



**Counseling Psychology Program**

**MA Degree**

**FIRST YEAR FIELDWORK PACKET (CNP 4743)**

## **Counselor Development: What Can You Expect?**

The process of entering a graduate program is often a very difficult and trying time for Master's and doctoral students. Initially the beginning student is immersed in theory and technique, and then expected to perform adequately in a practicum setting. Frequently the beginning student spends much time trying to conceal his or her anxiety and feelings of incompetency. Often, this inexperienced counselor conceals these feelings not only from faculty and supervisors, but also from members of one's cohort. As a result, isolation may make this developmental process more difficult than necessary.

Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987) describe typical counselor development using changes in three basic structures: self-and other-awareness, motivation, and autonomy. According to Stoltenberg and Delworth's (1987) model, the Level 1 trainee's primary focus is on him- or herself. The beginning trainee is often apprehensive and anxious at the prospect of being evaluated by both supervisor and client. Focusing on one's own fears and uncertainties makes it difficult to "be with" or understand what the client is experiencing. Although this initial focus on self as therapist is normal in the counselor development process, it does interfere with the trainee's ability to emphasize and understand the client. Students have so many messages going on in their heads, most of which are negative ("I do not know what to do", "I need to use empathy", "I do not know how to interrupt the client", etc). Motivation at this level is usually very high, as it reflects the individual's strong desire to become a counselor. The Level 1 counselor is preoccupied with helping people and "making a difference" rather than on the processes involved in becoming effective as a counselor. Here the focus is on basic counseling skills (e.g., eye contact, posture, and attending behaviors). Initial success, in addition to structured and supportive supervision, leads to increased confidence in one's abilities and skills as counselor. With practice, the beginning counselor becomes less anxious and more able to understand specific techniques (how to set a collaborative goal, how to redirect the client, how to combine empathy and directness, etc). Using these techniques, the counselor is able to describe and facilitate the therapeutic process. With regard to autonomy, early counselors-in-training are dependent on their instructors and supervisors to tell them what to do. Trainees often lack confidence and as they gain more confidence, they begin to be less dependent and more confident in themselves. Again, this is all normal so if you feel like what is described above, you are responding in a very normal and expected manner.

As early counselors gain more experience, a shift occurs to what Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987) describe as a Level 2 counselor (often occurs during internship). The Level 2 counselor is now able to move some of the self-focus over to other-focus and begins to attend to the cognitive and emotional experience of the client. In extreme cases, the counselor may over-identify with the client, becoming absorbed in the client's pain, depression, or joy. This loss of objectivity may result in the trainee feeling confused, pessimistic or optimistic. For the first time, the Level 2 trainee realizes that counseling is much more complex than previously thought. Now that they are able to use basic counseling skills effectively, trainees at this level are often assigned more difficult clients with more severe pathology. This may result in a state of disequilibrium for the trainee; the Level 2 trainee realizes that he or she lacks sufficient skills to work effectively with all clients. This trainee often fluctuates between wanting to be treated as an independent counselor and wanting to be dependent on a supervisor. Trainees can become uncertain about

their own ability to be a counselor which in turn adversely affects their motivation. Ambivalence and frustration are often common at this level of counselor development; trainees may feel ambivalent about their training program and faculty, as it is here that trainees realize their program and faculty have strengths and weaknesses (Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987).

Having weathered Level 2, the Level 3 counselor realizes how the client's emotional experience impacts him or her, while understanding how certain behaviors and techniques affect the client. Here the counselor is able to find a healthy balance between the two; he or she is able to move back and forth between focusing on the counselor's emotional experience and cognitive responses to the client and an awareness of what the client is experiencing. Information from both perspectives is integrated at the level; a deeper and more integrated understanding of the concepts relevant to the particular task and situation is developed. As a result of this deeper understanding, counselor motivation becomes more consistent. The Level 3 counselor is able to identify his or her strengths and weaknesses, as well as the limitations of the profession. At this level, the trainee is confident but consults with others when in doubt in particular situations.

It is important to remember that all counselors, regardless of their developmental level, have good and bad days. This development of a graduate student can be very trying and difficult at times. It is also a long-term process. In these difficult times, it is important to realize that this process is normal. If the developing counselor knows what this process entails, hopefully the ups and downs along the way won't be as unsettling and earth shattering. Hopefully it will be easier to discuss this process with site supervisors, peers, advisors and faculty members, knowing one is not alone in this process.

