

VIII. PRACTICUM GUIDELINES

Practicum Defined

Practicum is field experience taken for academic credit that provides students with the opportunity to learn counseling skills under supervision. This experience may be with groups, individuals (children and adults), and families.

Minimum Practicum Experience Defined

Students should plan to devote approximately 15-20 hours per week for three (3) consecutive semesters of supervised practicum. Please refer to **Section II, Summary of BBS Licensure Regulations** or the BBS website for minimum/maximum experience requirements.

The Department of Counseling requires that students have a total of 700 Practicum hours (defined below) during their practicum year, with a minimum of 280 direct client contact hours during the course of COUN 530 A/B, 584 A/B, and 590. These totals meet or exceed the BBS regulations and CACREP accreditation standards.

Direct client contact (DCC) hours are accrued through providing counseling services to clients in the following categories: individual children and/or adults, couples, families, and groups*.

*Groups should be facilitated by two clinicians (including, but not limited to, student trainees) as co-leaders whenever possible. **NOTE: *co-leaders for groups are mandatory during COUN 530 A/B and all students must lead a group at some point during their practicum year.***

Students will gather all 280 of their direct client contact (DCC) hours during the (minimum of) 3 semesters in which they are enrolled in practicum courses COUN 530 A/B, 584 A/B, and 590. DCC hours may be performed and counted as of the date the semester begins [Note: Non- DCC hours may be counted from the date listed in the 4-Way Agreement.] Students in their first semester of practicum (COUN 530 A/B) need to earn 40 DCC hours of the 280 required for graduation (by CACREP, not the BBS). An additional 240 DCC hours must be gathered after COUN 530 A/B while enrolled in COUN 584 A/B and COUN 590. If necessary, students will enroll in COUN 591 as they finish gathering their DCC hours. Students who have completed their required 280 DCC hours but wish to gain further practicum experience will enroll in COUN 590. Students doing any clinical hours must be enrolled in practicum. Students enrolling in COUN 591 or extra semesters of COUN 590 may: 1) stay at their original site beyond the calendar year commitment: or 2) seek placement in another approved site. Either scenario requires consultation with the Clinical Training Director. In **NO** circumstances may a student change sites/begin at a new site without the express **PRIOR** knowledge of and permission from the Clinical Training Director.

The remaining 420 non-DCC practicum hours (of 700 total practicum hours) are made up of educational and service activities that further the student's clinical knowledge and practical experience in the counseling field. These activities may include (but are not limited to) supervision, trainings, client-centered advocacy, staff meetings, readings and/or using multimedia for professional development, consuming and conducting research, record keeping, administrative tasks, case reviews, and case management, interdisciplinary team meetings, community outreach, etc. Of the total 420 non-DCC hours required for

graduation, the first 60 hours are to be obtained during COUN 530 A/B, while the remaining 360 hours must be obtained during COUN 584 A/B and COUN 590 (and 591 if applicable).

The appropriateness of these ancillary activities (for 420 practicum hours) will be determined by the Site Supervisor based on the student's training goals and approved by the Practicum Instructor and Clinical Training Director.

Students are responsible to keep their practicum instructors informed regarding the number of hours (DCC and total) being accumulated throughout the year. Students are highly encouraged to maintain a tracking system to calculate the accrued hours, and maintain a COPY of any logs turned in to the Practicum Instructor or Clinical Training Director.

Note: Remember the practicum experience lasts one full year, and even though CSUF may be on break, obligations at the agency remain. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the agency regarding holidays and breaks.

There are two (2) kinds of **COUNTABLE HOURS** you may earn as a trainee that count toward licensure:

1. **Direct counseling experience** (counseling actually provided by you; no-shows do not count) of individuals (adults/children), groups, couples and families.
2. **Non-clinical experience**, defined as:
 - a. Supervision you receive (individual and/or group).
 - b. Administering and evaluating psychological tests, writing clinical reports, and writing progress or process notes.
 - c. Client-centered Advocacy [CCA is defined in Business and Professions Code (BPC) Section 4980.34(h) as including, but not limited the "researching, identifying, and accessing resources, or other activities, related to obtaining or providing services and supports for clients or groups of clients receiving psychotherapy or counseling services."]
 - d. Professional enrichment hours (training, conferences, and workshops attended that are authorized and counter signed by your supervisor).

