ORIENTATION HANDBOOK

For

THE CENTER FOR COUNSELING
and
DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

California State University, Sacramento
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Introduction

Welcome to the Center for Counseling and Diagnostic Services! Your Practicum experience here will provide you with the unique opportunity to serve as a practitioner to the community while receiving intensive supervision as a student. While your supervisor will provide you with instruction, feedback and guidelines required of you in your student role, this manual has been written to help you understand your role as the counselor in a mental health agency.

The CCDS policies and procedures in this manual have been written to provide you with a brief review of the legal and ethical standards of mental health practice and for the smooth operation of the agency. Since your status as a student does not exempt you from malpractice suits or the ethical requirements of your professional association, you are urged to read this manual carefully and refer to it during the course of your term in Practicum.

Also remember: your enrollment here is contingent upon you obtaining professional liability (malpractice) insurance.
Ethical Guidelines and Standards of Practice

Please refer to ethical standards and guidelines of your specific professional organization to guide your behavior and decisions as a counselor. Always consult with your instructor or the Coordinator when in doubt. Your instructor should provide copies of these guidelines. Remember, while seeing clients at the CCDS you are not only acting under the supervision (licensed or not licensed) of your instructor, but the Coordinator is also considered the legal holder of the records and therefore is responsible for your compliance with professional standards of practice in this Center. The University legal advisor has notified us that if a client decides to sue, not only the University, the Department, the instructor, and the Coordinator, but also the student, can be held responsible.

General Information

Address: Center for Counseling and Diagnostic Services
California State University, Sacramento
Eureka Hall, Room 421
6000 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95819-6079

Phone: (916) 278-6252

Hours: Posted at the beginning of each semester. Staff is on duty at the beginning of each practicum/clinic when clients are expected to be checking in. The Center is closed during all semester breaks and holidays.

Staff: Coordinator: Coordinates Center function with faculty, department, and community agencies; may serve as back-up for instructors; provides consultation to faculty and counselor trainees; hires and supervises student assistants; provides back-up for scheduling appointments, collecting fees, and phone coverage. Reports needs for equipment repair. Orders supplies.

Student Assistant: Serves as receptionist, schedules appointments, collects fees. aids with check out of test materials/videos/books, assists with videotaping, transmits messages to counselors, assists in daily functions of the Center.

Fees: Staff will collect the service charge at (or before) the first session. If a client needs to discuss problems regarding the fee, refer them to the staff person on duty. On a limited basis, fee waivers are granted by the Coordinator.
Appointments

Staff will schedule all Initial appointments for you and will attempt to match client needs with areas of specialization. i.e., MFCC, Career, Voc Rehab, School Psych. etc. Once you have seen the client(s), it is your responsibility to establish a contract to continue at the same time each week. Changes in appointment times may only be made by staff so you must coordinate any requested changes with the staff person on duty.

Your instructor will let us know when to begin scheduling clients for you. Eventually, you will have two clients per class, with the remaining 2 hours for instruction and processing.

The sessions typically begin on the hour and last 50 minutes. As we often have clients booked back-to-back, it is important that you do not go over the scheduled hour. You will often need those 10 minutes to breathe and turn your tape over.

It is important that you are here at least 15 minutes before your first appointment to set up the tape recorder, make seating adjustments, confirm videotaping, etc.

If you are ill or an emergency prevents you from being here for your appointment:

Leave a message with the staff and your instructor at least 24 hours in advance. Only extreme emergencies should keep you from Practicum unless you have cleared your absence with your supervisor and your client the week prior.

Contact your clients to cancel appointments for that day. It is your responsibility to contact the clients you have already seen at least once. Staff will contact any new clients scheduled.

Clients who miss their appointments:

If your client calls to cancel, a note will be in the file.

If the client does not show for the first session, then return the file to the office for processing. Note “NS” (No Show) on the client attendance record form in the client file.

If clients don’t show and you have already seen them in a previous session, it is your responsibility to call them.

If a client misses two appointments, even if they have called to cancel, they will be dropped from the schedule and put back on the waiting list absent some extenuating circumstances. You must discuss this with your supervisor and let the office staff know if you expect the client to continue.

Notify staff when a client does not plan to return so we may schedule a new client for you.

To protect the confidentiality of the client, speak only to the client. If you must leave a message: leave your name, “from CSUS,” and the CCDS phone number. Never leave your home phone
number or cell phone number. Remember people have Caller ID, so to protect your privacy, dial *67 to block the telephone number.

Attendance Policies

Before their first appointment, clients are informed that if they miss their first appointment, they will lose their appointment time.

Established clients who miss two sessions will lose their appointment time unless the counselor and instructor determine that to do so would be clinically unsound. Clients may request to be placed on the waiting list for another appointment time.

