Semester Prior to Practicum: Finalizing Your Placement**

**Submit the CEHD Online Application.** (Application, Unofficial Mason transcript, completed C&D Program Planning Sheet, and P&I Log) online by February 15 (Summer or Fall start) or September 15 (Spring start). You must meet with you advisor prior to the deadline to get advisor's approval for your application. You should make this appointment well in advance of the deadline, as advisors may have limited availability. After you have received your advisor's approval, you will submit the Application online. Any changes made to course plan after submission of P/I application require advisor's



review to ensure that P/I eligibility has been maintained. Failure to notify advisor of changes in course plan may lead to delays in P/I eligibility.

**Complete the CMHC Site Approval form.** Once you have secured a placement, you must submit the CMHC Site Approval form and on-site supervisor resume/CV by the dates, below. Students are strongly encouraged to complete this paperwork well before the deadline. **Students who select sites that do not meet the criteria outlined on the Site Approval Form will have to withdraw from Practicum.** Final deadlines are as follows:

- November 15 for Spring Practicum
- April 15 for Summer Practicum
- July 15 for Fall Practicum

**Provide Site Information Updates.** You must notify the Clinical Coordinator of site information changes: names, addresses, and phone numbers of all involved in the clinical field experience.

## Part II: Practicum and Internship Policies and Procedures- School Counseling

### Elementary and Secondary Placement Requirement

VA-DOE requires that all school counselors be licensed in PreK-12. This means that all students *must complete* an elementary placement and a secondary placement [either 7-8 OR 9-12]. It is recommended to complete your Internship placement at the level in which you eventually want to work. Select the other level for your Practicum placement.

### Criminal Background Check Requirement

All local school systems require students to complete a criminal background check through their human resources office (not through George Mason University) prior to beginning the internship. Detailed instructions on the process will be sent to the student from either the school system or Mason. Students are strongly advised to disclose any/all legal incidents that may appear on their records. The consequence of failing to do so, whether or not such incidents resulted in conviction, is termination of the Practicum or Internship.

### One Semester Prior to Practicum

Submit the CEHD Online Application (Application, Unofficial Mason transcript, completed C&D Program Planning Sheet, Resume, Goals Statement, Proof of First Aid/CPR/AED Requirement, and P&I Checklist) online by February 15 (Fall start) or September 15 (Spring start). You must meet with your advisor prior to the deadline to get advisor's approval for your application. You should make this appointment well in advance of the deadline, as advisors may have limited availability. After you have received your advisor's approval, you will submit the application online. Any changes made to course plan after submission of P/I application require advisor's review to ensure that P/I eligibility has been maintained. Failure to notify advisor of changes in course plan may lead to delays in P/I eligibility.

### One Semester Prior to Internship (during Practicum)

You must submit another Application for each Internship. As with Practicum, you will need to submit the application packet with all of the additional documents except the C&D Program Planning Sheet. You do not need to meet with your advisor.

### Notification of Placement

The Clinical Practice Specialist submits the Practicum and Internship student information to the school systems, and then awaits the school systems' response. The Clinical Practice Specialist works closely with the school systems to ensure timely placement, however, please understand that the process may take some time as each school system has its own process and place hundreds of students for clinical experiences each semester, from GMU and other universities. Students are not to contact school systems, individual schools, or make personal arrangements with individual counselors for placements. You will receive an email from the Clinical Practice Specialist with your placement information after the school system has determined your assigned site and communicated that information to GMU. The Clinical Practice Specialist will also send you information regarding the Human Resources check-in procedures for your school system. After you receive your placement, you should contact your On-Site Supervisor via email or phone to introduce yourself and ask about any preparation for your Practicum or Internship placement.

**Note:** Students may not complete a field placement at his or her immediate work site. The only exception to this: You have been designated a role that is distinctly different from your current role and your field placement supervisor is not the same as your immediate work administrator and/or supervisor. **You must obtain faculty approval** by discussing this with your advisor or the Clinical Coordinator.

## **Part III: Frequently Asked Questions- Clinical Mental Health Counseling**

### **When are CMHC P & I applications due?**

Initial applications are due September 15 for Spring Practicum and February 15 for Fall and Summer Practicum. Remember to meet with your advisor to discuss your plans in the semester prior to your application due date. Site approval is due November 15 for Spring Practicum, July 15 for Fall Practicum, and April 15 for Summer Practicum

### **To whom do I submit my P&I documents?**

Documents are submitted to the Counseling Program Clinical Coordinator, or University Supervisor, depending on the document. See your concentrations P&I Checklist for details.

### **How should I submit my initial P&I application?**

Students should fill out the two-part application online by the due dates stated above at the following address: <https://cehd.gmu.edu/epo/student-internship>

### **Do I need a TB or any other tests?**

Check with the individual site to determine any tests or other requirements, as these vary.

### **Do I need to submit a separate application for Practicum and Internship?**

Because CMHC Students are expected to complete their Practicum and Internship experiences at the same site, CMHC students submit all application materials for practicum and internship prior to beginning Practicum). In rare cases, CMHC students may change to a different site. If this occurs, the student must meet with her/his advisor and submit an updated Site Approval Form and On-Site Supervisor Resume.

