



# School Counseling Program Practicum Handbook

*Discover the Counseling Buff in You*



School Counseling Program  
College of Education and Social Sciences  
West Texas A & M University  
Amarillo Center  
720 S Tyler St, Amarillo, TX 79101

May 20, 2020

**COUNSELOR EDUCATION PROGRAM**

## **Statement of Philosophy**

The Counselor Education program faculty at West Texas A&M University (WTAMU) adheres to a scientist-practitioner model of training. Consistent with this approach are the program goals of graduating counselors who: (a) demonstrate competency in providing professional services to people from diverse cultural backgrounds; (b) can effectively evaluate research relevant to the profession; and (c) are committed to continued professional development and to evaluating their clinical and programmatic interventions. In addition to specific job settings, the faculty believes that it is also our mission to instill a strong sense of professional identity and appreciation for the rich knowledge base of the counseling profession. It is also our mission to aid our graduates in becoming certified and/or licensed in their chosen counseling specialty.

The clinical approach of the Counselor Education program is developmental, educative, and preventative in nature. While education for remediation of pathology is a part of counselor education, the program's emphasis is mental health. Our basic commitment is to prepare students to facilitate optimal development of persons by increasing clients' understanding of not only those forces within themselves and their environment that impede growth but also of those assets within themselves that empower them.

The Counselor Education faculty members are committed to offering a program of graduate study that will lead to the personal growth of students from a wide range of backgrounds (racial, ethnic, religious, geographical, socio-economic, etc.) that ultimately will benefit the diverse client groups they will serve. The program faculty recognizes and honors the individuality of people, variation in developmental levels, and cultural diversity. Facilitation of the growth of individuals necessitates addressing both their common needs and issues and their individual differences. Program faculty believe it is important for students to develop a diverse range of knowledge and to formulate their own counseling approach while under the guidance of faculty and field-based experience supervisors.

## **COUNSELOR EDUCATION FACULTY**

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## PROGRAM INFORMATION

### Overview of Programs

West Texas A&M University offers two professional training programs for future counselors; School Counseling and Master of Arts in Counseling. The Counselor Education programs are designed to prepare students for positions in schools, mental health agencies, and human services agencies. The *Master of Art in Counseling* program is designed to meet the academic and clinical requirements established by the Texas Board of Professional Counselors. The *School Counseling* program is designed to meet the academic and practicum requirements established by the Texas State Department of Education for licensure as preK-12 school counselors.

### Mission Statement

The programs in Counselor Education at the West Texas A&M University are designed to prepare students with the culturally competent knowledge and skills to practice effectively and ethically in service positions in schools, human services agencies, and mental health facilities. Our philosophy of training is consistent with the scientist-practitioner model and includes emphases on self-exploration, human growth and development, and an appreciation of cultural diversity and social justice.

Our goals are to:

1. Create a supportive, safe, and collaborative learning environment for students from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
2. Develop competent, critically thoughtful practitioners who integrate theory, research, and experiential knowledge to accurately assess conditions, promote well-being, and assist clients with their mental health goals.
3. Develop professionals who are aware of relevant ethical standards and guidelines, who are able to engage in ethical decision-making, and who are ethical in their functioning as professional.
4. Facilitate students' personal development by encouraging them to engage in continuous personal and professional self-study and re-evaluation so they may acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills essential for the practice of counseling.
5. Ensure that only qualified, ethical, and professional counselors-in-training enter the field of counseling.

The Counselor Education faculty is committed to the belief that the development of effective counselors best occurs when theoretical knowledge and practical application are interlaced. A majority of courses include both academic content and appropriate practical experiences. At times, students are required to role-play as clients for other counselors-in-training and to participate in group counseling experiences. Students in the clinical mental health and school counseling programs are provided actual counseling experience under faculty supervision prior to assuming professional responsibilities in their internship. All students are expected to use the most current edition of the American Counseling Association's [\*Code of Ethics\*](#) and the American School Counseling Associations [\*Code of Ethics\*](#) as a guide for their behavior throughout their program.

## SCHOOL COUNSELING

The master's degree major in School Counseling is designed to prepare counselors to promote the academic, career, and personal/social development of school-aged youth in the context of a comprehensive developmental school counseling program. Further, our goal is to prepare ethical, culturally competent school counselors who address individual and systemic barriers to educational achievement and personal development. Students are prepared to work professionally with children from the kindergarten level through high school.

