

## MFT Clinical Training and Personal Disclosure Policy

### PREFACE

\_\_\_\_\_The M.S. in Marriage and Family Therapy program involves the student in a unique applied learning experience. Coursework focuses on developing the theoretical knowledge and practical skills necessary to function as a systems-based psychotherapist. Integrated into the program is a rich and extensive clinical experience. Because of the intense and time-consuming nature of clinically-focused training, the MFT program requires from students a level of commitment, dedication, and personal responsibility beyond that of a non-clinical graduate program. This document is designed to describe the unique aspects of clinical training and those aspects of the program about which the student might not otherwise be aware. This document should be read and used in conjunction with other documentation concerning the MFT specialization, such as the *Graduate Catalog*, the *Family Therapy Student Handbook*, the *Family Therapy Practicum & Internship Handbook*, and the *FamilyWorks Policy & Procedure Manual*.

### ACADEMIC TRAINING

\_\_\_\_\_Your approach to coursework provides faculty with an assessment of your ability to manage responsibility, integrate core concepts necessary for clinical practice, and interact with others in a sensitive, compassionate, and collaborative manner. Retention in the MFT program requires maintaining a “B” average. In addition, students must demonstrate professionally appropriate behavior and may be terminated from the MFT program or barred from participation in internships or practica for non-academic reasons. These reasons may include, but are not limited to disruptive behavior in any university associated activity and a demonstrated inability to conduct successful working collaborative interactions with peers and faculty.

\_\_\_\_\_During the time that you are in this program, faculty members will be getting to know you and thinking about your strengths and weaknesses as potential clinicians. Group projects are an area, for example, that can test students’ ability to work as a team, manage stress and responsibility, and resolve differences in a professional manner. Among others aspects, faculty will be noticing such things as your ability to manage responsibility, integrate the core concepts necessary for clinical practice, behave with honesty and integrity, interact with others in a professional, sensitive, and compassionate manner, your willingness to learn, and your ability to exercise self-responsibility. These categories of personal maturity reflect something about your academic readiness to work with the public and your ability to manage peer and faculty interactions in a clinical setting.

\_\_\_\_\_If a faculty member has concerns about your ability to work with the public, he or she will proceed through the following process: 1.) Talk with you informally about his or her concern. At this point no paperwork is generated. 2.) If the problem(s) is not resolved, the faculty member will meet with you, discuss the problem and possible solutions, and generate an email documenting this meeting. This email will be placed in your academic file. 3.) if the problem(s) continues, the faculty member will again meet with you and discuss the possibility that without resolution, your *Comprehensive Exam I - Application to Clinical Practicum* is at risk of being denied. This meeting will also be documented and the documentation placed in your academic file.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Self disclosure in class.** As part of some classes, students are invited to offer self disclosures. Students are never required to make personal self disclosures during a class or for an assignment. If a student chooses to self disclose in class, faculty encourage other students to treat those disclosures as confidential; however, faculty cannot guarantee that other students will maintain that confidentiality. In addition, faculty members may share student disclosures with other MFT faculty and professional colleagues, administrators, or employers expressly for the purpose of assisting in the student's development as a clinician.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Confidential material in class.** As part of many classes, clinical material in the form of DVDs, video- or audio-recording of therapy either from public sources or from clients seen at FamilyWorks is viewed. All students in MFT classes are required to subscribe to the standards of the AAMFT Code of Ethics in regard to confidential material. Thus all clinical materials discussed or viewed in class must remain confidential. All recorded material remains the property of the MFT program.

### **COMPREHENSIVE EXAM I – APPLICATION TO CLINICAL PRACTICUM**

\_\_\_\_\_ In order to register for *MFTH 7600 Practicum in Marriage and Family Therapy*, students are formally screened by the MFT faculty and receive faculty approval to enroll. Submission of the *Comprehensive Exam I - Application to Clinical Practicum* prompts this screening process. Students apply for clinical practica when they have completed the following five courses: *MFTH 6800 Orientation to Marriage & Family Therapy Practice and Ethics*, *MFTH 7500 Development in the Family System*, *MFTH 7101 Family Systems Theories*, *MFTH 7400 Psychopathology*, and *MFTH 7102 Interventions in Marriage and Family Therapy*.

