

Clinical Internship FAQs

What internship experiences do you offer?

On the SAFet Clinical team, we routinely have internship opportunities for Master's (or Doctoral) level candidates in mental health disciplines, including counseling, marriage and family therapy, social work, and applied psychology. Interns work as part of our team, providing outpatient mental health services in a community mental health setting.

We have more limited opportunities for Bachelor's level candidates which are usually tied to specific programs such as EWU's Behavior Health Support Specialist certificate students.

How long is an internship?

This varies by program, but we generally place interns for at least a year, and we welcome interns from programs that have longer placement times (typically up to 18 months for both practicum and internship). Internships shorter than a year are generally not feasible given the extensive onboarding and training process and our deliberate approach to building an intern's caseload.

When do interns start?

Most commonly, our intern cohort starts in January. We are typically interviewing interns in September and October to identify the cohort for the next year. Interns from EWU tend to start later due to their academic program. We can work with programs that have different start dates, but the availability of an internship placement may be less for students on a different internship clock since we do try to build a January cohort rather than relying on rolling applications.

What population do you work with?

We are primarily a youth-serving program, working with youth as young as two. We also work with adults who are recent survivors of sexual assault or other crimes, and we have a reputation for working with refugee youth and adults. The clinical issues tend to be the ones most commonly seen in community mental health, including trauma, anxiety, depression, and behavior problems. As the local Community Sexual Assault Program, we tend to get a higher number of referrals related to trauma than some agencies. We also have a reputation for working with youth who exhibit problematic sexual behavior (PSB), which is behavior that is causing harm to others (these youth typically need trauma therapy with some extra attention to good safety and supervision planning until they learn more functional ways to get their needs met).

What does training look like?

Interns go through the same onboarding and training process as new staff, which involves approximately 40 hours of initial training. Some of this is agency-specific administration training to keep us in compliance with our accrediting body, the Council on Accreditation. The rest are clinical trainings (such as asynchronous training in Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Motivational Interviewing). Some of the training is meeting with different LCSNW staff to learn how programs work together. After this initial training period, ongoing training is integrated into group and individual supervision. We blend didactic training with experiential work and self-study. We initially start with CBT for youth, which includes a focus on helping youth with trauma, behavior, anxiety, and depression. Later, we encourage interns to look more deeply into areas that are of particular interest to them or are relevant for the clients they are seeing. This may involve learning other commonly used evidence-based practices such as Common Elements Treatment Approach (CETA) for adults, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), the gold standard treatment for trauma and behavior problems for youth age 2-7, Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). Most approaches can be delivered by interns (as generic rather than name-brand therapy). Some approaches like EMDR have more limited opportunities for interns to practice alone, but they often are good co-therapy opportunities.

We ask all interns to learn and apply our core model of CBT given our expertise with this approach. We also encourage reflection on clinical orientation and we are open to exploring promising practices and practice-based evidence as part of a more nuanced discussion of evidence-based practice (EBP). Interns have the opportunity to lead staff activities and teach our team about what they are learning in their academic program.

Are there any constraints on when I can do my internship hours?

We want interns to be well-supported by having immediate access to a Clinical Supervisor when needed. Therefore, hours on-site (when there are opportunities to get direct clinical hours) are limited to LCSNW's business hours, which are 8am-5pm Monday through Thursday and 8:30am-3pm on Fridays. Some indirect hours may be obtained by completing trainings and other activities outside of LCSNW business hours, but all client contact would occur during business hours.

What does supervision look like?

Each intern is assigned a specific Clinical Supervisor as their direct supervisor. Individual supervision occurs once a week for an hour. We have an "open door" policy for supervisors, so if a person's direct supervisor is not available, interns can connect with any of the other Clinical Supervisors to get immediate support. We have an intern specific group supervision once a week scheduled around the availability of the intern cohort. For interns who are available Thursday mornings, they are welcome to attend our consultation meetings at 9am (covering a

number of topics each month such as Parent-Child interaction Therapy consultation, Chronic Disease consultation, or Refugee and Multicultural consultation) and our team staff meetings at 10 (which alternate between administrative meetings and group supervision).

