

Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC)

Field Experience FAQs

What is the Field Experience?

The Field Experience is the hands-on, practical application and skills development portion of your degree, which includes the following courses: Practicum in CMHC, Internship I, and Advanced Internship. During the Field Experience, you will put into practice all that you have learned in your academic classes. In consultation with your NEC Field Experience Instructor, the on-site supervisor will monitor and evaluate all aspects of your clinical knowledge, skills, and abilities according to key performance indicators.

Are there actual classes that accompany the Field Experience placement?

Yes. The Field Experience has three separate classes: Practicum, Internship I, and Advanced Internship.

Are there assignments due for the Field Experience classes?

Yes. Each class has assigned reading and weekly assignments.

Does NEC find a Field Experience site for me?

No. The Field Experience is very specific to each student. The culture and mission of the site itself, the programs offered, commuting distance, hours of operation, and many others are factors individual to each student. The NEC faculty are here to help identify which type of clientele or clinical site each student is interested in, as well as how to go about reaching out to potential sites. However, ultimately this is each student's responsibility. We encourage each student to connect with our very talented Career and Life Planning office to discuss additional options that may be available.

Am I guaranteed a Field Experience placement?

No. While NEC has worked for many years with its community partners, there are no guarantees that our partners will have positions available. It is up to each student to research, apply, interview, and secure their own Field Experience.

What should I look for in a Field Experience site?

Great question! The main query we encourage you to keep in mind is this: Will the experience at this particular site prepare me for 1) the state licensing exam and 2) my future as a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor?

What if I can't find a site?

In this very rare occasion, you may continue your education by focusing on other classes (i.e., electives) while still pursuing a Field Experience site.



Can I get paid for my Field Experience?

Absolutely! However, organizations tend to appreciate the free labor provided by students in their Field Experiences. The [Department of Labor](#) only approves sub-minimum wage or no-wage work if the two parties agree that "...that this placement in no way establishes an employee/employer relationship between the student(s) and the business site at which they are placed" (RSA 279:22, 2021).

How many clinical hours do I need for the Field Experience?

CACREP requires the accumulation of a minimum of [700 clinical hours](#) (CACREP, 2021). However, some state regulatory boards require more hours of internship. If this is the case for your state, NEC provides an elective to meet these needs in the Advanced Internship II course.

That's a lot of hours! How do I accomplish that?

As mentioned above, the Field Experience is divided into three separate 12-week classes: Practicum, Internship, and Advanced Internship. You will accumulate a total of 700 hours over the course of 36 weeks.

Practicum: 100 hours over 12 weeks (approximately 8–10 hours per week)

Internship: 300 hours over 12 weeks (approximately 22–26 hours per week)

Advanced Internship: 300 hours over 12 weeks (approximately 22–26 hours per week).

I'm currently employed in the counseling field. Can I just get my hours through my job?

Students can use their current place of employment to accumulate their hours for Field Experience *if, and only if*, the supervised clinical experience is "distinctly defined" ([CACREP, 2021](#)) from their daily employment. In short, you must learn and develop new or different counseling skills apart from your day-to-day role. For example, if you currently work at a community mental health center doing group or intake interviews, you could potentially earn your hours for the program at the center in a different role (one-on-one counseling, different types of groups, a satellite location).

What if I don't get enough hours by the end of each class?

In this instance, your specific circumstance will be reviewed by your NEC Instructor and the Clinical Coordinator in consultation with the Program Director. There are several options that can be explored. Rest assured; NEC will work with you!

What if I have TOO MANY hours at the end of each class?

One of the most important skills to learn as a budding clinician is self-care and boundary setting. The unfortunate reality is that the demand for mental health services far exceeds the number of available practitioners. If we as mental health clinicians keep saying yes to client assignments, we could easily be booked 12–15 hours per day! Our hope is to guide you through your own growth process in learning healthy limitations and finding your voice to enforce your boundaries.

I saw on the CACREP website and in the NEC CMHC Handbook that I need Direct Hours and Indirect Hours. What are these?

Direct Service and Indirect Service are the two primary categories that define the characteristics of the services provided. CACREP defines Direct Service as “...the supervised use of counseling consultation, or related professional skills with actual clients (can be individuals, couples, families, or groups) for the purpose of fostering social, cognitive, behavioral, and/or affective change. These activities must involve interaction with others and may include: 1) assessment, 2) counseling, 3) psycho-educational activities, and 4) consultation. The following would not be considered direct service: 1) observing others providing counseling or related services, 2) record keeping, 3) administrative duties, 4) clinical and/or administrative supervision” ([CACREP, 2021](#)).

Here is a helpful chart that breaks down the 700 required hours:

	Direct Service Hours	Indirect Service Hours	Total Hours	Hours per Week (average)
Practicum	40	60	100	8–10
Internship	130	170	300	22–26
Advanced Internship	130	170	300	22–26
TOTAL	300	400	700	20