*Tue Informed Consent* form, which the client signs during the first session contains a clause regarding attendance. Please be sure to review the form with the client. The reasons for the attendance policies are as follows:

For counseling to be most beneficial, regular attendance is needed.

We have found over the years that clients who miss the first session or two later sessions, generally miss several more sessions and terminate prematurely.

This is a professional training program and you do not benefit if you do not have regular clients.

Clients generally can be seen for one semester only. If it is necessary for the client to continue treatment, it is the counselor’s responsibility to find an appropriate referral source. Exception to the one-semester limit is granted to clients who began late in the semester and wish to continue treatment the following semester or in certain circumstances when the counselor, supervisor, and/or Coordinator determine a referral for a second semester is clinically appropriate.

Communication

Each Practicum class will have a folder with the instructor’s name on it in the office. Inside the folder will be information concerning new clients, client charts, and any messages.

Special requests for space, equipment, materials, or videotaping should be entered on the Practicum Request form in the folder.

Messages can be left on the answering machine when staff are out of the office (278-6252) or emailed to us at ecds@csus.edu. All rules of confidentiality must be observed, i.e., client information must not be left where publicly accessible. Reminder: E-Mail is not a confidential communication source.

If a client wishes to contact you, have them call the Center and we will relay the message to you. To avoid unsupervised contact with the clients and to prevent unwanted calls, students are not to give their personal phone numbers to clients. As part of your professional responsibility to the
client, it is important that we be able to reach you or leave you a message during our office hours. Staff will ask for your contact information at the beginning of the semester.

Students are advised to keep “out-of-session-contact” to a minimum and consult the instructor if there are requests for phone calls, letters, and other agency collaboration.

**Furnishings and Lights:** Check the cubicle you will be working in before each session to make sure there are enough chairs and that they are arranged properly, particularly if you are planning to be videotaped. Have your clients sit facing AWAY FROM the mirror; it can be a distracting reminder to the client that someone may be observing them. Turn off lights when you leave cubicles and return furnishings and supplies to original position. Make sure there is tissue on the table.

**Cubicle/Room Assignments:** Space is assigned if staff receive specific requests for wheelchair access, number of clients in session, videotaping, art/play therapy, etc. Specific requests for room assignments must be noted in the client chart under “Comments” section of the *Client Attendance* form for the following week and on the *Practicum Request* form.

**Equipment Room**

**Audio taping:** Students are responsible for providing their own audiotapes. High-quality, 100- or 110-minute cassettes are recommended for best results. Place tape in the recorder that corresponds to the cubicle in which you will be working. Test all equipment before the session to avoid the disastrous disappointment of a blank session! It is only necessary to push the POWER button on and then press RECORD and PLAY simultaneously. All other adjustments have been preset, so please do not touch other switches or buttons. Recorders can be switched “on” from inside each cubicle. Use initials or first names only to identify tape. You should plan to tape over the previous week’s sessions each week. You may wish to have a second tape with you weekly in case your primary one does not work. You must take every precaution, to protect the confidentiality of the client including when you are listening to the tapes off-site. *You are required to destroy/erase all tapes at the end of the semester.*

**Videotaping:** All videotaping will be done by the staff, and the student needs to supply her/his own videotape. Make sure you let us know in advance so that the equipment can be prepared prior to the session. You should face the minor and be sure overhead lights are on for videotaping. Make your request on the *Practicum Request* form the preceding week. Due to the identifiability of clients on video, it is important that you maintain confidentiality while viewing the tape. Tapes may be viewed in the CCDS or checked out for viewing at home. Unless a special request is made, all videotapes will be erased by staff at the end of the semester and used as back-up videos during the next semester.

**Computers:** School Psychology students will have use of the computer located in room 413C. The key for this room can be checked out from CCDS staff. The computer in the Center office is for staff use only.
Group Room (423): If the chairs and/or the table need to be moved, please stack and put in the back hallway. Return any furniture to its original room and usual configuration at the end of your usage. This room is used as a classroom and can be used as a family therapy room as well. When using this room, allow time for clean-up and replacing furniture.

Large Room (425): This room is also used as a family therapy room and classroom. Furniture must be arranged for each specific use. Please stack chairs and put in back hallway. When using this room, allow time for clean-up and replacing furniture.

Play Therapy Toys, art supplies, and Therapy “Games”: Toys, art supplies, and “games” are currently housed in the center office and should be checked out by staff and returned to the staff at the end of each session. Keep an eye on children using supplies that can damage walls or carpet in the cubicles — we have no janitorial services so you are responsible for picking up and cleaning up after them.

Let us know immediately if anything is missing or malfunctioning.

If you are a member of the last class to use the Center for the day, please take personal responsibility to see that lights and equipment are off and all doors are secured. We need your assistance with this as we have had serious losses due to theft.