Each supervisor has a different style, but we share a common approach grounded in the discrimination model and developmental model of supervision.

What does it take to be a successful intern?

We have been lucky enough to have had a lot of amazing interns train with us for as long as we can remember. We have found that curiosity and openness to learning and feedback are key qualities that predict good outcomes. We also note that folks who are able to be more of a self-starter (once they have the background information to know how to accomplish something) tend to do better as there are periods of time that you'll need to follow-through on things. Our supervisors are incredibly supportive and responsive, but we don't want to micromanage your day. We've also learned that interns need to commit to spending some time on site at the beginning, even if there isn't a formal meeting to attend, to meet the team and have people start to have you in their mind to facilitate co-therapy and client assignments.

Will I be able to get the hours I need?

Yes, we have hosted interns continuously for several years, and almost every intern has met their hours requirement on time for timely graduation. Most programs have approximately 240-300 direct hours needed, which can be met by gradually building up to a full caseload that the intern carries throughout the middle and end of internship. In the rare case where this has not happened, it is usually because the intern is experiencing an unexpected life circumstance that impacts their ability to complete their academic requirements and internship requirements as planned. In those cases, we partner with the intern's academic program as soon as we can to find a plan for success. We've had interns who have taken a break from internship and then return to graduate successfully.

Do you have opportunities for interns to get group counseling experience?

Yes, but given our size and our clinical population, groups are more rare at our site. Interns have been able to fulfill group counseling requirements, and interns have even been able to develop and start their own groups, but groups tend to be a small portion of the direct hours that interns have.

Can interns be hired as staff?

Yes, we commonly have interns who are hired into full time clinical positions after they graduate. We tend to know our interns very well, and they know our setting well, so it is often a perfect fit. We are eligible to hire Agency Affiliated Counselors (AACs), which means we do not have to plan for an employment gap after graduation while new graduates are applying for the associate

license. We sometimes have opportunities for interns to begin part-time work prior to graduation.

What programs are eligible to be considered for internship?

Primarily, we host interns from Master's level (sometimes Doctoral level) programs that are preparing students for independent licensure as a mental health professional. Most commonly these are programs in counseling, marriage and family therapy, social work, or applied psychology, and they all require practicum/internship as part of the academic program.

Do you accept Ballmer scholars?

Yes, we are an approved site for students with the Ballmer scholarship who need to work in a Medicaid-serving agency. We want a diverse intern cohort, so we would not aim to exclusively place Ballmer scholars, but making the commitment to serve Medicaid clients as a Ballmer scholar is certainly a factor that we consider in our overall decisions about offering internship placements.

How are interns selected?

If we have availability for placement, we are committed to interviewing any interested candidate. We typically do one, brief interview of 20-30 minutes with standardized questions. There are opportunities to ask questions that help the intern candidate see if our site is a good fit for them. If there are questions about whether specific program requirements can be accommodated in our internship program, an email prior to the interview is typically best. If students are coming from programs where they don't have classmates doing internship with us that they can consult with about our program, we can schedule a tour of our building and talk in more detail about the services that we offer and how internship works.

We aim to have a diverse range of schools, disciplines, and lived experience represented in our intern cohort, so we sometimes have to decline wonderful individuals for internship.

We do have an option for "early decision," which is intended for students who are clear that we are their top choice for internship placement. With early decision, the intern indicates that if they receive an offer from us, they will immediately accept it and withdraw from consideration at other sites. We ask for the name of a school contact so that there is accountability for students who select this route. To be clear: until we make an offer, a student is encouraged to interview at any sites that might be a good placement for them, and they are welcome to accept those if we are not able to extend an offer first.

Early decision is not required; everyone would still be part of the pool of applicants until we finish filling our cohort. However, it is possible that fewer spots will be available if there are early decision candidates who receive offers.

How do I apply?

If your school allows you to submit internship materials directly, please email your resume/CV to Lekeisha Kinard (lkinard@lcsnw.org), Behavioral Health Program Manager. Cover letters are welcome but not required.