Mental Health Counseling Graduate Program Handbook

University of Tennessee

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Mental Health Counseling Program
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Mission Statement and Overview
The focus of the Mental Health Counseling Program is the preparation of excellent counselors and scholars to serve in agencies that provide counseling to adolescents, children, adults and families (such as programs serving at-risk children, youth and families; outpatient and inpatient mental health treatment centers; drug and alcohol treatment programs; hospitals; private practices; detention centers; and mental health counseling programs in schools). Our graduates are self-aware counselors and scholars whose life long learning continually informs their service, practice, and development. Many also choose to continue their graduate studies at the doctoral level.

The Mental Health Counseling Program at the University of Tennessee is a 60-credit hour program, accredited by the Counsel for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). The program of study includes at least 1000 hours of closely supervised practicum and internship counseling experiences in clinical settings. Each student’s program is customized to support individual goals as well as to provide a common core of counselor preparation. Graduates of the program will have completed the educational and graduate clinical preparation requirements qualifying them to apply for the National Counselors Exam (this is the exam for National Counselor Certification and for licensure in Tennessee and many other states). Graduates of the program will also have completed the educational and graduate clinical preparation requirements for licensure as a professional counselor with mental health service provider designation (LPC-MHSP) in Tennessee. Our CACREP accreditation helps ensure the portability of the degree. For example, the counselor licensure requirements of many states match the CACREP standards for Mental Health Counseling Programs.

The faculty provides a rigorous, experiential, practical educational experience, aimed at maximizing the professional and personal-development of our graduates. It is important that our graduate students learn and develop in a challenging and supportive learning community.

Goals
The goal of the Mental Health Counseling Program is the preparation of graduates as:

- Strong, effective, self-aware counselors
- Persons ready to develop deeply healing therapeutic relationships
- Professionals well-skilled in the full range of task areas needed from mental health counselors
- Scholars with a solid background of understanding and a personal and professional curiosity to guide their life-long study of counseling, mental health, and human development

Persons and professionals ready to thrive in and embrace the increasingly diverse world in which we all live and work.

**Objectives**

After completion of the Mental Health Counseling Program, graduates will:

1. Score higher than the national average on the National Counselor Exam (NCE) in each of the eight content areas:
   - helping/counseling relationships,
   - human growth and development,
   - social and cultural foundations,
   - group work,
   - career and life style development,
   - appraisal,
   - research and program evaluation,
   - professional orientation and ethics.

2. Score higher than the national average on the NCE in each of the five work behavior areas:
   - fundamentals of counseling,
   - assessment and career counseling,
   - group counseling,
   - programmatic and clinical interventions,
   - professional practice.

3. Obtain and maintain placement/employment in an appropriate mental health counseling agency or practice, or succeed in doctoral graduate education.

4. Practice effective and efficient counseling.

5. Provide necessary and effective accountability and advocacy for counseling services.

6. Consistently provide counseling services within the laws and ethics governing the counseling profession.

7. Effectively advocate for and consult on behalf of clients, and be effective agents of social changes that positively impact the lives of potential clients.

8. Qualify for certification by the National Board of Certified Counselors.

9. Qualify for mental health counselor license eligibility with mental health service provider status.

10. Qualify for membership on necessary managed care panels that provide insurance for mental health counseling by licensed professional counselors.
Atmosphere, Advisement and Mentoring

The faculty believes in group process, human connections and person to person interactions. These qualities are reflected in our courses and our communications and interactions between the faculty and students. Our methods of advisement are based on our understanding of these concepts, and our chapter of the Chi Sigma Iota Honor Society, an international professional counseling organization, supports these qualities.

We provide group and individual advisement. Mental Health Counseling Masters students meet at least once each semester to discuss issues of advisement including registration, course offerings, thesis and elective options, other advisement issues, as well as time-, self-, and life-management while thriving in a rigorous graduate program. This helps our students get to know each other and receive answers to their advisement related questions from faculty and peers. Each student also has an individual advisor with whom he/she meets to establish and maintain an individualized course of study and to address additional advisement questions.

