



The University of West Alabama
Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC)
Master's Program Handbook
2023-2024

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To Students and Prospective Students:

Welcome to the Counselor Education Master's Program at The University of West Alabama. This handbook serves as a guide with valuable information for you as a current or prospective student. It was developed and revised based on student recommendations and years of faculty experience.

This handbook is updated yearly. We value your feedback about program procedures, policies, and practices, so be sure to discuss any potential changes with your advisor. Counselor Education Program Faculty members honor your opinions and depend on you to keep us informed about how the program is serving you.

Based on your major and last name, you will be assigned a Faculty Mentor. Your Faculty Mentor is well-prepared to serve in their role, has a full grasp on the curricular program, and has a strong understanding of the process (for both full-time and part-time students) to navigate the program, including understanding the purpose and timing of clinical placements. In addition, your Faculty Mentor will be aware of the resources available to you.

If, after reading the Handbook, you have questions, contact your Faculty Mentor with any questions related to your UWA experience. Faculty Mentors are assigned to students as they enter the program based on which counseling program they have enrolled in and their last name. Each Faculty Mentor is listed below, along with the program and last names they mentor.

Sincerely,

Necoal Driver, Ph.D., LPC

Coordinator of Clinical Experiences

Faculty Mentor, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Last Names A-G

ndriver@uwa.edu

Deborah Grant, Ph.D., LPC-S, CRC, NCC

Core Faculty

Faculty Mentor, School Counseling / Guidance and Counseling Last Names A-L

dgrant@uwa.edu

Kelly Owenby, Ph.D., LPC-S

Core Faculty

Faculty Mentor, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Last Names P-Z

kowenby@uwa.edu

Doris Vaughans, Ph.D., LPC-S, NCC, TMHC

Core Faculty

Faculty Mentor, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Last Names H-O

dvaughans@uwa.edu

Nisha Warbington, Ph.D., LPC-S, NCC

Core Faculty

Faculty Mentor, School Counseling / Guidance and Counseling Last Names M-Z

Brad Willis, Ph.D., LPC-S

Counseling Program Coordinator

bwillis@uwa.edu

Mission

Our Counseling Program strives to provide a brighter future for individuals, families, and communities. We do this by training emerging counselors to:

- Celebrate creativity, knowledge, & diversity.
- View counseling as both an art and a science by providing them with the practical tools and knowledge to help facilitate change.
- Grow into culturally competent practitioners by providing students with cultural learning experiences.
- Advocate for client well-being through innovation and collaboration.
- Involve the clients in learning the resources needed to foster client self-efficacy.
- Utilize clinical skills related to a wide variety of counseling services while maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards.
- Know and apply skills that support multiple counseling services needs in a framework of national, state, and local ethical and professional standards.
- Lead productive, responsible, and enriched lives.

CMHC Program Objectives

Upon successful completion of the program, all students will be able to:

1. Articulate the elements related to professional identity, including the history and philosophy of the counseling profession, the value of professional organizations, the need for legal and ethical practice, and advocating for the profession and clients that are served.
2. Demonstrate knowledge and awareness of social and cultural diversity issues in counseling and be able to implement culturally sensitive counseling interventions.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of human growth and development and will be able to apply personality and learning theories to facilitate change and growth in individuals and family systems at all developmental levels and in multicultural contexts.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of career development theories and methods and be able to apply career counseling skills to facilitate client exploration and problem-solving.
5. Demonstrate knowledge of helping processes and will have the interviewing and counseling skills to facilitate client engagement in counseling.
6. Demonstrate a theoretical and experiential understanding of group purposes, development, dynamics, theories, and methods in a multicultural society, and will be able to apply these skills to facilitate group processes.
7. Demonstrate knowledge of individual and group approaches for assessment and evaluation in a multicultural society and will be able to apply these skills to facilitate the helping process.
8. Demonstrate knowledge of research and program evaluation and will be able to apply basic quantitative and qualitative research skills.
9. Articulate the role and practice of the clinical mental health counselor in a professional setting.

Program Admission Requirements

Phase I: Graduate School Admission

- Meet the requirements to be admitted to the School of Graduate Studies.
- Provide verification of background clearance/fingerprints.

Phase II: Counseling Program Admissions Portfolio

Candidates must submit a portfolio to the program for review. The portfolio affords a candidate the opportunity to provide valuable information regarding:

- Relevance of Career Goals
- Aptitude for Graduate-level study
- Potential success in forming effective counseling relationships
- Respect for cultural differences.

The application includes:

1. Resume including educational background, a record of employment, and volunteer activities.
2. Professional Goals Essay
3. Three completed Recommendation for Admission Forms.
4. Video Interview

Faculty Mentoring

Your Faculty Mentor is a full-time faculty member in the counseling program at UWA. Your Faculty Mentor will work with you during your entire time in the program. ** Your faculty mentor will not replace your academic advisor but can work with you to complement the services offered by academic advising.*

Your Faculty Mentor will assist in your socialization into the counseling programs and the counseling profession in the following ways:

- Introduce you to relevant persons, processes, and resources within the graduate system.
- Help you understand your responsibilities as an adult learner.
- Provide support and encouragement to you as you transition into the role of graduate student.
- Assist you to make connections with graduate faculty whose expertise is within your area of interest.
- Assist you with specific questions you may have about the profession.
- Assist you with specific remediation strategies if you are struggling.

