

## MFT Program Policy on Practicum and Internship

### Policy Availability

The **Policy on Practicum and Internship** is available to the public via the [MFT Homepage > Accreditation > Policies and Handbook.](#)

## Practicum

### Eligibility to Register for Practicum

Before registering in **MFTH 7600: Practicum**, students must successfully complete the following pre- and/or co-requisites:

- Service Learning
- MFTH 6800: Relational Theory, Practice, & Ethics
- MFTH 6900: Foundations in MFT
- MFTH 7050: Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice
- MFTH 7101: Family Systems Theories
- MFTH 7102: Interventions in MFT
- MFTH 7500: Development in the Family System
- MFTH 7350: Legal Issues in MFT
- Comprehensive Exam I

### Practicum Structure

#### 1. Continuous Enrollment Requirement

Per program policy, students must remain enrolled in MFTH 7600 for three consecutive semesters (one calendar year: Summer–Fall–Spring or Fall–Spring–Summer).

- If a student takes a semester break, the sequence resets when practicum is resumed.

#### 2. Maintain Active Caseload and Assess Client Satisfaction

Once released, students must maintain a caseload at FamilyWorks, where sessions are video recorded for supervision. Students must also administer the Client Satisfaction Survey as directed by the Clinical Coordinator.

#### 3. Seek Supervision Outside of Practica

In addition to supervision during practica hours, students are encouraged to request supervision meetings with any faculty supervisor during the time they are enrolled in practicum. During official national holidays and/or when clients are not seen, supervision is not required.

#### 4. All students are required to have liability insurance and must maintain continuous coverage while enrolled in *MFTH 7600 Practicum in Marriage and Family Therapy* or *MFTH 7980 Internship in Marriage and Family Therapy*.

This policy addresses Standards V12.5, Eligibility Criterion E: Accuracy and Program Transparency in Policies and Publications as well as Standard II: Curriculum, KE II-D: Program Leadership, Program Faculty, and Program Clinical Supervisors and KE III-C: Foundational and Advanced Application Components. Updated Fall 2025. Scheduled for update Fall 2029 or sooner as necessary.

5. Students are required to join AAMFT, which membership avails them of a liability insurance policy through CPH.
6. Students may elect to take an off-campus internship.
7. Each student is responsible for the accurate recording and submission of their accrued client and supervision hours to the Clinical Coordinator. Submission dates are as follows. For hours accrued during the . . .
  - Fall semester, by January 15<sup>th</sup>
  - Spring semester, by May 15<sup>th</sup>
  - Summer semester, by July 23<sup>rd</sup>

### **When Required the Total Client or Supervision Contact Hours are Not Met**

If a student has not accrued the required client contact or supervision hours at the end of the year (500 or 300), he/she/they must re-enroll in *MFTH 7980 Internship in Marriage and Family Therapy* or *MFTH 7600 Practicum in Marriage and Family Therapy* (space permitting) until the required client and supervision contact hours have been accrued.

### **Supervisory Release to See Clients Outside of Practicum**

Once the student demonstrates the following, supervisors may release students to see clients independently (solo or co-therapy), allowing them to work outside of practicum and outside of the direct observation of a faculty supervisor:

1. do no harm to clients
2. can ensure clients' safety
3. conduct self ethically
4. show beginning skill asking productive opening and joining statements and questions.
5. conduct and present self professionally (dress, punctuality, behavior, etc.)

. . . . the student will be “released” to see clients independently—either alone or with a co-therapist—without a supervisor’s immediate presence behind the mirror. While students may not yet be expected to facilitate second-order change, the supervisor has confirmed that the student can begin defining problems and considering the contexts that shape clients

The student will receive an email informing him/her/they that he/she/they have been released and placed on the client rotation list.

Upon release, students will receive verbal or email confirmation from the practicum supervisor informing them that he/she/they can place themselves on the rotation list and begin receiving clients.

Release also indicates that the student has successfully met the following criteria:

This policy addresses Standards V12.5, Eligibility Criterion E: Accuracy and Program Transparency in Policies and Publications as well as Standard II: Curriculum, KE II-D: Program Leadership, Program Faculty, and Program Clinical Supervisors and KE III-C: Foundational and Advanced Application Components. Updated Fall 2025. Scheduled for update Fall 2029 or sooner as necessary.

- able to introduce self and FamilyWorks (policies, procedures, confidentiality, videotaping, etc.) to clients in a warm and professional manner. (SLO 4)
- attends practicum regularly, arrive prepared and on-time, and you are actively engaged throughout the required period. (SLO 3)
- keeps appropriate and thorough records, documenting therapy and contact with clients and other systems. (SLO 3)
- does not offer simplistic advice and personal opinions. (SLO 2)
- limits self-disclosure to occasions of specific therapeutic utility. (SLO 6)
- follows clinic policy (paperwork, follow-up, referrals, etc.) and attend to legal and ethical issues. (SLO 6)

Faculty supervisors think about and talk with each other on a regular basis about clinically active students. If faculty have concerns about your ability to conduct therapeutic conversations with clients, your immediate supervisor will meet with you individually.

