

Northwestern University
Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy Program
Academic Program Manual
On-Campus and Online Branches
2026-2027

Northwestern

The Center for Applied
Psychological and Family Studies

IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER: The information in this handbook applies to the academic years stated on the handbook and is updated periodically. The MSMFT Program reserves the right to change, without notice, any statement contained in this handbook concerning, but not limited to, rules, policies, tuition, fees, curricula, and courses. Once the handbook is provided to a student, failure to read this information does not excuse a student from knowing and complying with its content. In addition to The Graduate School program policies ([See TGS Policies](#)) graduate students are subject to and should be aware of the [Northwestern Student Handbook](#) and University policies pertaining to students ([See Northwestern University Policies](#))



Dear students, welcome!

Welcome to the Marriage and Family Therapy Program at The Family Institute at Northwestern University. We are thrilled to have you join our community as you begin your journey toward becoming a marriage and family therapist.

In this program, you will engage in a transformative experience that will challenge, inspire, and prepare you for meaningful work with individuals, couples, and families. Our program is intentionally designed to provide rigorous academic training, immersive clinical experiences, thoughtful supervision, development of your professional identity, and opportunities for research. Through this process, you will gain the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to become an ethical, systemic, integrative, competent, and compassionate clinician.

Graduate education in marriage and family therapy is both rewarding and demanding. Balancing coursework, clinical training, supervision, professional responsibilities, and personal growth requires dedication, resilience, and hard work. The fact that you are here reflects our confidence in your potential. Through our admissions process, we carefully select students whom we believe have the capacity to thrive in this profession, and your acceptance into this program is an affirmation of that belief.

Throughout your time in the program, you will be supported by a dedicated community that includes the Department Chair, core faculty, supervisors, advisors, staff, and affiliate instructors. We are committed to your success and are here to guide, challenge, and encourage you along the way. At the same time, graduate education is an active partnership. We begin with the expectation that you will take ownership of your learning, seek support when needed, and engage fully in the opportunities and responsibilities of professional training.

The field of marriage and family therapy continues to evolve, and what you learn today will serve as the foundation for a lifetime of growth. The MSMFT program at The Family Institute emphasizes the importance of adaptability, critical thinking, and lifelong learning. These dispositions will enable you to remain responsive to the changing needs of your clients and continue developing as a clinician throughout your career.

While challenges are a natural part of any graduate program, we encourage you to approach them with curiosity, self-awareness, and determination. We expect you to regularly reflect on your progress, actively seek feedback, and address concerns immediately.

This Academic Manual, together with your Clinical Training Manual (online or on-campus), and the TGS Student Handbook, is designed to support your success by:

- Outlining the mission, goals, and student learning outcomes of the MSMFT program;
- Providing a clear understanding of university and program policies, procedures, resources, and avenues for support; and
- Serving as a guide for navigating both the academic and clinical components of your graduate education.

We are honored to accompany you on this unique and exciting journey. We look forward to learning alongside you, supporting your growth, and celebrating your accomplishments as you develop into a skilled and reflective marriage and family therapist.

Welcome to our MSMFT community!



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MSMFT Program Directory

Name	Education Title	Email
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Shah, Puja	Director of Clinic	pshah@family-institute.org
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Links to University Department Websites

AccessibleNU	
CAESAR	
The Family Institute	
Graduate Financial Aid Office	
The Graduate School	
Bianca West, Student Services Assistant	bianca.west@northwestern.edu
Kristine Emrich, Assistant Director of Student Services	kristine.emrich@northwestern.edu
Kate Veraldi, Senior Director of Student Services	k-veraldi@northwestern.edu
Student Health Services	
Northwestern University Libraries	
Norris University Center	
Norris University Book Store	
Evanston Parking Office	
Registrar's Office	
Student Accounts	
Technology Support Services (NUIT)	
University Police	(847) 491 - 3254 (information) (847) 491 - 3456 (emergency)



A. MISSION, GOALS, AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

MSMFT Program Mission Statement

The mission of the Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy (MSMFT) Program at Northwestern University is to educate students to become knowledgeable, competent, systemic, culturally sensitive, ethical, and empirically informed Marriage and Family Therapists. Graduates of the program are expected to exhibit a beginning level of competence with a variety of presenting problems, utilize the Integrative Systemic Therapy (IST) framework to integrate knowledge from the field into practice, demonstrate multicultural sensitivity and ethical competence in their work, and have an appreciation for research, particularly research on family relationships and the process and outcome of therapy. With additional education and experience, graduates of the program will go on to become outstanding practitioners and future leaders in the field of Marriage and Family Therapy. The program's mission is embedded in that of The Family Institute (to strengthen and heal families and individuals from all walks of life through clinical services, education, and research) and Northwestern University (excellent teaching, innovative research, and the personal and intellectual growth of its students). Accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE), the program reflects the Professional Marriage and Family Therapy Principles and COAMFT's Developmental Competency Components.

Program Goals

1. Train entry level Marriage and Family Therapists who are knowledgeable, systemic, integrative, and empirically informed (Integrative Systemic Therapy).
2. Train competent entry-level therapists who are informed by a multicultural perspective and awareness of self.
3. Graduates achieve an identity as an MFT and observe the AAMFT code of professional ethics.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Goal #1: Train entry level Marriage and Family Therapists who are knowledgeable, systemic, integrative, and empirically informed.

SLO 1 – Foundational knowledge base

Outcome: Students will become knowledgeable of the core concepts, common factors and major schools of marriage and family therapy.

SLO 2 – Integration of concepts, models and techniques

Outcome: Students will learn to utilize a systemic, integrative, and empirically informed approach to planning and staging therapy (Integrative Systemic Therapy).

SLO 4 – Integration of research

Outcome: Students will learn to be critical consumers of research, incorporate research findings into their clinical practice, and utilize progress research data to make informed clinical decisions.



Goal #2: Train competent entry-level therapists who are informed from a multicultural perspective and an awareness to self.

SLO 3 – Clinical competence

Outcome: Students will develop a strong beginning level professional competence in the conduct of systemically oriented family, couple, and individual therapy (Integrative Systemic Therapy).

SLO 5 – Diversity and multi-cultural sensitivity

Outcome: Students' clinical work will incorporate cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity across a range of cultural contexts including race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, and sexual orientation.

SLO 8 – Development of the self-of-the-therapist

Outcome: Students will develop awareness of their own reactions to clients and clinical responsibilities and develop means of managing their reactions and using them, when appropriate, in the context of therapy.

Goal #3: Graduates achieve an identity as an MFT and observe the AAMFT code of professional ethics

SLO 6 – Professional ethical conduct

Outcome: Students will develop an understanding of legal and ethical standards and demonstrate the ability and commitment to apply them in the professional practice of Marriage and Family Therapy

SLO 7 – Professional identity as marriage and family therapist

Outcome: Students will clearly identify themselves with the profession of Marriage and Family Therapy.

B. PROGRAM GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Communities of Interest

The program has identified its Communities of Interest that provide formal and informal feedback as part of the Program's ongoing assessment and development of its outcome-based educational program. The Communities of Interest are our students, teaching faculty, supervisors, alumni, employers, Northwestern University, The Graduate School (TGS), and 2U.

MSMFT Program Governance and Roles

Kristina S. Brown, Ph.D., LMFT serves as the MSMFT Department Chair. In her role as Department Chair, she is responsible for the planning and oversight of program curriculum, faculty scholarship, adherence to COAMFTE accreditation requirements, coordination of scholarships and research assistantships, and management of the day-to-day operations of the MSMFT program across both branches. The Core Faculty members, under the direction of the Department Chair, are responsible for the administration of the program. Each are assigned to chair and/or participate in one or more committees (e.g., curriculum, research, supervision, accreditation, remediation, and student life). They all serve on the admissions committee, advise students, and produce scholarly work. Additionally, Core Faculty members teach, supervise, and mentor new supervisors and faculty.

All faculty members who teach or consult in the Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy program



are licensed, practicing clinicians who hold faculty appointments from the Weinberg School, Psychology Department at Northwestern University. Core faculty are responsible for course development, course instruction, academic evaluation, and scholarship along with the direct clinical training and supervision of students. Affiliate faculty support the MSMFT Program through instruction, supervision, and collaborative support for the success of students. Consulting Faculty augment the MSMFT Program by lending their expertise to our students by giving guest lectures and providing interested students with guidance on academic and research interests. The students of the MSMFT program are important contributors to the program. As learners, clinical trainees, and the future of the MFT field, you are expected to produce high-quality, original academic work, grow and develop as a person and as a therapist, and provide feedback regarding the program, including its curriculum, policies, and procedures. The feedback you provide in program meetings, on formal evaluation measures, and in individual meetings with faculty members is of great value to the program and is one important source of program modifications and improvements.

Program Evaluation and Assessment

The program has identified its Communities of Interest that provide formal and informal feedback as part of the Program's ongoing assessment and development of its outcome-based educational program. The Communities of Interest are students, teaching faculty, supervisors, alumni, employers, Northwestern University, The Graduate School (TGS), and 2U.

The MSMFT Program utilizes all data and metrics supplied by various departments and program assessments and evaluations as part of our strategic plan for continuous program development and improvement. The MFT Department Chair, designated core faculty, and Education Operations are responsible for collecting information regarding student learning outcomes, courses, supervision, and faculty effectiveness, clinical trainee success, and program accomplishments. The program requests that students, faculty members, supervisors, and alumni complete various evaluations to adequately assess the program's performance in achieving its benchmarks. Data is collected, analyzed and interpreted, and action plans are developed for program growth and development.

The program collects data on curriculum, teaching practices (CTECs and Program Evaluations); program resources; trainee achievement; Department Chair effectiveness; faculty and clinical supervisor evaluation; graduate achievement; student demographics; program effectiveness; employment of graduates, and employer satisfaction. Program Goals and Student Learning Outcomes are reviewed formally at the yearly Program Review. At this time, action plans are developed, and outcomes are revised as needed to align program goals and developmental competency components. Results of the yearly Program Review are reported to the Chief Academic Officer, faculty, students, and supervisors. The Program additionally provides an Annual Report to COAMFTE to maintain our accreditation. Statistics on the achievement of each graduating class are posted on the website of The Family Institute at Northwestern.

Program Accreditation | COAMFTE

Our program has been fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) since 1994. The COAMFTE is the standard-setting organization for family therapy training recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. Our online branch was accredited in June 2022.



Graduate Achievement Data

Graduates of the MSMFT Program typically seek licensure as Licensed Marital and Family Therapists (LMFTs) in their resident state. The time from graduation to licensure typically takes from two to five years. Some of our MFT graduates pursue doctoral work. Students can count on the advice and support from the Department Chair, advisors, teaching faculty, and supervisors for guidance on the steps they will need to take after graduation. We take pride in preparing our students for success in their journey to licensure, as reflected in the data on our website.

Regulatory Variance Acknowledgement Statement

Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) is a profession that has attained licensure in all 50 states in the USA; however, each state has its own laws and regulations about what is needed to become licensed as a MFT in that state. The Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy Program at Northwestern University continues to maintain their accreditation with COAMFTE; this status does not guarantee that graduates will be able to obtain a license or credential in a state for which they apply. State regulatory boards can change their laws and policies at any time; Northwestern University cannot guarantee that this degree and internship experience will meet future licensing requirements.

Students are responsible for determining whether they can meet licensure or credentialing requirements. Students are expected to review license requirements in the state they intend to practice as soon as possible so that they understand what may and may not be accepted across state lines. Here is the link to information about each state's licensure resources: [MFT State/Provincial Resources \(AAMFT.org\)](https://www.aamft.org/resources/state-provincial-resources). An additional resource is mft.license.com.

Northwestern University will not refund tuition, fees, or any associated costs, to students who determine after admission that they cannot meet licensure or credentialing requirements. If you know that you plan to pursue licensure in a state other than Illinois, it is best to contact that state's board directly for the most up to date information. Students can learn more about the requirements of MFT licenses in other states at [The Association of Marital & Family Therapy Regulatory Boards \(AMFTRB\)](https://www.amftrb.org).

US Residency Requirement

Students must be residing in the United States while enrolled in the program and actively taking classes.

TFI Employee Policy

It is the policy of the program that a student may not be employed by The Family Institute at Northwestern University (TFI). A student in the program may receive a stipend for work on a program-related project when stipends are available and approved, but they may not be employees of TFI. If an employee of TFI will matriculate into the program, they must resign from any full or part-time TFI employment and have terminated said employment in advance of their cohort's initial orientation.



Background Checks

The Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy program includes required clinical training and placement, all applicants offered conditional admission must submit to a criminal background check before being fully admitted to the program. Criminal history does not automatically disqualify an applicant from admission. Background check results are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, considering the nature of the findings, applicable laws, and clinical placement requirements. If information from the background check results in an adverse admission decision, the applicant will receive a copy of the consumer report and a summary of their rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) before a final decision is made. Please note that clinical placement sites may have additional screening requirements. Inability to meet a site's eligibility requirements may affect a student's ability to complete required clinical training and the degree program.

Nondiscrimination Statement

Non-discrimination Statement Northwestern University prohibits discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, creed, national origin, ethnicity, caste, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, parental status, marital status, age, disability, citizenship status, veteran status, genetic information, reproductive health decision making, height, weight, or any other class of individuals protected from discrimination under federal, state, or local law, regulation, or ordinance or any other classification protected by law in the matters of admissions, employment, housing or services or in the educational programs or activities it operates, as required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended in 2008; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967; and any other federal, state, or local laws, regulations, or ordinances that prohibit discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation.