Note: Hours **CANNOT BE COUNTED** until students have completed 12 units and have been **CLASSIFIED/ ADVANCED TO PRACTICUM**. After the Classification/Advancement to Practicum process is complete (**note:** this is not automatic) and the trainee has a supervisor, these hours may be counted toward BBS licensure requirements. The Site Supervisor is always the one with discretion as to whether training hours listed in categories 1 and 2 are acceptable and may be counted.

Reminder: For trainees, per the BBS, for purposes of enrollment in Beginning Practicum (COUN 530 A/B), direct client service hours may NOT be performed or counted for fulfillment of the required hours until the official start of the semester (i.e., late August or late January).

Supervision

To meet BBS licensure requirements, students (trainees) must obtain supervision at a 5:1 ratio, receiving 1 unit of supervision for every 5 client contact hours per week on the average. A unit of supervision consists of either 1 continuous hour of individual or triadic (one supervisor with two supervisees) or 2 hours (with no less than 1 continuous hour) of group supervision (with no

more than 8 supervisees) per week. During the practicum year, students are required to schedule both individual/triadic and group supervision every week of each semester (even when this exceeds the 5:1 BBS minimum ratio), while they are accruing their required hours toward graduation. For limitations on who can/cannot serve as your agency supervisor (e.g., your personal psychotherapist), please refer to the BBS website. In addition, students participate in practicum class in a discussion with their practicum instructor each week, to which students are required to bring a minimum of two videos for COUN 530A/B and three videos for COUN 584A/B during the semester reflecting their current counseling sessions with clients at their agency.

The BBS has established the following requirements for supervisors:

1. Has been licensed by a state regulatory agency for at least two years as a licensed professional clinical counselor, licensed marriage and family therapist, licensed clinical social worker, licensed psychologist, or licensed physician certified in psychiatry by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.
2. Has not provided therapeutic services to the trainee or associate.
3. Has a current and valid license that is not under suspension or probation.
4. Complies with supervision requirements established by their professional organization's ethical codes and by BBS regulations.
5. Has completed the appropriate training (6 hours pre-2020; 15 hour post-2020) in supervision within 60 days of beginning supervision.
6. Obtains no less than six hours of continuing education activities in supervision each licensure cycle.

Volunteer Supervision

If the Site Supervisor is a volunteer (i.e., a licensed professional who is not self-employed or a paid employee) extra documentation is needed. Specifically, there needs to be an original written agreement that states the supervisor is a volunteer and has access to client records. Attach the original written agreement between the parties (trainee/associate, volunteer supervisor and the agency) to the BBS Experience Verification Form (for later hours verification –trainees only). The supervisor is asked on the Verification Form to declare if they worked as the student's supervisor on a voluntary basis, as opposed to a self-employed basis in private practice or on a paid basis as an agency employee.

This letter of agreement is needed any time the trainee's (or associate's) supervisor **is not paid by agency (trainees) or employer (associate)** for the provision of supervision. The trainee/associate should maintain the **original** of this letter of agreement to submit with the application for licensure. Contact the BBS at www.bbs.ca.gov for additional clarification as to the requirement for this letter. This is one of the most overlooked pieces of documentation in the application for licensure. Please do not overlook this requirement.

Change of Agency

Students will interview for and sign a 4-Way Agreement with their clinical training site that encompasses a full calendar year. It is expected that students will remain in their clinical training site for the entire year. Commitments to community clinical training sites (with whom reciprocal trust is an essential ingredient), are to be honored except in the most extreme circumstances. In the rare case where it may be in the best interest of the student, agency or public to change agencies, students must contact the Clinical Training Director **before** any changes are made, to discuss possible resolutions to the situation. A change of agency would involve a student's written request and would be considered by the full faculty. It is understood that any potential problems between a student trainee and their site would be immediately and continually discussed with the practicum instructor, who will then make the Clinical Training Director aware of the situation, as appropriate.

NOTE: If a student extends their time at an agency or changes agencies (for any reason) a new 4-Way Agreement is required. 4-Way extensions must be completed prior to the expiration of the initial contract and new 4-Way Agreements are due within two weeks of starting with the agency. Students do NOT need to re-submit a new 4-way agreement when they change supervisors, only a new BBS Supervision Agreement.