

Counselor Competency and Fitness Statement

Oakland University's counseling programs are required, as CACREP-accredited programs, to hold students to the highest professional, personal, and ethical standards. The 2014 ACA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Section F.6.b, states in part, "Counselors, through ongoing evaluation and appraisal, are aware of the academic and personal limitations of students and supervisees that might impede performance. Counselors assist students and supervisees in securing remedial assistance when needed, and dismiss from the training programs supervisees who are unable to provide competent service due to academic or personal limitations" (pp. 13). The Ethical Guidelines for Counseling Supervisors, Published by the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, states in guideline 2.12: "Supervisors have the responsibility of recommending remedial assistance to the supervisee and of screening from the training program, applied counseling setting, or state licensure those supervisees who are unable to provide competent professional services. These recommendations should be clearly and professionally explained in writing to the supervisees who are so evaluated."

In the counseling program and counseling courses, you will be required to demonstrate competencies that cannot always be adequately evaluated based on written assignments and classroom discussion alone. Therefore, passing grades require successful performance on nine factors that have been established as essential for performance as a competent and ethical counselor (Wiggins-Frame & Stevens-Smith, 1995). You are expected to be: 1) open, 2) flexible, 3) positive, 4) cooperative, 5) willing to use and accept feedback, 6) aware of impact on others, 7) able to deal with conflict, 8) able to accept personal responsibility, and 9) able to express feelings effectively and appropriately. The counseling profession requires interpersonal, intrapersonal and performance-based competencies. Becoming a professional counselor means assuming responsibility for not only your clients' well-being, but also for the well-being of the school or agency where you work and the reputation of the profession itself. As such, you are expected to conduct yourself with the same level of professionalism in the department that will be expected of you in a work setting. In summation, when problems and/or complaints experienced by faculty and staff accumulate, the department must take action in fulfillment of its commitment to high ethical standards. Although not an exhaustive list, here are examples of unacceptable behaviors.

1. Unprofessional and/or Unethical conduct
2. Repeated non-attendance and/or tardiness in classes, at internship placement and other required departmental functions
3. Repeated excuse making when tasks, assignments, tests, and/or appointments are not completed in a timely manner or require rescheduling
4. Difficulty tolerating different points of view, constructive feedback
5. Difficulty communicating respectfully or participating collaboratively with others (e.g.,

- classmates, colleagues, clients, supervisors, and/or instructors)
6. Behavioral displays of mental or emotional difficulties that impede learning of others and/or represent a risk to others and/or self
 7. Verbal or physical aggressiveness toward others
 8. Consistent inability or unwillingness to carry out academic or internship expectations and responsibilities
 9. Lack of awareness into negative consequences of own behaviors on others
 10. Frequent blame of others or external factors for performance failures and difficulties in the academic or internship environment(s)
 11. Behaviors that place others at risk in the academic or internship environments, including current substance abuse problems; exploitation of others; emotional, physical or verbal abuse; vindictive action toward others; or stealing from others
 12. Difficulties with maintaining confidentiality and/or ethically handling clinical materials
 13. Inability to demonstrate cultural competence with clients and/or peers during academic or internship environment(s)
 14. Inability to provide effective services to clients
 15. Failure to maintain regular contact with supervisors, including keeping them apprised of clinical and ethical issues pertaining to clients.
 16. Inability to maintain appropriate boundaries with faculty, staff, supervisors, peers, and/or clients

You will be informed by your instructor if your performance on any of these factors is problematic and will be given specific written feedback with guidelines for improvement as an ongoing part of our procedures for maintaining competency and fitness (See Guidelines for Procedures of Violation of Competency and Fitness).

Counseling not only demands the highest levels of performance, it also exposes counselors to stresses and challenges that may threaten individuals' coping abilities. Students are expected to take accountability for their personal wellness and demonstrate appropriate mental and emotional functioning to work effectively with clients and colleagues. The resources and references listed below may be helpful to students.

References

- Baird, B. N. (2011). *The internship, practicum, and field placement handbook: a guide for the helping professions* (6th edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Kottler, J. A. (2011) *The therapist's workbook: Self-assessment, self-care, and self-improvement exercises for mental health professionals* (2nd edition). San Francisco: John Wiley & Son.

Morrisette, P. J. (2001). *Self-supervision: A primer for counselors and helping professionals*.
New York: Brunner-Routledge.