Title IX Statement

It is the policy of Northwestern University to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits discrimination (including sexual harassment and sexual violence) based on sex in the University's educational programs and activities. Title IX also prohibits retaliation for asserting or otherwise participating in claims of sex discrimination. The Title IX coordinator and the deputy coordinators (listed under Our Staff) have been designated to oversee Northwestern's compliance with Title IX and to respond to reports of violations. For more information about Title IX, go to Northwestern's Title IX website. A person may also file a complaint with the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights regarding an alleged violation of Title IX by visiting the U.S. Department of Education's website or calling (800) 421-3481.

C. ACADEMIC PROGRAM POLICIES

University Code of Conduct

Students enrolled in this program are subject to Northwestern University's Student Code of Conduct and are expected to uphold the standards of academic integrity, personal responsibility, and professional behavior



established by the University. All students are responsible for knowing and complying with the policies, procedures, and expectations outlined in the Code.

The official Northwestern University Student Code of Conduct, including student rights, responsibilities, and the student conduct process, is maintained by the University and is available on the Northwestern University website. Students should refer to the University's official policy, as it may be updated periodically. The [Northwestern University Student Handbook](#) describes the expectations for behavior and conduct in the Northwestern community and outlines the procedures to be followed when these expectations are not met.

In addition to the above code, MSMFT students and faculty are expected to follow the AAMFT Code of Ethics. Those found to have committed a violation or to have attempted to violate either the Northwestern University Code of Conduct or the AAMFT Code of Ethics will be subject to disciplinary sanctions, up to and including dismissal from the University.

Academic Integrity

The MSMFT Program is a Program within The Graduate School (TGS) of Northwestern University. We adhere to the strictest standards regarding academic integrity and follow the policy set down by TGS as stated below.

“Academic integrity is fundamental to every facet of the scholarly process and is expected of every student in The Graduate School in all academic undertakings. Integrity involves firm adherence to academic honesty and to ethical conduct consistent with values based on standards that respect the intellectual efforts of both oneself and others.”

Students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the Academic Honesty Code. The full university policy, procedures, student rights can be found here: [Northwestern Provost Academic Integrity](#).

Authenticity of Student Work

All students are expected to maintain standards of conduct appropriate for healthcare professionals and graduate scholars. The program and faculty expect academic integrity from students and for them to follow the [Northwestern University Academic Integrity Policy](#). Academic Dishonesty includes but is not limited to, each of the following acts when performed in any academic or academic-related matter, exercise, or activity.

1. **Cheating:** using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, study aids, or computer-related information.
2. **Plagiarism:** representing words, data, pictures, figures, works, ideas, computer programs or outputs, or anything generated by someone else as one's own.
3. **Fabrication:** presenting as genuine any invented or falsified citation, data, or material.
4. **Misrepresentation:** falsifying, altering, or misstating the contents of documents or other materials related to academic matters, including schedules, prerequisites, and transcripts.
5. **Misuse or non-identified AI use within assignments.** It is the instructor's right to deny use of AI for their course. If AI is allowed a student should include the following statement in assignments to indicate use of a Generative AI Tool: “The author(s) would like to acknowledge the use of [Generative AI Tool Name], a language model developed by [Generative AI Tool Provider], in the preparation of this



assignment. The [Generative AI Tool Name] was used in the following way(s) in this assignment [e.g., brainstorming, grammatical correction, citation, which portion of the assignment].”

Academic Credit

To graduate from the program, students must successfully complete 25 **units**. These include 19 academic courses and 6 internship courses for a total of 25 units of academic credit. In addition, all students must complete the Professional Identity Seminar, that is offered at zero (0) credits.

Northwestern University Units

Northwestern University credit for undergraduate and graduate programs is awarded in **units**, rather than hours. Courses are assigned 1.0 unit of credit. Northwestern does not typically offer conversions to other credit systems; however, institutions accepting Northwestern quarter credit in transfer can consider 1.0 Northwestern quarter unit to be approximately equal to 3.0 quarter hours, and 1.0 Northwestern semester unit equal to 4.00 semester hours. More information can be found at [The Office of the Provost](#).

Registering for Courses

To register for courses, see [The Graduate School's General Registration Policies](#). Any NU holds (financial or otherwise) must be cleared before registration for classes. To confirm registration, check quarterly class schedules in [CAESAR](#). After enrolling in courses, registration changes can only be made by following The Graduate School's policies (see [Changes in Registration](#)).

Only officially admitted, active students (i.e., students not on leave of absence) can register for courses toward a degree. [The Office of the Registrar](#) maintains an up-to-date quarterly class schedule (see the "View the Quarterly Class Schedule" link on CAESAR). Students register in CAESAR, within the assigned period, on the Office of the Registrar's website.

Registration Policies

Except for new incoming students, registration for each quarter is completed during an advanced registration period prior to the next quarter. For these advance registrations, the Registrar's Office notifies students of registration information via student email. Failure to register during the designated advance time may result in a fee and/or the student being dropped from the program.

- Students in the On-Campus MFT Program will register for courses with a –0 (E.g., MS_FT 400-0)
- Students in the Online Program will register for courses with a –6 (E.g., MS_FT 400-6).

Professional Conference Opportunities

As Marriage and Family Therapists in training, there are opportunities to advance your learning experience by engaging in scholarly settings and work. Attending conferences is a great way to learn about current events, participate in research, and hear from some of the founding and front-running figures in the field. Conferences are also an inviting environment to connect with other students and therapists. We encourage students to further their clinical and academic training by attending conferences.



AAMFT and NCFR are our national premier conferences to attend. Should attendance at either of these two conferences conflict with course meeting time, please contact the appropriate course faculty member in advance to arrange for the date(s) you will be missing class. Missing a class session to attend a systemic conference will not count as a 1st absence in a course, though you will be required to complete a writing/presenting assignment integrating a conference topic and the missed course content. This assignment is due the week after the conference and the missed course date.

Upcoming are two major conferences to consider:

[American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy \(AAMFT\) Systemic Family Therapy Conference](#)

October 8 – 9th, 2026 (Virtual)

[National Council on Family Relations \(NCFR\)](#)

November 18-21st, 2026 (Minneapolis, Minnesota)

Evaluation of the Program

Throughout the year and the course of the program, students are expected to evaluate their experience with their classes, instructors, curriculum, clinical internship, supervisors, program procedures, and themselves. This is an opportunity to give feedback and influence a program and career that you have invested in. During your professional development, we expect you to take advantage of these opportunities to provide feedback. Completing formal evaluations is part of your grade in the internship courses (i.e., group supervision).

D. CLASSROOM POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS

Creating a Classroom Community

We strive to be a community of learners in which a spirit of collaboration guides the exchange of ideas between the instructor and the students. To maximize this environment, the following classroom etiquette is expected:

On Campus students attending class in person must:

1. Cell phones should be silent and put away during class;
2. Computers will be used only for taking notes during class,
3. Activities unrelated to that class will be avoided;
4. When on campus, no food should be consumed during class; all beverages must have lids.

Online students attending class via Zoom must:

1. Participate in a private, quiet space (with the same confidentiality as a therapy session);
2. Participate in a fixed position (students cannot attend class via tablet or smartphone);
3. Keep camera/video on throughout entire class to be counted as present;
4. Mute yourself when not speaking and use a headset to minimize background noise.



Waiving Courses Policy

Under the circumstances described below The Program may approve a student's petition to waive an MSMFT course who can document through official transcript that they have completed an equivalent course within the last 5 years. A course description from the previous school's graduate catalogue and/or the course syllabus must be submitted at the time of request. Up to three credit units may be counted toward the required units needed for graduation. The Department Chair, in conjunction with the MSMFT core faculty, will review and take appropriate action on waiver requests.

Course Waiver Process

Please complete the student section of the course waiver form and return it with a copy of the transcript course syllabus, and pertinent supporting documents to your [Student & Alumni Affairs Manager](#).

The form will be verified by the SAA Manager and if all sections are completed correctly, passed to the on-campus faculty who is currently teaching the course or the online course lead for the course. Upon reviewing the requested material, the faculty will either ask for additional material, deny, or accept the course waiver request. If the course waiver request is accepted by the course faculty, a second program core faculty member will review all materials and, in consultation with the Department Chair, make the final decision about granting or denying the course waiver application.

In the final step, the form is returned to the program student affairs manager who will add the waiver, if accepted, to the student file and notify the student about the outcome. Please note that this process can take 2-3 weeks for review.

Confidentiality and Distribution of Program Materials

Course materials, including syllabi, lectures, assignments, assessments, presentations, recordings, and other instructional content, are provided exclusively for the educational use of students enrolled in the program and individuals affiliated with the program.

Students may not copy, reproduce, distribute, post, share, sell, or otherwise make program materials available to individuals or organizations that are not enrolled in or affiliated with the program without prior written permission from the program. This prohibition includes sharing materials through websites, social media, cloud storage platforms, artificial intelligence tools that retain or publish content, or other electronic or physical means. Unauthorized distribution of program materials may violate intellectual property rights, copyright laws, and university policies and may result in disciplinary action.

Recording of Classes and Academic Activities

To promote an open and respectful learning environment and to protect the privacy of students, faculty, and guest speakers, students may not record class sessions, clinical activities, presentations, or other academic events without prior authorization.

Students who require recording technology or note-taking applications as an approved disability accommodation must work through **AccessibleNU** to obtain appropriate accommodation. Faculty should not approve individual requests to record classes outside of the University's accommodation process.



Any recordings or notes created as part of approved accommodation are for the student's personal educational use only and may not be copied, shared, posted, or distributed without the express written permission of the instructor and, when applicable, other participants.

University Academic and MSMFT Program Calendar

The MSMFT Program follows the official Northwestern University Academic Calendar published by the Office of the Registrar. Students are responsible for being aware of university deadlines, including registration dates, add/drop dates, tuition deadlines, holidays, and degree conferral dates.

In addition, the program publishes an annual MSMFT Program Calendar that includes important program-specific dates such as orientations, program meetings, immersion events, training milestones, and graduation-related deadlines.

The Program makes every effort to adhere to published dates; however, circumstances may occasionally require changes to scheduled events, deadlines, or activities. When changes are necessary, students will be notified through official program communication channels. Students are expected to regularly review their Northwestern email and program communications for updates.

- [Northwestern University Academic Calendar](#)
- [MSMFT On-Campus Program Calendar 2026-2027](#)
- [MSMFT Online Program Calendar 2026-2027](#)

Course Attendance and Participation

All courses and each class session within the courses are designed to contribute to students' development as systemic and relational therapists. To maintain the most productive learning environment for students and the instructor, it is imperative that students adhere to the attendance policies of the program.

1. **Class attendance is mandatory.** Students are expected to be present in all classes, except under certain circumstances (described below). Students are required to communicate with the instructor prior to the class if they are unable to attend a scheduled class.
 - a. One absence per course per quarter is permitted without penalty. A second absence for whatever reason will reduce the overall course grade by 10% unless an additional assignment is completed as provided by the instructor.
 - b. Instructors may require students to complete an additional assignment for any absence.
 - c. Students are responsible for seeking out and making up the work that they missed.
 - d. If a student is absent for more than 20% of the classes for any reason (the actual number of classes depends on the quarter and course), the program may require the student to retake the course extending the length of their overall program.
 - e. These policies apply separately to each course over the duration of the program.
2. **Promptness is expected.** Promptness is a professional responsibility to students and instructors and is necessary for all students to benefit from the class. Arriving late or leaving class early can cause a disruption of learning. Students should inform the instructor as soon as possible about needing to arrive late or leave early for any reason.



- a. If a student misses more than 30 minutes of a class (on-campus), or more than 15 minutes of a live session (online), they will be marked as absent from the class.

Students are expected to be present in all classes, to read assignments before class, and to be prepared to participate in discussion as well as apply the readings to information presented in class. Class participation will be graded based, in large part, on attendance and punctuality. For on-campus summer courses, which are fewer weeks, the requirement of an additional assignment or grade reduction will be in effect with the first absence. Consistent with NU policy, if a student is not present for at least 80% of course time, the program may require the student to re-take the course. If there are documented, extenuating (exceptional, unforeseen, unavoidable, and temporary) circumstances, the program at its sole discretion may allow the student to complete make-up assignments that compensate for an additional absence, though with a reduction in grade for the course.

On rare occasions, a class or live session may be re-scheduled by the program or the instructor, for health or other unavoidable reasons. If this happens, all efforts will be made to announce the changes well in advance of the class. Students are expected to prioritize and attend class as per the altered schedule and should discuss any concerns directly with the instructor.

Religious Observance

Northwestern University policy affirms that students should not be penalized because of observances of their religious beliefs; students shall be given an opportunity, whenever feasible, to make up within a reasonable time any academic assignment that is missed due to individual participation in religious observances. Please inform your professor in advance of any intended absences for religious observance.

Receiving Course Content for Class Sessions Missed

At the discretion of the course instructor, the following options may be available for absence. The student will be marked as absent; however, it may be possible for the student to receive content if it is available and as decided by the instructor. The student request to receive content must be made in writing, along with the stated reason for the absence. Such a request may be made once a quarter.

- **Classes and live sessions are not recorded. As described by Northwestern University, a recording of the course, if a course is recorded, may be provided to students who were absent for a 7-day period through Canvas.** Viewing a recording after an absence does not count as being present for class. The student is still marked absent for the class session that was missed.
- If recording, instructors may choose to turn off the recording at certain points during class to protect student privacy and eliminate the possibility that recording might stifle discussion, particularly if sensitive content is being discussed. If there is any concern that class content may be inappropriate or complicated to record, please see the Live option below.
- Course content cannot be recorded by the classmate providing livestream.
- Student recording is prohibited. *Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of university policy and state law.*
- See the attendance policy in this manual to understand the implications of missing a class session.



Course Assignments

Professors (course instructors) determine the nature and extent of assignments for each course as described in the course syllabus.

Late Work: All late work will be penalized if it is submitted any time after the stated deadline. Students who anticipate being unable to submit the assignment at the time it is due should prepare to submit the assignment early. Students should be in contact with their instructor regarding late assignments *as soon as possible*. Prior to the deadline, instructors may provide arrangements for turning in late work; otherwise, there will be a 10% reduction of points on the assignment for each day the assignment is late.