### Objectives

Graduates of the program will demonstrate the ability to facilitate student development in the three broad areas described in the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) National Standards: academic development, career development, and personal/social development. As a result of participating in the school counselor preparation program, graduates will be able to:

1. Plan, design, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive developmental school counseling program
2. Clearly articulate the role of the school counselor and his/her contributions to the mission of a school program
3. Provide consultation to parents and teachers to assist them in helping their children and students acquire the skills needed for school success
4. Select developmentally appropriate interventions to assist students in making educational transitions
5. Demonstrate knowledge and use of emerging technologies in education and school counseling.

### Practicum and Internship Requirements

Students in the School Counseling program focus their training on planning, implementing, and evaluating guidance and counseling programs to meet the unique social, physical, intellectual, and emotional needs of children and adolescents in school settings. **Students are responsible for securing access to practicum sites in local and neighboring school districts.** Students' practicum is 160 hours, of which 60 must be direct service contact (e.g., classroom guidance lessons, individual or small group counseling, etc.) under the supervision of a Certified School Counselor (CSC).

### Practicum Course Sequencing

Students will complete COUN 6375 Essential Helping Skills, and then complete a 160 – hour practicum experiences. All practicum placements are based on the student's intended work setting.

## **PRACTICUM AND INTERNSHIP POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Applicable to Students in All Programs**

The practicum and internship experiences are critical components in the preparation of professional counselors. Following is information that applies to students regardless of their specialty area.

We anticipate that students will have the opportunity to use and apply the skills developed in the degree program at their placement sites. Practicum is designed to help students begin to apply theory to practice.

### **Basic Information**

#### **A Semester Before Beginning Practicum or Internship**

Coordinators of the Counseling and School Counseling Programs:

- Meet with students to discuss potential placements and review the placement process.
- The student needs to find a TEA approved School to complete their practicum.
- The student will find a site supervisor (a school counselor with at least 3 years of experience).
- **Paperwork must be submitted in advance: 1<sup>st</sup> week on August for Fall semester, 1<sup>st</sup> week of December for the spring semester, and 1<sup>st</sup> week of May for the Summer semester.**
- Paperwork that needs to be submitted
  - Practicum Application (**Page 7**)
  - Site supervisor's School Counselor Certificate
  - Service Record of the Site supervisor
  - Resume of the Site Supervisor

**Site Supervisor** is the School Counselor who supervises you in your district.

**Field supervisor** is Dr. Malvika Behl

#### **During the semester:**

- The student will complete 160 hours, 60 direct and 100 indirect
  - Direct hours are face time with students through individual counseling sessions and guidance lessons.
  - Indirect hours are any services provided to the school by helping the school counselor where students are not present.
- Submit documentation that they have professional liability insurance through [Healthcare Providers Service Organization](#) (HPSO) before they begin their practicum/internship. Students may also obtain such insurance through professional associations such as the [American Counseling Association](#) (ACA), ACA divisions such as the American Mental Health Counselors Association, the American School Counselor Association, or the Texas Counselors Association.
- Site supervisor Agreement (**page 10**)
- Practicum Agreement Form (**page 11**)

#### **After Practicum and Internship Begins**

- The School Counseling practice student will have to submit the following while in practicum
  - 3 45-minute tapes that can be an individual counseling session or guidance lesson (more information will be provided in the syllabus)
  - Logs that will need to be submitted every 2 weeks with site supervisor signature (**page 8**)
  - Recommendation form filled out by site supervisor (**Page 9**)
  - Recommendation letter for certification from direct supervisor, a principal or superintendent.

- Students who are in field placements are expected to receive a minimum of one hour of individual supervision per week from their site supervisor.
- Students are responsible for submitting appropriate documentation (e.g., logs and supervisor evaluations) in a timely manner as prescribed in their course syllabi.
- Maintain and submit documentation of professional liability insurance. Students cannot accrue direct hours until they can provide proof of liability insurance. Since most insurance policies are in effect for one year, it is critical that students renew their policies before the policies expire and then submit documentation that their policies are in effect through their entire internship.
- Arrange a work schedule with the site supervisors. Students are expected to set their daily and semester schedule to coincide with both their courses and the calendar of their host site (not just the university schedule), including daily work schedule, holidays, vacation days, etc.
- Adhere to all requirements stated in practicum and internship syllabi, attend required class meetings, complete all course assignments, and attend individual and group supervision sessions.
- Perform site responsibilities in a professional manner, as if a paid staff member.
- Comply with all legal and ethical regulations; bring all potential ethical and legal issues to the attention of their site and university supervisors.

