Training Future Mental Health Practitioners

Combining Classroom, Hands-on Therapy and Research Opportunities
President’s Letter

from WILLIAM M. PINSOF, PhD

Dear Friends,

Our action mission (what we do) is to strengthen and heal families from all walks of life through clinical service, professional education and research. These activities are the pillars of the Institute. This Spring Newsletter is about the education pillar.

Since 1968 The Family Institute has been dedicated to training family therapists. In the early 1990s, shifting our focus from post-graduate education to Master’s-level training, we created our Master’s program in Marriage and Family Therapy at Northwestern University. In 2000, we took over Northwestern’s renowned Master’s program in Counseling and broadened our scope to include the training of professional counselors. Both of these programs are part of our joint venture with Northwestern — the Center for Applied Psychological and Family Studies.

Today we

• train over 100 counselors and couple and family therapists in our two Master’s programs.
• provide the Clinical Practica for graduate students in Northwestern’s doctoral program in Clinical Psychology (Evanston campus).
• train all Northwestern psychiatry residents to work with couples and families.
• provide two years of advanced training for six postgraduate fellows.

Beyond our action mission, The Family Institute’s intellectual mission is to develop and disseminate ways to think about and work with human problems that acknowledge the connectedness of all human beings. For us, depression, anxiety, addiction and the other problems we address are “family disorders” that affect and are affected by everyone they touch. Our educational initiatives integrate this unique way of thinking and working with our passion to help more individuals and families throughout the United States and the world.

With gratitude,

William M. Pinsof
President
Second to None: Building a strong postdoctoral fellowship

By Anthony Chambers, PhD, ABPP, Director of the Postdoctoral Fellowship Program

The Postdoctoral Fellowship program has a rich and storied legacy at The Family Institute. Before the creation of our Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy program (MFT), the fellowship was the primary education program for training couple and family therapists from all mental health disciplines. Today, the fellowship program continues to be invaluable to The Family Institute, as the fellowship is the breeding ground for our next generation of leaders.

The fellowship program has two main tracks: a research track comprised of one fellow and a clinical scholar track comprised of three fellows. All fellows participate in group supervision, an advanced couple therapy seminar and a professional development seminar, as well as see clients. In addition, the research fellow is assigned to one of our research projects. This year, the research fellow will work with Dr. Tammy Sher on her behavioral medicine and couples program. The focus of the research track is to create original knowledge relevant to couples and families, and to disseminate that knowledge through publishing and presenting at scientific conferences. Although receiving advanced clinical training is at the heart of the clinical scholar track, each fellow is also mentored and encouraged to become a critical thought leader in the field.

In addition to being an invaluable resource for The Family Institute, our fellowship program has become an international hub for couple and family therapy training. More than 40 years of research has shown that couple and family therapy (CFT) is an effective modality for treatment. With the exception of MFT programs, many graduate students in other mental health disciplines lack this training. The need for postdoctoral training in CFT is evident as we quadrupled the number of applications from scholars all around the world this year. Applicants repeatedly said some version of “this is one of the few fellowship programs in the country that I could find that focused on providing advanced couple and family therapy training within a scientist-practitioner context.”

Many of our past fellows have become valued Family Institute staff members. Others have gone on to academic medical centers, universities, government policy positions and private practice. Our fellowship program is robust, and we strive to ensure that our program is a global magnet for those interested in receiving state-of-the-art training in CFT.

To learn more about the Fellowship program, email Dr. Chambers at achambers@family-institute.org.
Using Science to Guide Practice: Marriage and Family Therapy
By Douglas Breunlin, MSSA, LCSW, LMFT, Director, Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy

The Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy (MSMFT) program was launched in 1990. Originally designed to replace the shrinking market in postgraduate training at The Family Institute, the MSMFT program is now one of the nation’s leading programs of its kind. The program attracts a talented and diverse cohort of students. They come to the program knowing the reputation of The Family Institute and the brand name of Northwestern University. They also value the program’s accredited status, the faculty’s national reputation, the volume of clinical work, the extensive supervision and the thoughtful curriculum around which their courses are built.