All assignments must involve original work. The use of published work must be cited using current APA formatting. An assignment can be submitted for grading in only one course. Students may work within one topical area (e.g., eating disorders) in more than one course; however, each assignment must focus on a different aspect of the area of interest. If a student is unclear about this distinction, they should check with the professor prior to beginning the project.

If an assignment is submitted in a course that appears to be similar to an assignment in a prior course, the professors of both courses will discuss the similarity of the assignments. If the assignment is determined to be essentially a duplicate of an earlier assignment, it will be treated as an instance of academic dishonesty and subject to the program's policies on academic dishonesty (see Academic Integrity). If the assignments are distinct enough, the professor of the current course will meet with the student to discuss the problem and decide whether to allow the student to modify and resubmit the assignment.

Grading

Letter grades will be given for all courses taken for one (1) credit unit. A S/U satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade is given for the required zero (0) credit courses. Grades given for completed credit-bearing courses are A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, and F (for failing work). Any course in which a student receives a failing grade (F), must be retaken in the next quarter the course is offered in the branch in which the student is enrolled. A failing grade will impact a student's curriculum plan if the failed course is required to move forward in the program.

Grading Scale							
A 93 – 100%	A- 90 – 92%	B+ 87 – 89%	B 83 – 86%	B- 80 – 82%	C+ 77 – 79%	C 73 – 76%	C- 70 – 72%
If a student receives an F in a course, they will be required to retake that course before continuing.							

GPA Requirements

It is the expectation of the program that all graduate students will earn an A or B for their courses. To maintain satisfactory academic status, a grade of C will be allowed for no more than two (2) courses. A student who receives a **third C** will be **placed on academic probation** and required to retake one of the courses for which they received a C. Additionally, students are expected to carry a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 (B).



Grade Appeal Process

The MSMFT Program follows The Graduate School at Northwestern University's grading practice, which gives faculty members full grading authority at their sole academic discretion. **The Graduate School does not have a grade appeal process or policy.**

Program instructors will allow students to review graded work and will explain grades based on the course's published grading policy or relevant rubric. Students with questions or concerns about a graded assignment or final course grade should discuss them directly with the course instructor.

Students may request a grade review in writing from the instructor; however, the instructor's decision is final. The course instructor will determine how to address questions or concerns about course assignments or grades. A final course grade may be changed only to correct a clerical or computational error. Students may not request a grade change because they are dissatisfied with a grade or because they wish to submit new or revised work after final grades have been submitted. The only exception to the instructor's full grading authority is when a student cites discrimination based on a protected category. In those cases, the student or other involved individual should contact the Office for Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance.

Incomplete Grades | Petition for Incomplete

In accordance with Graduate School policy, incomplete grades (**Y** or **X**) are reserved for unique circumstances beyond a student's control. Criteria for Incomplete Grades (Y Grade): A Y grade is reserved for extraordinary circumstances beyond a student's control in extreme and unusual cases.

Process:

1. The process may be initiated by the student, instructor, advisor, or Department Chair.
2. The student must complete and submit a ***Petition for Incomplete (Y) Grade*** to the instructor, advisor, and Department Chair. This form can be obtained from your SSA.
3. The student and instructor must agree on the terms of the request.
4. The petition is reviewed collaboratively by the instructor, advisor, and Department Chair (with the option to involve the full MSMFT Core Faculty if deemed necessary by the Chair).

A **Y** grade must be resolved by the agreed-upon deadline. In the case of a leave of absence, the work must be completed within **one calendar year** of the grade date; otherwise, the grade may convert to a failing grade (**F**).

Final Examination Delays (X Grade)

1. **Criteria:** Given when a student negotiates with the professor to postpone a final exam due to extenuating circumstances.
2. **Deadline:** Unless otherwise approved, the final examination must be completed within **two weeks** of the course's end date. For both **X** and **Y** grades, the program's standard policy regarding late work remains applicable.



Course Electives

The MSMFT Program does not currently offer electives in either branch of the program. On-campus students may be permitted to take an elective course in another Northwestern University department if their schedule allows, their advisor approves, the department can accommodate MFT students, and space is available in the course. Electives must be taken during the second year of the program and only in a quarter when the student is enrolled in no more than four courses. To request an elective, the student must email their advisor with a formal request to register. The advisor will review the request, consult with MSMFT Core Faculty as needed, and notify the student of the decision. If approved by the program, the student may contact the course instructor to request special permission to enroll.

E. ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICIES

Program Curricula | Curriculum Plans

On-Campus branch:

Students are expected to complete the program as outlined on [The Family Institute's website](#). The program will not review requests to take courses in an alternative sequence or cadence. This ensures that all students receive a consistent and comprehensive education. Continuous registration is required throughout the program.

Online branch:

Continuous registration is required throughout the program. Students enter the program on a track designated within their application for program admittance: Full-Time, Full-Time (California), or Part-Time. Students are permitted to request a change in program track one time during their enrollment, within the following guidelines:

- **Accelerating curriculum:** Part-Time students who wish to move to the Full-Time track must make this request prior to beginning the program. Once they program begins, students cannot move from Part-Time to Full-Time.
- **Decelerating curriculum:** Full-Time students who wish to move to the Part-Time track must make this request prior to beginning clinical training. Students who are considering a change in their programming should discuss the plans with their assigned Student Success Advisor. A Student Success Advisor can provide the steps for requesting a track change. Students are expected to complete the program as outlined in their curriculum plan provided by Student Success when entering the program. The program will not review requests to take courses in an alternative sequence or cadence. This ensures that all students receive a consistent and comprehensive education.

Online students are required to register for a minimum of two courses per quarter, unless there are fewer than two courses required for program completion. Online students' request for track changes is subject to program review and not guaranteed.



Sequence of Courses

The sequencing of courses in the curriculum is based on six developmental principles that are roughly sequential and progressive in nature:

- Providing a foundational knowledge base and an orientation to a systemic, integrative and empirically-informed approach to MFT practice.
- Preparing to begin therapy early in your training (learning while doing).
- Expanding knowledge of methods, models and modalities while increasing cultural sensitivity and integrating diversity in one's understanding and practice of systemic family therapy.
- Expanding caseloads as you deepen your understanding of the role of research in a scientist-practitioner's clinical work.
- Deepening your understanding of family of origin and psychodynamic issues in clinical practice.
- Learning more about working with a variety of presenting concerns and exploring particular clinical interests.
- Presenting your Capstone Project. Toward the end of your program, you will work intensively on your capstone, which involves synthesizing and applying what you have learned in the program. This project requires demonstration of your knowledge and skills in integrative systemic therapy and your accomplishments consistent with the program's mission, goals, and outcomes.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

Students must follow The Graduate School's Satisfactory Academic Progress Policies. In addition, students must also be in good clinical standing at training sites and must complete all fieldwork requirements. Students who are found to not meet satisfactory academic or clinical progress will be placed on probation and begin the coaching and remediation process.

Academic Probation by the Graduate School and Program

The Graduate School's academic probation policies can be found here ([Academic Probation Policies](#)). Students whose GPA remains below 3.0 for two consecutive quarters in the program over Fall, Winter, or Spring will be placed on academic probation by The Graduate School. Students with more than three (3) Incomplete (Y) or InProgress grades (K) are placed on academic probation.

Although The Graduate School excludes the summer quarter from the Academic Probation Requirement, The MSMFT Program requires students to maintain satisfactory academic progress in all quarters. Therefore, students whose GPA falls below 3.0 or has 4 or more incomplete grades (K and or Y grades) are subject to the following: Students must meet with their advisor or otherwise designated faculty member immediately to create a plan to remediate the deficiency. Any Clinical Training efforts might be paused and suspended until the academic deficiency is remediated.

Online students must meet with their student success advisor to create an updated curriculum plan. Once the deficit has been remediated the student may return to their Clinical Training Placement.



A student will be placed on academic probation if any of the following conditions exist.

- Having a cumulative GPA lower than 3.00
- Receiving a third C grade in the program
- Receiving a 4th incomplete grade in the program
- Breaking the NU or COAMFTE Student Code of Conduct
- Placement, Site or Clinical Difficulties

Suspension of clinical privileges or site placement

When a student meets the criteria for probation, they will meet with their advisor to create a plan and a timetable for the student to re-establish satisfactory academic standing. The student will then meet with the Department Chair who will confirm the student status and review the plan. The Chair will then put the probationary status in writing, and this document will be signed by the Chair, the advisor, and the student before it is placed in the student's academic file.

Failure to comply with the plan will result in a review of the students' progress in the program by the core faculty. The core faculty can recommend a revision to the plan and extend the probation or request that the student withdraw from the program. If a student declines the request to withdraw from the program, they will be dismissed from the program. A student has the right to file grievance if they believe that the dismissal is unjustified.

Professional Attire and Presentation

The Family Institute's dress code contained in the ***Clinical Policies and Procedures Manual*** states,

"Our respect for clients is shown through our professional attire as well as in our professional behavior in all our interactions with them. Being prepared in all respects for client meetings demonstrates our serious attitudes toward therapeutic work and may help encourage clients to reflect on and take the risk of participating in the change process more deeply. While we understand shifting cultural and generational views of formality in the workplace and the impact of the seasons, we ask that therapists dress in appropriate work attire that reflects modesty, consideration for others, and self-regard. Working with children in play therapy may require some adjustment to the usual dress, but please approach all your clinical activity with this level of thoughtfulness. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please check with your academic advisor. Students are expected to adhere to that dress code when in the presence of clients"

In addition, when students are on campus or visiting campus for immersions, students are expected to be mindful of the fact that TFI buildings are professional settings with clients, visitors, and employees being present. Student attire, appearance, and demeanor as trainees should reflect the professional nature of these settings.

Practice Outside of Clinical Placement Sites

It is prohibited for a student to practice Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) or represent themselves as therapists, counselors, mental health clinicians, pre-clinicians, clinicians in training, or any other term which hold the same meaning **outside of the approved practicum/internships placement in which they are placed.**



Students **may not** provide treatment or therapy with clients other than those seen in the Family Institute's Bette D. Harris Clinic (on-ground) or at the practicum site at which they are placed (online) unless they hold a mental health license or its equivalent in the case of a student practicing remotely in a country where licensing does not exist, and practice within its requirements.

If a licensed student is engaged in practice externally to The Family Institute during their time in the program, they will be asked to provide documentation of their qualifications to do so. In the conduct of their external practice, they may not represent themselves as an MFT or as a student in the program. For example, students with an external practice may not mention their student status in the MSMFT program in any of their marketing materials. Further, they are not allowed to discuss the cases of their external practice in the context of the program's supervision or courses.

Similar rules and expectations apply to students who are engaged in the provision of any form of consulting or coaching. These students are expected to hold the appropriate credentials and may be asked by the program to provide documentation of them. In the conduct of their consulting or coaching, these students may not represent themselves as an MFT or as a student in the program. They are not allowed to discuss the cases of their external practice in the context of the program's supervision or courses. And, of course, students are not allowed to discuss the cases of the TFI clinic or their site placement in any other professional or personal context.

Guidelines for Using Social Media

Program leadership understands that the use of social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, or TikTok can enhance communication or serve additional purposes for graduate students while they are enrolled in the Program. The fact that the MSMFT is a clinical training program, however, necessitates that careful thought be given to what is conveyed on these platforms. The following ethical considerations and guidelines should be used when using social media, in addition to referencing AAMFT Code of Ethics.

A. Ethical Considerations

1. Confidentiality: Students should understand that it is their primary obligation to protect client confidentiality, and they understand that this means they must also protect confidential information stored in any medium.
2. MSMFT students are prohibited from making connections with clients on social media of any kind.
3. Multiple Relationships: Practitioners refrain from entering multiple relationships when these relationships could reasonably be expected to impair objectivity, competency, or effectiveness in performing clinical functions or if they pose any risk of exploitation or harm to those with whom we enter into these relationships. Since connecting with clients on social networks may potentially compromise client confidentiality or may create multiple relationships with people with whom we have already established a professional relationship.
4. MSMFT students are prohibited from discussing confidential information on listservs or status updates on their social networking profiles.
5. MSMFT students are required to be aware of the implications of discussing professional and general clinical issues within their social networks in Tweets, status updates, and blog posts. They must exercise



caution with any messages as they understand that these messages may be read by wide networks of non- professionals. Practitioners are aware that even masked data may provide enough detail to potentially identify a client. Practitioners understand that messages posted on personal and professional networks may be archived and seen by other parties to whom they are not authorized to release confidential information, and they adjust their behavior accordingly.

6. MSMFT students must accurately represent their professional status on social media and other online platforms. Students may not misrepresent themselves as licensed clinicians, therapists, or otherwise imply that they are authorized to practice independently.
7. Students may not use their status as an MSMFT student or clinical trainee to offer professional advice, counseling, or other clinical services through social media or other public online platforms. Students should clearly distinguish educational or personal content from professional clinical practice and must comply with applicable ethical and professional standards.

B. Personal vs. Professional behavior on the web for practitioners:

- a. When communicating with fellow students, remember that first and foremost, they are your colleagues and in a professional relationship with you.
- b. At all times, remember, you are representing the field of couple and family therapy, and the MSMFT Program. Consider the impact of what you post in public forums.
- c. Always consider first the potential impact/influence on individual relationships and the larger cohort.
- d. Before posting, reflect on what your intention is for posting something.
- e. Before posting, consider the appropriate tone of your post.
- f. While it may feel like a private space, in fact social media is a public space. Your posts follow you.
- g. Know the professional code of ethics, particularly as applied to social media and integrate how ethics relates to professional conduct online.
- h. Be mindful that social media activity can blur the boundaries between personal and professional lives and consider the potential impact of these activities on professional relationships.

