FIELDWORK SITE STATEMENT

Objectives of the Fieldwork Program

The primary objective of the counseling fieldwork program is to enable students to apprentice in the role of a practicing counselor. Counselor interns become part of a professionally approved counseling program in which they can observe successful practices, participate in all aspects of the program and apply classroom learning to actual clinical, school, and organizational situations.

Another objective of the fieldwork program is to give the counselor trainee the opportunity to test his/her competencies and readiness to enter the field. Finally, we value the professional interchange that develops between the university and agencies and schools in the community through our collaboration in training students. Interns are expected to conduct themselves as professional members of their facility in attire, demeanor and the timely completion of clinical paperwork. Interns are not expected to enhance the facilities shortage of non-clinical staff or to engage in non-counseling responsibilities.

Teachers College prides itself in the recognition that its counseling interns are consistently well received and evaluated as being significant contributors to the counseling programs in which they work.

Student Preparation

Supervised fieldwork is required of all Ed. M. (Masters in Education) students in the Program in Psychological Counseling at Teachers College, Columbia University. Students are expected to work in their placements during the second or third year of their program. Before coming to the field they will have completed coursework in Professional Issues, Group Counseling, Preparation in Individual Counseling, Developmental Psychology, and Theory and Assessment in Career Counseling and Development.

The Role of the Counselor Intern

The primary function performed by the counseling intern is to help individuals clarify their concepts of self, school and work roles, and to help persons who are presently experiencing difficulty. Another goal is to anticipate, circumvent and, if possible, forestall difficulties which may arise in the future. Interns may help individuals plan and obtain maximum benefit from educational social, vocational and other kinds of experiences which will enable them to discover and develop their potential for further growth and development. Counselors are, therefore, as interested in cultivating assets and potentials as they are in correcting and overcoming personal and environmental deficits and shortcomings.
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Interns are expected to function as part-time employees of the site during the academic year. The broader the intern’s experiences at the site, the greater their learning and their ability to be productive. As part of their intern requirements at Teachers College, interns are required to provide ongoing individual (personal and/or career) and group counseling to a caseload of five or more clients at their site. Other training experiences should include case conferences, crisis intervention, staff meetings, testing and assessment, staff development workshops, program development, seminars for staff, data gathering and record keeping as it applies to their population. All intern activities must be under the direction/guidance of a supervisor(s), who has at least three full years of experience and a Masters Degree.

Time Commitment

Depending on the individual, the counseling intern’s time commitment ranges from a minimum 600 hours throughout the course of two semesters of study. Fall semester entails working from September through December and the Spring semester entails working from January until early May. Typically, students work on-site two and one half or more days per week for one academic year. Other arrangements may be made as long as they are in accordance with state requirements and university policy.

The Role of the Site Supervisor

The site’s responsibility to the intern includes a minimum of two hours per week of structured individual supervision and one hour per week of group supervision (when applicable), by an individual with the appropriate credentials.

It is essential that the intern be offered supervised experience in individual counseling and where available, group counseling. The agency site is responsible for providing administrative assistance at the site for student interns. The specific internship description is to be worked out cooperatively between the fieldwork supervisor, university coordinator and intern. The intern is encouraged to assume a major part of the responsibility in this process and, in so doing, to identify areas of special interest as well as those that might most benefit the program.

The intern supervisor is also expected to furnish site program brochures and literature regarding types of theoretical constructs utilized and the techniques and training opportunities students will be exposed to. The site supervisor is also responsible for providing an end of semester evaluation regarding student progress and performance. Since this evaluation is part of the teaching/learning process it should be shared with the intern before it is sent to the program. It should reflect the performance in the field for the semester just completed. The program’s placement coordinator is available to the agency and to the student for consultation and assistance at any time in the academic year.