



North Carolina Department of Adult Correction
Division of Health Services
Behavioral Health Services

Practicum, Internship, and Field Experience
Opportunities in
Psychology, Clinical Social Work,
Mental Health Counseling, & Substance Abuse
Counseling

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GOALS

The North Carolina Department of Adult Correction's (NCDAC) primary goal is to promote public safety by the administration of a fair and humane system which provides reasonable opportunities for adjudicated offenders to develop progressively responsible behavior. The Behavioral Health Services section delivers comprehensive care and treatment to offenders with a mental illness, substance use disorder, intellectual deficit, and other developmental disabilities. Behavioral Health Services field experience opportunities in Psychology, Clinical Social Work, Mental Health Counseling, and Substance Abuse Counseling offer education, training, and preparation for the future practice of professional mental health treatment providers. Our field experience opportunities, which include practicum and internship hours for several students completing education in various fields, provide a platform for future work in substance abuse, trauma, severe mental illness, community mental health, and integrated healthcare settings. In addition, the Behavioral Health Services field experience opportunities provide a wealth of corrections-specific instruction for students wishing to find permanent employment in a correctional setting. This goal is accomplished by providing students with training, supervision, and opportunities to achieve proficiency in consultation, assessment, intervention, and therapy with a diverse, under-served, disenfranchised, and frequently disadvantaged client population.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

The NCDAC is committed to providing comprehensive behavioral health services that support the care and treatment of individuals with mental health needs. These services are thoughtfully designed to prevent, manage, and reduce the impact of conditions that contribute to mental health challenges, with the goal of promoting wellness and recovery. Our treatment programs are multi-disciplinary in nature, ensuring that everyone receives personalized and holistic care. Services include but are not limited to: (1) Identification and diagnostic assessment; (2) Acute care services; (3) Outpatient treatment; (4) Residential care; (5) Specialized programs tailored to specific diagnostic categories; (6) Preventive interventions. We strive to create a supportive environment where individuals feel respected, empowered, and equipped to make meaningful progress in their mental health journey.

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER SERVICES

The NCDAC is committed to delivering comprehensive behavioral health services that support the care and treatment of individuals with substance use disorders. These services are designed to address both criminal thinking and substance use, with a strong emphasis on cognitive behavioral interventions. We operate from the belief that when individuals learn to change their thinking, they can also change their behavior. To foster meaningful and lasting change, our programs incorporate repetition, skill-building exercises, and role-play activities. Each participant is thoughtfully assigned to the appropriate level of care—ranging from Intermediate Intensive Outpatient and Long-Term Intensive Outpatient to residential services—based on their individual needs. All treatment is guided by a gender-responsive, standardized curriculum to ensure consistency and quality across our programs.

FIELD EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Field experience opportunities are unpaid clinical experiences for students in psychology, social work, and mental health counseling programs. Field placements can be arranged in various prison facilities across North Carolina with either male or female offender populations.

Most of these opportunities involve working with an outpatient mental health team following a community mental health center model with the communities served being a large institution or several smaller prison units. However, there are also opportunities to gain experience in specialized programs for offenders with intellectual disabilities, with serious and persistent mental illness, and for those with sexual offenses. Some of these programs are based on an Inpatient or Residential model while others follow a Day Treatment or partial hospitalization model.

All sites are committed to helping Masters and Doctoral level students acquire the broad clinical skills necessary to perform the duties of a Licensed Psychological Associate, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, or Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor in a health service setting. Bachelor's level students develop skills in providing support services, engaging in activities that increase basic knowledge of mental health treatment in correctional settings. Evaluation of performance and progress is ongoing and includes feedback through supervision and formal evaluations completed in collaboration with the student's academic institution. These evaluations focus on detailing the student's strengths and areas needing further improvement.

There are general characteristics of all the opportunities regardless of the setting. For students at or above the master's level, field experience in Behavioral Health Services starts with a period of observation and familiarization with clinical/counseling work in a correctional setting. During this initial period, the student reads policy and procedure manuals and becomes familiar with the documentation required for behavioral health services. Concurrently, the student accompanies a Behavioral Health Clinician and observes behavioral health evaluations, therapy sessions, crisis interventions, and group therapy. When the staff and the student both feel comfortable with additional independence, the student begins conducting behavioral health screenings and assumes an individual therapy case load under the supervision of a licensed clinician.

All students at or above the master's level are afforded the opportunity to conduct behavioral health screenings with a population that includes those with serious mental health disorders as well as personality disorders. The student may expect to interview and evaluate a sample of individuals experiencing psychotic and affective disorders as well as various mental health concerns. Students with requisite education (e.g., Psychology students who have completed an assessment course) may have an opportunity to administer, under supervision, assessment instruments such as the WAIS-5 and MMPI-3.

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER SERVICES

Substance Use Disorder services are provided under the department's Alcoholism and Chemical Dependency Program (ACDP). This program offers unpaid clinical field experience opportunities to graduate students in master's programs of rehabilitation counseling and substance abuse counseling. Field placements can be arranged in various prison facilities across North Carolina with either male or female offender populations. Most of the opportunities involve working with an outpatient substance abuse treatment team in the prison setting. Other field experience opportunities may include working in a residential community-based program which services probationers and parolees.

