**Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling**

**Standards of Practice**

The skills of the practitioner determine the quality of the profession. Because clinical mental health counseling is a helping profession, it requires a responsibility to maintain the highest standards of practice. One of the counselor’s primary functions is to work with people who have various disabilities to develop or enhance the:

\*Vocational skills they need to secure gainful employment

\* Coping skills they need to achieve good mental health and increased independence

\* Qualities and skills needed to function effectively within the community

The mission of the Division of Clinical Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling with regard to Clinical Mental Health Counseling is to serve the people of North Carolina by educating clinical mental health counselors (CMHCs) with the knowledge and expertise to provide services to the State’s citizens with disabilities, with an emphasis on those with psychiatric and/or developmental disabilities. The mission is based on the fundamental belief in the dignity and worth of all people and the rights of people with disabilities to live self-determined lives in inclusive communities of their choice. The Division seeks to educate mental health counselors who use the counseling relationship and skills to work collaboratively with individuals to: 1) maximize functional capacity, productive and independent living skills, and quality of life; and 2) provide access to culturally sensitive and evidence-based counseling practices; and 3)manage personalized services to support the unique needs and preferences of each individual, their family, and community. Fundamental to this is a focus on the whole person—psychological, vocational, spiritual and physical aspects as well as family, social, work, and community relationships. The Division seeks to educate CMHCs who possess the knowledge, critical thinking abilities, commitment to independent learning and scholarship, vision, and courage required to forge new models of community practice to address the diverse needs of the individuals with disabilities now and in the future.

In carrying out this mission, the faculty of the Division has the obligation to acquire, discover, preserve, synthesize, and transmit knowledge, to serve as models of professional leadership, and to create a culture of educational excellence that will nurture students’ intellectual and ethical development. Students have the responsibility to fully engage in an educational process of research, free inquiry, and personal responsibility and to become foremost practitioners, scholars, researchers, and leaders in the profession of mental health counseling.

**Content of Curriculum**

The content of the curriculum in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program is designed to help students obtain the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to function effectively as professional clinical mental health counselors.

**Graduates of the CMHC Program will:**

1. Effectively apply current best practices in CMHC within a community-inclusion model.
2. Accurately assess the mental health care needs of people with disabilities and work in partnership with consumers to provide mental health treatment.
3. Acquire specific knowledge and skills to address the mental healthcare needs of people with psychiatric and developmental disabilities.
4. Work collaboratively with professionals, family members, community providers, employers, and policy makers to achieve optimal treatment outcomes for people with disabilities.
5. Demonstrate multicultural and social justice counseling competencies, including cultural humility practices.
6. demonstrate strong clinical skills in mental health counseling (case conceptualization, diagnosis, and treatment planning and delivery).
7. Engage in a process of lifelong learning, collaboration, and collegiality as part of ongoing professional development CMHCs.
8. Have the necessary leadership, business and management, and public policy skills to assume leadership roles in CMHC; and
9. Promote and support consumer empowerment and self-advocacy of people with disabilities.

**Scope of Practice**

The Scope of Practice for Clinical Mental Health Counselors represents a broad consensus regarding the range of knowledge and skills as well as the specific techniques and modalities required to provide effective mental health counseling services. The professional scope of practice differs from the individual counselor's scope of practice; Specifically, an individual scope of practice is based on each practitioner's additional training and experience beyond their Master's Degree program. Each counselor is ethically bound to limit their client practice to that individual scope.

The *American Counseling Association Code of Ethics* is a consensus-building statement of

ethical standards that articulates the core practice elements for individual practitioners of mental

health counseling. Its vigorous enforcement through ACA's Policies and Procedures for

Processing Complaints of Ethical Violations is an indication of the importance the profession

places on adherence to this mandatory code. These standards of ethical practice are intended to

assure the community that the mental health counseling profession accepts its responsibility to

provide caring and competent services to persons seeking counseling. Students in the Clinical

Mental Health Counseling program are expected to practice in conjunction with the *American Counseling Association Code of Ethics*.

I. **Assumptions**

* The Scope of Practice Statement identifies knowledge and skills required for the provision of effective mental health counseling services to all persons seeking counseling as embodied in the standards of the profession’s credentialing organizations.
* Several mental health disciplines and related processes (e.g., evidence-based practices, research, various types of therapy, case management) are tied to the central field of mental health counseling. The field of mental health counseling is a specialty within the psychology profession with counseling at its core and is differentiated from other related counseling fields.
* The professional scope of clinical mental health counseling practice is also differentiated from an individual scope of practice, which may overlap, but is more specialized than the professional scope. An individual scope of practice is based on one's own knowledge of the abilities and skills that have been gained through a program of education and professional experience. A person is ethically bound to limit their practice to that individual scope of practice.

**II. Underlying Values**

* Facilitation of independence, integration, and inclusion of people with disabilities in employment and the community.
* Belief in the dignity and worth of all people.
* Commitment to a sense of equal justice based on a model of accommodation to provide and equalize the opportunities to participate in all rights and privileges available to all people; and a commitment to supporting people with disabilities in advocacy activities to achieve this status and empower themselves.
* Emphasis on the holistic nature of human function which is procedurally facilitated by the utilization of such techniques as:
* Interdisciplinary teamwork.
* Counseling to assist in maintaining a holistic perspective.
* A commitment to considering individuals within the context of their family systems and communities.
* Recognition of the importance of focusing on the assets of the person.
* Commitment to models of service delivery that emphasize integrated, comprehensive services which are mutually planned by the clients and the clinical rehabilitation and mental health counselors.

**III. Scope of Practice Statement**

Mental health counseling is a systematic process which assists all people seeking counseling to achieve their highest quality of life possible through the application of the counseling process.

The clinical mental health counseling process involves communication, goal setting, and beneficial growth or change through self-advocacy, psychological, vocational, social, and behavioral interventions. The specific techniques and modalities utilized within these counseling processes may include, but are not limited to:

* Assessment and appraisal;
* Diagnosis and treatment planning;
* Career (vocational) counseling;
* Individual and group counseling treatment interventions;
* Case management, referral, and service coordination;
* Program evaluation and research;
* Interventions to remove environmental, employment, and attitudinal barriers;
* Consultation services among multiple parties and regulatory systems;
* Job analysis, job development, and placement services, including assistance with employment and job accommodations; and
* The provision of consultation about and access to rehabilitation technology.

**Commitment to Non-Discrimination/Seeking Reasonable Accommodations**

The University is committed to equality of educational opportunity. The University does not

discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age,

color, creed, disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, national

origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. A student with a disability may

participate in the program so long as the student satisfies program requirements, including these

Standards of Practice, with or without reasonable accommodation. Students who seek reasonable

accommodations for disabilities must contact the University’s Office of Accessibility Resources

and Service (“ARS”) as soon as possible. The Office will determine a student’s eligibility and

recommend appropriate accommodations and services. ARS may be reached by phone at 919-

962-8300 or by email at accessibility@unc.edu.

I have read and understand this overview of the Standards of Practice. I have also read and

understand the UNC-CH Honor Code (<https://studentconduct.unc.edu/students>).

Student:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_