



Family, School and Community Partnerships
Leading to Successful Learning

PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC EXTERNSHIP (PRACTICUM) PROGRAM

Revised: September, 2018

This program is recognized as a Member of ACEPT.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Connections Day School (CDS) is a private therapeutic day school, founded in 1998. We serve children and adolescents, ages 8-21, primarily from Lake County who, because of significant special education needs (ED, BD, LD, OHI, AUT, TBI, ID), require an alternative school program that is both educational and therapeutic. By utilizing therapeutic, educational, family and community connections, CDS is able to promote academic achievement, social/emotional well-being and personal growth. The Staff Members at CDS employ a variety of methods to help students make academic progress, appropriately manage their behavior, and develop and/or improve their coping, problem-solving and social skills. By utilizing a combination of respect, humor, empathy, and kindness balanced with firmness (i.e., maintaining high expectations and ensuring that students adhere to established rules, boundaries and limitations), Staff Members are able to establish and maintain supportive, nurturing relationships with our students. In turn, these relationships can help the students be more open to learning the life skills required for short and long-term success.

The students engage in an academically challenging curriculum emphasizing group instruction and hands-on activities. The Clinical/Therapeutic Staff at CDS utilize a cognitive-behavioral/problem-solving approach as well as psychodynamic, dialectical-behavior, family-systems and narrative principles. In addition, the Lakota-Sioux Circle of Courage – which teaches the value of belonging, independence, generosity and mastery – is explored to help students develop these essential life skills. This multi-faceted approach works to assist the students in: overcoming issues at hand; practicing positive, alternative behaviors; and exploring ways to “re-write” their negative life stories. The goal is to work with students to build on their strengths and gifts, and be allies with them in their struggle against the challenges and obstacles that get in the way of their success. The therapeutic milieu is based on a positive, nurturing model, where natural, logical consequences for behaviors are utilized as often as possible. CDS avoids using restrictive and/or punitive methods of behavior management and does not have a time-out room. Therapeutic holding (restraint) is only employed as a last resort, when a student is presenting as a danger to him/herself or others.

Ms. Betty Lindquist and Dr. John Schuler, the founders of our program, chose to base the mission of CDS on philosophical principles similar to those held at Counseling Connections – their multi-disciplinary group practice which specializes in the therapeutic needs of children, adolescents and families. The professionals at Counseling Connections have worked closely with the schools, courts and social service agencies of Lake and Northern Cook Counties since 1982.

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Connections Day School offers a comprehensive array of support services, including:

- Small Group and Individualized Academic Instruction
- Individual, Group, Family & Milieu Therapy and Crisis Intervention
- Psychiatric Consultation and Evaluation
- Individual and Group Art Therapy
- Substance Abuse Evaluation and Individual & Group Therapy
- Occupational Therapy and Speech & Language Evaluations and Services
- Social/Emotional, Problem-Solving & Coping Skill Building
- A Comprehensive Behavior Management Program
- Daily School Nurse Services
- Transition & Post-Graduation Preparation

II. TRAINING PROGRAM, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Clinical Training Program at Connections Day School is extensive - offering two Post-Doctoral Fellowship (APPIC), two Doctoral Internship (APPIC) and four Therapy Externship (Practicum) positions.

The Therapy Externship program has been designed to help Externs acquire and refine their clinical skills in key areas of practice, all while functioning as a valued member of a Multidisciplinary Team. This team is comprised of Special Education Teachers, Program Assistants, Behavior Specialists, an Art Therapist, Substance Abuse Specialist, Speech & Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist and Psychiatrist. There is an emphasis on training in fundamental clinical skills with a primary focus on Individual, Group, Family & Milieu Therapy, and Crisis Intervention. The training program is designed and organized in a way that provides Externs with a planned, programmed sequence of training experiences – one that assures breadth and quality of training.

Externs are provided with opportunities to work with high-risk children, adolescents and their families – individuals struggling with mild to severe: mood, anxiety, behavior, substance-related, psychotic, developmental, and personality disorders from diverse cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. All of this is done under the supervision of the Clinical Director, and other members of our dynamic Clinical Training Staff.

Ultimately, our primary objective is to promote our Externs' professional growth in such a way that, by the end of the training year, they feel confident in their ability to function as Clinicians who practice in accordance with the highest standards of care.

III. CLINICAL WORK, SUPERVISION AND TRAINING

- Individual, Group, Family & Milieu Therapy, and Crisis Intervention with children, adolescents and their parents/guardians. Co-leading “Specialty Groups” with experienced staff group leaders (e.g., art therapy, music therapy, drug & alcohol education).