Your Faculty Mentor can assist in curriculum guidance in the following ways:

- Help you understand the conceptual basis of the curriculum.
- Assist you with course planning.
- Help you identify conferences and seminars relevant to your education and career goals

You can expect the following from your Faculty Mentor:

- To respond to any questions you might have regarding the program (i.e., course planning, field experience, and/or the comprehensive exam).
- To monitor your progress in the program and discuss any concerns during mentor/mentee meetings.
- To complete a minimum of three mentor/mentee meetings which are required and graded assignments in CO501, CO509, and CO545.
- Address any concerns regarding your progress in the program.
- Evaluate professional dispositions during each of the three required mentor/mentee meetings.
- Encourage participation in professional counseling organizations, counseling workshops/seminars, and explore ways to develop your counselor identity.

What your faculty mentor expects from you:

- Communicate with your faculty mentor regarding problems, issues or circumstances that might prevent you from successfully completing the courses and program.
- Meet the professional dispositions of the counseling profession.
- Attend scheduled meetings or notify your mentor in a timely manner if a scheduled meeting needs to be rescheduled.

If you have any questions about the Faculty Mentor Program, please contact your mentor or Dr. Brad Willis, Program Coordinator of Counseling Programs at bwillis@uwa.edu.

Course of Study – MS Clinical Mental Health Counseling

1. Professional Courses: 9 hours

*The * course must be completed prior to registering for CO589 Internship in Clinical Mental Health Counseling*

CO506 Life-Span Development and Learning (3)

*ED504 Techniques of Educational Research (3)

ED506 Educational Statistics (3)

2. Concentration Courses: 45 hours

The * courses must be completed prior to registering for CO558 Practicum in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. *Special fees information is noted in red.*

*CO500 Professional Orientation (3) *(State counseling association student fee which will vary by state)*

*CO501 Introduction to Clinical Mental Health Counseling (3) *(\$228 fee to purchase Tevera)*

*CO541 Theories and Techniques of Counseling (3)

*CO544 Strategies for Crisis Intervention (3)

*CO546 Group Counseling (3)

*CO520 Psychopathology (3)

*CO509 Pre-Practicum in Counseling with Residency (3) *(ACA student membership fee \$105)*

CO530 Theories and Techniques of Distance Counseling (3)

CO542 Career Development and Counseling (3)

CO543 Counseling Children and Adolescents (3)

CO545 Diagnostic Techniques in Counseling (3)

CO547 Counseling Multicultural Populations (3)

CO558 Practicum in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (3) - requires 2 terms to complete.

CO589 Internship in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (6) - Can take up to one year (*Professional development training- \$ amount will vary depending on student's choice of training*)

3. Six (6) hours of approved electives (refer to UWA's [Graduate School Catalog](#) for listing of electives)

Total Required: 60 hours

**If you plan to obtain a state license in any state other than Alabama, you need to review that state's licensing board's educational requirements BEFORE you take any electives. Some states require the completion of courses not included in the required courses listed above. You can fulfill that state's course requirement by using the two electives (6 semester hours) to take those courses. Please contact your mentor if you have any questions about what elective you need to take based on the state in which you plan to obtain licensure.

Counseling Programs Standards Crosswalk

UWA Program Objective	CO 500	CO 501	CO 506	CO 509	CO 540	CO 541	CO 542	CO 543	CO 544	CO 545	CO 546	CO 547	CO 548	CO 558	CO 579	CO 589	ED 504
<p>PLO 1 - Professional Orientation and Ethical Practice - Professional Orientation and Ethical Practice</p> <p>Students will be able to articulate the elements related to professional identity including the history and philosophy of the counseling profession, the value of professional organizations, the need for legal and ethical practice, and advocating for the profession and clients that are served. (CACREP 2F.1.d.i.)</p>	X	X		X	X								X	X	X	X	
<p>PLO 2 – Social and Cultural Diversity</p> <p>Students will have knowledge and awareness of social and cultural diversity issues in counseling and be able to</p>		X			X				X		X	X	X	X	X		

implement culturally sensitive counseling interventions. (CACREP 2F.2.a,b,d.)																	
PLO 3 - Human Growth and Development Students are able to demonstrate an understanding of development across the lifespan and the impact on normal and abnormal functioning. (CACREP 2F.3.e,g.)			X				X										
PLO 4 – Career Development Students will have knowledge of career development theories and methods and be able to apply career counseling skills to facilitate client exploration and problem solving. (CACREP 2F.4.c,f,i.)						X											
PLO 5 - Helping Relationships Students are able to demonstrate the skills necessary to engage in an effective and therapeutic helping relationship. (CACREP 2F.5.b,i.)			X	X		X					X	X	X	X			
PLO 6 – Group Work Students will have a theoretical and experiential understanding of group purposes, development, dynamics, theories, and methods in a multicultural society, and will be able to apply these skills to facilitate group processes. (CACREP 2F.6.b,f.)							X		X								

PLO 7 – Assessment Students demonstrate the ability to identify effective assessment strategies in order to facilitate treatment planning. (CACREP 2F.7.e,i.)		X			X				X									X
PLO 8 - Research and Program Evaluation Students will demonstrate an understanding of research methods to inform evidence-based practice. (CACREP 2F.8.a,j.)		X			X				X									X
PLO 9 - CMHC The Clinical Mental Health Counseling student will articulate the role and practice of the clinical mental health counselor in a professional setting. (CACREP 5C.1.c; 2.d.)	X	X																
PLO 10 - School Counseling The School Counseling student will articulate the role and practice of the school counselor in a professional setting. (CACREP 5G.1.b; 2.a.)	X				X													

Program Completion Requirements

- A cumulative grade-point average of no less than 3.25 on a four-point scale on all work attempted with no grade less than a “C”.
- A passing score on the Counselor Education Comprehensive Examination (CECE).
- Successful completion of one practicum for 100 clock hours and 600 clock hours of an internship supervised jointly by a site supervisor and a UWA counseling program faculty member.