The counseling programs have an active chapter of Chi Sigma Iota. Along with service events, our chapter provides social gatherings and a mentoring program that offers each new student a mentor who is an advanced graduate student.

And further, our students take responsibility for reaching out to each other. As each succeeds, all excel. Our faculty work to continue this tradition with each set of new students and with helping advanced students reach out to new students.

Program Length and Pacing Graduate Study

The 60-credit hour Mental Health Counseling Program can be completed in 2.5 years. While we are careful to help students meet this time frame, we also want you to know that rigorous graduate studies in mental health counseling should be a critically important, significantly life-enhancing addition to your professional and personal development. Therefore we encourage each student to get the full value of all courses and experiences, and to study at the pace that maximizes her or his individual learning and development experience. We recommend quality of study and development over quickness of pace. The maximum time restriction is that courses used toward the master’s degree must have been taken within six years of graduation.

Summer Study Necessity

The curriculum of the Mental Health Counseling Program is delivered across the calendar year, including summer sessions. This helps students graduate within optimally efficient time frames, but also creates a necessity of summer study as some courses are offered in summers only. In a full-time course of study, you would be able to use the summer prior to your first fall, the summer between your two academic years, and the summer following your second academic year, but you will need to make yourself available to summer study in at least 1-2 of your summers during graduate study at UT.
Part-time Study Option

If you do not wish to be a full-time graduate student (i.e., perhaps you are employed for significant hours, parenting, or have other very understandable reasons – there can be many), work with your advisor to design a course of study that serves your personal needs as well as your educational and graduate program needs. Be aware that Practicum and Internship often conflict a full-time job. You will very likely need to be providing service at your site at the same time you would be at your job. Students who work full-time and go to graduate school part-time, usually delay Practicum as long as possible, then leave or significantly reduce employment during Practicum and end outside employment during Internship.

Curriculum

Note that almost our all courses have both didactic and experiential components. Please be ready to apply all that you are learning and experiencing to yourself and your development in order to become the best tool you possibly can be for your clients.

Required Courses & Course Areas:

COUN535 Orientation to Counseling and Ethics; 3 CR; fall only; Prerequisite to Practicum.

COUN480 Skills for Counseling; 3 CR; summer, fall and spring; Prerequisite for Practicum.

COUN554 Group Dynamics & Methods; 3CR; fall & and some spring semesters; A critical core course focused in group counseling skills; Prerequisite to Practicum.

COUN551 Theory & Practice of Counseling; 3CR; fall & some spring semesters; Prerequisite to Practicum. This course provides a study of counseling theories that provide techniques and perspectives adding to the therapeutic relationship skills from COUN480: Skills for Counseling, as well as continuing the development of counselor self-awareness and the philosophical basis of therapeutic relationships.

COUN570 Cross-Cultural Counseling; 3CR; fall and most summers.

COUN555 Practicum in Counseling; 3CR; MHCP makes practicum placements for spring semesters only – This course includes at least 100 hours at a counseling setting with at least 40 hours in direct service to clients, as well as supervision, class meetings, and assignments that enhance skill development and ensure quality client service. Students must apply for practicum the semester prior. Applications are due October 1st. Please be aware that Practicum setting needs and client care often preclude full-time work outside of Practicum.

COUN525 Formal Measurement in Counseling and Education; 3CR; Normally offered spring and summer.

COUN552 Career Development; 3CR; Normally offered fall and most summers – This course is focused on career counseling applied across counseling settings and the critical area of career development (finding meaningful work or professional identity) in all persons’ lives.
COUN556 Mental Health Counseling and Related Professional Issues; 3CR; spring semesters; Addresses key professional issues faced by mental health counselors, such as program funding, laws/regulations related to mental health counseling, managed care, and program development.

COUN559 Internship in Mental Health Counseling; 9CR; fall, spring and summer semesters; Includes at least 900 hours at a counseling setting, across a calendar year, with at least 360 hours in direct service to clients, as well as supervision, class meetings, and assignments that enhance skills development and ensure quality client service. Students must apply for internship prior to beginning internship. Applications are due March 1st. Note that the required hours for internship may severely limit non-internship, non-program work time.