Students are expected to adhere to all applicable ethical and professional standards in their online behavior and use of social media. This includes exercising good judgment and taking care when creating, sharing, or posting content and messages on any social media platform.

The Program does not routinely monitor students' social media activity. However, if the Program becomes aware of online activity that may raise ethical or professional concerns, students are expected to engage openly in discussion with the Program and reflect on how their online presentation aligns with professional standards. When appropriate, students may also be expected to take immediate steps to remove or modify photos, posts, or other content that does not comply with the Program's ethical or professional standards.

Northwestern University Tuition

Tuition for the MSMFT program is set by The Graduate School at Northwestern University. Tuition for the 2026-2027 Academic Year has been set by Northwestern University and rates can be accessed at: [TGS Tuition](#)



Experiential Exercises in the Program

Participating in experiential exercises is an essential aspect of the program, providing students with exposure to potential clinical situations and opportunities to develop clinical expertise. One goal for experiential exercises is for students to develop the ability to manage distress, since clients have the potential to “trigger” us unexpectedly and in many ways. We recognize that these exercises have the potential to elicit difficult memories and feelings associated with individual sensitivities.

While we strive to provide a safe and supportive environment for all students, we encourage collaboration between students and their professors. If, at any point during an experiential exercise, a student feels unable to participate, they are free to opt out of the exercise or excuse themselves from class. Students who opt out of an exercise must complete an alternate assignment or experience at the discretion of the instructor.

If accommodation is necessary, students should discuss these needs with their professors and advisors in advance. We prioritize the emotional wellbeing of our students and are committed to creating a learning environment that is both challenging and supportive. We will reach out to students individually if we feel they are consistently unable to manage their emotional experiences surrounding certain topics and recommend outside support, and/or time away from the program to manage self-care. We encourage students to talk directly to their advisors and seek assistance with a mental health professional to address these challenges. By working together, we can ensure that students are able to fully engage in their coursework while feeling safe and empowered in their experiential learning.

Program Time Commitment Requirements

On-Campus branch:

- Courses throughout the program for the on-campus branch are primarily held on Wednesdays and Thursdays, but on occasion courses may require availability on other days of the week.
- On rare occasions, a class may be re-scheduled, and students are generally expected to prioritize classes over their other commitments.
- PCS supervision takes place in person, once a week for three hours on Wednesday afternoons; individual or clinical supervision is scheduled weekly at times arranged with the individual or clinical supervisor. Up to 2 students may be seen in individual/clinical supervision.
- Students are required to schedule time to see their clinical cases and keep appropriate records of their sessions. We recommend planning to conduct clinical work a couple of evenings a week and at least one day over the weekend.
- Please note that the coursework, clinical practice, supervision, and various program meetings comprise a full-time commitment.
- Students are required to attend quarterly on-campus program meetings. Internship (first year) students will meet in the 4th week of the quarter on Wednesday at 11:30am. Advanced Internship (second year) students will meet in the 2nd week of the quarter on Wednesday at 11:30am.



Online branch:

- The synchronous live sessions for all courses are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays between the hours of 10am CST and 8:30pm CST. Students are expected to adjust their schedules to prioritize live session attendance.
- PCS supervision takes place in the CANVAS Zoom Platform, once a week for three hours on the day scheduled by your program; individual or clinical supervision is scheduled weekly at times arranged with the individual or clinical supervisor. Up to 2 students may be seen in individual/clinical supervision.
- Any other program requirements, including the scheduling of clinical cases, external supervision, and site meetings must be scheduled outside of Tuesdays and Thursdays to ensure availability for live class sessions.
- Students are required to attend quarterly online program meetings. Meetings are held in the 3rd week of the quarter. Students who are pre-internship or enrolled in Internship will meet on Tuesday from 9am CST. Advanced Internship students will meet on Thursday at 3pm CST.
- Students must participate in **one** immersion event, held of the course of three days in the Chicago area.

Time Limits for Completion of Degree

Students must complete all the requirements for the master's degree within five years of the date of their initial registration in The Graduate School, which falls on the last day of the 20th quarter. Students who do not complete their degree within five years and were not previously granted deadline extensions related to LOA's will not be considered in good academic standing and will be placed on academic probation.

Degree Completion Requirements

The following is a summary of the requirements for graduation in the MSMFT Program. It is the responsibility of each student to monitor the progress of completing the following requirements for graduation.

- Complete **25 Units** of Study and the Professional Identity Seminar while maintaining a GPA above 3.0.
- Participate in all assigned supervision. Students are required to complete a minimum of 200 hours of supervision in the program, though they are also required to comply with the specific attendance policies for all required and assigned supervision.
- Accumulate 400 hours of direct client contact. Of the 400 hours, 100 must be relational hours (i.e., conducted with couples or families). The MSFT Program will work with students' clinical sites to ensure 400 client contact hours within the course of the program. A student's progress in training, including availability and ability to engage clients, will be evaluated twice yearly, and more often, if indicated, by the student's site supervisor, and quarterly by their group supervisor (PCS). If it is determined that the student has been given sufficient referrals but has not been able to engage or maintain cases and therefore cannot accumulate the expected number of clinical hours, the group supervisor will discuss the length of the time that the student may need to fulfill the clinical requirement with the Program Chair. If approved by the Program Chair, the student may extend their time in the program for one additional quarter by registering for one unit of internship at regular University fees.



- Demonstrate ability as a marriage and family therapist to the satisfaction of the faculty. This requires each student to document supervised clinical practice monthly and receive satisfactory feedback on formal evaluation measures completed by supervisors. Students are required to complete at least 2 live sessions per year for a total of 4 live interviews, though the internship courses may include an expectation of a live interview each quarter which would bring the total lives expected to 6. In support of each of these live sessions, students are required to do a case write-up. Students are required to video record their sessions regularly and are encouraged to bring cases frequently for live supervision. At least 50% of supervision must be based on observable, raw data (live and video). Each student must accrue at least 100 hours of supervision based on live and video.
- Complete Capstone Project.
- Complete all program evaluations: Self-evaluations, Supervisor Evaluations, Program Evaluations.
- Complete *Application for Degree Form* and *Master's Degree Completion Form* in [GSP](#)

Degree Conferral | Graduation Term

Students must complete all requirements for the master's degree within five years of the date of their initial registration in The Graduate School. Beyond five years, students will be considered not in good academic standing and placed on Academic Probation. Only rarely, under extenuating circumstances, will students be granted permission to continue beyond five years.

Students must complete the above no later than the deadline for degree conferral in a given year; to participate in the Convocation Ceremony in June, you must have completed all aspects of the program by the Summer Conferral Date that occurs in late August.

Marriage and Family Therapy Honor Society

Delta Kappa International provides marriage and family therapy professionals with an ongoing scholarly forum to exchange ideas that advance research, theory, and clinical practice. MSMFT students are eligible for the honor society if they have a cumulative GPA of 3.75 or higher and have completed the equivalent of 12 semester hours (4 classes) in the program. To apply, students must complete the application form and pay a one-time membership fee to Delta Kappa. The Program does not charge any dues in addition to this one-time fee. Enrollment takes place twice per year, with an induction ceremony held for each enrollment period. Eligible students are notified by email and given direct access to the Delta Kappa website to enroll.

Academic Distinction

Academic Distinction is a prestigious honor awarded to students who achieve a 4.0 GPA at the time of graduation. The honor is awarded to students with the highest academic records within their graduating cohort. Academic Distinction will be noted in the commencement program.

Licensure Documentation Requests

Graduating Students and Alumni may request assistance from the program with completing state licensure



forms and documentation related to their professional licensure.

To request completion of licensure paperwork, alumni must submit the program's licensure documentation request form and upload the form(s) requiring completion, along with any required supporting documents. The program will typically complete and return the requested forms within **three weeks**, excluding holidays. Completed forms will be returned to the graduate by email or mail, as appropriate.

Alumni are responsible for submitting their completed licensure applications and documentation to the appropriate state licensing board and for ensuring that all licensure requirements are met.

F. RESEARCH, CAPSTONE PROJECT AND THESIS OPTION

Research in Marriage and Family Therapy

Our clinically focused program is grounded in research, with research-informed practice integrated throughout the curriculum and clinical training. All students complete a course in marriage and family therapy research that introduces research methods and the application of research to clinical practice.

Students interested in gaining additional research experience, particularly those planning to pursue doctoral study or research careers—may participate in an optional research seminar and, if selected, work in a research lab and complete a research thesis. Students should notify their academic advisor of their interest in research as early as possible.

Research lab opportunities are available with faculty and staff at The Family Institute and in other departments across Northwestern University. The Family Institute conducts formal recruitment for research labs twice each year, in the fall and spring, for students interested in assisting with research or scholarly projects. Placement is competitive and cannot be guaranteed.

Students accepted into a research lab typically commit three to six hours per week. Some students also complete a research thesis using data from their assigned lab (see the **Thesis Option** section for additional information).

Capstone Project

The program's Capstone Project satisfies a key requirement of the Commission on Accreditation of Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE), as completion of it demonstrates that students have integrated and consolidated their learning in a manner consistent with the program's mission, goals and outcomes. The program's Capstone Project is completed over 2 quarters (495-0/6 and 496-0/6).

The Capstone Project course consists of three components:

1. The completion of a case study process that culminates in an IST Case Conceptualization Paper;
2. A formal case presentation; and
3. The submission of six video segments of therapy session(s) conducted by the student that demonstrate



proficiency with particular skills in the practice of Integrative Systemic Therapy.

The project demonstrates the student's ability to accomplish systemic integration in their practice and, thereby, their readiness to continue their professional growth through the continual integration of new learnings.

Online students must have completed half of their Direct Clinical Contact Hours (200 hours or more) and half of their Relational Hours (50 hours or more) to enroll in the Capstone courses. It will be the student's responsibility to pay tuition and fees associated with additional quarters required to complete their Capstone courses or other program requirements.

Thesis Option | Overview and Requirements

A thesis project can be completed by students in the MSMFT program. It is **optional and additional** for students and if completed and accepted, replaces the IST Case Conceptualization Paper requirement of the capstone portfolio; however, **students who complete a thesis are still required to complete the Capstone Case Presentation and IST Skills Video Samples portions of the capstone project.**

The requirement for a thesis project is that it is a first-authored and journal-submission-ready manuscript, typically a quantitative or qualitative empirical study, but could be another form of scholarly work (e.g., systematic review, theoretical paper). Of note, it is not required for a student to submit their thesis to a journal; the only requirement is that the thesis is journal-submission-ready, as determined by the student's thesis advisor and thesis committee.

Students who have their completed thesis accepted will have their thesis project listed on their final official transcript.

The student must have an approved thesis advisor (approved by the research committee) to guide and mentor them through the process of completing their thesis. A thesis advisor is a scholar or researcher who is qualified to advise on a thesis as approved by the research committee and who agrees to do so, knowing the requirements and process. They do not need to be core faculty or connected with the MSMFT program directly but must be associated with TFI and/or NU. Students do not need to be working in a research lab to complete a thesis. Students need to recognize that thesis advisors, even if the student is working in their research lab, are providing an additional and unpaid opportunity for students to complete a thesis project and if a student asks a potential advisor, they may decline. If a student wishes to do a thesis but cannot find an advisor, they will not be able to do a thesis project.

We also strongly encourage thesis projects that do not require a student to conduct their own data collection. Collecting data for a thesis project requires substantially more time for both the student and the thesis advisor. Typically, students use secondary data (or data in process of being collected) from a research lab or other easily accessible source (e.g., public domain dataset). Students who wish to collect new data for a thesis project and who have a thesis advisor who is aware of and agrees to the process must follow an earlier timeline for submitting the application form and the thesis proposal given the additional work including the IRB application/approval process and procedures of recruitment and data collection.



Thesis Timeline and Process (Optional)

Students who are interested in conducting a thesis are required in their first year (on-ground), first four quarters (online full-time), or first eight quarters (online part-time) to find a thesis advisor and collaborate with them on devising a thesis project. This is commonly, but not exclusively, done in research labs where students are working as emerging scholars. Students must share their interest and submit a plan to complete a thesis via the Thesis Application Form to their branch's research coordinator for approval. For on-campus students, this form must be completed and submitted no later than the beginning of their 2nd year in the program, i.e., no later than the start of their second Fall Quarter. For full-time online students, this must occur no later than the beginning of their fifth quarter in the program; for part-time online students, no later than the beginning of their eighth quarter. For students who are collecting data as a part of their project, the application form is required to be submitted 2 months prior to what is described above, according to the students' branch and time in the program. Note: Students can submit their thesis application form any time prior to their relevant deadline.

After this plan is approved by the branch research coordinator, students will work with their thesis advisors to submit a thesis proposal (typically the Introduction and Methods sections). For students who are using pre-existing data, the thesis proposal is due by the end of their first month of their second to last quarter of the program to the appropriate branch's research coordinator for approval. This date is Jan 31 for on-ground students; for online students, this date is either Jan 31, March 31, June 30, or September 30, depending on each student's expected date of graduation. For students who are collecting their own data or needing to submit an IRB application for use of data previously collected, the proposal would be due by the end of the second to last month of their third to last quarter of the program. This would be the end of November (for on-ground students) and then either end of November, end of February, end of April, or end of July for online students, depending on their expected date of graduation. Note: Students can submit their thesis proposal any time prior to their relevant deadline.

Once the proposal is approved, students may proceed with the remaining steps and sections of their thesis, which include conducting data analyses (as relevant), writing results and discussion, and formatting the thesis according to current APA style. Of note, for students collecting their own data, the aforementioned steps would also include and be preceded by completing and submitting an IRB application, recruiting participants, and collecting their data. A completed thesis paper needs to be approved by their advisor and submitted to the research committee of the program no later than five weeks prior to graduation (e.g., approximately May 1 for on-ground students; for online students, five weeks prior to the final day of classes of their final quarter in the program).