### **Certified School Counselors**

Graduates of the School Counseling program will be recommended for the [Texas Standard Certificate in School Counseling](#). All students seeking Texas licensure as school counselors should have their credentials and program plans reviewed by Dr. Elizabeth Garcia (Office of Alternative Certification) and by Dr. Malvika Behl (School Counseling Program Coordinator). Students must have two years of credible teaching experience and have fulfilled all program requirements, including successful completion of the comprehensive exam.

All students who would like to receive permission to complete the TExES #152, will need to complete the practice TExES 152. The practice TExES 152 can be completed either in person with Dr. Behl and/or Dr. Green or it can be completed online on <http://www2.certifyteacher.com/>. Students will need to create an account on the website using their buff email address and can use promo code: WTAMU6041.

After successful completion of the TExES Test ([#152-EC-12 School Counseling Exam](#)) and submission of an official transcript certifying a M.Ed. in School Counseling, students will be eligible for Texas Standard School Counseling Certification. Students interested in becoming a certified school counselor are encouraged to review the [Texas Administrative Code](#) and the [Texas Education Code](#) related to school counseling.



—Department of Education—  
Counselor Education Program  
**PRACTICUM/INTERNSHIP APPLICATION**

Check one of the following:  
**COUN 6399** \_\_\_\_\_ **COUN 6398** \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: Daytime \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ WT ID \_\_\_\_\_  
Total hours completed in program (including the current semester) \_\_\_\_\_  
Program Advisor \_\_\_\_\_  
Degree Plan Program: Mental Health (LPC) \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_ School + LPC \_\_\_\_\_

**Practicum/Internship Site**

Name of Agency or School \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Site Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_  
Site Supervisor’s Degree, License/Certification \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of Years of Supervisors Experience (**Only for School Counselors**) \_\_\_\_\_  
Site Supervisor’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_

This form **must** be submitted along with a copy of your transcript and a copy of your program degree plan via [mbehl@wtamu.edu](mailto:mbehl@wtamu.edu) to the appropriate Practicum and/or Internship Faculty Coordinator **during the semester prior to field experience**.

For **School Counselors**, please also submit your site supervisor’s School Counselor Certificate, Resume, and their Service Record. You will not be able to register until approved.

**Requested Practicum/Internship Class and Due Dates for Application**

*Each semester and each site requires a new application*

**Summer:** 1st week in May      **Fall:** 1st week in August      **Spring:** 1st week in December

\_\_\_\_\_ COUN 6399 – Summer \_\_\_\_\_ Fall \_\_\_\_\_ Spring \_\_\_\_\_ (Year) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ COUN 6398 – Fall \_\_\_\_\_ Spring \_\_\_\_\_ (Year) \_\_\_\_\_

Student’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_





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**Field/Site Supervisor Recommendation Form**

Indicate Role:

Field Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ Site Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ EPP/Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I **recommend** that the above listed candidate complete the program and be recommended for standard certification **based on the following reasons (Please write below)**:

\_\_\_\_\_ I recommend that the above listed candidate continue in the program to gain additional training and support before being recommended for certification for the following reasons:

\_\_\_\_\_ I **do not** recommend that the above listed candidate complete the program and be recommended for standard certification based on the following reasons:

- Please list several reason indicating the proficiency of the candidate
- Please list specific standards addressed
- Please include any deficiencies (expand bullets and section as needed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



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**Site Supervision Agreement**  
Counselor Education Program

The School Counseling Practicum site, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby agrees to provide the below mentioned graduate student with a practicum experience in the field of counseling totaling 160 hours. This agreement will be effective for a period from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week.

**West Texas A&M University agrees to provide the site the following services:**

1. To assign a university faculty liaison to facilitate communication between university and site;
2. To notify the student that he or she must adhere to the administrative policies, rules, standards, schedules, and practices of the site;
3. That the faculty liaison shall be available for consultation with both site supervisors and students and shall be immediately contacted should any problem or change in relation to student, site, or university occur; and
4. That the university supervisor is responsible for the assignment of a fieldwork grade.
5. A training manual with information about the practicum.