Comprehensive Examination

All counseling students are required to pass a comprehensive examination. Successful completion of a comprehensive exam is part of the graduation requirements. Students enrolled in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) program must pass the Counselor Education Comprehensive Examination (CECE). The CECE is an internal University of West Alabama comprehensive exam used to test the student’s knowledge of CACREP’s eight core standards: Professional Orientation & Ethical Practices,

Social & Cultural Diversity, Human Growth & Development, Career Development, Counseling & Helping Relationships, Group Counseling, Assessments & Testing, and Research & Program Evaluation.

The exam consists of 120 multiple-choice questions. The exam fee is \$50. Students may register to take the exam once they have completed 48 semester hours. The Office of Graduate Studies will handle the scheduling and administration of the exam. Students will not be allowed to graduate until they have passed the exam.

To register for the exam, students will need to use the following link: [CECE registration](#). Students can also find the registration link and study materials in the Clinical Mental Health Program Information course in Blackboard. The deadline for registering for the exam each term and the day the exam will be administered can be found in the academic calendar.

Liability Insurance

All students in CMHC Practicum and Internship must have a current membership in The American Counseling Association (ACA). ACA provides complimentary professional liability insurance to ACA's Master's Level Students. For more information, visit www.counseling.org.

UWA's CMHC Clinical Experience

The University of West Alabama's Clinical Experiences Component contains three separate experiences: Residency, Practicum, and Internship. These experiences provide the opportunity for candidates to apply knowledge gained in their courses, to collaborate with clinical mental health personnel, to practice counseling skills, and to reflect upon experiences under the direction of practiced on-site and university supervisors.

Clinical experiences are expected to take place in diverse learning environments. Diverse settings include clients with exceptionalities and clients from diverse ethnic/racial, linguistics, gender, and socioeconomic groups.

Pre-Practicum CO509 - Residency

CO509, Pre-Practicum, is the first step in the Clinical Experiences journey. CO509 is a required experiential course involving applied elements of theoretical models and customary helping skills to orient and prepare students for their initial supervised work with counseling clients. CO509 is a full semester course (two back-to-back online terms) taught three times per year: Fall, Spring, and Summer.

CO509 requires a four-day residency on our campus. All UWA Counseling students must be prepared to attend the residency. Residencies run from Thursday – Sunday.

Should you need to fly out on Sunday, please schedule as late as possible to allow yourself plenty of travel time. The residency usually ends at 5:00 pm Central on Sunday.

2023-2024 Residency Dates:

Sept. 28- Oct. 1, 2023

April 4-7, 2024

June 27-30, 2024

Coursework Details:

The course will open in Blackboard at the start of the semester for which you are registered.

There will be a course schedule just like in all your other classes. Prior to the on-campus portion of the course, you will have reading and viewing materials that will better prepare you for the on-campus coursework.

During the residency, students will spend the majority of their time in lectures, seeing skill demonstrations, and practicing skills. Students will also participate in a group experience with classmates.

Following your departure, you will have graded assignments to submit. These will consist of videos of demonstration of skills learned during the week and other "wrap-up" assignments that will be due within approximately 10 days following the conclusion of the residency.

Lodging:

Students within driving distance are welcome to commute back and forth to residency each day. However, we find that most students prefer to stay on or near campus. Specific lodging options vary from term to term and will be provided to you upon registration for CO509.

CO509: Practicum Site & Supervisor Approval

In CO509, you will need to begin taking formal action to prepare for starting the practicum. Obtaining a site placement for a practicum or internship is a collaborative process between the student, the field experience coordinator (Dr. Driver), and the agency personnel (typically the potential site supervisor). Initial identification of potential sites and site supervisor is made by the student. For information on how to obtain a site placement, see *Locating a Practicum or Internship Site* a couple of sections below this section.

We expect students to start looking for potential sites and supervisors by the second week in CO509. By the mid-point of CO509, students should have located potential site(s) and site supervisor(s). Students can consider placements that are already approved within the UWA Site Placement Directory found in Tevera, or a new placement can be requested.

Once a potential site is identified, if students have any questions about whether or not the site and/or the potential site supervisor are acceptable, they need to contact their mentor and/or the clinical experiences coordinator to determine if the site or supervisor meet requirements. If it is deemed a viable placement, students will then submit the necessary documents within Tevera. In Tevera, go to site placements and complete the following forms:

- Request for Placement Form
- Student Liability Insurance Document
- Site Supervisor Registry and Agreement

*Site Supervisors must review the UWA Site Supervisor Training material at uwa.edu/counselingprograms. They must complete the training prior to completing the Site Supervisor Registry and Agreement form.

- Supervisor's License or Certification

Practicum/Internship Site Approval

- Once all forms are signed by the student AND the site supervisor, the Clinical Experiences Coordinator (Dr. Driver) will review your site and your site supervisor. The Clinical Experiences Coordinator will let you know if your site is approved, typically within five days.
- If, after five days, you have not heard from the Clinical Experiences Coordinator, students may reach out by email to ndriver@uwa.edu requesting an update.
- It is possible that your site will not be approved. If this happens, you will need to find another site, complete the necessary paperwork, and resubmit in Tevera. The Clinical Experiences Coordinator will assist you with this process.

Once final approval is granted, students are eligible to enroll in CO558 Practicum. Students are not allowed to be enrolled in CO558 without an approved site in Tevera. On the Friday prior to each term, any student enrolled in the CO558 course without an approved site in Tevera will be dropped from the class. Students may not begin to record hours OR engage with clients prior to the start of the term in which they are enrolled in the CO558 course. Prior to the start of the term, students may go to their site for orientation (if required by the site), but the time spent in orientation prior to the start of the term cannot be counted in the 100 hours of required practicum work at the site. If students attend orientation at their approved site AFTER the term begins, those hours may be counted as indirect training hours.

