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Mental Health Services

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## Pre-Doctoral Psychology Internship

### Philosophy

The Pre-Doctoral Psychology Internship program's mission is to train advanced graduate students who emerge as entry level psychology practitioners. Our program is designed sequentially to refine an intern's professional identity while instilling competencies in delivery of services at a university-based mental health service. This is accomplished through a combination of supervision with experienced clinicians and didactic modalities in a supportive, yet appropriately challenging, clinical learning environment. Our goal is the development of practitioners who can successfully transfer their skills to a variety of outpatient settings within the rapidly evolving health care field.

Interns become part of multidisciplinary treatment teams, using cutting-edge brief treatment modalities to address a wide range of diagnoses and presenting problems. These include intensive brief therapies for individuals and couples, crisis intervention, on-call management of emergencies, behavioral medicine, outreach/consultation and supervision.

Applicants seeking to be part of a multiculturally sensitive environment while training with senior psychotherapists dedicated to healing pain and promoting clients' personal growth will fit well into this program. Our brief, intensive therapy model allows us to help many more people in need and gives interns extensive experience with a wide variety of clients, diagnoses and treatment choices. Our staff has been together for many years and is supportive of interns' growth and creativity. This is a therapy-focused learning environment for interns who wish to significantly strengthen their professional identities as effective practitioners.

### About Us

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is located in the Connecticut River valley of western Massachusetts. Amherst is a 30-minute drive from Springfield, about two hours from Boston and 3½ hours from New York City. Bradley International Airport, in Windsor Locks, Conn., is about a one-hour drive, and is served by many major airlines.

University Health Services (UHS) is the university's fully-accredited health center and is a major budgetary unit of the Office of Student Affairs. The director of Mental Health Services is a member of the UHS leadership team and reports to the organization's Executive Director, who, in turn, reports to the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.

Mental Health Services provides care for UMass Amherst students, their dependents covered by the school's student health insurance plan, and for faculty and staff through third-party insurance plans. The program also serves a number of state employees in the greater Amherst area.

Our professional staff includes psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and a psychiatric clinical nurse specialist. The director, associate director and two assistant directors share administrative responsibilities.

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## *Clinical Services*

Mental Health Services primarily provides short-term therapy on a once-a-week basis or intermittent model, except during times of acute stress when more frequent contact may be necessary. Clinical services include individual therapy; behavioral medicine, such as biofeedback and clinical hypnosis; couples therapy; and group therapy.

In addition to daily triage evaluations of all new clients, an emergency on-call service is maintained 24 hours a day, every day of the year. About 10% of clients are seen in long-term therapy; about 50 per year require hospitalization at psychiatric hospitals. Typical client problems include interpersonal crises, neurotic and characterological disorders, marital and family difficulties, depression, eating disorders, acute panic, suicidal states, psychosomatic disorders, substance abuse, borderline conditions and psychotic reactions.

Generally speaking, treatment is a multi-modal integration of brief therapies. Depending on a client's unique needs, a clinician will choose from brief psychodynamic, cognitive, behavioral, systemic, crisis intervention and/or psychopharmacologic approaches.

## *Consultation and Education*

Mental Health Services collaborates with other health professionals and campus community agencies. Ongoing consulting relationships include medical providers, minority student programs, the campus women's and gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender centers, campus police and residence hall staffs. Education efforts include peer counselor training, personal life issues workshops and stress management education. Interns join staff in prevention-oriented outreach efforts, including lectures, newspaper articles and brochures on timely mental health issues, and also provide group interventions after deaths affecting the campus.

## *Training*

Mental Health Services has trained professionals in the field since 1962. In addition to the Pre-Doctoral Psychology Internship, the division hosts two full-time advanced interns from the Smith College School of Social Work. The Pre-Doctoral Psychology Internship Program has been fully accredited by APA since 1979.

## *Quality Assessment and Research*

Applied clinical research is encouraged, given available time and funds. Most research efforts are concerned with monitoring and improving the quality of our services; a monthly review of clinical indicators helps identify service delivery areas that may require corrective action. During January and summer breaks, each intern chooses a quality assessment area of research or an area of specialized study. Current and past research includes studies of treatment outcomes, therapist-patient matches, consultation projects, consumer satisfaction, mental health-related needs of minority students, quality assessment of brief psychotherapy, brief group therapy with bulimic patients, and the university's demonstration alcohol education project. Interns usually find time available for dissertation work during semester break, spring vacation and in the summer.

## **About the Program**

Our university mental health focus offers a wide variety of direct clinical contacts, ranging from minor maladjustment to severe psychotic disorder. The internship promotes broadly based professional competency with primary focus on individual treatment. Interns develop expertise in systemically applying brief therapy modalities to address each client's unique clinical picture. In addition, supervised training experiences are provided in psychological assessment, group therapy, couples therapy, crisis intervention, consultation-education, biofeedback and clinical hypnosis.

Individual supervision is provided by licensed senior staff representing the disciplines of psychology, social work, and psychiatry; primary individual therapy supervisors will always be staff psychologists. In addition, a variety of seminars are offered which combine didactic presentations with group supervision of each intern's clinical cases to provide a maximum integration of theory and practice.

To assist in the transition between the roles of student and professional, the program offers gradually increasing responsibility and participation in all aspects of service. Supervision is actively supported for interns and staff, and is viewed as the means through which the clinical experiences can be conceptualized and important learning incorporated. Interns evaluate supervisors, seminars and the overall program via formal evaluations. Regular intern group meetings with the training director facilitate feedback and allows for adjustments to be made in the program.