**The Internship site agrees to provide the following:**

1. To assign an Internship/Practicum supervisor who has appropriate credentials, time, and interest for training the Practicum/Internship student;
2. To provide opportunities for the student to engage in a variety of counseling activities under supervision and for evaluating the student’s performance, including the guidance curriculum, responsive services, individual planning (addressing areas of educational, career, and personal/social development), and system support.
3. To provide at least one hour of weekly, individual supervisory contact that involves some examination of student work using audio/video tapes, observation, or live supervision; (Group supervision may accompany the required individual supervision, which may include case conference or staff meeting.)
4. To provide three written evaluations of the student based on criteria established by the university program.
5. To develop and maintain open lines of communication with the university practicum/internship coordinator. When concerns occur with the intern surrounding possible performance, professionalism, or suitability for site, this will be communicated to the university Internship/Practicum coordinator. Additionally, when concerns occur involving other practicum sites or interns, the supervisor will communicate this with the university Internship/Practicum coordinator.

Site supervisor Name \_\_\_\_\_ Certificate Type: \_\_\_\_\_

Years of Experience as a School Counselor: \_\_\_\_\_

Site supervisor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Field Supervisor Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

***The Site Supervisor is the School counselor with the district.  
Dr. Malvika Behl is the Field Supervisor.***



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## **Internship/Practicum Student Agreement**

1. I have read and understood the American Counseling Association's and the American School Counselor Association's ethical standards and will practice my counseling in accordance with these standards. Any breach of these ethics or any unethical behavior on my part will result in my removal from Internship and a failing grade, and documentation of such behavior will become part of my permanent record.
2. I agree to adhere to the administrative policies, rules, standards, and practices of the Internship site.
3. I understand that my responsibilities include keeping my Internship/Practicum supervisor(s) informed regarding my Internship/Practicum experiences.
4. I understand that accurate logs will be kept of my time at the Internship/Practicum site. This includes an accurate accounting of counseling time and as well as other activities. I must keep originals and or copies of all logs/documents and will not hold the university responsible for any misplaced or damaged documents.
5. I agree to hold all information discussed in class confidential. Class information regarding clients should not be disclosed to spouses, family members or friends. Additionally, no identifiable information regarding another student's clients should be communicated to your supervisors. If you have concerns about another student in class, speak to the university supervisor and not your on-site supervisor.
6. All tape feedback forms provided by Dr. Behl will be sent to the site supervisor.
7. I understand that I will not be issued a passing grade in Internship/Practicum unless I demonstrate the specified minimal level of counseling skills, knowledge, and competence and complete requirements as required.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



—Department of Education—

## **Professional Counseling and School Counseling Program**

### **Technology Use Policies and Procedures**

The West Texas A&M University Counseling program is committed to training counselors to be prepared to work in an increasingly technological, digital world. Students enrolled in the West Texas A&M University Counseling programs, herein referred to as “students”, will have access to and will utilize the protected health information from students who volunteer as clients during their time in the program and from individuals who receive counseling services from students enrolled in their respective counseling program during their Practicum and Internship experiences. Students in the counseling programs will be expected to read and to abide by the Program’s Technology Use Policies and Procedures to help ensure risks of unnecessary disclosure of information is minimized. Students will be expected to treat all data (e.g. video and audio recordings) of real and fictitious clients in a manner that is mindful of privacy and security of this information.

The following policies and procedures will outline the necessary protocol by which students should abide to decrease the accidental transmission, disclosure, or discovery of a volunteer’s protected health information. The following policies and procedures have been developed using the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule, the HIPAA Security Rule and the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH). These Policies and Procedures will be stored and maintained for six (6) years from the date of the most recent revision.

### **Definitions**

*HIPAA Privacy Rule:* The Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information (“Privacy Rule”) establishes, for the first time, a set of national standards for the protection of certain health information. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (“HHS”) issued the Privacy Rule to implement the requirement of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (“HIPAA”).<sup>1</sup> The Privacy Rule standards address the use and disclosure of individuals’ health information—called “protected health information” by organizations subject to the Privacy Rule — called “covered entities,” as well as standards for individuals’ privacy rights to understand and control how their health information is used. Within HHS, the Office for Civil Rights (“OCR”) has responsibility for implementing and enforcing the Privacy Rule with respect to voluntary compliance activities and civil money penalties.