The thesis would be either approved or returned for revisions and the final version would be due two weeks prior to graduation (e.g., approximately May 21 for on ground; for online students, two weeks prior to the final day of classes of their final quarter in the program).

If any of these deadlines are not met, students may not be permitted to continue with their thesis project as decided by the MSMFT Research Committee and will then be required to complete the Narrative Capstone paper. Possible adjustments to these deadlines must be approved by the thesis advisor and MSMFT Research Committee. There will be no adjustments to the final thesis submission deadlines.

Students who are completing a thesis need to contact their branch's administrator to receive instructions on



completing the Master's Degree Completion Form for approval by The Graduate School. This is where they will input the title of their thesis to be included on their official final transcript. This typically occurs approximately one month prior to graduation.

A. An overview of the timeline for successful completion of a thesis **(using secondary data and no IRB application)** is depicted in the table below:

On-Campus Students	Online Students
Step 1: During the first year of the program, identify a thesis advisor and collaborate on devising a thesis project.	Step 1: During the first 4 quarters (full-time) or first 8 quarters (part-time) of the program, identify a thesis advisor and collaborate on devising a thesis project.
Step 2: Submit the <u>Thesis Application Form</u> to the branch research coordinator with the plan to complete a thesis as soon as possible, but no later than the start of the fall quarter of the 2nd year . Your plan will be reviewed and a decision (or request for more information and/or a meeting) will be emailed to you within two weeks after submitting the form.	Step 2: Submit the <u>Thesis Application Form</u> to the branch research coordinator with the plan to complete a thesis as soon as possible, but no later than the start of the 5th quarter (for full-time students) or 8th quarter (for part-time students) . Your plan will be reviewed and a decision (or request for more information and/or a meeting) will be emailed to you within two weeks after submitting the form.
Step 3: Submit a thesis proposal—typically the Introduction & Methods sections—to the branch research coordinator for approval no later than the last day of the first month of the penultimate quarter in the program (January 31) .	Step 3: Submit a thesis proposal, typically the Introduction & Methods sections—to the branch research coordinator for approval no later than the last day of the first month of their penultimate quarter of the program , which is: Jan 31 , for expected graduation in Spring Mar 31 , for expected graduation in Summer June 30 , for expected graduation Fall September 30 , for expected graduation Winter
Step 4: Once the thesis proposal is approved, proceed with completing the thesis, including data analysis (as relevant), writing of results and discussion, and formatting the paper according to current APA style. The completed thesis must be approved by the advisor and then submitted to the research committee approximately five weeks prior to graduation (e.g., May 1) .	Step 4: Once the thesis proposal is approved, proceed with completing the thesis, including data analysis (as relevant), writing of results and discussion, and formatting the paper according to current APA style. The completed thesis must be approved by the advisor and then submitted to the research committee approximately five weeks prior to graduation (e.g., five weeks prior to the final day of classes of their final quarter in the program) .
Step 5: Students will coordinate with the branch administrator to complete the Master's Degree Completion Form.	Step 5: Students will coordinate with the branch administrator to complete the Master's Degree Completion Form.



Step 6: The thesis is either approved or will be returned for revision. If revisions are required, the final version of the thesis is due two weeks prior to graduation (e.g., approximately May 21). If the thesis requires more extensive revisions than possible prior to graduation (as determined by any person involved), the student will need to complete the IST Case Conceptualization Paper.	Step 6: The thesis is either approved or will be returned for revision. If revisions are required, the final version of the thesis is due two weeks prior to graduation (e.g., two weeks prior to the final day of classes of their final quarter in the program). If the thesis requires more extensive revisions than possible prior to graduation (as determined by any person involved), the student will need to complete the IST Case Conceptualization Paper
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- b. An overview of the timeline for successful completion of a thesis **with a student collecting data and/or needing to complete an IRB application for data use** is depicted in the table below:

On-Campus Students	Online Students
Step 1: During the first year of the program, identify a thesis advisor and collaborate on devising a thesis project.	Step 1: During the first 4 quarters (full-time) or first 8 quarters (part-time) of the program, identify a thesis advisor and collaborate on devising a thesis project.
Step 2: Submit the <i>Thesis Application Form</i> to the branch research coordinator with the plan to complete a thesis as soon as possible, but no later than end of July in the 1st year, Summer Quarter. Your plan will be reviewed and a decision (or request for more information and/or a meeting) will be emailed to you within two weeks after submitting the form.	Step 2: Submit the <i>Thesis Application Form</i> to the branch research coordinator with the plan to complete a thesis as soon as possible, but no later than the middle of the 4th quarter (for full-time students) or 7th quarter (for part-time students). Your plan will be reviewed and a decision (or request for more information and/or a meeting) will be emailed to you within two weeks after submitting the form.
Step 3: Submit a thesis proposal, typically the Introduction & Methods sections—to the branch research coordinator for approval no later than the end of November during their second Fall Quarter of the program (Nov 30).	Step 3: Submit a thesis proposal—typically the Introduction & Methods sections—to the branch research coordinator for approval no later than the end of the second to last month of their third to last quarter of the program, which is: a. Nov 30, for Spring (June) Graduation b. Feb 28, for Summer (August) Graduation c. April 30, for Fall (December) Graduation d. July 31, for Winter (March) Graduation



Step 4: Once the thesis proposal is approved, proceed with completing the thesis, which may include IRB application, participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis, writing of results and discussion, and formatting the paper according to current APA style. The completed thesis must be approved by the advisor and then submitted to the research committee approximately five weeks prior to graduation (e.g., May 1) .	Step 4: Once the thesis proposal is approved, proceed with completing the thesis, which may include IRB application, participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis, writing of results and discussion, and formatting the paper according to current APA style. The completed thesis must be approved by the advisor and then submitted to the research committee approximately five weeks prior to graduation (e.g., five weeks prior to the final day of classes of their final quarter in the program) .
Step 5: Students will coordinate with the branch administrator to complete the Master's Degree Completion Form .	Step 5: Students will coordinate with the branch administrator to complete the Master's Degree Completion Form .
Step 6: The thesis is either approved or will be returned for revision. If revisions are required, the final version of the thesis is due two weeks prior to graduation (e.g., approximately May 21) . If the thesis requires more extensive revisions than possible prior to graduation (as determined by any person involved), the student will need to complete the IST Case Conceptualization Paper	Step 6: The thesis is either approved or will be returned for revision. If revisions are required, the final version of the thesis is due two weeks prior to graduation (e.g., two weeks prior to the final day of classes of their final quarter in the program) . If the thesis requires more extensive revisions than possible prior to graduation (as determined by any person involved), the student will need to complete the IST Case Conceptualization Paper.

G. STUDENT PROTECTION AND RIGHTS

Student Privacy (FERPA)

All personal student and applicant information is handled with confidentiality. The MSMFT Program follows the University's policy concerning student rights of access to personal education records in compliance with the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#). No information from this file is released without the student's permission unless mandated by a court order.

Equal Opportunity and Anti-Harassment Policy

The MSMFT Program and The Family Institute provides equal opportunity for all students to have access to staff, services and learning opportunities at the Institute regardless of gender, race, religion, age, handicapping condition, ethnic background or sexual orientation. If a student believes that the program is in violation of Equal Opportunity and/or if a student believes that they are a victim of harassment, we request that they utilize our departmental grievance procedures (see Grievances). If a student is not satisfied with the outcomes of our departmental grievance procedures, Northwestern University provides the following resources & procedures:

- [Discrimination Complaint Procedures](#)
- [Disability Grievances for Students](#)
- [Sexual Harassment Prevention](#)



Our policy on sexual harassment is clear and explicit; sexual harassment in any form is unacceptable, and it will not be tolerated at Northwestern. Further, the University prohibits retaliation against any individual who makes a good-faith complaint of sexual harassment or who participates in a sexual harassment investigation.

The University is committed legally and philosophically not only to dealing firmly with all instances of sexual harassment brought to its attention, but also to developing awareness and an environment that discourages such behavior.

We encourage you to review the University's policies and to take advantage of the numerous resources on campus to prevent and address sexual harassment. Through these efforts, we can achieve our goal of fostering a respectful, harassment-free environment that furthers the educational and professional endeavors of all members of the Northwestern community. Further information can be found here: [Northwestern Harassment Policies](#)

Leave of Absence (LOA)

A leave of absence is a temporary separation from the university and program. Students wishing to take a leave of absence for any reason should carefully review [The Graduate School's Leave of Absence Policy](#). Students should also contact their Student Support Advisor and Academic Advisors to determine how leaves of absence may affect their curriculum plans. All medical leaves of absence documentation and registration paperwork must be submitted to the Student and Alumni Affairs Manager for processing.

Special care must be taken about leaves of absence from clinical training sites. In general, leaves of absence from clinical training are discouraged and should only be considered only in emergency circumstances (e.g., personal or family health issues or crises). A leave of absence impacts student fieldwork assignments. A plan for completion of fieldwork requirements will be made with the student's clinical training personnel, the Assistant Program Director, and the Department Chair. When a leave of absence is requested, students are expected to work with their sites to provide continuity of care for clients and discuss the plan with their respective clinical training director.

Requesting a General or Parental Leave of Absence

Students requesting a leave of absence must:

1. Meet with their Faculty or Academic Advisor to discuss the need for a leave and their plans for returning to the program.
2. Explain the circumstances requiring the leave.
3. Complete the required **Petition for Absence** through The Graduate School (TGS) Forms in GSP.
4. Provide any required documentation related to a medical or family matter.

A leave must be for at least one quarter and may not exceed one calendar year without additional approval. Requests to extend a leave beyond one year will be reviewed based on the student's circumstances, academic record, and plans for returning to the program.



Requesting a Medical Leave of Absence (MLOA)

A student who must temporarily interrupt their progress toward degree completion due to a physical or mental health condition may request a Medical Leave of Absence (MLOA). Students enrolled in the Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy (MSMFT) program must request a Medical Leave of Absence through their Faculty Advisor and Program Director. The purpose of an MLOA is to provide students with time away from academic and clinical training responsibilities to address health-related concerns while maintaining eligibility to return to the program at a later date. Requests for Medical Leave of Absence are reviewed on an individualized, case-by-case basis and require supporting documentation from a licensed healthcare provider.

Returning from Leave of Absence

Students should work with their faculty or academic advisor and their SSA to plan their return to the program. Because practicum and internship placements depend on program scheduling, clinical site availability, and accreditation requirements, a specific practicum or internship placement cannot be guaranteed upon return.

Students who fail to petition for reinstatement from general leave at the end of their approved leave period, or who do not request or are not approved for an extension by the originally approved leave of absence end date, will be discontinued from The Graduate School and need to apply for re-entry in order to return.

Time to Complete the Degree

Students must complete all degree requirements within Northwestern University's maximum degree completion timeframe of **five years**, unless an extension is approved through the appropriate university process, such as an approved LOA from the program.

A leave also does not automatically extend other academic deadlines, including deadlines for resolving incomplete grades, unless an exception is specifically approved by the University. Family Leave may be subject to different provisions.

For complete information about leaves of absence, including eligibility, procedures, and university requirements, students should consult [The Graduate School LOA Policy](#).

Student Retention, Remediation, and Exclusion

Students enter the Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy (MSMFT) program with the goal of becoming competent and ethical marriage and family therapists. Throughout the program, students are expected to develop the clinical, interpersonal, personal, and professional competencies necessary for entry-level practice. While many students successfully achieve these competencies, some may determine that the profession is not the right fit, and others may require additional support to meet program expectations.

Consistent with the 2026 AAMFT Code of Ethics, including Standards 4.4 (Oversight of Supervisee Competence) and 4.5 (Oversight of Quality of Care Provided by Supervisees), the MSMFT faculty have an ethical responsibility to evaluate student competence and ensure that graduates are prepared to provide safe, effective, and ethical care.

Because marriage and family therapists serve vulnerable individuals, couples, and families, the program is



committed to supporting student development while protecting the public. When concerns arise regarding a student's clinical, academic, interpersonal, or professional performance, the faculty will work collaboratively with the student to develop a plan for improvement. If a student is unable to demonstrate the competencies required for entry-level practice despite appropriate support and remediation, the program may determine that continuation in the program is not appropriate.

The program prioritizes student learning, development, and success through the following processes:

Clinical and Professional Skills

Students enrolled in the MSMFT program must demonstrate a basic set of core clinical and professional skills, including attitudes and values, which represent the baseline competencies within the profession. It is expected that students will further develop these competencies as they progress through the program by integrating all feedback they receive.

The core skills, attitudes and values are as follows:

I. Clinical Skills:

1. Students are expected to develop skills and knowledge in the MFT Developmental Competency Components (DCCs) and demonstrate in their capstone that they have acquired basic skills associated with Integrative Systemic Therapy.
2. Students must make satisfactory progress toward the accumulation of required clinical hours.
3. Students complete their requirements within the Bette D. Harris Child and Family Clinic (The Clinic) for on- campus students or their local clinical placement site for online students. To be in good standing in the program, a student must follow clinic or site policy and remain in good standing with The Clinic or their site. Completing all required paperwork within 24 hours of seeing a client is expected and required of trainees in the Clinic. Students unable to stay current with clinical paperwork may lose clinic privileges for a week at a time until they have shown that they are caught up. Permanent revocation of clinic privileges will result in dismissal from the program. See The Clinical Policies and Procedures Manual.
4. Students are expected to adhere to the Ethical Code of AAMFT and the laws of the State of Illinois or any laws of state in which the student is conducting clinical work and the United States.
5. Students are expected to maintain ethical and legal obligations to clients as outlined in any state in which the student conducts clinical work law and the AAMFT code of ethics. Especially important is the need to preserve confidentiality, including the client's identity. Confidentiality can be broken in many ways including careless talk in public places, leaving confidential notes in office or inappropriate places, and thoughtless conversation. Confidentiality is so important that the program has special consequences for violating it. For the first offense, students will receive a warning and will be asked to meet with their advisor to discuss the violation.