Practicum courses last 2 terms, and internships can last as much as 1 calendar year (6 terms) but are typically completed within 6-9 months.

Please be aware: If you are doing your Practicum or Internship at multiple locations under different supervisors, you will need to submit an additional request for each site in Tevera.

Site Supervisors

To be approved as a Site Supervisor, the proposed site supervisor must:

- Hold a minimum of a master's degree.
- Hold relevant certifications and/or licenses (All supervisors must be licensed within the discipline in which they are working, e.g., Licensed Professional Counselor, Licensed School Counselor, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Licensed Social Worker, Licensed Addictions Counselor, Licensed Psychologist, etc.).
- Have a minimum of two years of pertinent professional experience in the specialty area and be currently practicing in that specialty area.
- Have knowledge of UWA's expectations, requirements, and evaluation procedures for students and training.
- Have received relevant counselor supervision training, which can be met by reviewing the Clinical Mental Health Counselor Supervisor Orientation training at uwa.edu/counselingprograms.

The Site Supervisor serves as a mentor to the student by facilitating the student's integration into the clinical system. Common activities performed by a Site Supervisor include:

- Orienting the student to organizational policies and procedures.
- Allowing students to observe and co-lead clinical activities;
- Assisting the student in building an appropriate caseload; and
- Facilitating the student's efforts to fulfill the required practicum and internship activities.

The Site Supervisor has final authority for all decisions and/or actions taken about the student's roles and activities while engaging in practicum or internship activities within the organization. While the Site Supervisor is not responsible for the final grade of a practicum or internship student, they will formally evaluate the student's performance in individual and group counseling sessions. In addition, they will be asked to provide a brief mid-point and final report regarding the student's clinical experience via an online platform. The site supervisor will also collaborate with the university supervisor on a regular schedule throughout the placement.

Site Supervisor Training

UWA will provide training for Site Supervisors. Detailed information on Site Supervisor training will be located in the Site Supervisor Handbook. It is the student's responsibility to provide a copy of the Site Supervisor Handbook to their Supervisor prior to Practicum and Internship. The handbook and other important information are housed on the [Counseling Programs webpage](#).

University Supervision Requirements for Practicum and Internship Students

Practicum and Internship require that you attend University Supervision via Zoom each week. University Supervision lasts 1.5 hours weekly. When you register for CO548 or CO579, you can see what sections are available. Each section shows the day and time of supervision. Try to select a day and time that works best for you. Attendance is mandatory. Plan so you don't have other obligations during that time.

Prerequisites for Practicum in CMHC (CO558):

CO500 Professional Orientation
 CO501 Introduction to Clinical Mental Health Counseling
 CO541 Theories and Techniques of Counseling
 CO544 Strategies in Crisis Intervention
 CO546 Group Counseling
 CO520 Psychopathology
 CO509 Pre-Practicum with Residency

Practicum in CMHC (CO558)

The practicum involves obtaining 100 supervised clinical hours over two full academic terms (i.e., Fall 1/Fall 2, Spring 1/Spring 2, etc.) within a CMHC setting. Of the 100 hours, 40 must be direct client contact hours. Practicum also requires weekly supervision with both your on-site Supervisor and your university supervisor.

You will have TWO full terms to complete the 100 hours and must be active at your site for the length of both terms (16 weeks if practicum is being completed in two 8-week terms OR 12 weeks if practicum is being completed in two 6-week summer terms).

Practicum Grade:

- A grade of “IP” (In Progress) will be assigned at the end of the first term and will remain in place until the end of the second term. At that time, the grade will be changed to the appropriate letter grade.
- An “F” will be assigned if time expires, and the course will need to be repeated.
- If a student is terminated from their practicum site, an “F” will be assigned, all hours accrued will be lost, and the course will need to be repeated.

Prerequisites for Internship in CMHC (CO589):

CO558 Practicum in Clinical Mental Health Counseling
ED504 Educational Research

Internship in CMHC (CO589)

The internship course requires students to obtain 600 supervised clinical hours. Of the 600 hours, 240 must be direct contact hours. *Note: Internship hours may not be obtained prior to the start of the internship course. Any practicum hours obtained over the 100 hours required may not count toward internship hours.

Students are given approximately one year to complete the internship course. Most students complete internship within 4-5 terms, but occasionally some students need the full year to complete the required hours.

Internship Grade:

- A grade of “IP” (In Progress) will be assigned at the end of the first term and will remain in place until the course is complete OR time expires (see internship due date below). At that time, it will be changed to the appropriate letter grade.
- An “F” will be assigned if time expires, and the course will need to be repeated.
- If a student is terminated from their internship site, an “F” will be assigned, all hours accrued will be lost, and the course will need to be repeated.

Direct and Indirect Contact Hours

Direct contact hours include any activity in which the practicum or internship student is meeting face-to-face with clients. Examples of direct contact hours:

- individual counseling
- group counseling
- Sitting in on the Site Supervisor’s individual or group sessions
- intake interviews
- completing paperwork with the client present

Indirect contact hours include any activity related to counseling functions that do not include face-to-face meetings with clients. Examples of indirect contact hours:

- supervision hours

- record-keeping
- filing of records
- planning sessions
- consultation
- attending in-services
- attending conferences

Remember that the emphasis is for direct contact hours to include the actual face-to-face meeting with the client and the provision of a counseling service. If there is a question about how to categorize an activity, please contact your University Supervisor.

