

**Chadron State College**

**Counseling Program**

**Chadron State College Site  
2007**



**COUN 639**

**Practicum in Counseling  
Handbook**

# POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## Introduction

The Chadron State College Counseling, Psychology and Social Work Department welcome you to counseling practicum. We are committed to the development of counselors who will provide effective counseling services. Supervised experiential activities are vital to this development. Throughout your training you will participate in a variety of experience-based activities ranging from in-class role-plays to providing counseling services to individual clients.

Your practicum experiences are your opportunity to apply your counseling training to real clients. For most counselor trainees, it means "finally" being able to do what you enrolled in your graduate program to do. You will conduct actual counseling sessions. You will review each case with your site-supervisor and practicum class on a regular basis. You will learn how to complete case documentation. You will attend class and review cases with your colleagues. You will learn to critique yourself and become a more skillful counselor.

## Goals and Objectives

The goals of practicum are:

**Goal 1:** To provide hands-on counseling experiences under the supervision of faculty and qualified supervisors.

Objective A: Practicum students will successfully accumulate a minimum of 100 practicum hours of which 40 hours will be direct client contact hours.

Objective B: Practicum students will participate in regular group and individual supervision.

**Goal 2:** To provide a safe and challenging environment conducive to self-exploration and increased self-awareness.

Objective A: Practicum students will identify by means of self-evaluation and supervisor-evaluation their strengths and challenges regarding their basic counseling skills and professional competence.

Objective B: Practicum students will both give and receive feedback with their peers regarding their basic counseling skills, case conceptualization, and the therapeutic relationship.

**Goal 3:** To provide a structure that facilitates the integration of theoretical knowledge and clinical application.

Objective A: Students will periodically "staff" their cases in group and individual supervision.

Objective B: Students will be required to complete case documentation as designated by site requirements and standards.

## Roles and Responsibilities

Prior to their first practicum, students often wonder if the practicum experience will be similar to a classroom environment. Actually, practicum is structured less like a class and more like a professional counseling setting. Practicum serves as a bridge between the theoretical foundation of your masters program and the experiential nature of your internship (COUN 633) which is to follow. For most students it is the time in their training when theory and practicum application begin to blend together. Since practicum functions in a way which is different from traditional classes, it is important to clarify the roles and responsibilities of those involved. The key players involved in counseling practicum are the practicum faculty instructor, doctoral student supervisors, site supervisors, and practicum students.

**Practicum Faculty Instructor.** The practicum instructor will oversee all functions of your practicum experience. The practicum instructor will be responsible for facilitating class meetings, facilitating group supervision during class meetings, arranging sites visits, assigning practicum students to a doctoral student supervisor, monitoring client-contact hours, and designating a final course grade (refer to the course syllabi for details on grading). Designated Practicum Instructor is Susan Schaeffer, PhD, LPC.

**Clinical Site Supervisors.** Site supervisors are critical in your training. Site supervisors are responsible for providing consistent (*at least one hour per week*) clinical and administrative supervision to each practicum student they have agreed to supervise. Site supervisors serve as professional mentors to the practicum student. Site supervisors conduct consistent evaluations of students' strengths and challenges. The focus of individual supervision typically includes case review, theoretical application, and counselor self-awareness. It is the student's responsibility to arrange this weekly meeting. In collaboration with the practicum instructor, the site supervisor will complete an evaluation of the student's performance at midterm and upon completion of the practicum course. The site supervisor for the Chadron site is Practicum Instructor is Susan Schaeffer, PhD, LPC.

**Practicum Student.** Responsibilities of the practicum student include: (1) adhering to the ACA Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice; (2) conducting clinical intake interviews; (3) videotape and/or audiotape of sessions is preferred unless site restrictions prohibit such; (4) preparing for sessions; (5) maintaining a client caseload; (6) documenting all case information; (7) participating in weekly group and individual supervision; (8) Observing other professionals; (9) giving and receiving constructive and challenging feedback; (10) participating in class meetings; and (11) maintaining professional liability insurance. Additional specifics will be discussed in practicum class.

## Preparing for Practicum

Although this experience is part of a class for you, Counseling Practicum functions as a professional setting with a professional staff and real clients. Therefore, professional and ethical conduct on your part is required for your participation in practicum.

**Ethics.** Counseling Practicum students adhere to the professional ethics of the counseling professions as advocated by the American Counseling Association. Please familiarize yourself with those standards and consider them binding to your involvement in practicum. A copy of the current edition of the ACA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice can be obtained from your practicum instructor, if needed. In addition to the ACA Code of Ethics, other ethical rules for practicum are listed below. *Each practicum site will have its own set of policies and procedures. It is your responsibility to obtain and understand these policies.*

1. *Video and material from client files are never to be discussed or shown to anyone other than your supervisor, instructor, or in class as directed by your instructor. Seek permission from your site supervisor before discussing a case in class.*

2. Information about clients is never requested or released without the client's specific written consent, a copy of which must be kept in the client's file. In the case of child clients, a parent or guardian must authorize such action. An exception to this rule is made when it is suspected that the client may be a harm to self or others. *The decision to breach the client's confidentiality is never to be made by the practicum student counselor alone.* If the need arises, discuss it in detail with your site supervisor. Clients need to be advised of these limits to confidentiality during the intake interview. *Clients who are at risk of harm to self or others are not appropriate for practicum and need to be referred to more advanced practitioners.*

3. All counseling documents must be reviewed by the site supervisor or an appropriate designee.

**Professionalism.** While it is difficult (and hopefully unnecessary) to define and elucidate all aspects of professional conduct here, a few specific guidelines are offered.

