

Our mission: University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work (GCSW) prepares diverse leaders in practice and research to address complex challenges and achieve sustainable social, racial, economic, and political justice, locally and globally, through exceptional education, innovative research, and meaningful community engagement.

Guidelines for Private Practice Settings as a Practicum Site

The GCSW Practicum Team believes hosting a student in a private and/or group practice setting can provide a rich clinical practicum experience. Our office has seen an increase in partnerships with social workers who own and/or are a part of a private practice.

Based on student feedback and given this practicum setting's unique nature, our team has developed best practices to help guide practitioners in developing and maintaining a clinical practicum experience which prioritizes student learning, as well as client safety and satisfaction. Please consider these guidelines when deciding if your practice can accommodate a GCSW student and provide the required level of oversight, supervision and support.

1. Each student begins their concentration placement with varying degrees of clinical experience. At the start of the practicum experience, the practicum instructor is expected to assess each student individually to determine foundational skills and areas for growth and development. Students must have opportunities for training, shadowing, observing therapeutic interactions and/or opportunities for role playing with practicum instructors and/or preceptors before being assigned an independent caseload.
2. If the primary tasks and responsibilities of the student consists of providing psychotherapy to individuals and/or families, the assigned Practicum Instructor must have an LCSW. Any exception must be discussed and reviewed by the practicum team.
3. Weekly, educational supervision focused on student development in the 9 learning competencies is required. This can be done in an individual or group format. In addition, **consistent** individual case consultation for each student is expected to remain abreast of client progress. Further, it is the practicum instructor's responsibility to consistently assess students' level of comfort with assigned caseload and to make adjustments as needed. Consider this expectation and your capacity when deciding the number of students to accept as interns each semester.
4. If a student is featured on the practice's website, the student should be clearly identified as a graduate social work intern and not a licensed clinician, counselor and/or therapist.
5. A student shouldn't be required to market or advertise themselves as a sole way to build a caseload. A student's exposure to independent clinical practice should not be

dependent on the number of clients they recruit. Best practice is referrals are screened by the practicum instructor and/or preceptor to assess if the client's presenting problem aligns appropriately with the student's skill level.

6. It is best practice that the practicum instructor or a licensed preceptor remains in the physical office space while students meet with clients. However, we recognize that with virtual options for therapy, this may not be feasible for all sessions. The practicum instructor is expected to be aware of all scheduled sessions conducted by the student. The practicum instructor and/or a licensed preceptor **must** be available to the student in case of emergency or there is an urgent need for case consultation during or following a session. Failure to provide this level of oversight and support consistently may result in the removal of all assigned GCSW students from the practicum site.

7. Remember that students are not licensed clinicians and should not accept direct financial payments from clients for clinical services. All payments for clinical services should be made to the private practice and all financial compensation to students should be made from the private practice. Providing students with a stipend during the practicum experience is strongly encouraged.

8. It's important to note that students **MUST** cease providing clinical services upon student's graduation from the GCSW. Once a student becomes a graduate, they are no longer considered a practicum intern and are not covered under the University's liability insurance. If you hope to hire a student after graduation, the student **MUST** obtain LMSW licensure and/or follow state rules around clinical supervision prior to continuing to provide clinical services.

We are open to feedback from the community on how to enhance these guidelines. Please email your Practicum Faculty with any suggestions.

If you have any questions please contact the UH GCSW Practicum Team at: practeam@uh.edu

Thank you for your interest in becoming a valued partner and supporter of practicum education at the GCSW!