\_\_\_\_\_ Your *Comprehensive Exam I - Application to Clinical Practicum* is due at the end of the semester in which the last of the courses listed above are completed and no later than two business days after graduation. An electronic copy of the application is to be submitted to all full-time MFT faculty members as well as a hard copy to the Director of Clinical Training. Late applications will not be reviewed and must be resubmitted two business days after graduation of the following semester.

\_\_\_\_\_ Following receipt of the *Comprehensive Exam I - Application to Clinical Practicum*, the MFT faculty reviews the student's suitability and readiness for clinical training. Eligibility is based on personal and academic readiness. The criteria considered include academic performance (including the degree of engagement in the student's own education and scholarship), professionalism, presentation of self, personal trustworthiness, reliability, and responsibility. If faculty members have concerns, they will schedule a meeting with the student during which the student is given an opportunity to respond to those concerns. If faculty concerns are mitigated during this meeting, the student is permitted to enroll in practicum. If concerns remain, permission to begin practicum is denied. If the student has enrolled in clinical practicum, they will be administratively removed from the class.

\_\_\_\_\_ Students who are denied permission to enroll in practicum will be asked to create a professional development plan that includes performance benchmarks and a timeline. The plan can be amended to obtain faculty approval. If, at the close of the professional development plan timeline, the concerns of the faculty remain unresolved, the faculty will schedule a meeting with

the student to determine the best course of action, which may include a revised and renewed professional development plan or dismissal from the program.

## **CLINICAL PRACTICUM**

\_\_\_\_\_ Students participating in clinical practicum are expected to abide by the highest standards of professional behavior as elaborated in the AAMFT Code of Ethics. Students may be terminated from the program for behavior in clinical practicum that fails to meet the standards of the AAMFT Code of Ethics.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Enrollment, client contact, & supervision requirements.** Once the student enrolls in Practicum, students must be continuously enrolled for one calendar year. If students have not accrued the required client contact or supervision hours at the end of the year, they must enroll in *MFTH 7600 Practicum in Marriage and Family Therapy* (space permitting) or *MFTH 7980 Internship in Marriage and Family Therapy* until the required therapy and supervision hours have been accrued.

\_\_\_\_\_ A minimum of 600 client contact hours and 100 supervision hours are required for graduation. The configuration of the 600 hours of client contact is as follows: a.) a minimum of 150 face-to-face hours at FamilyWorks; b.) a minimum of 250 face-to-face hours when FamilyWorks & Internship face-to-face hours are combined; c.) a maximum of 100 hours of Direct Clinical Experience (as defined by the State of Georgia licensing law, “*time spent in client contact as therapist or co-therapist, in supervision, case staffing, or case consultation*”), and d.) a maximum of 100 hours of behind the mirror observation of live therapy.

\_\_\_\_\_ The configuration of the 100 hours of supervision is as follows: a.) a minimum of 50 must be based on direct observation, DVD, video- or audiotape and the remainder may be case report, and b.) a minimum of 50 must be individual supervision; the remainder can be group.

\_\_\_\_\_ During the time that students are enrolled in practicum, they will receive supervision during every week that they see cases, except during official VSU holidays. The student is responsible for the accurate recording and submission of these hours to the Director of Clinical Training at the end of each month.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Internships.** Students may choose to participate in an off-campus internship. Students are responsible for providing their own transportation and for any expenses associated with these placements.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Liability Insurance.** Students are required to have liability insurance before enrolling in a clinical practicum. Students must maintain continuous coverage while enrolled in MFTH 7600 Practicum in Marriage and Family Therapy or MFTH 7980 Internship in Marriage and Family Therapy. It is recommended that students join AAMFT since a liability insurance policy is part of student membership.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Leaving or missing clinical practicum.** Learning to be a therapist is challenging and requires a high degree of commitment to one’s own training, clients, co-therapists, and supervisors. Students who miss practicum tend to be viewed by faculty as perhaps lacking the