Practicum, Internships, and Tevera

What is Tevera?

UWA and Tevera have partnered to help facilitate your Practicum and Internship. Tevera allows you to:

- Search for approved field sites that complement your professional interests and personal strengths.
- Apply for and confirm your field placements online.
- Track your hours toward graduation.
- Run time-tracking reports for your site and university supervisors to approve.
- Automate the process for submitting site evaluations and other program assessments.

How Do I Access Tevera?

Students will be required to purchase Tevera as part of the CO501 Introduction to Clinical Mental Health Counseling course. The cost for Tevera is \$228.00. Instructions on how to purchase Tevera are provided in CO501.

To learn more about using Tevera while in the program, students can begin exploring anytime.

1. In your web browser, visit uwa.tevera.app and find the Student Hub to get an overview of Tevera's benefits.
2. Add noreply@app.tevera.com to your Contacts to ensure that you receive the registration email.

Locating a Practicum or Internship Site

Students are responsible for identifying and contacting potential practicum and internship sites. Although it is the student's responsibility to locate and secure a practicum and internship placement, the field experiences coordinator and the student's faculty mentor can help any student struggling to find a placement within their community. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the field experiences coordinator or your faculty mentor if you have tried long and hard to find your own placement without success.

Selecting an appropriate site is essential for the greatest benefit. Students should discuss possible sites with their faculty mentor early in their program. The first term during which a counseling student is enrolled is not too early to begin thinking about practicum and internship placements. As the student and the faculty mentor construct a degree plan, they will be projecting times for practicum and

internship, which will assist the student in planning well in advance. The reason to start finding a placement early is that you will have lots of time to visit sites, meet potential supervisors, and file forms with the University. It can take several weeks or longer before everything is in order. If you can secure a practicum or internship site prior to taking CO509, then you are well ahead of the game.

COVID-19 has changed the mental health counseling environment by increasing the demand and need for telehealth counseling/virtual counseling. Now that telehealth/virtual counseling is readily available at many sites, it is important that we, as a program, clearly identify what is allowed and not allowed as it relates to telehealth/virtual counseling. Practicum students are NOT allowed to complete their hours at a fully virtual site. Practicum students may complete their hours at a site that offers telehealth/virtual counseling, and practicum students may participate in some telehealth/virtual counseling, BUT the majority of the hours accrued MUST be in-person direct client contact. Internship students may complete their internship hours at a fully virtual site, BUT they must obtain a recommendation from their university practicum supervisor before a fully virtual site will be approved by the field experiences coordinator for internship. It is also expected that students and site supervisors be knowledgeable about laws within each state as to telemental health counseling and follow those laws as it relates to practicing across state lines.

Some suggestions for potential sites in your area are:

- Community mental health agencies
- Substance abuse treatment facilities
- Inpatient psychiatric hospital units
- Residential treatment facilities (mental health, substance abuse, eating disorders, etc.)
- University's student counseling centers
- Department of Rehabilitation Services
- Foster care group homes
- Correctional facilities that offer counseling programs to inmates
- Private practices that have multiple counselors

Helpful Suggestions for Locating a Practicum or Internship Site

Clinical Mental Health Counseling students can conduct a browser search of counseling-related agencies in their local area.

Ask other students if they know of any possibilities. Network!

Before you move forward with an interview, check these two things:

- Can the site meet all of my needs as a practicum student/intern?
- Does the Potential Supervisor actually have all of the required qualifications?

Can the Site Accommodate Your Needs?

Students must select sites with some of these questions in mind:

- Is the potential Site Supervisor willing and able to supervise you weekly?
- Can you obtain the required number of direct contact hours?
- Is it possible to earn the total number of hours?

Interns also need to consider the types of experiences available to them at a potential site. Consider the population of the clients you may find at the site.

- Would this fit your interest?
- What types of services are offered (individual, small group, educational)?
- What theoretical orientations are used? Does this interest you?
- Would it be helpful to gain insight from this agency?

Making Initial Contact with A Potential Site and Supervisor

1. Find out the protocol for how the organization handles practicum and internship requests. Some organizations have a clinical coordinator who coordinates placements. Other organizations might wish to involve the director of the organization in that process. Make sure you begin with the appropriate source. Find out if your needs match the policies of that system. For example, is a part-time internship possible? Do I need to take a leave of absence to be approved for a placement? Is there paperwork that must be filed to formally request placement?
2. Next, when possible, you should convey interest and utilize all modes of communication. You should call, email, and visit the site personally OR follow the previously discussed protocol for requesting a placement based on the guidelines of the potential site.
3. Contact the possible Site Supervisor or other appropriate contact. Prior to the initial meeting, send them a letter explaining your request and a copy of your resume. Set up an interview/meeting with the possible Site Supervisor at the site. Prior to the meeting, familiarize yourself with your responsibilities, the Site Supervisor's responsibilities, and the responsibilities of your site.

Clinical Placement Request Cover

Your Name

Current Street Address
Current email address • Phone Number
Permanent Address • City, State • Zip Code

Today's Date

(Name and address of contact)

Dear _____,

In the upcoming months, I will be completing the coursework for my Master of Arts degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) from the University of West Alabama. I am currently searching out various internship opportunities and was wondering about the possibility of doing a (100-hour **Practicum or 600-hour Internship – enter the appropriate hours**) with **(enter agency name, as well as semester and year for interest)**. My interest in this position stems from **(list reason for interest)**.

In addition to my Master's degree, I received **(insert degrees, dates, and institutions)**. **Insert sentences about personal characteristics that will appeal to an employer. Insert leadership positions currently held in the community and any professional development/organization membership.**

Insert a summary of why the employer would want you to work for them. Also, in this paragraph, how you found out about the internship can be mentioned (It can be helpful to use someone's name if they work for the company).