Programs that train marriage and family therapists are unique because they focus on working with relationships, particularly families and couples. The clinical approach is grounded in a systems theory that suggests human problems are a function of the context in which they occur; therapy must change that context for the problem to be resolved. This translates into having the relevant relationships (people) present for the therapy.

As the field of marriage and family therapy evolved, many approaches developed. Our MSMFT program uses an integrative approach that transcends the many models of therapy. Our faculty developed the approach, called Integrative Problem Centered Metaframeworks (IPCM). IPCM provides a map that enables trainees to learn how to navigate the complex terrain of relationships, and enables students to choose clinical strategies that help clients solve their problems.

The MSMFT program aspires to prepare graduates for practice in the 21st Century. Therapy has always been part art and part science but the science of therapy is getting better and will increasingly be emphasized over the science of art. Accordingly, the emphasis of our program is to train therapists in the scientist-practitioner model that uses science to guide practice. Trainees are taught to use the STIC® (Systemic Therapy Inventory of Change), created at The Family Institute, which tracks the progress of therapy over time.

Graduates of the Marriage and Family Therapy program have a range of postdegree options. Some go on to doctoral studies while others work in agency settings or private practices. Following the accrual of postgraduate clinical experience with supervision, graduates can take a licensing exam and become licensed marriage and family therapists.

To learn more about the Marriage and Family Therapy program, email Mr. Breunlin at dbreunlin@family-institute.org.
Clinical Excellence in Counseling Psychology

By Fran Giordano, PhD, Director, Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology

When you enter The Family Institute, there is no doubt that one of its primary missions is the training of Counseling Psychology students. The Institute's Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology is a centerpiece of that educational mission and a powerful representative of its values and treatment emphasis.

Students can be found in every Institute location, counseling clients alongside staff therapists. In their practicum year, Counseling Psychology students see individual clients while receiving supervision from staff therapists and attending the Preceptor experience. The supervisor, trained in developmental supervision techniques, helps the students facilitate necessary insights and changes in their clients, while meeting the students’ beginning therapy skill development needs. The Preceptor, a unique aspect of the program’s training model, helps students become reflective practitioners by encouraging self-examination; they explore their own family dynamics, biases and personal values to help them become powerful and fully present therapists. Practicum students participate in other special clinical experiences including the Rainbows program (groups helping children experiencing loss) and the Mental Health Human Rights clinic (mental health evaluations with refugees seeking asylum). All of these experiences happen while students are taking a full load of academic coursework.

This emphasis on clinical excellence is taken into the second year of the program when students are placed in external sites. At this point, they become excellent representatives of The Family Institute to agencies all over the Chicagoland area. Some Counseling Psychology students stay at the Institute in their externship year and participate in clinic programs such as Parents In Charge (PIC), the Dialectical Behavior Therapy program or the Anxiety clinic. It is this integrative setting, where education and treatment take place side-by-side, that makes the Counseling Psychology program maintain this shared value of clinic excellence.

Upcoming Changes

In the last five years, the Counseling field has changed rapidly, and the Counseling Psychology program is keeping up with those changes. The program is changing its name to Master of Arts in Counseling. The program is also in the process of seeking accreditation from the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), the national accreditation body for counseling programs. The accreditation will assure that the program maintains the highest level of academic rigor while making it easier for graduates to seek licenses nationally, opening many federal mental health employment opportunities.

To learn more about the Counseling Psychology program, email Dr. Giordano at fgiordano@family-institute.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

ONET (www.onetonline.org), the nation’s primary source for occupational information, lists mental health counselors as a Bright Outlook occupation. This means that mental health counseling is considered a new and emerging occupation with a large number of job openings and rapid job growth expected in the next five years.
Nine Steps to the Other Side of Triggered:™
Training students and clinicians to work with trauma clients
By Cynthia Yesko, MA, LCPC, Assistant Director, Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology

One of the numerous clinical specialties The Family Institute offers centers on helping those who have experienced trauma. A dedicated team not only works with clients but also offers workshops to clinicians and students who work with this population. Nine Steps to the Other Side of Triggered™ teaches the steps necessary to help a client through a traumatic episode. As part of their intensive training, many of our Master-level students attend this workshop, where they learn from real-world experiences. This synergy extends the educational environment of The Family Institute into the professional community in a specific, unique way.

