



UNIVERSITY of MASSACHUSETTS
AMHERST

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Mental Health Services

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Social Work Internship

General Information

For more than 20 years, Smith College School for Social Work has placed second-year students at UMass Amherst's Mental Health Services.

Currently, two students are placed for a 35-hour-per week experience beginning the week before Labor Day until the end of spring semester classes. Each student makes accommodations for time off with their supervisor. There is a stipend with each placement.

The experience includes 8 – 10 clinical hours each week, with participation in family, couples or group therapy. At times, interns work with children, but the predominant client population is college-aged or above. Mental Health Services maintains a 24-hour on-call system, and interns serve on that rotation with their primary supervisor.

Social work interns meet with their primary supervisor for a minimum of two hours each week, and are encouraged to seek consultation from other staff with expertise in the student's area of interest.

The program's multidisciplinary nature is one of its strengths. Interns are assigned to clinical and functional teams which blend social work, nursing, psychiatry and psychology.

Seminars

Social work and psychology trainees participate together in the following core and brief seminars:

Individual Psychotherapy

The individual psychotherapy seminar is a case-oriented approach to the principles and practice of short term, psychodynamic and multimodal treatments. Major objectives are to develop an understanding of diagnosis and client selection using brief treatment modalities, the importance of active dynamic interpretations and the special considerations of integrating multimodal therapies to fit each client's unique requests and diagnostic picture. Theoretical and clinical readings provide a basis for the weekly discussion of interns' ongoing cases. Clinical topic areas for the second semester are chosen by the intern group to elucidate specialized areas of psychotherapy they would like to pursue in depth with senior clinicians.

Multicultural Seminar

This seminar addresses how treatment is conducted while taking the client's and therapist's ethnicity and cultures into consideration. Invited lecturers present on specific therapeutic approaches that work well with clients who are Latino, African-American, Asian-American, etc.

Crisis Intervention Seminar

Critical aspects of crisis intervention are presented, including a review of general goals and discussion of demographic, historical and diagnostic risk factors for suicidal and homicidal behavior. Other topics include strategies for de-escalating crisis situations, appropriate use of consultation, differential treatment selection in a crisis context and factors unique to the university setting; documentation and risk management concerns are presented. Basic elements of Critical Incident Stress Management are also taught.

Group Therapy

This seminar is designed around intern needs, interests and experience; and addresses group theory, dynamics and practice skills. Topics may include co-leadership, group design, screening techniques, stages of group development, process skills and specialty group topics. This seminar provides an opportunity for group supervision focusing on that semester's current intern-led groups. Periodic reading assignments provide an in-depth understanding of short-term group therapy.

Biofeedback – Behavioral Medicine

This six-week seminar focuses on the treatment of psychosomatic and stress-related symptoms and dysfunctions, and its integration with psychotherapy. Sessions include clinical theory, assessment procedures and direct supervised experience with computerized EMG, GSR, EEG, and thermoregulation equipment; ongoing weekly supervision is provided by a clinical psychologist with national certification in biofeedback.

Clinical Hypnosis

Teaches the theory and offers experiential practice in hypnotic induction and therapeutic application.

Brief Seminars offered during the year include:

INTAKE AND ASSESSMENT SKILLS

This seminar focuses on Mental Health Services' current intake practices, including rapid assessment, differential diagnosis, contracting for focused treatment goals, dictating and recordkeeping.

PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY

An overview of our clinic's most commonly prescribed psychiatric medications, and discussion of the principles and actions of the agents on client treatment. Collaboration among interns, our psychiatrists and psychiatric clinical nurse specialist is integral.

TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

Explores the realms of consciousness that transcend normal ego boundaries and discusses clinical questions such as how to work with healthy spiritual impulses in clients and differentiating between mystical and psychotic experiences.