6. The advisor will meet with the faculty to create a fitting consequence. These may include being asked to write a paper on the importance of laws surrounding confidentiality, or the loss of one letter grade in their internship course. Repeat violations will require the development of a remediation plan that includes probationary status in The Program, or in the more egregious cases, dismissal from the Program.
7. Students are expected to demonstrate enough emotional strength and stability to avoid negative effects on their clients or fellow students as judged by faculty or clinic/community supervisors.
8. Students are expected to manage personal problems so that they do not interfere with their studies or clinical training. Students are encouraged to engage in their own therapy to manage any issues that may negatively impact their clinical work.

II. Professional Skills:

1. *Interpersonal skills:* The student demonstrates the ability to listen to and to be empathic with others, to form healthy relationships, and to interact respectfully with others despite differing experiences, values, backgrounds, or points of view.
2. *Expressive skills:* The student demonstrates the ability to appropriately communicate ideas and feelings in oral, non-verbal, and written forms.
3. *Cognitive skills:* The student demonstrates appropriate problem-solving ability, critical thinking skills, organized reasoning, intellectual curiosity, and flexibility.
4. *Affective skills:* The student demonstrates an ability to tolerate and manage internal states, uncertainty, and interpersonal conflict.
5. *Reflective skills:* The student demonstrates the ability to examine and consider personal motives, attitudes, behaviors, and their effect on others. A reflective skill of special relevance is the ability to be open to and to integrate feedback.
6. *Personal skills:* The student demonstrates a strong work ethic, motivation to learn, personal organization, punctuality, and appropriate self-presentation.
7. *Attitudes:* The student demonstrates the desire to help and advocate for others, to be open to new ideas, and to act with honesty and concern for ethics.



Student Assessment | Coaching and Remediation

The MSMFT Program is committed to supporting students' academic, clinical, and professional development. When concerns arise regarding a student's academic performance, clinical skills, professional conduct, or progress toward program competencies, the Program may provide coaching, additional support, or set a formal remediation plan. These processes are intended to clearly identify areas of concern, establish expectations and goals, provide appropriate support and resources, and monitor the student's progress toward successful completion of the program and readiness for professional practice.

Step 1 | Student Assessment -> Concern Identified

Faculty, supervisors, and administrators continually assess each student's readiness to progress throughout study in the program. When a concern is identified, the faculty member, supervisor, or administrator who observed the issue will discuss it directly with the student and work collaboratively to establish expectations, goals, and strategies for improvement. The First level of advising and coaching will be advisory and will be facilitative of change. Feedback to students about their conduct and/or dispositions will be developmental in focus and linked to education and training.

If the concern persists, is not adequately addressed by the student, or reflects a pattern of behavior, the student's academic advisor will be notified, and the concern will be documented using the **MSMFT Program Student Incident Report**. If the concern is serious or is not resolved through initial feedback, coaching, goal setting, and guidance, the student will proceed to **Step 2 of the remediation process**.

Examples of behaviors that may warrant intervention include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to maintain client confidentiality
- Habitual tardiness or absenteeism from classes, supervision, or clinical sessions
- Failure to respond to communications from faculty, supervisors, advisors, or program staff
- Poor academic performance
- Failure to maintain clinical placement, clinical case load, or supervisory placement
- Incomplete or untimely documentation and other required program responsibilities
- Dismissing or failing to incorporate feedback from faculty or supervisors
- Disrespectful, disruptive, or unprofessional behavior toward others
- Poor professional boundaries with clients or colleagues
- Violations of the AAMFT Code of Ethics, applicable laws, or state regulations
- Other academic, clinical, or professional behaviors that may negatively impact the student, clients, the Program, or the student's ability to successfully meet program requirements and professional standards.

The MSMFT Program is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and inclusive learning and clinical environment. Bullying, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening behavior will not be tolerated.

Any student whose conduct compromises the safety or well-being of others may be immediately referred to the remediation process and may be subject to additional University or Program action, as appropriate. When the program deems the impact and severity of the situation warrants further review, additional actions may be taken including a probation, temporary suspension from all program related activities (including but not limited to classes, supervision, client contact, interaction with other students, or presence on TFI & NU property).



Step 2 | Departmental Review and Determination

If a concern is not sufficiently resolved through advising and coaching, or if a faculty member, supervisor, or administrator identifies a serious concern, gap, or inappropriate or unprofessional behavior, the following remediation process will apply.

1. Faculty and Department Consultation

- The observing faculty member and advisor discuss the issue with the Department Chair and the Program Core Faculty.
- The core faculty evaluates the situation to formally determine whether it warrants the designation of a “serious concern, gap, or challenge”.

2. Determination Outcomes

- **If classified as a serious concern, gap, or challenge:** The process immediately advances to **Step Three**.
- **If not classified as a serious concern, gap, or challenge, coaching and support will be offered:**
 - The issue remains a general concern area for ongoing development.
 - The student will work on this area with the guidance of their **academic advisor**.
 - The faculty will collaborate to identify alternative growth strategies, which may include:
 - Referrals to university (NU) student resources and services.
 - Recommendations for external support.
 - Suggestions for professional medical or therapeutic interventions, as appropriate.
- The student and advisor will create a timeline to determine next steps in the process. If the student fails to progress, after the set timeline, they will advance to **Step Three**.

Step 3 | Development of Remediation Plan / Goals & Monitoring

If remediation fails at Steps 1 or 2 or the concern is determined to be serious or is not resolved through initial feedback, coaching, goal setting, and guidance, and students who do not satisfactorily reach their goals and complete the assigned tasks by the agreed-upon date will be referred for remediation with their academic advisor.

The initial remediation meeting request will outline:

- The specific concern – Academic, Clinical, or Professional.
- The unmet academic, clinical or professional behavior expectation or MFT Core Competency.
- Expected growth and changes for the student.
- A specific timeframe for behavioral correction.

During the meeting, a remediation contract will be developed detailing the agreed-upon action plan and completion dates, and the student will be placed on academic and/or clinical probation.

If University or legal processes (e.g., Title IX) are involved, the Program may be limited in its ability to provide remediation coaching or share information regarding related complaints, decisions, or outstanding matters.



Step 4 | Review of Student Progress

At the conclusion of the remediation period, the Department Chair, advisor, and other appropriate faculty or supervisors will review the student's progress and determine whether the student has met the requirements outlined in the remediation plan. If the student has met all requirements and satisfactorily addressed the concerns that led to remediation, the remediation process will be considered complete, and the student will continue in the program in good standing or as otherwise determined by the program.

If the student has made meaningful progress but has not fully met the remediation requirements, the program may continue, extend, or revise the remediation plan. A revised plan may include additional requirements, adjusted timelines, increased monitoring, or other supports determined by the program.

If the student does not meet the remediation requirements, does not demonstrate sufficient progress, or continues to present academic, clinical, professional, or ethical concerns, the Department Chair may refer the matter to the MSMFT Core Faculty for review. Core Faculty will meet to determine the next appropriate steps, which may include continued remediation, a recommendation that the student withdraw from the program, or dismissal from the program.

Step 5 | Withdrawal, Dismissal from the Program

If a student does not meet the requirements of the remediation plan, does not make sufficient progress, or presents serious academic, clinical, professional, or ethical concerns, the student will attend a progress review meeting with their advisor and the Department Chair. In serious circumstances, including ethical violations, the program may proceed based on the available evidence and the student's overall progress in the program.

Following the progress review, the Department Chair may refer the matter to the MSMFT Core Faculty for review. Core Faculty will meet to determine the appropriate administrative outcome. The student may be offered the option to **voluntarily withdraw** from the program or may be **formally dismissed** from the program.

If the student does not voluntarily withdraw, the Department Chair will issue a written dismissal letter notifying the student of the decision. Copies of the letter will be sent to the MSMFT Core Faculty, the training clinic, supervisors, if applicable, the Chief Academic Officer of The Family Institute, and the Dean of The Graduate School.



Step 6 | University Appeal

Dismissed students have the opportunity to appeal the program decision through The Graduate School.

The student must submit the appeal in writing to the **Senior Director of Student Services, The Graduate School, within 10 days of the date of the program's final written determination of exclusion.** The student should include any supporting documentation with the appeal. If an appeal is not submitted within the 10-day period, the program's decision becomes final and is not subject to appeal.

The Dean of The Graduate School, or their designee, will review the appeal and may request additional information or meet with the student and/or program. The Dean will generally issue a decision within 30 days of receiving the appeal. If additional time is required, the student and program will be notified in writing. **The Dean's decision is final for program and Graduate School exclusions related to academic progress.**

The University's appeal process is available through [The Graduate School's Appeal Process for Exclusion](#)

Disclosure and Communication

Remediation Chain of Communication Process

****The Family Institute, external clinical sites, and the MSMFT Program reserve the right to temporarily suspend a student who is reported to be in violation of the rules, regulations, or standards of the Program or the AAMFT Code of Ethics until the investigation and/or due process has been completed. This suspension may include participation in enrolled classes, clinical placements, and/or other academic or clinical activities.*

Disclosure of Remediation Status

Information about a student's remediation status will be shared with core faculty and may be shared with other relevant parties, such as supervisors and teaching faculty, to enhance support and collaboration aimed at helping the student achieve their remediation goals. This additional sharing will occur on a case-by-case basis, determined in consultation with the student's academic advisor and the student will be informed of this. The goal is to ensure that those involved can provide effective support while maintaining confidentiality.



Student Initiated Concerns | Grievance Process

In accordance with [University Policy](#) the MFT program is committed to fostering a respectful, fair, and supportive learning environment. Students are encouraged to raise concerns promptly and to seek resolution through open communication whenever possible. This policy explains how students may address interpersonal, academic and clinical concerns, disputes, grievances, and appeals. Most concerns can be resolved informally; when informal resolution is not successful, students may pursue the formal grievance process described below. Students will not be subject to retaliation for raising a concern or participating in this process in good faith.

Grievances and Disputes between and/or Among Students

Overview & Commitment to Direct Communication

The program fosters a professional, collaborative, and respectful learning environment. When interpersonal conflicts arise between students regarding training, discussions, perspectives, and program activities, students are expected to address and resolve these concerns directly and professionally before involving faculty or administration.

Step-by-Step Resolution Process

Step 1: Initial Direct Conversation

- o The aggrieved student(s) must initiate direct communication with the other student(s) to discuss the concern and work toward a mutually acceptable resolution.
 - Faculty or Advisor should not be solicited for involvement at this stage.

Step 2: Follow-Up Conversation

- o If a resolution appears to have been reached but the issue persists, the aggrieved student(s) must make a second direct effort to contact the other student(s) and seek further clarification and resolution.

Step 3: Faculty Advisors and Core Faculty Mediation

- o If the second direct effort fails, or if the other student(s) refuses to engage in the resolution process, the student(s) may consult their respective faculty advisor(s).
- o The advisor(s) will bring the matter to the core faculty. The core faculty may:
 - Provide direct mediation.
 - Refer students to appropriate university or external resources.
 - Step into an advising or formal review role if there has been a breach of program policies, procedures, or ethical standards (e.g., MFT guidelines).

Step 4: Arbitration

- o If faculty-led mediation does not resolve the dispute, all participating parties agree to enter binding arbitration and abide by the final ruling of the Program Chair (or their designee).
- o Students also have access to confidential, informal, and impartial assistance outside of the program's formal administrative structure. The [University Ombudsperson](#) is available to help students navigate concerns, evaluate options, and facilitate communication independently.



Grievances and Disputes | Academic and Clinical

Students are encouraged to address concerns as early as possible. When a student has a dispute or concern involving a faculty member, supervisor, staff member the student should first attempt to resolve the matter directly with the individual(s) involved, when appropriate. Students may consult with their academic advisor or another appropriate program leader for guidance.

If the concern cannot be resolved informally, the student may initiate the formal grievance process described below. The process differs depending on whether the grievance is **academic** or **clinical**.

Academic Grievances

Students who experience an academic or instructional concern are expected to make a good-faith effort to resolve the issue directly with the individual(s) involved. Academic and instructional grievances may include concerns related to course policies, instructional practices, academic decisions, program requirements, classroom interactions, or other academic matters.

If the concern is not resolved, students should follow the escalation process below in order:

1. **Faculty Advisor**
2. **Core Faculty**
3. **Department Chair**

At each step, the student should provide a clear explanation of the concern, the steps already taken to resolve the issue, and the outcome they are seeking.

If a solution is not forthcoming during the escalation process, the academic advisor will discuss the dispute with the individual in question who may suggest a solution or recommend that the student speak to the Department Chair. If unsatisfied with the input of the academic advisor, the student also has the right to request a meeting with the Department Chair.

Once the Department Chair is directly involved, they may suggest a solution or request a meeting with the student and the individual in question. When all other attempts have failed, the Department Chair will determine how to resolve the conflict. If the student is unsatisfied with the solution, they have the right to pursue the grievance process.

If a resolution cannot be reached after completing the program-level escalation process, the student may submit a written grievance to the **Chief Academic Officer (CAO) of The Family Institute at Northwestern University**. The written grievance should include:

- A description of the concern or dispute;
- The steps taken to resolve the matter;
- Documentation of the outcomes at each level of review; and
- The resolution being requested.

The CAO will review the grievance and may consult with relevant faculty, staff, or program leaders to determine an appropriate resolution.



Grade Appeals: Students should note that while concerns about course grades may be discussed through the escalation process outlined above, Northwestern University and The Graduate School do not provide a formal grade appeal process except in cases involving alleged discrimination or other protected-category concerns.