Nine Steps is a curriculum used to aid individuals, couples, families and groups in healing from trauma. Nine Steps is a map that breaks the trauma treatment process into simple manageable steps that incorporate visualization exercises. It limits the work to areas where an immediate and positive change can be made in a small part of the client’s trigger story. A trigger is an event in the present that “sets off” a flashback of the past.

The curriculum evolved as I examined my own rookie mistakes as a counselor-in-training working with trauma clients. Before I learned how to make the trauma work effective, I pushed my clients too fast and addressed too much of the trauma story at once. I noticed that many of them remained stuck with the same set of triggers. As my career evolved, I was able to identify the transformative moments for clients and create the foundation for Nine Steps to the Other Side of Triggered.

Through this process, the clinician helps the client understand that the distress caused by the past trauma is similar to what is being experienced during the current trigger. Using these nine steps, the clinician and the client work to find ways to overcome the trigger. Unresolved parts of the trauma allow the triggers to set the flashbacks in motion. The help and support the client receives allows them to heal these emotional wounds. Through the Nine Steps, clinicians and students alike are better equipped to work with trauma cases, helping their clients move more easily through the process.

To learn more about Nine Steps counseling and workshops, email Ms. Yesko at cyesko@family-institute.org.

The help and support the client receives allows them to heal these emotional wounds.
Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I was born, raised, educated and married in Chicago. Susan and I have three lovely daughters and four grandchildren. I am on the staff of Lurie Children’s Hospital as an attending in Pediatric Hematology/Oncology/Transplant, and serve on the academic faculty of Northwestern Medical Center and the Feinberg School of Medicine. I have been the senior pastor of the Apostolic Faith Church for 33 years. Much of the work we do is focused on families and young people, and reaching people in the greater Chicagoland community. I am also a board member of World Vision, and serve as a Chicago Health Commissioner on the Board of Health.

What attracted you to The Family Institute?

I was recruited to the Institute by a colleague of mine. I was inspired by its history and mission, especially the health and well-being of families. The fact that efforts were being made to make services accessible to the poor was important and solidified my decision, along with the connection with Northwestern University.

How does the AAB allow you to give back to the Institute?

“Serving on the AAB allows me to support and help carry out the mission of the Institute. It is a privilege to help cultivate relationships between professionals in the field and graduate students who are beginning their professional journey through our alumni-sponsored events.”

Debbie Youderian, LCSW, LMFT, AAB Vice Chair

“I am able to give back by helping facilitate the challenging transitional phases of the current students, fostering meaningful connections among the alumni, and promoting the spirit of positive growth and change that is at the heart of the Institute.”

Dana Bennison, MA, LPC, AAB Board Member

Describe the Institute in three words.

Excellent, progressive, healing

In each issue of Institute News, we will introduce you to Family Institute Board members. Our Board members are charged with maintaining the Institute’s financial security and charting its direction and future growth.
The mission of The Family Institute at Northwestern University is to strengthen and heal families from all walks of life through clinical service, education and research.

An affiliate of Northwestern University, The Family Institute is a unique, innovative not-for-profit organization, governed by its own independent Board of Directors and responsible for its own funding. We have four staff practice locations, including Evanston, Chicago, LaGrange Park and Northbrook. For more information on our staff practice, please call 847-733-4300 or visit our website at www.family-institute.org.

If you haven’t thought about planning for the future, there is no better time. Take advantage of a great resource to help you in your planning. Our website includes a number of valuable tools including wills videos, the Online Wills Planner, and a downloadable guide to planning your will or trust. Remember The Family Institute in your bequests.

www.tfigift.org