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- Assisting with the facilitation of Monthly Parents' Support Group meetings.
- Attending Multidisciplinary Staffings for students; and writing and presenting Treatment Summaries, and occasionally Social Developmental Histories, for these Staffings.
- 1.5 hour of Individual, and 3 hours of Group Supervision/Didactic/In-service Training per week with a Licensed Clinical Psychologist and/or other members of the Clinical and Administrative teams; and opportunities to consult, as needed, with other members of the Clinical Training Staff. The primary focus of this supervision is to explore and develop the psychological services rendered directly by the Extern, as well supporting their professional development.
- Externs may be asked to audio/video tape their sessions for review within supervision; and any audio/video taped sessions that are utilized outside of the CDS building for academic, training or professional purposes may be reviewed by the supervisor.
- Monthly consultation meetings with the Medical Director/Consulting Psychiatrist for CDS.
- Daily Staff Meetings – from 3:30-4:00pm, to discuss the day's events, problem-solve and develop plans for the future.
- Institute Days – in-school staff training which cover school & community-related, therapeutic and behavior-related topics and interventions; and include mandatory Non-Violent Crisis Prevention & Intervention (CPI) training (for which you will receive formal certification).
- An opportunity to engage in Animal Assisted Therapy by working with our Staff Therapy Dogs (all of whom are certified through *Therapy Dogs International*), within the milieu and in individual & group therapy.

TRAINING NOTES:

- Although the Therapy Externs at CDS do not conduct any psychological testing, when one of the students on their caseload requires testing, they collaborate with the Examiner in reviewing the data and developing a case formulation based on both the testing data and the Extern's therapeutic work with the student. Diagnostic Externs from Counseling Connection (and their Supervisors) are the only individuals who provide formal psychological testing for Connections Day School students.
- Therapy Externs engage in data collection and progress monitoring for each of the students on their caseload, this is done through weekly tracking and graphing of the therapeutic and social/emotional goals identified on each student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). Externs utilize *Goal Tracker*, a school-wide, online, goal-tracking matrix to accomplish this task – this program helps CDS staff collect data within all tiers of therapeutic, academic, and behavioral intervention, and yields data charts of student progress. These charts are then utilized to assess quarterly progress on each student's IEP goals, another outcome measure

IV. EXTERNSHIP FORMAT

- 11 consecutive months ~ mid-August – late-July.
- 3 days per week (a minimum of 24 hours) for the School Year; and 2 days per week (a minimum of 16 hours) for Summer Term – the final 7 weeks of training.

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- **Please note:**
 - Some modifications can be made to this format depending upon the Extern's course schedule (e.g., an Extern can be on site for 2 full-days and 2 half-days).
 - Some evening work may be required in an effort to be as available and accommodating as possible for Family Therapy sessions.
 - Externs help to create a strong, safe, and healthy therapeutic milieu, this includes assisting with student arrival & dismissal, and providing assistance to school staff throughout the milieu.
- Thursday is the one day that ALL Externs are required to be on-site.
- Externs are required to participate in a minimum of 600 hours of Supervised Clinical Experience throughout the year; this time is spent in: Direct Service; Indirect Service; Training; and Supervision.

V. EVALUATION

Evaluation is an active, ongoing process throughout the Externship period. All evaluations that an Extern's academic program requires will be completed by her/his Primary Supervisor. In addition, the Supervisor and Extern will have an active discussion of the evaluation itself, and the Extern's areas of strength and weakness (this type of discussion will occur at least 2 times throughout the course of the training year). Any serious concerns will be discussed with the Extern, the other members of the Clinical Training Staff, and the Director of Training at the Extern's academic program. All Externs will receive a copy of the document: *Due Process & Grievance Procedures*, for a full explanation of these policies, at the beginning of their training/orientation.

VI. EXTERNSHIP BENEFITS

- Vacation Time ~ Thanksgiving, Winter, Spring and Summer Breaks, all National Holidays and a modified Summer Schedule (2 days per week, for the last 7 weeks of the Externship).
- 10 Sick Days and 1 Personal Day for the year.
- No pager, crisis phone line, or on-call duties
- Free lunch available daily from Organic Life (see CDS website for more info & sample menu)
- Free Parking
- Laptop Computer
- Monthly Allowance for Program/Clinical Supplies

VII. CLINICAL STAFF

As a Connections Day School Extern, you will be a member of a dynamic Clinical Team:

Kristen Mittl Pollina, Psy.D.

Illinois School of Professional Psychology

Licensed Clinical Psychologist | Clinical Director & Director of Clinical Training | Primary Supervisor

Giovanna Vitullo, Psy.D.