Clinical Grievances

Clinical grievances may include concerns related to a student's clinical training experience, clinical placement, relationship with a supervisor, clinical evaluations, or decisions regarding supervision, training, or clinical performance.

Students who experience a concern at a clinical training site are expected to make a good-faith effort to resolve the issue directly with the individuals involved, unless the matter involves an ethical, legal, safety, or client welfare concern that requires immediate reporting. If the concern is not resolved, students should follow the escalation process below in order:

- 1. Clinical Site Supervisor**
- 2. Program Clinical Supervisor**
- 3. Clinical Training Director - (online only)**
- 4. Director of Clinical Training & Supervision (branch specific)**
- 5. Department Chair**

At each step, the student should provide a clear explanation of the concern, the steps already taken to resolve the matter, and the outcome they are seeking.

If a resolution cannot be reached after completing the clinical escalation process, the student may submit a written grievance to the **Chief Academic Officer (CAO) of The Family Institute at Northwestern University**.

The written grievance should include:

- A description of the concern or dispute;
- The steps taken to resolve the matter;
- Documentation of the outcomes at each level of review; and
- The resolution being requested.

The CAO will review the grievance and may consult with relevant clinical, academic, and administrative personnel to determine an appropriate resolution.

Urgent Concerns: Matters involving potential ethical violations, client safety, violations of law, discrimination, harassment, or other serious professional concerns should be reported immediately to the appropriate clinical or program leader and do not need to follow the standard escalation sequence outlined above.

Grievances Related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

For matters related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), students might be referred to or seek consultation with the Department Chair. Referrals or student consultation are meant to coach, support, and resource



students with DEI concerns. In addition, the Northwestern University policy, “anyone in our community who has been the target of, or who witnesses, sexual misconduct, discrimination, or harassment based on a protected category is encouraged to report the incident to the [Office of Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance](#) so that those impacted can be provided with information on available resources and options.” Students may file a report directly with the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX (see <https://www.northwestern.edu/equity/file-a-report>). Students can also contact the Associate Program Director for assistance in filing a report.

Formal Escalation of a Grievance Beyond the Program

To escalate a dispute that was not successfully resolved within the program (e.g., with the intervention of program faculty, leaders, or the Department Chair) students should prepare a brief written statement of their position regarding the dispute and submit this statement to the Chief Academic Officer (CAO), Dr. Anthony Chambers (achambers@family-institute.org) of The Family Institute at Northwestern University, who oversees all education programs. The matter will be reviewed by the CAO, who will then meet with the parties involved on one or more occasions in separate meetings or together. If this resolution supported by Dr. Chambers is accepted, the matter is resolved, and the student will be informed in writing of any action steps that will be implemented towards a resolution. The CAO also has the discretion to form a committee (drawing on any resource or individual within the program, the larger TFI or NU community) to study the matter further to create alternative solutions. The CAO may consult with The Graduate School as needed. If this process fails, the student may grieve the process to the University grievance process beginning with [The Graduate School](#).

Confidentiality and Retaliation

Grievances will be handled as fairly and confidentially as reasonably possible, consistent with the University's policies and the need to investigate and resolve the matter. Students will not be subject to retaliation for raising a good-faith grievance or participating in the grievance process. Concerns regarding retaliation should be reported to the CAO or another appropriate University official.

**If at any time during this process, students feel there is a risk to their personal safety, or the safety of others, they should discontinue the dispute process immediately and contact their academic advisor or the Department Chair if the advisor is involved in the dispute.*

H. SOURCES OF SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Advising

Early in the program, each student is assigned a member of the Core MSFMT Faculty to serve as their academic advisor throughout their enrollment. In the uncommon event that an advising assignment changes, the student will be notified via email. Students are encouraged to meet with their academic advisor at least quarterly. These meetings provide an opportunity to discuss academic progress, reflect on experiences in the program, and plan for professional and career goals beyond graduation.



Academic advisors serve as a resource for students throughout their academic, clinical, and professional development. Advisors may collaborate with teaching faculty, clinical supervisors, and group or individual supervisors, when appropriate, to support student success and address concerns.

Although advisors respect student privacy, the advising relationship is not subject to absolute confidentiality. When necessary to support student development, address concerns, or coordinate resources, advisors may share relevant information with the Department Chair, Core Faculty, teaching faculty, and/or supervisors who have a legitimate educational interest in the matter. Any information shared will be communicated in a professional, respectful, and constructive manner.

Students are encouraged to address concerns or disagreements directly with the faculty member or supervisor involved whenever possible. In most cases, direct communication should be the first step in resolving issues or disputes before seeking additional support or intervention.

Personal Therapy for Students

Students are strongly encouraged to be in therapy during their time in the program. For on-campus students Northwestern University offers mental health clinics on both the Chicago and Evanston Campuses, including virtual services. Counseling and Psychology Services (CAPS) serves as the primary mental health care service for faculty, staff, students, and parents. To learn more about their clinical services, educational workshops or to schedule a consultation, please visit the CAPS website at <http://www.northwestern.edu/counseling/>.

Students will not be clients at The Family Institute's clinic or staff practice during the period of their training at The Family Institute. In order to avoid a dual relationship, students may NOT seek therapy with a current or recent Core, teaching or supervising faculty member, or clinician employed by the Family Institute. If they were Family Institute clients prior to admission to the program, they should speak to their therapist about an appropriate outside referral. They are required to terminate their therapy at The Family Institute prior to entering the program.

Online students UWill is a leading mental health and wellness solution that provides innovative technologies that facilitate best-in-class video and message-based counseling within a secure environment. This free teletherapy platform enables students to receive real-time counseling online from a network of licensed mental health professionals for issues including depression, stress, anxiety, trauma, specific relationship problems, family concerns, academic performance difficulties, loneliness, and sleep disturbance, among others.

Once they set up a profile, students are almost immediately connected to a licensed mental health counselor based on their unique needs and preferences including presenting issue, gender, language, ethnicity. Students choose a time that fits their schedule (day, night, weekend availability), and choose the appointment type (video, phone, chat, message). Uwill provides 24x7 technical support by email support@uwill.com or phone 833.99U.Will (833.988.9455). <https://uwill.com/>

Student Class Representatives

Student Representatives serve as liaisons between the student cohort and the core faculty, working



collaboratively to advocate for student needs and foster program community.

Duties and Responsibilities

- **Liaison & Advocacy:** Solicit concerns, questions, and ideas from cohort members prior to monthly meetings.
- **Student Life Committee Meetings:** Collaborate to set agendas, attend monthly meetings with designated core faculty members, document meeting outcomes, and share updates and decisions with the cohort via email afterward.
- **Program Events:** Contribute to program events, including open houses, admissions interviews, and other department activities.
- **Leadership Meetings:** Meet with the Department Chair as needed.

Terms of Service

On-Campus Branch: 2-year term | **Online Branch:** 4-quarter term

1. Selection Process

On-Ground Branch: Near the end of the first quarter of the first year, students are invited to nominate peers or themselves. The two candidates with the most votes are elected to serve as the Student Representatives. In the event of a tie, a runoff vote is held.

Online Branch: Nominations and voting take place during the winter quarter, with terms beginning in the spring quarter.

2. Qualifications

Student Representatives must demonstrate a high standard of professionalism and leadership. They must be capable of mature, diplomatic communication, inclusive representation, effective negotiation, boundary implementation, and mediation when working with both the student cohort and core faculty.

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy Student Membership

Students in the MFT Program are required to maintain student membership in the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), the national professional organization for the field of Marriage and Family Therapy. This requirement supports the development of students' professional identity and engagement with the broader MFT profession and is integrated into the program's Professional Identity Seminar (MSFT 400-0/6) and MFT Practicum Course (MSFT 480-0/6).

Students are required to establish AAMFT student membership and submit verification of their membership through **FieldX during Winter 2026**. Students must maintain active AAMFT student membership throughout their entire program of study. Continued membership is verified as part of the student's clinical training requirements.

AAMFT student membership provides student professional liability insurance at no additional cost. This coverage supplements any liability coverage provided through the university or the student's clinical practice site. Students are responsible for maintaining active AAMFT membership and ensuring that their liability



insurance coverage remains current throughout their clinical training.

Affiliation with professional organizations is an important component of students' professional development and identity formation. Membership provides students with opportunities to connect with practicing Marriage and Family Therapists, engage with current research and clinical developments, access professional education and resources, and develop relationships with colleagues who share a systemic perspective on care. These professional connections can contribute to students' ongoing development and lifelong engagement with the MFT profession.

Students may apply for AAMFT student membership through the AAMFT website by selecting "Membership." Students may also consider membership in the Illinois Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (IAMFT) as an additional opportunity for professional engagement and connection within the state.

Professional Workshops or Conferences

Students are strongly encouraged to attend and volunteer at professional workshops and conferences. Information regarding workshops and conferences – including calls for proposals – will be distributed via the *Systemic Update*, the department's bi-monthly e-newsletter.

AccessibleNU and Accommodations

Northwestern University is committed to providing equal access and reasonable accommodations for all students with disabilities.

Registering for Accommodations

1. **Action Required:** Students seeking accommodation must register with AccessibleNU (ANU) as early as possible—ideally well before the start of their first quarter—to ensure timely arrangements.
2. **Eligibility:** Accommodations cannot be provided retroactively, and students must be officially registered with ANU to receive services.
3. **Documentation:** Students must provide appropriate documentation from an unrelated licensed professional detailing their diagnosis, functional limitations, and recommended accommodations.

Confidentiality

All disability-related documentation and records are strictly confidential. They are housed securely within the ANU office and are kept separate from students' academic files.

Contact AccessibleNU

Phone: 847-467-5530

Website: [AccessibleNU](#)

TGS Commons

The Graduate School (TGS) has a space for general use by TGS graduate students and postdocs to study, to host small group gatherings, to reserve for formal academic presentations, etc., called TGS Commons. Graduate students must be enrolled in TGS and have a valid WildCARD to access the Commons (2122 Sheridan Road



Evanston, IL)

The Writing Place

Northwestern's peer writing center offers free, dialogue-based consultations for all members of the university community—undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and staff.

Services

- Support at Any Stage: Consultants assist with brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising, and polishing papers, applications, presentations, and reports.
- Collaborative Approach: Consultants act as attentive readers and conversation partners rather than graders or ghostwriters.

Appointments & Location

- Location: 555 Clark Street, Room 2-206 (Online appointments are also available).
- Registration: Users must register online using their Northwestern email address prior to scheduling an appointment.
- Website: [Northwestern Writing Place](#)

Additional NU Resources for Students

Northwestern University has many resources to assist students in academic and community living.

Among them are:

Academic Information

- [Master's Degree Requirements](#)
- [Northwestern University Student Handbook](#)

Important Campus Resources and Offices

- [AccessibleNU](#)
- [Canvas - Learning Management System at Northwestern \(on-campus students\)](#)
- [Center for Civic Engagement](#)
- [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#)
- [Fitness and Recreation](#)
- [GSP | Graduate Student Progress](#)
- [Health Services](#)
- [Health Insurance](#)
- [International Office](#)
- [Libraries](#)
- [NETID and Email](#)
- [Northwestern Career Advancement](#)
- [Northwestern University Information Technology](#)
- [Office of Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance](#)
- [Office of the Registrar](#)
- [Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching](#)



- [Child and Family Resources](#)
- [University Shuttles](#)
- [WildCARD \(University ID\)](#)
- [Women's Center](#)

Graduate Life and Services

- [Chicago Transit Authority U-Pass](#)
- [Parental Accommodation Policy](#)
- [Community Building Grants](#)
- [Graduate Student Associations and Graduate Leadership Council](#)
- [English as a Second Language Support](#)
- [Graduate Student Commons](#)
- [Legal Services for Graduate Students](#)
- [Professional Development Programming for Graduate Students](#)

Other Resources

- [Gender and Sexuality Resource Center](#)
- [Parking and Safety](#)
- [Office of International Students and Scholars](#)
- [Shuttle Schedules](#)
- [Northwestern's policy on Discrimination and Harassment](#)

I. STUDENT FEEDBACK ON THEIR EXPERIENCE IN THE PROGRAM

CTEC Evaluation of Courses

Students should be prepared to provide feedback about each course they take through Northwestern's online course evaluation system known as CTEC, which stands for Course and Teacher Evaluations Council. This electronic feedback is subsequently provided to the course instructor and the Department Chair. **CTEC data is only valuable as a source of feedback if most, if not all of the class participates.** It is, therefore, vital that each student contributes by completing the CTEC process for each of their courses. It is an essential contribution to ensure the quality and continual improvement of the Program. Note that we have and will continue to make changes to courses based on student feedback.

Mid-Quarter Feedback of Courses

All students will receive a Mid-Quarter Review form during the fourth week of each quarter. This anonymous feedback opportunity allows students to share their experiences, provide constructive input, and highlight what is working well in the course. Student participation is highly encouraged, as feedback helps instructors make timely adjustments and enhance the learning experience while the course is still in progress. Individual responses are kept confidential and are reported in a manner that protects student anonymity.

Student Evaluation of Group (PCS) and Individual / Clinical Supervision

Students are also required to evaluate both their group, clinical, and individual supervisors throughout the program



as outlined by the Clinical Training Handbook. Completed evaluations are to be submitted through the clinical paperwork system. Your assessment of your Program Clinical Supervisor and any other supervisors you have while in training and the supervision experience is one of the most important vehicles through which all supervisors strive to improve. A student's evaluation of their supervisor is anonymous.

Mid- Program Review and End of Program Review

To support continuous improvement and ensure the program meets its educational objectives, students are asked to participate in program evaluation surveys at key points during their academic journey. A mid-program survey is distributed to students to gather feedback on their experiences, learning environment, and overall satisfaction with the program. As students approach graduation, they will also be invited to complete an end-of-program survey, which includes a self-assessment of professional growth and development. Students are asked to reflect on their knowledge, skills, and competencies at the beginning of the program and compare them to their current level of preparation for professional practice.