## **Activities**

### *Individual Psychotherapy*

Interns conduct an average of 12 hours of individual therapy per week during the first half of the year and 14 hours the second half. The majority of cases require brief psychotherapy or crisis intervention; the intern will also see several cases for the entire year in psychodynamically-oriented psychotherapy.

A staff psychologist assigned as the major supervisor meets with the intern for two hours a week throughout the year; a secondary supervisor (a psychologist, psychiatrist or psychiatric social worker) meets with the intern for one hour a week during the year. Interns also choose several clinical areas of specialization, for which additional supervision is provided.

### *Intake*

About 40-50 new clients are triaged each week and are assigned to intake teams, giving interns a good deal of choice in choosing the type of clients they treat. An intern adds approximately two new patients each week. Intakes are supervised during the individual supervision hours, with emphasis placed on developing rapid evaluation skills using the clinical interview.

### *Couples Psychotherapy*

Interns will see at least one couple on an ongoing basis, generally working with a staff co-therapist.

### *Group Therapy*

Interns may participate as a co-therapist in one of our group programs; opportunities are contingent on adequate group enrollment. Topics vary; some recent groups have focused on relationship skills, self-esteem, early sobriety, eating disorders, family issues, GLBT identity, mindfulness-based stress reduction. Supervision is provided either by the staff co-therapist, within a group therapy seminar or by the group therapy coordinators.

### *Diagnostic Assessment*

Interns typically consult on two to four assessment cases per year. The Assessment Supervisor oversees all assignments. Emphasis is on brief, useful reports addressing the treating clinician's and the client's referral questions in a practical, focused manner. Interns and their supervisor discuss cases as a group, in weekly Assessment Team meetings. The Assessment Supervisor also provides individual supervision on report writing and on the feedback session for each case.

### ***Crisis Intervention***

Mental Health Services maintains a 24-hour emergency on-call service every day of the year. Initially, interns participate with their primary supervisor, taking 24-hour on call every ninth day. After a time determined by the supervisor and the intern, interns assume a primary role, with the supervisor observing; later the intern assumes first on-call responsibilities, with a supervisor providing back-up for consultation. Staff psychiatrists provide daily second on-call and are consulted for medication, inpatient admissions and second opinions in complex clinical situations.

### **Seminars**

The program combines the following core seminars with brief programs offered throughout the year.

#### ***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.

#### ***Diagnostic Assessment***

Emphasis is on the application of psychological tests in a brief treatment setting and using assessment as a therapeutic intervention, rather than simply an information-gathering tool. Often, assessment questions

will be approached with self-administered, quickly scored tests such as the PAI Personality Inventory, Incomplete Sentences, MMPI, Beck Depression Scale, or Multimodal Life History Questionnaire; other instruments, such as the Rorschach (Exner Scoring), DAP, TAT and WAIS-III can also be used. Interns need not have extensive experience with projective assessment but are expected to be familiar with test theory, administration, scoring, interpretation and report writing with both projective and objective measures. Those interested in behavioral medicine can be exposed to various assessment strategies and measures used in that clinic. Individual supervision and consultation with the Assessment Supervisor will focus on interpretation and integration of test data, writing brief, useful reports and giving therapeutically meaningful feedback. Interns will be encouraged to recognize the limitations of assessment and to provide feedback which incorporates these limitations.

### ***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:***

#### **PROFESSIONAL ISSUES**

A discussion of ethics, legal issues, professional identity development and political involvement in psychology and mental health administration.

#### **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.

## Weekly schedule

12 – 16 hours	Individual, couples, crisis intervention
4 hours	Clinical specialization
2 – 4 hours	Emergency on-call
3 hours	Individual supervision with primary and secondary supervisors
2 – 4 hours	Additional supervision for specializations, on-call, and clinical team supervision
5½ hours	Seminars
3 hours	Staff meetings (intake team, clinical group, administrative staff, intern administrative group)
2½ hours	Case management, case notes, administration
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34 – 42 HOURS PER WEEK</b>

## Clinical Concentrations

An individualized program of specialization is arranged for each intern after the first third of the internship year. Interns are encouraged to formulate and pursue their own special professional interests. This often takes the form of intensive supervised work in one or several clinical areas such as crisis intervention skills, couples therapy, consultation and education, biofeedback, hypnosis, supervision of a clinical psychology graduate student, or mental health administration. Interns can also elect to concentrate on working with specific populations, such as women, Hispanics or GLBT clients, or on a particular diagnostic syndrome such as eating disorders or borderline personalities.

## Meetings

Interns participate in several weekly meetings, each with a specific focus.

The hour-long Mental Health Services staff meeting provides time for announcements, identifying critical cases and communication among all staff.

Staff and interns meet for one hour per week in small clinical conference groups, which provide supportive peer supervision. Clinical presentations are followed by discussion of theoretical formulations, exploration of countertransference issues and future directions for treatment.

Staff and interns also meet twice weekly in small triage groups where intake cases are distributed. Peer supervision focuses on diagnosis, treatment planning and disposition. Each intake team has a subspecialty area: addictions, eating disorders and family/couples.

## In-Service Education

Consultants are invited to Mental Health Services throughout the year to conduct workshops on topics of interest to staff and interns. In addition, staff, interns and invited Five College faculty are encouraged to present their work at a colloquium series.