



Family, School and Community Partnerships  
Leading to Successful Learning

## **PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC EXTERNSHIP (PRACTICUM) PROGRAM**

*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 Restorative Intervention & Behavior Management Program
- Daily School Nurse Services
- Transition & Post-Graduation Preparation

## **II. TRAINING PROGRAM, GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

The Clinical Training Program at Connections Day School is extensive - offering three Post-Doctoral Fellowship positions, three Doctoral Internship (APA accredited) positions and four Therapy Externship/Practicum (ACEPT member) 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, Restorative Intervention Specialists, an Art Therapist, Substance Abuse Specialist, Occupational Therapist, Speech & Language Pathologist, Marriage & Family Specialist 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 who are struggling with mild to severe: mood, anxiety, behavior, substance-related, psychotic, developmental, and personality disorders; and who are diverse in age, culture, ethnicity, race, religion, socioeconomic status, gender identity and sexual orientation. All of this work is done under the careful 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 & TRAINING**

- Providing Individual, Group, Family & Milieu Therapy, and Crisis Intervention for children, adolescents and their parents/guardians. Co-leading “Specialty Groups” with experienced staff group leaders (e.g., Art Therapy, Circle of Courage, Drug & Alcohol Education).
- Participating in 1.5 hours of Individual, and 3 hours of Group Supervision/Didactic/In-Service Training per week the Clinical Director and other members of the Clinical and Administrative teams. Consulting, 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 as support their professional development.

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- Engaging in All Staff In-Service training events and 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).
- Participating in Multidisciplinary Individual Education Plan (IEP) Conferences for the students on your caseload; and writing and presenting Treatment Summaries, and occasionally Social Developmental Histories, for these Conferences.
- Engaging in Monthly Family Therapy Seminar and ½-hour monthly Family Therapy Consultation meetings with the Licensed Marriage & Family Therapy consultant for CDS
- Participating in Monthly Psychiatric consultation meetings with the Medical Director/Consulting Psychiatrist for CDS.
- Assisting with the facilitation of Monthly Parents’ Support Group meetings.
- Attending All Staff Meetings to discuss the day’s events, problem-solve and develop plans for the future.
- 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:**

- ✚ 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.
- ✚ Although 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. Psychodiagnostic Externs from Counseling Connection (and their Supervisors) are the only individuals who provide formal psychological testing for Connections Day School students.
- ✚ Externs engage in data collection and progress monitoring for each of the students on their caseload. This is done through weekly tracking of the therapeutic and social/emotional goals identified on each student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP). Externs utilize 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. This data is then utilized to assess quarterly progress on each student’s IEP goals – the primary outcome measure utilized within this setting.

#### **IV. EXTERNSHIP FORMAT**

- 11 consecutive months > early-August – early-July.
- 3 days per week (at least 24 hours) for the School Year
  - ✓ 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.

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- 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 their 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 areas in need of improvement (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 year.

## **VI. EXTERNSHIP BENEFITS**

- School Schedule - All National Holidays and Thanksgiving, Winter, Spring & Summer Breaks
- 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
- Free parking
- Access to a Clinical Library of books & manuals, and therapeutic resources & supplies
- Monthly allowance for program/clinical supplies
- Participation in Staff appreciation events, outings & team-building activities throughout the year

## **VII. CLINICAL STAFF**

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

<b>#</b>	<b>TYPE of CLINICIAN</b>	<b>ROLE(S) they PLAY</b>
<b>3</b>	Full-Time (F/T) Licensed Clinical Psychologists	Clinical Director & Director of Clinical Training; Diagnostic Program Director; Primary Supervisors & Seminar Leaders
<b>5</b>	Part-Time (P/T) Licensed Clinical Psychologists	Auxiliary Supervisors, Consultants; Seminar Leaders & Psychodiagnosticians
<b>1</b>	P/T Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist	Medical Director & Consultant
<b>3</b>	P/T Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors	Auxiliary Supervisors; Consultants; Seminar Leaders; Specialty Group Leaders & Therapists
<b>1</b>	P/T Marriage & Family Specialist	Auxiliary Supervisor & Seminar Leader
<b>1</b>	F/T Art Therapist	Primary Supervisor, Therapist & Seminar Leader
<b>1</b>	F/T Substance Abuse Specialist	Therapist & Seminar Leader
<b>1</b>	P/T Occupational Therapist	Therapist & Seminar Leader

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1	P/T Transition Specialist	Therapist & Seminar Leader
1	P/T Speech & Language Pathologist	Therapist & Consultant
3	F/T Post-Doctoral Fellows	Therapists & Auxiliary Supervisors
3	F/T Doctoral Interns	Therapists & Informal Supervisors
4	P/T Therapy Externs (MA, Doctoral & Advanced)	Therapists
1	P/T Art Therapy Extern	Therapist

## VIII. APPLICATION PROCESS

✚ **WHO can Apply?:** Master's-level and Doctoral (Intermediate & Advanced) students, from Clinical and Counseling Psychology training programs, who have met all program requirements to apply for Externship/Practicum.

✚ **WHAT do You Send?:** Ideally, the CDS Application Review Team would like to receive all application documents in one attachment. Given this, please SCAN the following 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.

✚ **Application Materials:**

1. Cover Letter outlining professional goals & interests, and how CDS meets those criteria
2. Curriculum Vitae
3. 3 Letters of Recommendation
4. Writing Sample (*Note: a Case Formulation, Treatment Summary, etc. is preferred. However, if you do not have a sample that fits this category, please send a Psychodiagnostic Report.*)
5. [If required by your program] Letter of Eligibility/Readiness from your DOT
6. [If required by your program] ACEPT Pledge
7. Transcript(s)

✚ **WHERE do You Send It?:**

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

E-Mail: [kpollina@connectionsdayschool.net](mailto:kpollina@connectionsdayschool.net)

✚ **WHEN do You Send It?:** all materials must be submitted 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*). No applications will be accepted after this date.

**Please Note:** A medical examination, fingerprint screen, state & federal background checks and drug screen are required for all new staff members at Connections Day School.

*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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