Counseling Practicum and Internship: The Developmental Assessment of Counseling Skills in community mental health settings

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Abstract

The American Counseling Association (ACA), Department of Education, and CACREP set specific standards to be met by students who are entering the field of professional counseling. The domains and candidate proficiencies of Knowledge (Communication, Interpersonal Skills, and Critical Thinking), Skills (Scholarly inquiry, Reflective wisdom, Integration of Discipline, Technology Integration, and Organization), and Dispositions (Cultural Awareness) are all essential competencies incorporated within the professional counseling standards. Currently, a developmentally appropriate assessment instrument designed to measure these standards-based competencies does not exist. Preliminary work has been completed on the design of such an assessment instrument for the school counseling internship with encouraging results. Feedback on the design and items of an instrument were gathered from Kutztown University and the University of Pennsylvania’s internship on-site supervisors. However, none exists for the practicum experience in both school and mental health counseling and for the internship experience in mental health counseling. The goal of this current project is to develop and to establish the psychometric properties of a developmental, standards-based assessment instrument measuring these competencies in the one-semester Counseling Practicum experience and the two-semester School Counseling and Mental Health Counseling internships.