Educational Psychology 550 Conceptual Statistics and Research Design; 3CR; Normally offered each semester – This is the research class normally used by MHCP students.

Human Development Course; 3CR - The human development course is normally provided in spring semester.

School Psychology 690: Psychopathology in Schools and Mental Health Settings, 3CR; Offered summers only. This is the psychopathology course that we provide along with School Psychology faculty for our students as well as those of related programs (school psychology, school counseling, sports psychology)

COUN 540: Psychopharmacology for Mental Health and School Settings; Offered every other summer only (2013, 2015); Designed specifically to provide needed background for counselors related to psychopharmacology. Also used by School Counseling and School Psychology students.

Elective Study – MHCP students complete four electives. Advisors give input and approve elective choices. MHCP students are encouraged to develop a set of electives around a theme or area of specialization. Electives are available from within and outside the department.

COUN 562: Child-Centered Play Therapy; 3CR; Summer only. Offered most summers, this is an important elective course for counselors interested in serving troubled children and youth, or who want to understand counseling for adolescents and adults better through understanding psychotherapy for children. This course is needed by MHCP students interested in serving children as a significant part of their internship.

Practicum and Internship
Mental Health Counseling Program students complete a one semester, 3-credit hour practicum in a setting providing mental health counseling. This work is closely supervised. Site-supervisors carefully assign and monitor practicum student work with clients. Practicum students also receive extensive group and individual supervision from university faculty and advanced doctoral students in Counselor Education. Students complete a minimum of 100 total hours in this practicum with at least 40 of those hours being direct service to clients. Note that students must apply for practicum the semester prior. Applications are due October 1st for practicum.
After practicum, Mental Health Counseling Program students complete a 9-credit hour internship that spans a calendar year. While careful supervision continues from university faculty, advanced doctoral students, and site supervisors, interns increase their levels of responsibility for client care and related services to that of an excellent entry level professional counselor. Individual faculty supervision continues through the 1st six credit hours of internship. Interns complete a minimum of 900 total hours in this internship with at least 360 of those hours being direct service to clients. MHCP interns also develop and complete a professional quality, individually developed theory integration to address client needs through their internship, culminating in a professional presentation and manuscript draft.

Note that students must apply for internship. Applications are due March 1st. Also note that the numbers of hours required for internship would preclude full-time, non-internship work.

Practicum and internship sites are selected in communication with the Mental Health Counseling Program Placement Coordinator, as well as advisors and other faculty. Sites are matched to students’ areas of interest as much as possible. Students are welcome to suggest sites and areas of interest as well as to ask for guidance and suggestions. Students are required to have all sites approved by the Placement Coordinator before engaging in significant communication with persons at the site regarding a practicum or internship placement.

Comprehensive Exams
Comprehensive exams are completed in the semester that each student will graduate. The exams cover all core curricular areas. Therefore students need to complete core courses prior to or during the academic year semester of their comprehensive exams. This becomes important to note, as it is possible complete your final courses and graduate in a summer session, yet comprehensive exams are only provided fall and spring. In that case, you would have to make sure with your advisor that you are not planning a course in summer that is critical to your comprehensive exam.

Faculty members provide an orientation that includes guidance in the make up of the exam, content to be reviewed, and how to study. Students normally study in groups and support each other through the preparation process.

The exams are in essay format, are application focused, and help students synthesize their studies from the varied courses of their programs for the tasks that they will engage in on a daily basis throughout their careers. Comprehensive exams are a time for graduating students to “put it all together,” to show and discover how much they have learned. The preparation and exams also help prepare students for their licensure exams, the first of which is often taken late in the same semester.

Research Options
Many of our students are interested in participating in research. We encourage you to consider and discuss your level of interest in research with your advisor. Participating in research is not required – you will develop and a thinker, a counselor and a scholar through the program,
whether you add research participation or not. Your first and highest priority should be your development as a counselor.