### Accruing Clinical Hours and Internship Options

MFT Program students must accrue 300 client contact hours under AAMFT Approved Supervision. While most achieve this within the required year, variability, such as a reduction of client flow into the clinic or a student's personal circumstances, may extend training. If hours are not completed after three consecutive practica, students must:

- Remain registered at the university by enrolling in either **MFTH 7600 Practicum** (space permitting) or **MFTH 7980 Internship**.
- Maintain liability insurance
- Continue seeing clients under faculty supervision

### Early Start Practicum (ESP)

Normally, students begin clinical work in the first semester of their **second year (2-1)**. However, when practica seats are available, eligible first-year students may register for *MFTH 7600: Practicum in Marriage and Family Therapy* and begin in the **Summer of Year 1 (1-3)**.

**Eligibility for ESP:** The number of 1<sup>st</sup> year students admitted to summer practicum is limited to the space available on the summer practica teams as well as the needs of the FamilyWorks Clinic. Students who wish to be considered for early admission into practicum must . . . .

1. be a student in good standing who was not admitted on probation
2. Comprehensive Exam I has been successfully completed
3. be willing to defer MFTH 7700 (Assessment) and MFTH 7400 (Psychopathology & pharmacology) courses until Summer of Year 2.
4. be willing/able to remain on campus during the summer for summer practicum, transition onto new cases, assume supervisor approval, and take on new cases during June, July, and August.

### Selection Process

This policy addresses Standards V12.5, Eligibility Criterion E: Accuracy and Program Transparency in Policies and Publications as well as Standard II: Curriculum, KE II-D: Program Leadership, Program Faculty, and Program Clinical Supervisors and KE III-C: Foundational and Advanced Application Components. Updated Fall 2025. Scheduled for update Fall 2029 or sooner as necessary.

MFT faculty look at course projections to get a close estimate of how many practica slots are available for any given semester.

1. The MFT faculty then put out a call for those interested in ESP which includes the notification that interested students will have to submit their Comprehensive Exam I early, since Comp I is a pre-requisite for *MFTH 7600 Practicum in Marriage and Family Therapy*.
2. Students notify the Clinical Coordinator of their interest and request inclusion in the early practicum lottery drawing.
3. A lottery drawing date and time is established and advertised in advance.
4. A lottery drawing, open to all students and faculty, is held in the MFT classroom.
5. MFT faculty facilitate a name draw until all of the predetermined early admissions practicum slots have been filled. A second draw is done to establish a list of ESP alternates.
  - a. Early Practicum Alternates: If a student is unable to fulfill the early practicum requirements, regardless of reason, an alternate *may* be called upon to take their place. For this reason, alternates must be able to meet all of the requirements. Alternates are called upon in the order they were drawn during the ESP drawing.

### Program Responsibilities

- Gather perspectives from all parties.
- Prioritize client care, student training, and fairness.
- Escalate issues to the Program Director, Department Head, Dean, or University Attorney when needed.

### Supervision Hours Requirement

Of the 100 supervision hours that each student must accrue,

- i. a minimum of 50 hours must be observable data (face-to-face, live, direct observation, video recordings, reflecting teams, behind the mirror)
- ii. all supervision hours must occur at FamilyWorks with an MFT faculty member or adjunct who is licensed in the state of Georgia, a AAMFT Approved Supervisor or on a track toward earning this credential. While you will get supervision at an internship, this supervision is considered administrative in nature and will not be counted toward your clinical supervision hours.
- iii. The state of Georgia eligibility requirement to sit for the licensing exam requires a minimum of 500 client contact hours to meet the practice requirement for state licensure. If you do not intend to seek licensure in Georgia, and you are certain that the state in which you intend to seek licensure requires only 300 client contact hours, then, and only then, can you graduate from the VSU Program with a total of 300 client contact hours. You must have the permission of your advisor for this exception.

### Practicum Attendance: Leaving or Missing Clinical Practicum

Becoming a therapist requires consistent commitment to clients, co-therapists, supervisors, and one's own development. Attendance is therefore closely monitored:

This policy addresses Standards V12.5, Eligibility Criterion E: Accuracy and Program Transparency in Policies and Publications as well as Standard II: Curriculum, KE II-D: Program Leadership, Program Faculty, and Program Clinical Supervisors and KE III-C: Foundational and Advanced Application Components. Updated Fall 2025. Scheduled for update Fall 2029 or sooner as necessary.

- **Fall/Spring:** Missing two consecutive weeks or three total weeks (19%) may result in practicum failure and/or program dismissal.
- **Summer:** Missing two consecutive weeks or two total weeks (25%) may result in practicum failure and/or program dismissal.

### Withdrawal from Practicum

Students wishing to withdraw must first consult with their supervisor.

- They are responsible for discussing the status of all cases (FamilyWorks and internships) with their supervisor.
- Any student deciding not to complete the MFT degree must notify both the Program Director and their advisor via email.

### When All Client Contact Hours Have Not Been Accrued in One Year

Unlike master's level training in many other fields (biology, math, accounting), your training relies on clients. There are many factors that can make access to clients unreliable or inconsistent, including seasonal changes (e.g., Christmas, Halloween, school breaks), internship sites, client type, case difficulty, and many other human variables. Clients cancel or leave therapy for a wide variety of reasons. Neither the MFT faculty, the program, nor the university can guarantee that the entire 300-hour client contact requirement can be accrued in the one year of continuous enrollment, although most students do.