interest and commitment necessary to learn to be a good therapist, and thus, the discipline and concentration necessary to graduate and achieve licensure. Consequently, attendance at practica is given close attention. During the Fall and Spring semesters, students who miss two consecutive weeks or a total of three weeks of practicum can fail practicum or be dismissed from the program. During the Summer semester, students who miss two consecutive weeks or a total of two weeks of practicum can fail practicum or be dismissed from the program.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Withdrawal from practicum.** Students who wish to withdraw from Clinical Practicum must consult with their supervisor prior to doing so. Such students will be responsible for discussing the status of each of their cases (whether from FamilyWorks or an internship) with their supervisor. If, at any time during the clinical portion of training, a student determines that she or he does not wish to complete his/her degree in MFT, the student must inform the program director in writing. In addition, the student will be expected to fulfill commitments to clients and co-therapists until the end of that semester.

### **CLINICAL SUPERVISION:**

\_\_\_\_\_ The primary goals of supervision are the enhancement of the supervisee's professional competence and the assurance that high quality services are being provided to clients. Each student enrolled in Practicum must receive weekly individual and group supervision. A significant percentage of this supervision will be live observation or review of recorded sessions. Supervisors vary in the degree to which they focus on theory, skills, and the self-of-the-therapist. However, each of these issues will receive attention at some point in the program.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Self-of-the-therapist concerns.** If the supervisor feels that personal material is interfering with the student's assessment or treatment of clients, the supervisor will bring that concern to the attention of the student and may suggest that the student seek professional services to address the issue further. Supervisors will not conduct personal therapy with supervisees nor will the program require a student to obtain personal therapy. However, if personal issues appear to faculty supervisors to continue to interfere with the student's behavior and work as a therapist, that difficulty will be reflected in the student's practicum grade and in the student's progress through the program.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Disclosure of personal information.** Students who choose to reveal personal information during clinical supervision deserve to have that information treated with respect. The American Association of Marriage & Family Therapy Code of Ethics, the Georgia Marriage and Family Therapy Code of Ethics, and the Rules of the Georgia Composite Board of Professional Counselors, Social Workers, and Marriage and Family Therapists will be followed in regards to confidentiality. The AAMFT code of ethic addresses the confidentiality of supervisees when it notes that marriage and family therapists do not disclose supervisee confidences except by written authorization or waiver or when mandated or permitted by law. In educational or training settings where there are multiple supervisors, disclosures are permitted only to other professional colleagues, administrators, site supervisors, or employers who share responsibility for training of the supervisee. For all other disclosures, verbal authorization will not be sufficient except in emergency situations, unless prohibited by law.

\_\_\_\_\_ Disclosures that are pertinent to the training and development of the supervisee as well as disclosures pertaining to trainees' fitness to see clients may be discussed with other faculty or professional colleagues who have a role in the clinician's training. In addition, supervisors routinely share information with other faculty supervisors about general areas in which the student demonstrates strengths and areas of difficulty in the performance of therapy. End of semester evaluations are routinely shared with the student's next practicum supervisor to assist in the continued supervision of the student. Students also receive a copy of the end-of-the semester evaluation. Students in a practicum can expect to receive live supervision via recording and monitoring equipment, as well as supervision based on DVDs of sessions and case notes. Students can expect regular feedback on their progress in clinical practicum. This feedback will be verbal during the course of the semester, unless the faculty has reason to be especially concerned. In that case, a letter outlining the concern(s) will be sent to the student. End of semester evaluations include a course grade, Pass or Fail, which goes into the student's permanent file and transcript. Clinical supervision is provided only by AAMFT Approved Supervisors. Co-therapists or fellow students may never serve as supervisors.

I have read and understand the nature of clinical training as described above and choose to enter the clinical practicum in marriage and family therapy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student

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Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
MFT Faculty Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date