I am very interested in an internship position with **(enter agency name)**. I have enclosed my resume for you to review. If you desire further information, I can be reached at **(enter phone number here)**. Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Your Name Here

How to Behave During a Practicum or Internship Interview

- Present yourself professionally (appropriate interview attire)
- Bring necessary items, e.g., resume, etc.
- Display good posture
- Do not chew gum
- Practice appropriate eye-contact
- Listen attentively
- Smile enough to convey your interest and positive attitude
- Sound enthusiastic and interested, yet sincere
- Turn off all electronic devices
- Send a thank you letter, email, etc., thanking the potential site/supervisor for their time and consideration. Handwritten notes are always special.

Interview Questions that May Be Asked of You

- What are your expectations for this Practicum/ Internship experience?
- How do you handle conflict or stress?
- You disagree with how your supervisor has rated skills/development/performance at your site. How would you handle this?
- What are your areas of growth, and what are your strengths?
- Why are you interested in completing your Practicum/ Internship at our facility?
- What do you hope to gain from your Practicum/ Internship?
- What is your experience working with diverse populations?
- What are your future career goals?
- Explain the qualifications of an on-Site Supervisor.
- Tell me about UWA's counseling program:
 - What courses have you taken?
 - What is expected of an intern?
 - How long is an internship?
 - What is expected of a Site Supervisor?
 - Is there a training program for the Site Supervisor?
 - What questions do you have about this site?

Interview Questions You Will Want to Ask

- What will my duties be?
- Have you ever supervised a Practicum/ Internship student before, and if so, what was your experience? If not, what is your expectation?
- Will you be able to meet my program's requirements?
- What are your licenses/credentials, experience, and supervision training?
- Tell me about your site's population demographics.
- What can you tell me about your agency/ practice, etc.?
- What experiences can you provide me with as a Practicum/Internship student?

Additional Notes

Remember, sites have the option of offering or declining to offer a student intern applicant placement. In either case, be gracious.

Some sites may require job orientation/ training, background checks, and drug testing before a student can begin the work experience. Know the process so you don't lose valuable time.

Memorandums of Agreement

Find out if your site requires a written contract between the site and University that is above and beyond the Practicum/ Internship Registration document. If so, follow up with the Clinical Experiences Coordinator for assistance in beginning this process.

Professional Development

Students are encouraged to join and maintain membership in professional counseling organizations. Such memberships offer students additional learning opportunities and allow the students to be introduced to the professional world of counseling. Through engagement with professional counseling organizations, students will be exposed to professional issues and leaders in the counseling profession. Membership in some professional counseling organizations offer students the opportunity to join email lists that provide access to job postings as well as access to professional development trainings. Below is a list of names and websites of different professional counseling organizations:

Alabama Counseling Association (<http://www.alabamacounseling.org/>)

American Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (<http://acesonline.net/>)

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (<https://www.aamft.org/>)

American Counseling Association (<http://www.counseling.org/>)

American Mental Health Counseling Association (<http://www.amhca.org/>)

American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (<http://www.arcaweb.org/>)

American School Counseling Association (<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/>)

NAADAC The Association for Addiction Professionals (<https://www.naadac.org/>)

Southern Association of Counselor Education and Supervision
(<http://www.saces.org/>)

** Each state has its own counseling association. It is recommended that school counseling students join the professional counseling association of the state if they intend to pursue certification.

Student Retention and Dismissal Policy

The University of West Alabama Counseling Programs

This policy applies to all students enrolled in the Counseling Programs in the College of Education.

As part of meeting the program objectives set forth in the Department of Counseling Program Student Handbooks and Graduate Catalog, students are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical, responsible, and professional manner. This process is to ensure students demonstrate appropriate

progress toward developing the necessary behaviors, attitudes, and professional competencies to practice as a counselor-in-training. Student progress is routinely monitored and discussed during faculty meetings and in consultation with other faculty members.

At the onset of their academic program, students are directed to review these standards and seek clarification when needed.

In order to successfully complete the program and be endorsed for any relevant certifications or licensure, students must demonstrate academic performance meeting or exceeding department standards in all settings, including classes, advising sessions, clinical sites, and all verbal and written communication, including:

1. Follow all academic requirements as outlined in the Graduate Catalog
2. Demonstrate fitness in their interactions with others as measured on the *Counseling Student Evaluation*

Standards, which include the following competencies:

1. Follows ethical and legal considerations
2. Displays multicultural competence
3. Open to new ideas
4. Aware of own impact on others
5. Responsive, adaptable, and cooperative
6. Receptive to and uses feedback
7. Responds to conflict appropriately
8. Accepts personal responsibility
9. Expresses feelings effectively and appropriately
10. Dependable in meeting obligations

3. Conform to the codes of ethics of professional associations in counseling and all related national and state licensure and certification boards.

The Evaluation Process:

Students' competence is evaluated using the *Counseling Student Evaluation Standards* and documented with the *Counseling Students Evaluation Form*. All students will be reviewed by individual faculty using the Standards during CO509, Pre-practicum in Counseling, CO548/558, Practicum, CO579/589, Internship, and as necessary throughout the program.

Admission to the program does not guarantee fitness to remain in the program. In addition, a review may be initiated on any student at any time if a faculty member, staff, course instructor, program mentor, or field supervisor believes the student has displayed behavior that suggests the student does not possess sufficient competency in one or more criteria. Faculty also may initiate a review at any time for:

1. Students who engage in illegal or unethical behaviors,
2. Students who present a threat to the well-being of others, or
3. Students who violate the UWA Student Code of Conduct, any other applicable UWA policies or procedures, or any other Counseling Programs policies or procedures.