If the student has not accrued the required client contact or supervision hours by the end of the year of three practica, he or she must remain enrolled in the university, show documentation of an ongoing liability insurance policy, and remain under the supervision of an AAMFT Approved Supervisor faculty member. This requires that the student enroll in either *MFTH 7980 Internship in MFT* or *MFTH 7600 Clinical Practicum*, space permitting. If outstanding hours remain at the end of a fourth clinical semester, an additional semester or semesters are required until all required client contact and supervision hours are met.

If the student opts to take *MFTH 7980 Internship in MFT*, he/she/they will need to ask a faculty member to be the supervisor of record for the course. Once agreed, the faculty member will co-create a syllabus with the student that outlines the course requirements. While there is flexibility in the construction of the syllabus (readings, assignments, etc.), the student is required to meet for supervision at least once a week during any week that clients are being seen.

### Carrying a Caseload at FamilyWorks is a Program Requirement

It is at [FamilyWorks](#) that your clinical work is video recorded, availing both you and your supervisors of the best opportunity to observe your work, so that you can consult together in face-to-face supervisory conversations. Further, it is at [FamilyWorks](#) that you work closely with AAMFT Approved, systemically trained, and Georgia licensed family therapy faculty.

## Internships (optional)

This policy addresses Standards V12.5, Eligibility Criterion E: Accuracy and Program Transparency in Policies and Publications as well as Standard II: Curriculum, KE II-D: Program Leadership, Program Faculty, and Program Clinical Supervisors and KE III-C: Foundational and Advanced Application Components. Updated Fall 2025. Scheduled for update Fall 2029 or sooner as necessary.

Students may take an internship, which will help with accruing the required hours, provide an invaluable feel for the inside of the American mental health system, and add value to student experience and resumes.

Please see the Clinical Coordinator for further information and assistance finding an internship or settling problems that you might have during an internship.

- Internships are not required but may enhance experience, hours accrual, and career preparation.
- Students are responsible for transportation and related costs connected with internships.
- The Clinical Coordinator assists with internship placement and problem-solving.

### **Procedure for Reporting, Discussing, and Resolving Problems at Off-Campus Internships**

#### **A. Responsibilities of the Student**

- Assuming awareness on the part of the student that there is a difficulty, he or she should begin by contacting the MFT Program Clinical Coordinator, Jessica Millican, (229) 293-6266, whose contact information appears in the Internship Packet. The discussion during this contact should seek to understand the problem from the student's perspective, discuss possible solutions, decide who would be involved in the solutions and what additional contacts or meetings need to occur, and create a plan for resolving the problem.
- If the Clinical Coordinator and the faculty supervisor adjudge that the problem needs further input from the Program Director or the fuller faculty, he or she should inform the student of this, and move the discussion on to that next level of discussion and discernment.

#### **B. Responsibilities of the Site/Site Supervisor**

- Assuming awareness on the part of the site supervisor that there is a difficulty, he or she should begin by contacting the MFT Program Clinical Coordinator, Jessica Millican, (229) 293-6266, whose contact information appears in the Internship Packet. The discussion during this contact should seek to understand the problem from the Site/Supervisor's perspective, learn who is/would be involved in possible resolutions, and what additional contacts or meetings need to occur. If a plan for resolving the problem is not initiated during this conversation, further conversations should be scheduled for the purpose of doing so.
- If the Clinical Coordinator/Faculty supervisor adjudges that the problem needs further input from the Program Director or the faculty, he or she should inform the Site Supervisor of this and move the discussion to the next level.

#### **C. Responsibilities of the Program/Clinical Coordinator/Faculty Supervisor**

- The MFT Program will be responsible for taking all reasonable measures to:
  - learn the nature of the problem based on the wider context in which it is embedded. This will include speaking with involved parties, such as student, site supervisor, relevant others.

This policy addresses Standards V12.5, Eligibility Criterion E: Accuracy and Program Transparency in Policies and Publications as well as Standard II: Curriculum, KE II-D: Program Leadership, Program Faculty, and Program Clinical Supervisors and KE III-C: Foundational and Advanced Application Components. Updated Fall 2025. Scheduled for update Fall 2029 or sooner as necessary.

- work with the Site supervisor and/or the student to discover/devise a solution that takes into consideration the best treatment of clients, if clients are involved; fair treatment of all concerned (student, site supervisor, etc.); the student’s education and training; and all legal and ethical considerations.
- depending on the nature of the problem, others may be brought into awareness and discussion of the problem. These might include the Department Head, college Dean, and/or the University Attorney.
- involve the Program Director if/when, a plan for resolving the problem cannot be created.

### Related Policies

For related policies, go to [MFT Homepage > Accreditation > Policies and Handbook](#):

- Policy on Client Contact Hours
- Policy on Clinical Readiness
- Policy on Subpoenas
- Policy on Transporting Confidential Material
- Policy on Teletherapy Practice