If you are additionally interested in participating in research, there are two main paths to participate in research in the counseling programs while a student in the Mental Health Counseling Program: (1) joining ongoing research and (2) faculty sponsorship of a student led study. The two options are noted below.

If interested in participating in research, let your advisor know and consider faculty research interests that might also interest you. Joining ongoing projects and faculty interests is a great way to learn and develop as a researcher.

If you wish to consider leading the way in a study of your own, with faculty support, discuss this option with your advisor very early in your graduate study. It is important to plan ahead and allow the time you will need for a great study. For example, as your subject leads you to particular qualitative or quantitative methods, you may need to use one of your electives or an additional course to prepare you to implement the research methods needed in your study. As you show the motivation and excellence, demonstrating your ability to focus and follow through, you will be working to demonstrate to faculty that you are an up-and-coming professional who needs and deserves faculty partnership in your student led study.

**Elective & Specialization Possibilities**

Electives are selected with input from advisors, mentors and others, and must be approved by advisors. Course descriptions and additional course information is made available to students in the program through a binder of information related to common elective courses, as well as through other sources, such as advisor experience, mentoring students experience, and of course the Graduate Catalog. A list of sample specialization areas and sample elective courses follows.

**At-Risk Children and Youth**

Counselor Education 562 – Child-Centered Play Therapy
Counselor Education 664 – Systems and Issues in Counseling Children and Adolescents
Counselor Education 560 – Practicum in Grief Facilitation
Counselor Education 563 – Crisis Intervention for Counselors
Counselor Education 504/604 – Special Topics, as available
Child and Family Studies 540 – Parent-Child Relations
Child and Family Studies 566 – Theories of Family Therapy
Child and Family Studies 511 – Survey of Research in Child and Family Studies
Child and Family Studies 515 – Children in Contemporary Society
Child and Family Studies 530 – Families of Children with Disabilities
Child and Family Studies 552 – Diversity in Children and Families
Child and Family Studies 562 – Families and Children Coping with Stress
Child and Family Studies 570 – Research Methods in Child and Family Studies
Child and Family Studies 631 - Adolescent Development in Families
Cultural Studies 592 – Social Justice and Education
Law 863 - Children and the Law
Nursing 528 - Well Child Care: Assessment of Growth, Development, and Behavior
Nursing 562 - Acute Illnesses in Children
Nursing 563 - Care of the Child with a Chronic Condition
Psychology 432 - Childhood Psychopathologies
Psychology 475 – Adolescent Development
Recreation and Leisure Studies 520 – Program Design and Evaluation in Therapeutic Recreation
Recreation and Leisure Studies 521 – Facilitation Techniques in Therapeutic Recreation
Recreation and Leisure Studies 522 – Clinical Aspects in Therapeutic Recreation
Sociology 551 – Juvenile Delinquency and the Social Structure
Sociology 463 - Community Sociology
Social Work 531 - Working with Maltreated and Traumatized Children and Their Families
Social Work 571 - Evidence-based Practice with Children and Adolescents
Special Education 470 – Psychology of the Exceptional Child

**Counselor Education and Supervision**

Counselor education and supervision courses, in areas such as counselor supervision, advanced theories, independent study assisting faculty teaching and research may be available as elective options near the end of the 60-credit hour MHCP and following discussions with advisors regarding this option. This option would be most relevant to masters students with interests in completing a doctoral program and who has demonstrated academic and dispositional excellence up to that point.

**Marriage and Family**

Counselor Education 562 - Child-Centered Play Therapy (for understanding of children and an introduction to and foundation for filial therapy, which is a parent-child systemic intervention that is based on CCPT)