Atmosphere: In order to maintain a warn~ and professional atmosphere in the face of crowding and back-to-back scheduling of classes, it is requested that you:

- Do not bring food and drink into the Observation Corridor. We no longer have custodial service to take of spills and trash so please be careful if you do eat or drink in one of the other areas.

- Do not use the waiting room to talk and socialize. Please use empty group rooms for consultation/study. Soundproofing is minimal, so keep your voice to a whisper outside of the cubicles, in hallways, and in the observation areas.

- Please clean up after each session, returning chairs, supplies, and equipment to their original place and throwing away any debris so that the next counselor will have a clean room. The center office is for staff only. Please use office window to make requests of staff. These student assistants work hard to schedule appointments for you and maintain professional and congenial contact with the public. They cannot give their full attention to the person on the other end of the phone if you are talking loudly or disturbing them unnecessarily.

Donations of office supplies, artwork, play items, or children’s books will be greatly appreciated!
Limits of CCDS Services

Phone use is limited to contacting clients who are “late cancels” or “no shows” during practicum time. If you require a private conversation, please ask for the key to room 413C.

Other calls (to service agencies, etc.) can be made as requested when space is available in the office.

CPS reports and other urgent calls are to be made under the supervision of your instructor or the coordinator.

Counselors should avoid any unsupervised phone counseling.

Due to the large volume of incoming calls and preparation for the next class, counselors and faculty are asked to keep special requests of staff to a limit.

Please do not ask staff to run errands, make phone calls, type letters, or copy handouts for clients.

We no longer have regular custodial services for the Center. Please clean up (food, containers, toys, furniture, tapes, miscellaneous garbage and tissues) when the session is over so that the room is ready for the next counseling session.

Audiovisual materials, videotapes, books, and file resources must be checked out by staff.

Client Charts

Student Statement of Understanding and Responsibility: The student signs this form indicating that she/he understands and accepts the conditions regarding confidentiality, exceptions to confidentiality, supervision requirements, and liability protection to minimize legal and ethical violations.

All client charts shall include the following forms and information:

Intake Information: Information taken by staff from initial telephone contact. Presenting problem is identified in order to place client in appropriate practicum. e.g., career, marriage and family.

Counselor Trainee Release of Information: This provides the staff with statistical information so we may contact you during the semester or in subsequent semesters if a client requests that other counselors or agencies contact the trainee regarding the client’s prior counseling experience.

Client Attendance Record: Staff will check “comments” section as well as Practicum Request form after each session to determine next session’s room assignment, fee collection, appointment changes, and any special requests for video/play equipment, etc. Indicate whether the client was In Returning, or Terminated.
Forms Packet: The necessary forms will be in each client’s file. Included in the packet are the *Informed Consent, Assessment and Treatment Plan,* and *Case Notes.*

a. *Informed Consent Agreement:* This form is to be completed prior to the beginning of the first session. It covers all the necessary legal issues that require us to get signed consent. Counseling cannot be provided if client refuses to sign the form. **Counselor Trainee must also sign the form at the first session.**

b. *Authorization for Exchange of Information:* This form releases the counselor to exchange information with designated persons or agencies. Counselor should not discuss client with any outside sources, including counselors previously seen at the CCDS, without this authorization. This form should not be filled out until the client or counselor have the need for the exchange of such information and then care must be taken to complete it fully with all appropriate addresses.

c. *Emergency Care of Minor:* It is preferred that the parent or guardian be available while the minor is in the session. However, in the event that this is not possible, this form allows the CCDS to take necessary medical action.

d. *File Closure Procedure:* Explains and tracks steps for terminating with client(s). Make sure all entries have been signed initialed by both the counselor and supervisor. **Required on all files!**

e. *Assessment & Treatment Plan & Case Notes:* This form is designed to assess any possible critical issues that might require immediate attention. A treatment plan consistent with any of these issues is necessary to avoid malpractice or negligence charges. e.g., client reports suicidal intentions. Treatment plan reflects relevant responses to critical issues.

f. *Weekly Plan:* This form has been approved by the University legal advisor as the minimum information necessary to track client progress and avoid any charges of negligence. Reason for termination must be made at the last entry. All entries must be reviewed and initialed by counselor and supervisor.

To ensure confidentiality, all client charts must stay in the Center Office.
Third-Party Requests Procedure

Requests for records, reports, statements by agencies (Family Court Services, Probation Department, etc.) or individuals (attorneys, therapists, etc.) require that:

A signed Authorization for Release of Information by the client is on file in the Center.

All information released is co-signed by supervisor and copies placed in the client file.

If you are subpoenaed or contacted for any such information, contact your supervisor or the coordinator immediately. Do not attempt to provide such information directly yourself.

Copying and mailing are the responsibility of the counselor during the semester the client is seen.