**1. Please don't talk about clients in the halls, waiting area, or elsewhere. Client information is to remain confidential and is to be discussed in supervision and consultation only.**

2. Please dress professionally, that is, no sport, casual, or provocative clothing. If you're unsure about what constitutes appropriate dress or how it affects the delivery of effective service, please discuss this with your site supervisor or instructor.

3. Please keep doors to outside halls closed and locked in order to maintain security of client materials.

4. Please familiarize yourself with the procedures in this manual and of your site and follow them at all times.

In preparation for counseling, prior to your first counseling session you will need to review the ACA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, arrange an individual supervision time, and become oriented to the expectations of your site.

**Liability Insurance:** All students enrolled in practicum are required to carry professional liability insurance. Low cost insurance is available to student members of ACA. Contact your practicum instructor for additional information.

## Supervision

The supervision process is an important part of your training experience. You will receive two types of supervision. Group supervision will be conducted during your class time and will involve reviewing cases and relating class members' counseling experiences to counseling theory. Individual site supervision will be conducted on a weekly basis and will involve a more intensive one-on-one type of instruction. The purpose of supervision is to provide you with ongoing feedback regarding your counseling skills and professional development. To prepare yourself for supervisory sessions (individual and group), review your videotapes and sessions, and identify specific supervisory needs prior to your supervision sessions. Your site supervisor or practicum instructor may ask you to bring your counseling files and your videotapes to supervision sessions. Meet with your site supervisor prior to seeing clients to set up goals and structure. Each supervisor may function a little differently.

## The Counseling Process

Each practicum site will be unique in structure and expectations. The following is provided as a guideline to discuss with your site supervisor.

**The Intake Interview:** Potential clients seeking services participate in an intake interview, which has three purposes. The first is to assess clients' needs and to ensure that their needs can appropriately be served in this setting. In general, clients who are considered to need 24-hour availability of care for any reason are not appropriate clients for practicum students. The second purpose of the intake is to orient the client to relevant issues such as the counseling process itself and informed consent. The third purpose is to provide a safe foundation for the development of a therapeutic relationship. Your site supervisor will provide examples of intake questionnaires that will assist you in gathering pertinent clinical information.

**Conducting the Session:** Sessions are generally 50 minutes long, starting on the hour and ending at 10 minutes before the following hour. Courtesy and professionalism dictate that you start and end your appointments on time. Regardless of when you start, end at 10 minutes before the hour. With some clients, you may find it helpful to start your "wrap up" well in advance of that time. A client's or counselor's difficulty starting or ending a session on time is often indicative of a therapeutic issue and should be discussed with your supervisor or instructor.

**Cancellations and "No Shows:"** Cancellations and "no shows" should always be followed up. Call the client to reschedule. Cancellations, no shows, telephone contacts (and attempted contacts) need to be documented in your case notes.

**Discharge/Transfer:** When you finish working with a client for any reason, you need to close or transfer the file. Closings and transfers must be discussed ahead of time with your site supervisor.

If the client wishes to continue counseling, and if another counselor is immediately available, your instructor may authorize you to transfer the client to that counselor.

When you close or transfer a file, review the file with your site supervisor making sure that all forms and notes are complete and have the appropriate signatures. Please follow this procedure for ALL files assigned to you. Please be mindful that failure to complete this process is considered by us to be poor professional behavior and also can put you and us in legal jeopardy.

### **Video/Audio taping Sessions:**

Remember, because the Counseling Practicum is a training experience, we highly encourage taping of client sessions. The purpose of taping sessions is so you and your supervisors can review your work and give feedback to enhance your skills. This needs to be explained to the client both during the initial screening process and during the intake interview. Videotapes are part of the client file and need to be protected as such. *All videotapes are to be erased at the end of each semester.*

### **Case Documentation:**

A 'typical' counseling file is comprised of the following documents: The client files contain a variety of forms, which need to be kept accurate and up-to-date, as dictated by good clinical practice and legal liability issues. Client files are to be kept locked at all times. Consult your site supervisor for documentation requirements at your site.

**Referral Form:** Prior to beginning counseling, clients will complete a referral form. This form is used to identify information necessary to arrange an intake interview as well as a beginning indication of the client's presenting concern. The referral form is a part of the chart and contains confidential information.

**Disclosure Statement:** The disclosure statement is a critical piece of documentation. Prior to beginning counseling, the counselor is required to review the details of this form with the client, respond to all questions, and obtain the signature of the client. This form is to be signed by the client and counselor. All practicum students must comprehend and be able to explain any portion of this document. You will probably be required to utilize a form specific to your setting.

**Intake Questionnaire:** The intake questionnaire is a tool used to gather pertinent clinical information. The information gathered by counselors during the intake process is determined by various factors such as the theoretical orientation of the counselor, the age of the client, and the treatment modality offered (individual, group, or family counseling).

**Intake Summary:** The intake summary provides an objective overview or "picture" of the client at the time of the intake. A well written intake summary will provide the reader with an understanding of the client's presenting concern, personal history, family dynamics, and goals of counseling. Intake summaries are to be reviewed by the site supervisor.

**Counseling Notes:** After each session, a counseling note is to be written into the client's file. The purpose of case notes is to assist in treatment planning and evaluation. They may also be used as a