Counselor Education 664 – Systems and Issues in Counseling Children and Adolescents
Counselor Education 504/604 – Special Topics, as available
Child and Family Studies 511 - Survey of Research in Child and Family Studies
Child and Family Studies 530 – Families of Children with Disabilities
Child and Family Studies 540 – Parent-Child Relations
Child and Family Studies 550 – Theory and Research in Family Studies
Child and Family Studies 552 – Diversity in Children and Families
Child and Family Studies 562 – Families and Children Coping with Stress
Child and Family Studies 566 – Theories of Family Therapy
Child and Family Studies 567 – Family Violence
Child and Family Studies 570 – Research Methods in Child and Family Studies
Child and Family Studies 631 - Adolescent Development in Families
Child and Family Studies 652 - Men and Families
Child and Family Studies 653 - Women and Families
Educational Psychology 522 – Adult Development
Law 862 - Family Law
Law 863 - Children and the Law
Law 951 - Domestic Violence Clinic
Nursing 555 - Care of the Pregnant Woman
Nursing 528 - Well Child Care: Assessment of Growth, Development, and Behavior
Nursing 562 - Acute Illnesses in Children
Nursing 563 - Care of the Child with a Chronic Condition
Nutrition 616 – Maternal and Child Nutrition
Psychology 550 – Social Psychology
Social Work 532 – Short-Term Interventions
Social work 570 - Evidence-based Practice with Families
Sociology 463 - Community Sociology

Probation and Correctional and Offender Counseling
Counselor Education 562 – Child-Centered Play Therapy (for this course’s focus on prevention and application to troubled youth)
Counselor Education 664 – Systems and Issues in Counseling Children and Adolescents
Counselor Education 563 – Crisis Intervention for Counselors
Counselor Education 504/604 – Special Topics, as available
Law 854 – Investigatory Criminal Procedure
Law 855 – Adjudicatory Criminal Procedure
Sociology 451 – Criminal Justice
Sociology 452 – Race, Ethnicity, Crime, and Justice
Sociology 453 – Gender and Crime
Sociology 455 – Society and Law
Sociology 459 – White-Collar Crime
Sociology 463 - Community Sociology
Sociology 505 – Foundations of Criminology
Sociology 551 – Juvenile Delinquency and the Social Structure

**Substance Abuse Counseling**
Counselor Education 604 – Special Topics – Systems and Issues in Counseling Children and Adolescents
Social Work 564 – Evidence-Based Substance Abuse Treatment
Child and Family Studies 540 – Parent-Child Relations
Child and Family Studies 562 – Families and Children Coping with Stress
Child and Family Studies 566 – Theories of Family Therapy
Child and Family Studies 567 – Family Violence
Child and Family Studies 631 - Adolescent Development in Families
Child and Family Studies 652 - Men and Families
Child and Family Studies 653 - Women and Families
Educational Psychology 522 – Adult Development
Law 862 - Family Law
Law 863 - Children and the Law
Law 951 - Domestic Violence Clinic
Sociology 451 – Criminal Justice
Sociology 452 – Race, Ethnicity, Crime, and Justice
Sociology 453 – Gender and Crime
Sociology 455 – Society and Law
Sociology 463 - Community Sociology
Sociology 505 – Foundations of Criminology
Sociology 551 – Juvenile Delinquency and the Social Structure

**Women’s Issues**
Child and Family Studies 566 – Theories of Family Therapy
Child and Family Studies 653 - Women and Families
Cultural Studies 512 - History of Women’s Education
Educational Psychology 520 – Survey of Adult Education
Educational Psychology 522 – Adult Development
Law 862 - Family Law
Law 863 - Children and the Law
Law 951 - Domestic Violence Clinic
Law 958 - Women and the Law
Nursing 554 - Care of the Well Woman and Minor Acute Illnesses
Nursing 555 - Care of the Pregnant Woman
Nutrition 616 – Maternal and Child Nutrition
Sports Studies 543 - Women, Sport, and Culture
Women's Studies 434 – Psychology of Gender
Women’s Studies 469 Sexuality and Cinema
Women’s Studies 484 African-American Women in Society
Women’s Studies 512 History of Women in Education