Termination Procedure

Clients who miss two appointments should be considered for termination unless the counselor/supervisor make a special request to continue.

Clients who miss two appointments must be contacted by the counselor by phone to discuss termination policy and/or reason for client’s decision to discontinue. Do not leave phone messages regarding this.

For referrals, use CCDS Referral Resources List, Community Services Directory, and Self-Help Resource Book

Close File:

Update case notes and include termination statements (reason for termination may need to be determined by phone).

Complete as much information on Assessment and Treatment Plan form as possible. This information is helpful when subsequent counselors contact us (at the request of the client) for information regarding prior counseling experience. The information will also protect us from claims of negligence/ malpractice should unforeseeable events follow termination of counseling (e.g., suicide, homicide, etc.).

A Case Summary may be requested by your supervisor for class requirements but should not be part of the client file.

Counselor must initial and/or sign all forms and have the supervisor review and initial and/or sign them.

When all forms are signed by supervisor, the charts will be stored in the inactive file for 5 years.
Returning Client

CCDS policy is to provide one semester of service to a client. Exceptions are:

- Client began sessions towards the end of the semester and wishes to continue after the break.
- Instructor and counselor have determined that continuation with the client is appropriate. They must recommend that the client return.

A second service fee will be charged if client was seen for more than three session in a previous semester.

All chart information needs to be completed and signed by both the instructor and counselor. In addition, the following steps need to be taken:

- Indicate under “Comment” section of Client Attendance Sheet: “recommend return.” The instructor must initial this recommendation.
- Have client sign Release of Information form so that new counselor can contact previous counselor.
- Complete new Intake Information form.

Counselor Responsibilities

Read and sign Statement of Understanding and Responsibility.

Apply for and obtain liability insurance prior to client contact. You failure to have obtained liability insurance before seeing clients will result in you being administratively dropped from the practicum.

Maintain chart and clinical records:

- Read and sign Counselor Trainee Release of Information.
- Review Informed Consent Agreement and other forms with client and obtain their initials and signature(s) as required.
- Complete Client Attendance record each week.
- Enter progress notes after each session.
- Complete Client Intake forms before termination if client will be continuing at the CCDS.
• Indicate reason for termination for each client and any, referrals made.

• Submit all written materials to be reviewed and signed by faculty before placing in the permanent chart. Include clinical records and all correspondence.

• Note in the chart regarding client’s attendance. Make specific requests for video taping and special rooms for the following week’s appointment.

• Call “no show” clients and review the missed appointment policy and schedule next appointment if appropriate. If a new client is a “no show,” let the staff know so another client can be scheduled for the following week.

• Make audiotape of sessions (use good-quality, 100- or 120-minute tape): check equipment before the session to make sure everything is functioning. Erase all tapes at the end of the semester.

Resource materials:

• Videotapes can be checked out for viewing in Center or at home.

• Books can be checked out for 3 days.

• Play therapy toys need to be checked out and returned immediately after play session.

If the instructor requires videotaping of sessions, make arrangements with the staff a week in advance.

Clients can leave messages for you at the Center; these will be placed in your practicum folder. If client needs to contact counselor sooner, staff will attempt to reach the counselor by phone. Do not give out your personal phone numbers or addresses.

Any notes regarding clients that are not part of the file should have names and other identifying information deleted.

Return room (furniture, toys, etc.) to orderly state for the next class.
Faculty Responsibilities

Check communication from office staff in folder regarding client messages, etc.

Return all client charts to office.

Inform staff regarding type of clients, number of clients per student and starting date.

Make sure that all chairs are returned to designated rooms, turn off all power, leave rooms clean and orderly, and secure the Center.

All requests from agencies and individuals regarding clients will be referred to the instructor for follow-up.

Clients will not be continued for the following semester unless specifically requested by the instructor at the close of the current semester.

Report to staff any problems regarding faulty equipment immediately.

Review and sign all files to assure compliance with legal and ethical requirements.

Staff Responsibilities

Take intake and schedule appointments. Put charts together with forms and intake information.

Take messages for counselors.

Handle crisis calls and make appropriate referrals.

Receive clients and collect fees.

Set up and run video equipment.

Post room assignments.

Check out audiovisual equipment, tests, and play materials upon request.
Coordinator Responsibilities

Provide consultation regarding policies and procedures for the Center.

Be available for supervision back-up, particularly if outside agency is involved. i.e., Child/Adult Protective Services, Probation Department, Family Court Services.

Negotiate with outside agencies requesting CCDS services.

Respond to client complaints/requests and when appropriate, consult with instructors and counselor-trainees.

Serve as clinical consultant to trainees and instructors regarding referrals, resources, legal and ethical issues.

Coordinate interdepartmental requests for space and services.

Oversee general functioning of the Center, including managing Center staff.