Stoltenberg, C. & Delworth, U. (1987). *Supervising Counselors and Therapists*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

## Practicum Hints

1. Consult with your Fieldwork professor to solicit suggestions for sites that would best match your interests. Be sure not to underestimate yourself; you may be capable of handling more than you think. Along those same lines, try not to take on too much. Your professor will be helpful in assisting you in potential site selections.
2. Descriptions of sites where former students have completed practica are provided in Fieldwork class by instructors and are listed online (address to be given in September). They are also included in the Blue Binders to be found in the area outside of the Counseling Psychology faculty offices.
3. Start gathering information to prepare your resume. Get samples from other students or professors. Be sure to include your phone number and email address on your resume so the site can contact you to arrange interviews. You will discuss your resume in Fieldwork, so do not worry if you are unsure what should and should not be included.
4. Consult with second-year students to hear feedback on various sites. This will include both professional and "off the record" information. Remember, you not only need to enjoy the challenge of your practicum site, you need to enjoy the staff and the population, too. For further information, you may also examine the "Blue Binders," which contain students' comments about sites from years past.
5. Discuss your anxiety over finding a site both in your Fieldwork class and with other students. It is important to remember that each of you is entering an unknown area, and it is challenging to maintain your well-being without supporting each other. Second-year students have been through this experience and survived. You will make it if you don't try to go it alone. Also, second-year students may have some tips regarding practicum sites of which the faculty may be unaware.
6. Keep a list of all potential sites, their phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and addresses, and the contact person. It is helpful to keep this list in your daily planner or near your phone at home. Then, as your calls begin to be returned, you will have any special notes and information available right at your fingertips. As you will be contacting many people, it is easy to become confused about the agencies.
7. Be clear which concentration you are in so you can tell the site how many hours a week you will need on site. Students in the Clinical Mental Health Concentration need 200 hours over 2 quarters because you will also be doing a 600-hour internship over three quarters in the second year. School Counseling students need 200 hours over 2 quarters, plus a 600-hour internship in a school. Everyone else needs 400 hours over 3 quarters.
8. Be sure to include a cover letter when sending your resume in the mail to potential sites. You want this letter to summarize the highlights of your resume in case they don't bother to look at the resume, or the two documents become separated.
9. Sending "Thank you" notes is helpful after you have completed interviews. This reminds the supervisor that you are really interested in the position and acknowledges that you're appreciative of the time they took out of their schedules to interview you.
10. BE PERSISTENT!!! Many organizations (especially mental health clinics) are slow in returning calls. If you do not hear from a site for a week and a half, don't be afraid to call them back. Sometimes the message does not get passed along in the first place. Also, calling to verify that your cover letter, application, and resume were received is a good reason for checking back with an organization that is slow in contacting you.

11. First year practicum can be done with populations from various and diverse backgrounds -- including adolescents and adults.
12. After scheduling an interview, consider how you would like to present yourself. Even if the site is a shelter or other "laid-back" organization, you want to make the best impression possible. If you take yourself seriously, others will, too!
13. When interviewing, be sure to take your time in answering questions. Responding with, "That's a good question - let me think about that for a moment" is much better than charging ahead without knowing where you're going. You will be respected more as an interviewee if you put some thought into your answers.
14. Always have questions to ask the interviewers. Following this section is a list of possible questions you can anticipate being asked, as well as good questions to ask your interviewer. Also, make sure that there will be a minimum of a full hour of supervision per week on site; this is not only a contract requirement, it is vital to your growth as a counselor.
15. Along those lines, it might be in your best interest to discuss, in detail, the type of clientele with whom you will be working. You need to make an attempt to have a good match between your ability level, your personality, and your past experience. Realistically, however, in some situations a perfect match is not possible. Again, your Fieldwork professor will be helpful in evaluating the match between you and your potential site.
16. As you continue through the interview process, it will be important to review the contract with your potential supervisor. If the site is unable to meet your particular requirements, it is not in your best interest to continue with the application process. You **MUST** have supervision for one hour per week on site; you **MUST** be able to audio or videotape your counseling sessions; you **MUST** be able to complete the required hours of direct client time. This last "MUST" sounds simple enough, but several students in the past have run into difficulty meeting this requirement, especially at sites where few individual client hours are available.
17. Good luck! You have many resources available to you - don't be afraid to utilize them. Remember, ask other students about their experiences looking for Practicum sites.
18. Be supportive of one another. This is not a competition. Everyone will get a site; sometimes it just takes a while. Before you commit to a site, be very certain that that is where you want to be. It is very inappropriate to change your mind and withdraw from a site because they may have turned other students down based on your acceptance. It does not reflect well on you, the program, or the University, so please be thoughtful about your decision.
19. All students are required to get malpractice insurance for practicum and internship. This can be obtained from APA or ACA and will be discussed in Fieldwork and Practicum courses. Students need to provide a copy of proof of insurance to your practicum and internship instructors prior to beginning practicum or internship.