All field sites are committed to helping the student acquire the broad clinical skills necessary to perform the duties of a Licensed Clinical Addiction Specialist in a health service setting. Evaluation of performance and progress is ongoing and includes feedback through supervision and formal evaluations completed in collaboration with the student's academic institution. These evaluations focus on detailing the student's strengths and areas needing further improvement.

Field experience in ACDP begins with a period of observation and familiarization with clinical/counseling work in a correctional setting. During this initial period, the student reads policy and procedure manuals and becomes familiar with the documentation required for Alcoholism and Chemical Dependency services. Concurrently, the Student accompanies a Substance Abuse Counselor and observes intakes, common assessments, treatment planning, educational sessions, group therapy, skill building sessions, and crisis interventions. When the staff and the student both feel comfortable with additional independence, the student begins conducting intakes, common assessments and co-facilitating/facilitating all group activities and individual sessions with offenders under the supervision of a licensed clinician.

UNDERGRADUATE OPPORTUNITIES

This opportunity offers unpaid field experience opportunities to undergraduate students in bachelor's programs in behavioral health service fields (e.g., psychology, sociology, human services, rehabilitation studies, etc.). The experience involves working with Behavioral Health Services staff in leadership and administrator positions, utilizing a mentorship model to encourage thoughtful consideration of the population served as well as the individuals who serve the population. Students will have the opportunity to learn about specialized programs for offenders with intellectual disabilities, with serious and persistent mental illness, and for those with sexual offenses.

ELIGIBILITY

MASTER'S LEVEL

The student must currently be enrolled in a master's or doctoral program in their respective area of study. The prospective student must be receiving training to work in direct care with clinical populations that meets standards set forth by state level licensure requirements related to the university's identified training program. Prior to establishing an Academic Affiliation Agreement

with the university for training, the DAC will consider the program's curriculum and training model. The following criteria must be met:

- 1) The program shall be identified and labeled as a psychology, social work, mental health counseling, or substance abuse counseling program that educates and trains students to engage in clinical activities which constitute the practice of their respective fields. Institutional catalogues must clearly specify the type of program and training intent.
- 2) The program shall maintain authority and primary responsibility for the core and specialty areas.
- 3) The program shall have an identifiable body of students at the institution who are matriculated in that program for a degree.
- 4) There shall be an identifiable full-time faculty in residence at the institution, sufficient in size and breadth to carry out its responsibilities, employed by and providing instruction at the home campus of the institution.
- 5) There shall be a faculty member at the institution responsible for the student's program either as the administrative head of the program, or as the advisor, major professor, or committee chair for the individual student's program.
- 6) The program shall be an integrated, organized sequence of study as demonstrated by an identifiable curriculum track or tracks wherein course sequences and course content are described in institutional catalogues, departmental handbooks, or other institutional publications.
- 7) The program shall include, as listed on the transcript, internship, externship, practicum, or other supervised field experience appropriate to the area of specialty and the clinical practice of psychology, social work, mental health counseling, rehabilitation counseling, or substance abuse counseling.

Note for Master's and Doctoral level students: We prioritize universities in North Carolina that are in reasonable proximity to facilities accepting students. Out-of-state universities are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Applicants are encouraged to review North Carolina's General Statutes for additional details regarding licensure requirements in the area of study:

Psychology Programs must meet the standards set forth by the [North Carolina Psychology Practice Act](#) (see [G.S. 90-270.136 \(5\)](#), [G.S. 90-270.136 \(8\)](#)), and relevant portions of the North Carolina Administrative Code (see [21 NCAC 54](#)). Further details regarding standards can be reviewed on the website for the [North Carolina Psychology Board](#).

Clinical Social Work Programs must meet the standards set forth by the [North Carolina Social Worker Certification and Licensure Act](#) (see [G.S. 90B-3 \(6\)](#) and [G.S. 90B-3 \(8\)](#)) and relevant portions of the North Carolina Administrative Code (see [21 NCAC 63](#)). The program must be accredited by the [Council on Social Work Education](#) (CSWE). Further details are available on the website.

Mental Health Counseling Programs must meet the standards set forth by the [North Carolina Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselors Act](#) (see [G.S. 90-330 \(3\)](#) and [G.S. 90-332.1 \(3\)](#)) and

relevant portions of the North Carolina Administrative Code (see [21 NCAC 53](#)). Further information can be reviewed on the [North Carolina Board of Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselors'](#) website.

Substance Abuse Counseling Programs must meet the standards set forth by the North Carolina Licensed Clinical Addiction Specialist Act (see [21 NCAC 68 .0101](#)) Further information can be reviewed on the [North Carolina Addictions Specialist Professional Practice Board](#) website.

UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL

The student must currently be enrolled in a bachelor's program in a behavioral health services field in North Carolina. To be considered for an undergraduate level field experience, the student must have completed their sophomore year and be in good academic standing. They must be enrolled in a course or program established by their university. NCDAC will consider the program's curriculum and training model prior to reviewing and signing field experience opportunity paperwork. NOTE: Approval may take several weeks; students are encouraged to express interest well in advance of desired start date.

Interested?

To submit your materials for review, please complete the [Student Information Form](#) in its entirety.

Contact

For additional information contact:

Behavioral Health Training Branch

SVC_DAC_Behavioral_Health_Training_Branch@dac.nc.gov