In such cases, depending upon the circumstances, the evaluation process may result in the student being dismissed from the Counseling Program without the opportunity for remediation. Faculty members, staff, course instructors, program mentors, and field supervisors may evaluate all students according to these standards. Students will have the opportunity to participate and respond at each step of the process. Performance on the standards will be rated on a scale of 1 (Unacceptable) to 3 (Target) as described in the Standards. A rating of 2 or 3 on all standards will indicate competence. The Evaluation Form will then be shared with the student. A rating of 1 on any of the standards will initiate the following procedure:

1. The student will be contacted to schedule a meeting to review the Evaluation Form. The meeting will be held with the issuing faculty member unless the process was initiated because the student engaged in illegal or unethical activities, presented a threat to the wellbeing of others, or violated the UWA Student Code of Conduct (in which case, the meeting will be held with a faculty review committee, as outlined in Step 3 below). The student has five business days to respond to the request to schedule a meeting. If the student does not respond by the close of business on the fifth business day, the matter will proceed to step 3 below.
2. At the meeting, the issuing faculty will review the Evaluation Form with the student and discuss a remediation plan. Within ten business days after the meeting, the issuing faculty will provide a final copy of the remediation plan (incorporating any changes agreed upon at the meeting) to the student for review and signature. The student will have five business days to review, sign, and return the remediation plan. Failure of the student to sign and/or return the remediation plan by the close of business on the tenth business day will not impede the process and may be considered during the process.

The remediation plan may include:

1. Specific competency(ies) from the Standards which require(s) remediation,
2. Specific recommendations to achieve remediation,
3. Specific requirements to demonstrate remediation efforts have been successful, and
4. A specific deadline for subsequent monitoring to evaluate progress.

Both the student and issuing faculty may retain copies of the signed Evaluation Form and remediation plan. At any time during the remediation process, the issuing faculty member may refer the student to a faculty review committee.

A faculty review committee will be convened if:

- a. The process was initiated because the student engaged in illegal or unethical activities that presented a threat to the well-being of others, or violated the UWA Student Code of Conduct,
- b. A student fails to respond to the issuing faculty's request to schedule a meeting to review the Evaluation Form,
- c. A student fails to show reasonable progress in the remediation plan, or
- d. A student receives more than one Evaluation Form rated 1 during his or her Program of Study.

The committee will be comprised of three core faculty including the program coordinator, the faculty mentor, and one other member appointed by the program coordinator.

The student will be required to meet with the faculty review committee in accordance with the procedures described in #1 and #2 above. The faculty review committee may consult with any of the full Department of Counseling faculty regarding the development of alternative remedial strategies and/or

evaluation of the student's fitness for continuation in Counseling Program. The faculty review committee will monitor the student's progress on the remediation plan. If at any time the student is determined not to be making satisfactory progress, the faculty review committee may either modify the remediation plan or dismiss the student from the program.

All faculty review committee decisions for a student's dismissal from the Counseling Programs will be forwarded to the Department Chair. The Department Chair will forward the committee's decision to the Academic Dean. The student may make a first appeal of the committee's decision to the Department Chair. Should an additional appeal be requested, a final appeal can be made to the Academic Dean of the College of Education. The final decision will be forwarded to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Student Dismissal:

The following circumstances constitute some cases of "unsatisfactory" performance and will result in dismissal from the program without an opportunity for remediation or improvement.

- If a student's GPA remains a 3.25 GPA by the end of the online term or campus semester in which, the student was placed on Academic Probation per the policies of the UWA Graduate School.
- A student earns a D and/or F or WF in the same course two times
- A student earns three grades of W, WP, and/or WF
- Failure to successfully meet all requirements of the student's improvement plan
- Any serious ethical violation or unprofessional behavior as determined by the governing laws, professional codes of ethics.

Academic Standing Policy

University of West Alabama Graduate School

Good Academic Standing

Graduate students at The University of West Alabama must maintain an overall grade point average of 3.0 (master's level) or 3.25 (M.Ed. in Instructional Leadership, Ed.S., and Ed.D. programs) to be considered in "Good Academic Standing." No grade below a "C" will be accepted for graduate credit. Students are responsible for monitoring their own compliance and student status as stated in this policy. The School of Graduate Studies is not required to officially notify a student of a change in his/her academic status.

*Specific programs may require a higher GPA than what is required for Good Academic Standing for the School of Graduate Studies. Check carefully the completion GPA required for graduate educator preparation programs.

Academic Warning

After completing 12 semester hours, a student will be placed on "Academic Warning" if he/she does not meet the required overall grade point average specified in his/her program. Academic Warning may be removed if the student raises the overall grade point average to 3.0. (master's level) or 3.25 (M.Ed. in Instructional Leadership, Ed.S., and Ed.D. programs) by the end of the online term or campus semester in which the student was placed on Academic Warning.

Academic Probation

A student on “Academic Warning” who fails to raise his/her grade point average to a 3.0 will be placed on “Academic Probation.” The student will be removed from Academic Probation if the cumulative GPA is raised to 3.0. (master’s level) or 3.25 (M.Ed. in Instructional Leadership, Ed.S., and Ed.D. programs) by the end of the online term or campus semester in which the student was placed on Academic Probation.

Important

A student on academic probation or dismissed from UWA may not use credit earned at another institution to clear his/her academic probation to meet degree requirements for graduation from UWA. Any credits earned by a student at another institution while he/she is on probation or dismissed will not transfer back to UWA.