Illinois School of Professional Psychology

Licensed Clinical Psychologist | Diagnostic/IAES Program Coordinator | Primary Supervisor

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Sol Rappaport, Ph.D.
DePaul University
Licensed Clinical Psychologist | Administrator/Owner | Auxiliary Supervisor

Kathryn Hefferon, Psy.D.
Illinois School of Professional Psychology
Licensed Clinical Psychologist | Administrator/Owner | Auxiliary Supervisor

Christina Bailey, Psy.D.
Illinois School of Professional Psychology
Licensed Clinical Psychologist | Psychodiagnostician | Auxiliary Supervisor

Heather Digby, Psy.D.
Adler University
Licensed Clinical Psychologist | Psychodiagnostician | Auxiliary Supervisor

Michael Greenbaum, M.D.
University of Illinois
Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist | Medical Consultant

Charlotte Edwards, Psy.D.
Illinois School of Professional Psychology
Licensed Clinical Psychologist | Consultant

Arlene Messner-Peters, LCSW
University of Illinois
Licensed Clinical Social Worker | Consultant

Samantha Daab, M.A.A.T., LPC
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Art Therapist | Art Therapy Group Leader

Diana McNelis, M.A., LCPC, CADC
Loyola University
Certified Alcohol & Drug Counselor | Substance Abuse Education Group Leader

MaryPat Henders, M.A.A.T., LCPC
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Senior Therapist from Counseling Connection | Personal Management Group Leader

Laura Grimes, M.Ed.
National-Louis University
Senior Behavior Intervention Specialist | Chosen Stars Adoption Group
and Grief & Loss Group Leader

Larisa Liekys, B.A.
University of Wisconsin
Music Appreciation Group Leader

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Heather DeBruin, M.S., OTR/L
Mount Mary College
Occupational Therapist

John Lybolt, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
Northwestern University
Speech & Language Pathologist

Stephanie Conforti, Psy.D., LPC
Illinois School of Professional Psychology
Program Therapist

Nicolette Pilot, Psy.D.
Midwestern University
Post-Doctoral Fellow

Kayla Pedraza, M.S.
Rosalind Franklin University
Program Therapist

Shane Rondeau, M.S.
Wisconsin School of Professional Psychology
Doctoral Intern

Elizabeth Cotey, B.A. (M.A. Candidate)
Chicago School of Professional Psychology
Therapy Extern

Ceara Hershberger, M.A. (Psy.D. Candidate)
Midwestern University
Therapy Extern

Jessica Miller, M.A.
Midwestern University
Advanced Therapy Extern

Savannah Williams, B.S. (M.A. Candidate)
Rosalind Franklin University
Therapy Extern

Desiree Linderman, M.A. (Psy.D. Candidate)
Chicago School of Professional Psychology
Supplemental Therapy Extern

Stephanie Taylor, B.S. (Psy.D. Candidate)
Illinois School of Professional Psychology
Diagnostic Extern Assigned to CDS from Counseling Connection

Please note, at each level of training, CDS trainees have clearly and consistently designated titles: Post-Doctoral Fellows = “Fellow” or “Post-Doc”; Doctoral Interns = “Intern”; and Therapy Externs = “Extern”. Additionally, all school staff members are referred to by their formal title (Ms., Mr. and Dr.) to support a climate of respect and more clearly establish boundaries between students and staff.

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VIII. APPLICATION PROCESS

Doctoral and Master's level students, from Clinical and Counseling Psychology training programs, who have met all the requirements of their program for application for Externship/Practicum, must submit the materials listed below **within one week of the ACEPT-identified date that students may begin submitting applications** (e.g., if students can begin submitting applications on the second Tuesday in February, they are due to CDS by the third Tuesday in February) prior to their Externship year. **No applications will be accepted after this date.**

- Cover Letter outlining professional goals and interests, and how this Externship site meets those criteria
- Curriculum Vitae
- Three Letters of Recommendation
- Writing Sample (*Note: a Case Formulation, Treatment Summary, etc. is preferred. However, if you do not have a sample that would fit in this category, please send a Psychodiagnostic Report.*)
- All Graduate School Transcripts

This information must be forwarded via E-Mail to:

Kristen Mittl Pollina, Psy.D. | Clinical Director & Director of Clinical Training

E-Mail: kpollina@connectionsdayschool.net

APPLICATION NOTES:

- **Ideally, we would like to receive all application documents in one attachment.** Given this, please SCAN all documents together, in the order identified below, to create ONE attachment and e-mail this to Dr. Pollina.
- If you are unable to do this, please attach your individual documents, in the order identified below, and e-mail this to Dr. Pollina.
- **Applications must be organized in the following manner:**
 1. Cover Letter
 2. Vitae
 3. 3 Letters of Recommendation
 4. Writing Sample
 5. *If required by your program:* Letter of Eligibility/Readiness from your DOT
 6. *If required by your program:* ACEPT Pledge
 7. Transcript(s)

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Pollina at:

E-Mail: kpollina@connectionsdayschool.net or Phone: (847) 680-8349 ~ Ext. 319

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Please Note: A medical examination, fingerprinting, state & federal background checks and drug screening are required for all new staff members at Connections Day School. Placement at this site is contingent upon submitting all required health and medical examination forms and fingerprinting data, and passing both background checks and the drug screening.

Connections Day School abides by the ACEPT policies that no person at this training facility will solicit, accept or use any ranking-related information from any Externship applicant; and that no offers will be made to applicants prior to 9:00am on the ACEPT-identified Notification Day.

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