*HIPAA Security Rule.* The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996’s Security Standards for the Protection of Electronics Protected Health Information establishes a national set of security standards for protecting certain health information that is held or transferred in electronic form. The Security Rule operationalizes the protections contained in the Privacy Rule by addressing the technical and non-technical safeguards that organizations called “covered entities” must put in place to secure individuals’ “electronic protected health information” (e-PHI). Within HHS, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has responsibility for enforcing the Privacy and Security Rules with voluntary compliance activities and civil money penalties.

*Protected Health Information:* Information including demographic data that relates to an individual’s past, present, or future physical or mental health condition, the provision of health care to the individual,

or the past, present, future payment for services rendered. This relates to information that could identify the individual (i.e., DOB, social security, or video evidence [in the case of our video sessions])

*Electronic Protected Health Information (e-PHI).* Protected health information that is held or transferred in electronic form.

*Encryption:* the use of an algorithmic process to transform data into a form in which there is a low probability of assigning meaning without use of a confidential process or key.

*Psychotherapy notes:* notes recorded (in any medium) by a health care provider who is a mental health professional documenting or analyzing the contents of conversation during a private counseling session or a group, joint, or family counseling session **and that are separated from the rest of the individual's medical record.** Psychotherapy notes exclude medication prescription and monitoring, counseling session start and stop times, the modalities and frequencies of treatment furnished, results of clinical tests, and any summary of the following items: diagnosis, functional status, the treatment plan, symptoms, prognosis, and progress to date.

*Storage device:* any technological device that is used to store electronic data or media. Such devices include but are not limited to: Recording device, USB flash drives, external hard drive, laptops, tablets, and desktop computers.

### **Principles for Disclosure**

Students, faculty, and staff of the Counseling program may not disclose PHI except for the following:

- When the individual who is the subject of the information, in this case the volunteer client or a legal representative of the client, authorizes the disclosure in writing
- When the student or the faculty member are using the information for the organization and coordination of treatment, supervision, or clinical intervention. Students in group practicum are all expected to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of all cases discussed during supervision.
- When the information is provided to the individual who is the subject of the information
- When required by law (i.e., court order)
- To protect public health through disclosure to public health authorities by law to collect or receive such information for preventing or controlling disease, injury, or disability
- To report child abuse or neglect
- To report victims of abuse, violence, or neglect
- If the individual poses a serious threat to self or to the public
- Use of e-PHI for research purposes given that:

The Privacy Rule permits a covered entity to use and disclose protected health information for research purposes, without an individual's authorization, provided the covered entity obtains either: (1) documentation that an alteration or waiver of individuals' authorization for the use or disclosure of protected health information about them for research purposes has been approved by an Institutional Review Board or Privacy Board; (2) representations from the researcher that the use or disclosure of the protected health information is solely to prepare a research protocol or for similar purpose preparatory to research, that the researcher will not remove any protected health information from the covered entity, and that protected health information for which access is sought is necessary for the research; or (3) representations from the researcher that the use or disclosure sought is solely for research on the protected health information of decedents, that the protected health information sought is necessary for the research, and, at the request of the covered entity, documentation of the death of the individuals about whom information is sought. A covered entity also may use or disclose,

without an individuals' authorization, a limited data set of protected health information for research purposes...(p. 8, OCR Privacy)

### **Authorization of Use And Disclosure**

Prior to the commencement of counseling related activities during the Practicum or Internship experiences students will receive proper consent regarding their status as students in the program, any recordings that will be obtained during the clinical experience, and how collected data will be used for the students' training and supervision.

#### **Minimum Necessary Use**

When using an individuals' PHI, students must make reasonable efforts to use, disclose, and request only the minimum amount of information necessary to accomplish the intended purpose of the use, disclosure, or request.

Students will be expected to maintain the confidentiality to minimize the amount of identifying information that is shared during group and individual supervision sessions. When creating, transmitting, and storing files (text and video) that contain PHI, students should create a unique identifier that will minimize the possibility of the volunteer client's PHI being unintentionally disclosed.

Only the individual whom is the subject of the PHI, the student who is acting in the role of the counselor, and the student's supervisor(s) and/or instructor should have access to the individual's PHI. When discussing individual clients in group supervision, students will make reasonable efforts to use, disclose, and request only that information which is necessary to accomplish the purposes of the supervision and consultation. Students who are members of the group will also maintain the confidentiality and privacy of individuals' PHI.