Health and Wellness
Counselor Education 562 – Child-Centered Play Therapy (for understandings of human development from the child-centered perspective)
Counselor Education 563 – Crisis Intervention for Counselors
Educational Psychology 522 – Adult Development
Nursing 409 - Genetic Disorders, Vulnerable Families and Health Advocacy
Nursing 504 - Advanced Health/Physical Assessment
Nursing 554 - Care of the Well Woman and Minor Acute Illnesses
Nursing 555 - Care of the Pregnant Woman
Nursing 556 - Care of Complex Health Problems in Women
Nursing 562 - Acute Illnesses in Children
Nursing 563 - Care of the Child with a Chronic Condition
Nutrition 509 - Graduate Seminar in Public Health
Nutrition 616 - Maternal and Child Nutrition
Nutrition 511 - Advances in Carbohydrate, Lipid and Protein Metabolism
Nutrition 512 - Advances in Vitamin and Mineral Metabolism
Nutrition 616– Maternal and Child Nutrition
Nutrition 618 – Nutrition and Aging
Nutrition 621 - Physiological Basis for Diet and Disease
Psychology 430 – Health Psychology
Public Health 536 - Research Methods in Health
Public Health 550 - Principles and Practices of Community Health Education
Program faculty review student progress on a regular basis and attend carefully to assist students in need, as well as to celebrate excellence in each developing counselor. In agreement with the ethical guidelines of the American Counseling Association, the Counselor Education faculty has developed the following student evaluation and retention procedures. Respecting these guidelines, the faculty considers not only academic abilities and skill performance when making retention decisions about students, but also such aspects as whether the student has appropriate levels of maturity, judgment, emotional stability, sensitivity to others, and self awareness.

**Evaluation and Retention Procedures**

*Prior to the end of each academic year, faculty members review progress evaluation forms and meet in order to evaluate each student’s progress in academic work, teaching, supervision and counseling skills, and intrapersonal/interpersonal effectiveness. Those students assessed as having difficulty will receive written and oral feedback concerning their progress from their advisor. All written feedback is placed in the student’s central file, including student responses to feedback received. Students who are identified as having deficiencies in one or more of the three areas evaluated are provided the following assistance in order to improve their performance:*

1. **Problem Identification Meeting**

   The advisor meets with the student and gives specific examples of the difficulties, which have been identified by the faculty. The student and the advisor then discuss minimal change
expectations and procedures. A decision is made at this time as to the seriousness of the problem, and if it is recurring. Steps for resolution are recommended and both parties agree upon a time frame for remediation. A contract is written at this time and is signed by the students and the advisor, with the understanding that the faculty at their next meeting will review the student’s progress.

2. Recurring or Critical Problems

If the situation is a continuing one, or is critical, a team of faculty members may be appointed by the program coordinator to meet with the student. The concerns are delineated in writing and given to the student prior to this meeting. During this meeting, the student is given specific information about the particular problem, the steps needed for solution, and the time frame allowed prior to determining if further action must be considered. A contract clearly stating areas which need to be improved, and the methods and time frame needed for improvement, is written and signed by the student and the involved faculty members. A copy of this agreement is given to the student and the original is placed in the student’s central file.

3. Insufficient Progress, Withdrawal, Advising

If the student does not make expeditious progress toward resolution of the identified problem(s), and if the faculty agrees that the student will not be able to successfully achieve the academic, teaching, supervision, counseling, and/or intrapersonal/interpersonal effectiveness objectives of the program, then recommendation for withdrawal of the student from the program is considered. If this decision is made by vote of the counselor education faculty, it is then forwarded to the department head. Academic and vocational advising will be offered to the student.

4. Due Process Procedures

Unless the problem involves a major disciplinary action, all of the preceding steps are handled by the Counselor Education faculty. The University and the program policies are written to assure students that their rights are respected and due process is followed. If a student wishes to challenge a decision of the program regarding retention in the program, the student has the right to an appeal process, as detailed in the student handbook, *Hilltopics*. The Counselor Education Program faculty believe that the stated procedures are in accord with the accepted educational practices and guidelines of the American Counseling Association Ethical Standards. Faculty members, through continual student evaluation and appraisal, must be aware of the personal limitations of the learner that might impede future performance. Faculty members must not only assist the learner in securing remedial assistance but also screen from the program those individuals who are unable to provide competent services.