

St. Stephen's College Practicum Plan during COVID-19

June 25, 2020

Principles of Conducting Practicum during COVID-19:

- St. Stephen's College's top priority is the health and safety of our students.
- Students should feel supported in respecting their own limits and should assess their own state of readiness to return to the practicum site. Students are not being required by St. Stephen's College to engage in either direct client contact hours and/or tele-mental health. Rather, these are opportunities we are making available to those who want them.
- Students must comply with all provincial directives currently in place (eg. physical distancing, use of PPE, hand sanitizer, etc.)
- If at any point students will be working onsite, St. Stephen's College will require written expression from the site regarding how the site is complying with the public health directive of their jurisdictions, and attending to the needs and health/wellness of our students
- If delivering tele-mental health services, students must complete proper Telehealth Competency training (consult with the Clinical Director about available training options)
- Proper contractual arrangements must be in place for practicum services, to be worked out with each practicum site

Implementation:

- Timeline:
 - **April/May 2020:** Re-start practicum students in Tele-Mental Health placements; in-person therapy remains paused. Student may return to existing sites to perform tele-mental health so long as proper protocols are in place. **Done (April 24, 2020).**
 - **June/July 2020:** Re-start in-person therapy; decision regarding in-person therapy was made in consultation with practicum sites (conditional on proper health/safety protocols at each site) and in light of current health protocols in the province. **Done (June 19, 2020)**
- Placement Priority: Priority will be given to establishing placements for students expecting to graduate in Fall 2020

Students assessing their own state of readiness should consider:

- In light of the current public health situation, what is your level of comfort with (a) in-person counselling, or (b) tele-health counselling?
- If you want to engage in tele-health counselling, how does this fit with your learning goals? Have you considered the stances that registration bodies have taken toward tele-health hours?
- If you are required to be on-site:
 - Are you willing and able to follow the public health directives at that site (eg., counselling while using PPE, counselling while maintaining physical distancing, etc.)?
 - Have you considered the risks associated with conducting either in-person or tele-health hours away from home (eg., transmission of Covid-19 to vulnerable people in your home)?
- If your site allows you to participate in e-counselling from home:
 - Would this involve use of your own equipment?
 - Can you ensure sufficient client privacy from a home-office environment? If you have family members in the home with you, this may be difficult to do. Client confidentiality is always paramount.
 - How will your site support you with client emergency situations if you are working from a home office? How will regular supervision sessions be conducted?
- If you are conducting e-counselling:
 - Will your site provide you with appropriate competency training in e-mental health?
 - Does the site have software and protocols in place that follow privacy laws and protect client confidentiality? St. Stephen College will assist you in assessing this.

For Sites to consider before engaging an SSC student:

- If the student is required to work onsite
 - A plan must be in place to ensure that the student's health and safety are cared for; this includes adherence to all provincial directives with respect to physical distancing, thorough sanitization, use of PPE, and other directives
 - Special consideration may need to be given in the delivery of Art Therapy services (eg., with respect to art supplies)
- If the student is conducting tele-mental health (either onsite or off-site)
 - Proper protocols are in place to protect client confidentiality in an online environment
 - Software and security protocols are in place
 - Relevant privacy legislation is being followed; the physical location of servers has been considered
 - Proper hardware access in place. If students are required to use their own hardware, protocols must be in place to mitigate the risk of privacy breach.
 - If the student works from their home, a policy exists giving the student direction about proper home-office workspace for therapeutic care, to allow for client privacy and confidentiality
 - Policy is in place to ensure compliance with best practices with respect to supporting the practicum student through client emergencies in a tele-health context
 - A plan is in place to provide the student with training in e-mental health competency