### **Data Safeguards**

Students are expected to make reasonable efforts to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and security of the PHI of their volunteer clients. Reasonable efforts include the protection against any anticipated threats, disclosures, or uses of secure information.

#### **Storage of Information**

##### **Media Devices**

Students are expected to store files that contain e-PHI (case notes, session summaries, audio/video recordings of counseling sessions) on a secure media device (e.g. Laptops, USB flash drives, DVDs, external hard drives). It is expected that students will maintain physical security of these storage devices at all times. Students should not leave any storage devices unattended at any time unless it has been physical secured in a safe location. Students should never at any time leave any media device unattended in a personal vehicle.

Students who store individuals' PHI on a portable media device should ensure that the portable device has been properly encrypted. This can be done on most computers very easily. On Apple computers, select the drive you wish to encrypt in the Finder window. Right click>Select Encrypt. You will be prompted to establish a password. On PC computers, select the drive you wish to encrypt. Right Click>Select BitLocker Encryption. Follow the prompts. Students should only share their passwords with

Students should make reasonable efforts to minimize the locations in which volunteer client information is stored. Students should NOT save any individuals' PHI on a third party storage site (i.e., Dropbox,

Google Drive). These are not secure locations for storing PHI. West Texas A&M University has a secure server, Blackboard that can be used to store and transmit files using File Transfer Protocol (FTP) in a secure manner. Individuals' data should be stored in as few locations as to minimize the risk of unintended use or disclosure of the volunteer client's e-PHI.

### **File names**

Files that contain identifying information or PHI of individual clients should be saved using a file name that de-identifies the subject of the files. Students should develop coded identifiers for all of their clients.

### **Viewing, analyzing, coding, editing, or accessing Files**

Files that contain identifying information or PHI of volunteer clients should only be accessed, viewed, analyzed, in a private, secure environment that minimizes the risk of unintentional use or disclosure of the volunteer client's identifying information or PHI. Students should not review video or audio recordings of individual clients in public places (i.e. coffee shops). Students should be mindful of other parties, such as roommates and family members, in the vicinity when viewing data that contains PHI.

### **Transferring Files**

Files that contain identifying information or e-PHI of volunteer clients should only be transferred between the faculty and the student through a secure medium. Students should *only* use Blackboard to upload their audio files. ***Email is not considered a secure medium and this method of file transfer is not allowed for files that contain identifying.***

### **Files Destruction**

All data that is stored on a storage device and that contains identifying information or PHI must be destroyed at the end of the students' clinical experience by the student. The data is being collected as a part of the students educational and professional training as such the data is not maintained beyond the semester of use.

### **Recording Devices**

Students are required to submit audio recordings of their counseling sessions during the Practicum and Internship experiences. **For security purposes and to limit accidental disclosure of audio recordings, the use of any cell phone or smart phone for recording is prohibited.** Students are expected to audio record sessions on a dedicated device that is kept physically secure under the guidelines above.

### **Breach Notification Procedure**

The acquisition, access, use, or disclosure of e-PHI or the volunteer client's identifying information will be considered a breach of privacy and security.

If a student or a faculty member discover a breach they should immediately notify the coordinator of the program, and should notify the individual who is the subject of the information that was obtained during the breach. The volunteer client shall be notified of the breach within 45 days of discovery.

Per HIPAA Security guidelines, the notification must contain the following elements written in clear, plain language:

1. A brief description of what happened, including the date of the breach and the date of the discovery, if known

2. A description of what information was involved in the breach
3. Steps that should be taken for the individual to protect themselves from harm from the breach
4. A description of what the student, the faculty supervisor, and the Counseling Program are doing to investigate the breach, mitigate further harm to the individual, and to protect against future breaches.
5. Contact information and procedures for the volunteer client to ask questions or to learn more information

Notification must be given in writing by first-class mail at the individual's last known address unless the individual has given agreement to receive electronic notices and such agreement has not been withdrawn, by e-mail.

### **Failure to Comply with the Policy and Procedures**

Maintaining the security and privacy of clients is high priority as a professional counselor. Students who fail to comply with the Departmental Policies and Procedures regarding the Privacy and Security of Electronic Information will be referred to the Student Review Committee for remediation. Such outcomes could include: failure of the practicum course, student remediation, client hours that are not consider sufficient for the course requirements, and/or dismissal from the program.

\*Adapted from Mercer University- Perkins School