

# MSCMHC PROGRAM INTRODUCTION

## Program Overview

The Sonoran University Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (MSCMHC) program helps students transform their passion for helping others into a profession as Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselors. Students gain the professional knowledge, dispositions, and skills along with the practical experience necessary to develop and deliver effective, compassionate, multiculturally competent, and evidence-based clinical mental health counseling. Graduates will be prepared to work in private practice, as part of integrative healthcare teams, in hospitals, or even with law enforcement or other government services.

Sonoran University's program does not require a GRE for admissions and its online design and its online practicum and internship make it accessible to students across the country. Throughout the program students engage in meaningful discussions on human behavior, learn current strategies to support the development of clients from diverse backgrounds and communities, and merge best practices from the field of professional counseling and integrative healthcare to enhance clinical care and outcomes.

The curriculum incorporates the innovation and best practices in online education that Sonoran University is known for and is being designed in accordance with standards and requirements for state licensing and certification exams. Building on Sonoran University's reputation as a leader in integrative healthcare education, this MSCMHC program is the first and only program to incorporate training on evidence based integrative mental health care including nutrition, mindfulness, self-care, and more. The program also uniquely offers an enhanced approach to crisis counseling by including training on field-based mental health crisis care. Further, with our commitment to authentic and practical coursework and assessments, students engage in clinical applications as early as the first quarter of the program. Through our novel Virtual Health Center simulation, students practice applying new clinical skills and knowledge safely in a virtual training environment. Sonoran University is also proud to eliminate a barrier many students face in finding a clinical placement for their internship. Our clinical experience placement assistance provides students the opportunity to complete their practicum and internship 100% online through remote telehealth-based care and supervision at our Virtual Center for Personalized Health Care.

## Program Mission

To educate and empower the next generation of practitioners in the field of clinical mental health counseling to deliver ethical, compassionate, effective, evidence-based, and multiculturally competent care that enhances the health and well-being of the diverse individuals and communities they serve.

## Program Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of the MSCMHC program, graduates will be able to:

1. Practice ethically and professionally in the field of mental health counseling.
2. Apply evidence-based theories and techniques in individual, group, couples, and family counseling.

3. Utilize best practices in counseling to successfully support and promote optimal growth and development across the lifespan of clients.
4. Describe health disparities, demonstrate competence in counseling individuals from diverse backgrounds, and advocate for marginalized populations to receive healthcare services.
5. Effectively incorporate current scientific evidence from the field of mental health and disordered behavior in clinical work to support assessment, prevention, intervention, and advocacy.
6. Integrate the responsible use of technology in the counseling process.
7. Apply appropriate theoretical perspectives in the therapeutic process.
8. Successfully respond to high-risk clinical scenarios including working with clients with trauma and in crisis.
9. Participate effectively as part of a client-centered interprofessional team.
10. Incorporate evidence-based integrative clinical mental health care to support the well-being of clients.
11. Establish a safe, judgment-free, and empowering therapeutic environment.

## Key Performance Indicators

Students are assessed across the ten (10) key performance indicators (KPIs) identified below. Each KPI will have a scoring rubric tied to a course assignment. Data will be used at both the individual student level as well as programmatic level.

The ten 10 KPIs students are assessed on are as follows – students will:

1. Utilize current, evidence-based ethical decision-making models.
2. Incorporate multiple counseling theories in the counseling process.
3. Select and effectively use appropriate strategies for counseling diverse clients.
4. Examine both the history and current trends in the field of professional counseling at the local, state, and national levels.
5. Integrate human development stage theories into the counseling process.
6. Assess, recognize, diagnose when appropriate, and effectively work with clients experiencing mental health conditions.
7. Demonstrate knowledge and skills in facilitating and functioning in groups.
8. Utilize current theories and models in substance use disorder and addiction counseling.
9. Demonstrate the effective use of career counseling approaches and models.
10. Apply evidence-based techniques in counseling clients in crisis.

## Professional Dispositions

In addition to the ten KPI's, each student is also assessed for evidence of Professional Dispositions. Students are assessed across four major constructs required to successfully complete the program and serve as a professional counselor.

Throughout the program, each student is formally assessed regarding:

1. Taking responsibility for learning, including critical thinking and demonstrating a growth mindset

2. Demonstrating maturity, professionalism, and maintaining appropriate boundaries
3. Showing integrity in work and interactions with others, self-awareness, and an openness to feedback
4. Effectively utilizing concepts and constructs related to diversity, equity, and inclusion

Once a student begins the MSCMHC program, they are required to adhere to the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics ([http://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2014-code-of-ethics-finaladdress.pdf?sfvrsn=96b532c\\_8](http://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2014-code-of-ethics-finaladdress.pdf?sfvrsn=96b532c_8))

## Scope of Practice

Professional counselor licensure is granted at the state level. Each state that offers licensure has an associated licensure law describing the clinical hours needed while in the master's program, as well as required coursework. Our program will prepare graduates to meet state requirements including the number of quarter hours, and required offerings (e.g., Counseling Theories). Further, the program provides graduates with the requisite number of Practicum and Internship hours required for licensure (100 and 600, respectively).

## Licensure

After graduating from our program, students seeking licensure in their home state will be required to take and pass the National Counselor Exam (NCE) a 160-item multiple choice exam. Throughout the curriculum, students will be exposed to and tested on theories, concepts, and ideas covered on the exam. Therefore, all graduates will have the required knowledge to successfully pass the NCE.

Students should contact the professional counselor licensure board for the state in which they plan to practice or the American Counseling Association using the following link to identify the specific standards they will need to meet for licensure - <https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/licensure-requirements> (<https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/licensure-requirements/>)

Inherent in each state law guiding licensure are the following guidelines:

- Courses required to be licensed (these include specific course titles e.g., Theories in Counseling)
- Number of hours required for all coursework (e.g., 90 quarter hours)
- Number of practicum/internship hours students need to complete during their counseling program (completed in Counseling Practicum, Internship I (A and B) and II (A and B))
- Exam(s) necessary to attain licensure (e.g., National Counselor Exam, Jurisprudence exam)
- Number of hours to be completed post-graduation (e.g., 3,000)
- And any and all other requirements unique to the particular state law

Students in the MSCMHC program from the state of Arizona fall under the state law when seeking licensure. Students must document specific curricular and clinical experiences in order to receive licensure. Further, the law requires students to successfully pass a national counselor exam and complete 3,200 post graduate hours.

The state of Arizona, as do many other states throughout the country, outlines three primary required elements for an applicant to be considered for licensure. The first element is the master's degree program they complete. The law describes specific topics to be covered in the curriculum. The proposed program meets all of the curricular

requirements, including the specific requirements for the clinical experience (Practicums and Internships).

Secondly, following a student's completion of the program, in order to be considered for licensure, the graduate will need to take and pass a national counseling exam. While the program courses will prepare the graduate for success on the exam the onus of passing is completely on the graduate. Students will be advised on best practices for passing the exam throughout the program.

Finally, once a graduate passes the exam, they will be required to complete 3,200 hours of post-graduate counseling work. Graduates will be required to contract with an agency/counseling setting or private practitioner for supervision over the course of this work. Again, the onus is on the graduate, however, the program will provide key information on options students have as well as best practices in forming an agreement to receive post-graduate supervision.

Complete details on requirements for graduates to practice in the state of Arizona can be found on the website of the Arizona State Board of Behavioral Health Examiners (<https://azbbhe.us/node/837/>).