### **How can I find an agency for my P&I?**

The CMHC P&I Site Database contains a listing of sites where students have completed their P&I experiences in the past, or sites that are interested in having Interns from our program. Inclusion in this list does not necessarily indicate that the site meets GMU current requirements. You must ensure that the site you select meets the current GMU requirements, as outlined in the P&I Handbook and Site Approval Form. You can also use your own contacts and consult with your advisor or the Clinical Coordinator.

### **May I be paid during my P&I?**

The Counseling Program does not prohibit any student from being paid for their work in P&I. Please note that finding a paid position is rare, but some sites may offer a small stipend.

### **How do I know which section of Practicum or Internship I/II to register for?**

You may register for the appropriate P&I course after your application has been submitted and registration opens. EDCD 750- Practicum, EDCD 792- Internship I, EDCD 793- Internship II.

### **How soon should I start looking for a placement?**

CMHC students should start looking for a placement between 12 and 6 months before they plan to begin their practicum experience.

### **How can I become a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)?**

Licensure is regulated by each state. Questions about licensure should be directed to the state agency, since this is not regulated by GMU or the program. You can find information about Virginia's LPC regulations at: [http://www.dhp.state.va.us/counseling/counseling\\_laws\\_regs.htm](http://www.dhp.state.va.us/counseling/counseling_laws_regs.htm).

For licensure in other states or DC, see:

<http://www.counseling.org/Counselors/LicensureAndCert/TP/StateRequirements/CT2.aspx>.

## **Part III: Frequently Asked Questions- School Counseling**

### **When are SC P & I applications due?**

Applications are due September 15 for spring placements, February 15 for fall placements.

### **To whom do I submit my P&I documents?**

Documents are submitted to the Clinical Practice Specialist or your University Supervisor, depending on the document. See the SC P&I Checklist for details.

### **Do I need a TB test?**

Yes, you need a Negative Skin/PPD TB test that is good through the entire course of your Practicum and Internship experiences. TB tests must be dated within 12 months of the practicum/internship start date. It is not needed for the CEHD online application, but will be requested directly from the school district after your placement is determined. TB tests are not required when you are completing the Practicum or Internship in the district in which you are currently employed.

### **Do I need to complete First Aid/CPR/AED training?**

Yes, you need to complete First Aid/CPR/AED training, ideally prior to the application deadline. Visit <http://cehd.gmu.edu/teacher/emergency-first-aid> for instructions on the requirement. There must be a hands-on component to this training. It is highly recommended that verification that the Emergency First Aid, CPR, and Use of AED Certification or Training requirement be submitted and documented in the Mason system by the application deadline.

### **Do I need to submit a separate application for Practicum and Internship?**

Yes, submit application materials for internship just as you did for practicum. Be sure to submit an updated Unofficial Mason transcript that reflects your enrollment in practicum. You may also wish to update your Goals Statement to include information about your practicum experience.

### **What information should I include in the Goals Statement?**

The goal statement should be 1-2 pages, double-spaced. It should describe your counseling strengths and goals for practicum/internship, as well as your future career goals.

### **How do I know which section of Practicum or Internship to register for?**

You may register for the appropriate P&I course after your application has been submitted and registration opens. EDCD 751- Practicum, EDCD 794- Internship I, EDCD 795- Internship II.

### **How and when will I be informed of my placement for Practicum or Internship?**

The Clinical Practice Specialist submits the Practicum and Internship student information to the school systems, and then awaits the school systems' response. You will receive an email from the Clinical Practice Specialist with your placement information after the school system has determined your placement assignment. The Clinical Practice Specialist works closely with the school systems to ensure timely placement, however, please understand that the process may take some time as each school system has its own process.

**May I contact someone in the school system where I am applying for placement to ask when and where I will be placed?**

No, it is **NOT** appropriate for students to contact the schools or school systems directly. If you have questions or concerns about your placement, please contact the GMU Clinical Practice Specialist, or the C&D Clinical Coordinator.

**May I count a long-term counseling substitute position or other school counseling employment opportunity toward my P&I requirements?**

You may be able to count a paid school counseling position toward your Internship requirements in certain situations. Keep in mind these opportunities are not common, and they most often occur within a school system where a student is already employed. The position must be approved by CEHD and the C&D Clinical Coordinator. Please see the Long-Term Sub Approval form, located on Blackboard, for more information. Students in these positions are responsible for meeting all class, hours, and supervision requirements of internship, as well as DOE requirements for licensure. Students are not able to count their paid position towards their practicum hours.

**If I am unhappy with my placement, may I request another?**

Generally, no, you may not request a different placement. School divisions go through extensive processes to arrange quality practicum and internship placements for GMU students. Placement location is often a concern for students, but please be aware that the school divisions are not often able to accommodate requests for specific locations within the school district. However, you are encouraged to discuss any concerns you have with your advisor and/or the Clinical Coordinator. You also have the option to defer your Practicum or Internship for one semester in hope of obtaining a different placement. Please be advised that deferment would delay your graduation by one semester and would not guarantee a different placement.