Federal Regulations limit the number of times a student may repeat a course and receive financial aid for that course. Questions about these regulations should be addressed to the UWA Financial Aid Center.

Academic Dismissal

A student on academic probation who again fails to earn the required overall grade point average required in his/her program will be dismissed from the School of Graduate Studies after the probationary period. In the following circumstances a student will be dismissed regardless of whether or not he/she has been placed on Academic Warning or Academic Probation:

1. A student earns a D and/or F or WF in the same course two times
2. A student earns three grades of W, WP, and/or WF
3. Students within the MBA program must exhibit a cumulative 3.0 graduate GPA to graduate. Any awarding of an F or D grade results in immediate dismissal from the graduate program. A maximum of two C grades is allowable; however, the awarding of a third C grade results in dismissal from the MBA program.
4. Students within the MS in Experimental Psychology program (all tracks) must exhibit a cumulative 3.0 graduate GPA to graduate. Any awarding of an F grade results in immediate dismissal from the graduate program. A maximum of two C grades is allowable; however, the awarding of a third C grade results in dismissal from the MS in Experimental Psychology program (all tracks).
5. Students within the Ed.D. program must exhibit a cumulative 3.25 graduate GPA to graduate. Any awarding of an F or D grade results in immediate dismissal from the graduate program. A maximum of two C grades is allowable; however, the awarding of a third C grade results in dismissal from the Ed.D. program.

A student who is preregistered for courses for a subsequent online term or campus semester and is dismissed will be dropped from his/her preregistered courses.

Degree requirements and academic performance standards outlined in this section are the minimum requirements. Satisfying these general requirements and standards does not imply that all degree and program requirements have been met. Some departments and colleges establish additional GPA requirements for their programs.

*A minimum GPA of 3.25 for master’s level programs and 3.50 for education specialist programs is required for program completion of any graduate student enrolled in educator preparation programs in the College of Education.

Procedures For Academic Appeal

One on-campus semester or two online terms after dismissal, the student may appeal to the Graduate Appeals Committee for readmission. A student who wishes to appeal for readmission must submit a written request to the Graduate Dean, who will present it to the Graduate Appeals Committee.

1. The appeal must be based on extenuating circumstances that may have caused the student academic difficulties for a particular online term or campus semester.
2. Documentation of circumstances that led to dismissal is encouraged. Supporting documentation from professionals providing assistance in the student's attempt to overcome challenging circumstances may include applicable official reports (e.g., police reports, hospital records, medical notes, death notices, travel documents, etc.). Factors generally not accepted for an academic appeal include but are not limited to such things as poor academic performance in class, personal time management problems, work or family commitments, and lack of awareness of University policies or deadlines.
3. The appeal must also provide adequate evidence of ability, maturity, and motivation on the part of the student. Appropriate letters of support from faculty or employers may be included. Notification of denial or approval of the appeal will be provided to the student within ten (10) business days after the decision of the Graduate Appeals Committee. The decision of the Committee is final and not subject to negotiation or further appeal.
4. Readmitted students must maintain satisfactory academic progress in all subsequent terms or semesters until degree completion. Should a readmitted student achieve less than a 3.0-grade point average (3.25 for Instructional Leadership and education specialist programs) in any subsequent term or semester, the student will be academically dismissed without the possibility of readmission.

Course grades will be included in the overall grade point average, even when the required time period to obtain a degree has expired. However, course grades over 9 years old cannot be used to determine hours for program completion.

This information is also located in the Graduate Catalog:

<https://catalog.uwa.edu/content.php?catoid=44&navoid=2017>

Credentialing and Employment Policy

The University of West Alabama Counseling Programs

Prior to Graduation:

Students may request an endorsement (i.e., a verbal or written recommendation) from program faculty in order to gain employment or credentials.

Students in the Counseling Programs will be endorsed by counseling faculty only for positions or credentials for which they have been adequately prepared. Students should seek endorsement only for employment and credentials that are appropriate based on their completed training, coursework, and supervised experience.

Before giving an endorsement, faculty will first check student records (e.g., GPA, program requirements, graduation status) to ensure that students are endorsed for employment or credentials for which they have been adequately trained.

Students should seek this endorsement from the faculty member who oversaw their practicum or internship supervision.

Upon or After Graduation:

Once students have completed their program of study and they are eligible to graduate from UWA's Counseling Program, the Counseling Program faculty will provide a credentialing or licensure endorsement OR formal recommendation for employment when the following requirements have been met:

- Completed all coursework listed on the program of study with the minimum required GPA for graduation.
- Maintained satisfactory student progress on the *Counseling Students Evaluation Form* for your concentration throughout the program of study.
- Completed all field experiences (practicum and internship) with satisfactory evaluations and proficiency on the *Counselor Competencies Scale – Revised (CCS-R)* from site supervisors.
- Satisfactorily passed the comprehensive exam required for your program of study.
- Have applied for graduation or have officially graduated from UWA.

For graduates seeking endorsement relative to professional opportunities, faculty will only endorse their preparation and competence relative to their specific training and areas of skill (e.g., School Counseling graduates will be endorsed for school-related professional opportunities, etc.). Methods of endorsement will include but not be restricted to written/verbal recommendations and commentary solicited and approved by graduates seeking professional employment, professional certification/licensure status, or related positions of opportunities.

Graduates should seek endorsement from the faculty member most familiar with their clinical skills and academic competencies. Typically, a graduate would reach out to the supervising faculty member who oversaw their internship supervision. If this person is no longer available or if there are extenuating circumstances, graduates would be encouraged to reach out to other faculty members in the following order: 1) Faculty Mentor; 2) Clinical Experiences Coordinator for the appropriate program of study; 4) Program Coordinator.