### **Practicum Evaluation**

If a student receives a grade below a B- in practicum or internship for a quarter, the following steps will be taken:

1. The student will automatically be placed on probation (see section on Probation).
2. The student will be advised that he/she will not receive academic credit or credit for the number of hours spent in practicum during that quarter. The student will need to put in an

equal number of hours for credit over consecutive quarters to demonstrate improved performance.

3. If a change of practicum/internship site is necessary, the student will explain the situation to the faculty in writing and petition to find a new practicum site. If faculty agree to allow the student to change sites, the student (with faculty guidance) will locate an appropriate placement and receive approval from faculty before beginning at the new site.
4. The student will receive a letter from the faculty stating the remedial activities and education that are required to address the deficiency and to remove the probationary status.
5. There may be several different types of activities required of the student in order for them to address the deficiencies that resulted in probation. These may include retaking courses, taking additional courses, obtaining additional supervision, and depending upon the student's needs, the faculty may require that the student enter into appropriate medical treatment and/or psychological therapy, to be paid for by the student.
6. It will be the student's responsibility to provide appropriate documentation that the requirements have been met.

### **Practicum Interviews**

#### **Questions you could ask your interviewer(s)**

1. What theoretical orientations are used?
2. How do the different disciplines (psychiatrists, social workers, psychologists, nurses, etc.) interact and work together?
3. What would a typical day be like for a trainee?
4. What types of psychopathology am I likely to encounter? How much diversity is there in type of problem and severity?
5. What are the strengths (and weaknesses or limitations) of the site?
6. How are supervisors (and rotations) decided?
7. How many practicum slots are available? Are any of them funded? Are any pre-allocated to a certain university?
8. How much interaction occurs between trainees?
9. How many hours of supervision each week? What kind?
10. Can I talk to an intern?
11. Are group counseling services offered here?
12. Will I be able to co-lead/co-facilitate a group?
13. Please describe multicultural diversity as it applies to your professional staff, the client population served, and your agency's services.

#### **Questions you may be asked in your interview(s)**

1. What is your theoretical orientation?
2. What are your strengths (and weaknesses or limitations)?
3. What is your time availability?
4. What type of clients do you and don't you want to work with?
5. What would you do if a client said they were suicidal?
6. What are the DU requirements for your practicum?
7. Are you interested in doing group counseling?
8. Talk about your experience with diverse cultures?

# FIELDWORK

CNP 4743 FIELDWORK IN COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

## MONTHLY HOURS LOG

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Month/Quarter/And/Year \_\_\_\_\_

Site \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ Phone/Email \_\_\_\_\_

| Dates                 | Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 | Week 4 | (Week 5) |     |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----------|-----|
| Fieldwork Class Hours |        |        |        |        |          | (A) |

### Supervision Hours

|                        |  |  |  |  |  |     |
|------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|-----|
| Individual Supervision |  |  |  |  |  |     |
| Group Supervision      |  |  |  |  |  |     |
| Subtotal               |  |  |  |  |  | (B) |

### Training Hours

|   |  |  |  |  |  |     |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|-----|
| Orientation                                   |  |  |  |  |  |     |
| Observation                                   |  |  |  |  |  |     |
| Workshop Attended                             |  |  |  |  |  |     |
| Staff Meeting/Staff Training                  |  |  |  |  |  |     |
| Other Training (Specify here or attach notes) |  |  |  |  |  |     |
| Subtotal                                      |  |  |  |  |  | (C) |

### Administrative/Case Management

|   |  |  |  |  |  |     |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|-----|
| On-Site Program Planning                            |  |  |  |  |  |     |
| On-Site Research/Reading Etc.<br>(Explain/Describe) |  |  |  |  |  |     |
| Other (Explain or attach notes)                     |  |  |  |  |  |     |
| Subtotal  |  |  |  |  |  | (D) |

Total Quarter Hours This Month

# FIELDWORK

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Quarter/Year \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Fieldwork Class Instructor/Section \_\_\_\_\_

Site \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ Phone/Email \_\_\_\_\_

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|                        | Cumulative Hours |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Fieldwork Class Hours  |                  |
| Supervision Hours      |                  |
| Individual Supervision |                  |
| Group Supervision      |                  |
| Subtotal               |                  |

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Orientation/Training Hours |  |
| Subtotal                   |  |

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Administration/Case Management Hours |  |
| Subtotal                             |  |

Total Fieldwork Hours

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|