Feedback collected through these surveys is anonymous, aggregated, and reviewed by program leadership and faculty to assess achievement of program learning outcomes, identify areas for enhancement, and support ongoing program development. Student participation is strongly encouraged, as survey results play an important role in strengthening the quality and effectiveness of the program.

Unsolicited Feedback

Throughout the program, students are encouraged to give their feedback directly to people of relevance (instructor, supervisor, etc.). If this feedback is of an interpersonal nature, that person and the person of relevance will work to resolve it. If the matter is not resolved, the student should consult with their academic advisor. In some instances, the advisor may suggest elevating the issue to the Department Chair.

Annual Alumni Survey

Beginning in the fall following graduation, alumni of the program will receive an annual survey designed to gather information about their professional experiences, career development, and perceptions of how well the program prepared them for practice. Alumni feedback is an important component of the program's ongoing assessment and continuous improvement efforts and supports accreditation reporting requirements.

Data collected through the survey are reviewed annually by program leadership and faculty to evaluate program effectiveness, monitor graduate outcomes, and identify opportunities for enhancement. Alumni participation also helps the program provide prospective students with meaningful information about the career paths and professional accomplishments of its graduates.

To protect alumni privacy, survey responses are aggregated and reported only in summary form. Individual responses are kept confidential, and no personally identifiable information is shared. Aggregate data may be provided to accrediting bodies, such as COAMFTE, as well as other stakeholders, including prospective students, faculty, university leadership, and program supporters.



Alumni/Employer Survey

Annually the program invites employers who have hired multiple graduates of the Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy (MSMFT) program to participate in an employer feedback survey. The survey gathers perspectives on graduates' overall professional preparation, skills, and readiness for practice. To protect privacy and encourage candid feedback, employers are not asked to identify individual graduates, and no personally identifiable employee information is collected. Survey results are aggregated and reviewed by program leadership and faculty to assess program effectiveness and inform ongoing curriculum and program enhancements.

J. IT and TFI OFFICE EQUIPMENT

Appropriate Use Policy

Access to electronic mail, the Internet, databases, computers, and other information technology (IT) resources is essential to the mission of Northwestern. The Program and TFI (create, integrate, transfer, and apply knowledge), and the achievement of excellence requires their effective use by all members of the Institute's community. Use of information technology must be consistent with the Institute's mission and with its role as a public agency. Each member of the Institute's community is expected to protect the integrity of these resources and to know and adhere to the Institute's rules, regulations and guidelines for their appropriate use. Regulations that govern personal conduct and use of Institute facilities also apply to the use of IT resources. In addition, and as stated in the "Creating a Classroom Community" policy above, cell phones should be silenced and put away during class. Computers, notepads and iPads will be used only for taking notes during class, there will be no shopping, internet surfing, social media browsing/posting, texting, or music listening.

Northwestern University and TFI Email Accounts and Usage

On-Campus MSMFT Students:

All on-campus students are required to use TFI E-mail for TFI clinical correspondence as The Family Institute complies with HIPAA and confidentiality regulations and Northwestern University email for correspondence related to their degree program.

All emails sent through any family-institute.org email address are stamped with the following statement: "This message contains confidential information and is intended only for the individual named. If you are not the named addressee you should not disseminate, distribute or copy this email. Please notify the sender immediately by email if you have received this email by mistake and delete this email from your system. Email transmission cannot be guaranteed to be secure as information can be intercepted, lost, arrive late or incomplete. The sender therefore does not recommend total dependence on email for secure and timely communication."

When communicating with clients via email, trainees should use their family-institute.org account and not a personal email account. The above disclaimer should be added as an automatic signature of all emails sent to clients. Because email is not a secure form of communication, it should be primarily used for discussion of



schedule or other superficial details.

A student's NU Email is for academic and university matters. Such as emailing your professors and Northwestern administration. As well as signing up for student organizations and events.

Online MFT@NU Students: All online students are required to use their Northwestern University email for correspondence related to their degree program.

When communicating with clients via email, trainees should follow the policies set by their internship site. Because email is not a secure form of communication, it should be primarily used for discussion of schedule or other superficial details.

A student's NU Email is for all academic and university matters, such as emailing your instructors and Northwestern administration, as well as signing up for student organizations and events.

Use of Computers, Printers, and Fax Machines

On-campus students at TFI have a wide range of office equipment, including desktop computers, office copiers and printers, scanners, and fax machines. Clinic rooms are equipped with desktop computers with the programs and software necessary to complete all necessary clinical documentation. While they may not be used for personal business, they are available for clinical and academic use as needed. Please be mindful of time spent on computers in the student lounge, the printer/copier in the student lounge should not be used to print lengthy term papers or articles, there are numerous student computer labs on campus as well as Quartet Copies located at 825 Clark Street in which you should use for your larger printing needs.

Student Lounge

On-campus students and online students who are visiting campus have access to the student lounge located in the lower level (LL) of The Family Institute building. This is a shared space with students from the Counseling Program. Please keep the room tidy, clean up after yourself, refrain from leaving dishes in the sink, do not leave valuables unattended, and be mindful of others. When students from the online MFT@NU branch are on campus for in-person programmatic events (i.e., immersion and graduation), they are welcome and encouraged to use the student lounge. **The lounge on the 3rd floor is intended for use of faculty and staff; students may use it to grab coffee and water, but please refrain from congregating in or around it.**

Coffee Makers and Microwaves

Coffee makers in the student lounge are for your use. Coffee and tea are supplied by TFI; however, you are welcome to bring your own supplies for sharing if you choose. Please be considerate and mindful when using the coffee makers, cleaning and wiping up spills, rinsing out pots, turning machines off when not in use, etc.

Lockers

Lockers are available in the student lounge for students who would like to use one during their time in the Program. Students may request a locker through the process outlined by the Academic Program Assistant during program orientation.



Students are responsible for the care and appropriate use of their assigned locker and for keeping the locker clean and in good condition. Students should not store valuables, prohibited items, or materials that could create a health or safety concern in a locker.

Locker use is a privilege provided for students' convenience and is subject to program and university policies. Students are responsible for removing all personal belongings from their locker when they complete the program or when otherwise directed by the program or university.

Refrigerators

The refrigerator in the student lounge is for your use. With two large academic programs, please be considerate of what you store in it. Please mark your items, do not store more than you need for the day, remove your items at the end of the day, and wipe up any spills.

K. DATA AND RESEARCH

TFI Data Policies and Procedures

Adapted from: <http://www.it.northwestern.edu/policies/dataaccess.html>

Audience:

All Family Institute (TFI) faculty, staff and students

All non-TFI researchers interested in conducting research at TFI

All non-TFI researchers entrusted with information maintained in TFI's data system

Definition:

Protecting information assets is driven by a variety of considerations including legal, academic, financial and other business requirements. The Family Institute at Northwestern University (TFI) is committed to nurturing the open, information-sharing requirements of its academic culture, while preserving the confidentiality, integrity and availability of its information resources.

The policy contained in this document will support and promote greater understanding of and appropriate use of data, and heightened awareness of the sensitive nature of data based on various risk factors. It is expected that this policy will improve the ability of the TFI community to properly manage access to TFI data in compliance with Federal and State laws and regulations, and other TFI and Northwestern University policy requirements. Specifically, it is

incumbent upon all researchers conducting research at TFI to assure all necessary regulatory (e.g., HIPAA) compliance in terms of training, data management and security, and client/participant contact. Overall, the policy will improve data quality and the transparency of institutional security and trust policies.

As reiterated below, all human subjects research must be approved by Northwestern University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and hence is subject to all the policies and procedures that guide human subject research at NU. Additional training may be imposed by TFI such as additional annual HIPAA training.

**Scope:**

These policies apply to all organizational uses of data/information that are created, collected, maintained, and utilized by TFI for carrying out the institutional mission of clinical work, research, teaching, *and* data used in the execution of required business functions. They also apply to any data that is to be collected at TFI, with TFI clients or employees, or with students enrolled in any of our training programs.

Data Policies:

The ethical and fair use of TFI data will be discussed as it affects three issues: (a) data access; (b) data security and data sharing.

Data Access:

- Access to all data described in Scope will be determined by the Data Governance Committee (DGC) within TFI. The DGC will be comprised of the Director of the Center, the Director of Research, the Chief Clinical Officer, the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Director of Clinical Operations and one other member appointed for a limited 3-year term. The Director of the Program Management Office will also be a member of the board in order to ensure compliance with all TFI policies.
- Access to data will be allowed consistent with the data being requested, the roles and responsibilities of the user and the level of training of the user.

Procedures:

The following procedures apply to all data that is being requested from TFI, whether or not that data exists already (archival) or is to be collected. The procedures are also applicable for any type of information from above *except* for Public Information, which includes any information that is accessible by the public on the TFI website or through printed materials.

Research Specific Procedures:

All researchers must complete the [Research Proposal Application](#) which is used to ascertain the following information:

- a. Proof of understanding of our ethical and regulatory requirements.
- b. A complete description of the study.
- c. An explanation of the impact of the study on The Family Institute including on its resources, space and personnel.
- d. An explanation of how the research being proposed is consistent with the mission of The Family Institute.
- e. An explanation of the oversight responsibilities of both the researcher and the sponsor (if the researcher is outside of TFI) for the project.
- f. If the DGC approves the research project, then the researcher **must get IRB approval from Northwestern University.**
- g. After IRB approval is ascertained, **the Research Proposal Application must be signed by the Director of the Center for Applied Psychological and Family Studies *before* the research is conducted.**



For those researchers *within* TFI

1. A formal request via the Research Proposal Application to access data or collect new data must be submitted to the DGC.
2. The DGC will meet once a month and proposals must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the meeting date. Any proposal submitted after the deadline will be reviewed for the following month's DGC meeting.
3. One member of the DGC will review the request form to make sure that it is complete and within the scope of requests that are considered.
4. The researcher making the request will be informed of the next DGC meeting. The DGC may request that the researcher attend the meeting in order to answer any questions that might raise.
5. The DGC will either
 - a. Approve the request in writing *or*
 - b. Deny the request *or*
 - c. Request more information in order to make a decision.
6. All research conducted within TFI must be registered through the NU IRB (<https://irb.northwestern.edu/>) and all instructions followed including approval of all measures and a participant consent form that is approved by both NU-IRB and the research board of TFI.

For those researchers *outside* of TFI (including those within the NU system)

1. The researcher(s) must find a sponsor within TFI who can be responsible for TFI procedures and for shepherding the research through the appropriate process.
2. Any publication rights or other rights to these data, regardless of if these data exist within TFI already or are to be collected by the researcher(s) and sponsor, must be determined ahead of time between the researcher(s) and the TFI sponsor. If new opportunities for the data arise, a new Research Proposal Application must be filed.
3. These agreements must be in writing and approved by the DGC
4. Authorship order for any publications or presentations should be decided before the research is conducted and modified throughout as appropriate.
5. The rest of the process is as written above for researchers within TFI.

Non-research Specific Procedures:

A formal request to access data, or collect new data must be submitted to the DGC and include the following:

1. A complete description of the purpose of the data request and it's intended use;
2. An explanation of the impact of the request on The Family Institute including on its resources, space and personnel.
 - o The DGC will meet once a month and proposals must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the meeting date. Any proposal submitted after the deadline will be reviewed for the following month's DGC meeting.
 - o One member of the DGC will review the request form to make sure that it is complete and within the scope of requests that are considered.
 - o The employee making the request will be informed of the next DGC meeting. The DGC may request that the requester attend the meeting in order to answer any questions that might raise.
 - o The DGC will either
 1. Approve the request in writing *or*
 2. Deny the request *or*



3. Request more information in order to make a decision.

Data Security

TFI data must be consistently protected throughout its life cycle in a manner commensurate with its sensitivity and criticality. All data collected within TFI or that uses TFI clients, staff or student information is ultimately owned by TFI and must be kept on the TFI network and/or on the premises at all times. That is, no data, neither archival nor collected, can be stored on a personal desktop or laptop computer, regardless of where that computer is located nor stored in any offsite location if the data is not electronic. Anything less than full compliance with this requirement will be considered an ethical breach.

Data Sharing

Permission to share ANY data from TFI with outside entities, including non-TFI Northwestern University employees, must have prior permission from the DGC, **in writing**. Note that federal funding and Northwestern University requires that data that are collected *with federal funds* must be made available for public access. Northwestern is able to assist with compliance of this regulation. More information about these services can be found, via NUCATS at: <https://nucats.northwestern.edu/resources-services/data-informatics-services>.

Policies Concerning Data Access When a Researcher's PI Leaves TFI:

When individuals other than the PI involved in research projects at TFI leave and he/she is interested in taking data with them, then as part of the exit process they must send a formal request to the DGC. If the DGC grants that request, then they may take copies of research data for projects on which they have worked, subject to relevant confidentiality restrictions. Original data, however, **MUST** be retained at TFI.

If the PI leaves TFI and wishes to continue the project at another academic/research institution, a formal request must be made to the DGC before ownership of the original data may be transferred from TFI to the PI's new institution. If permission is granted, the PI must ascertain a written agreement from the PI's new institution that guarantees (1) its acceptance of ongoing custodial responsibilities for the data and (2) TFI having access to the original data, should such access become necessary for any reason; and (3) relevant confidentiality restrictions, where appropriate.

Data Governance Committee Details

Vision:

Information is a valued asset that enables operational excellence, evidence-based care for clients, and enables us to make data-driven organizational decisions.

Mission:

To establish leadership structures, policies, processes, and technologies to ensure that client and other enterprise information sustains and extends the organization's missions and goals, delivers value, complies with laws and regulations, and reflects stewardship practices that minimize risk to stakeholders and advances the public good.



Responsibilities of the Data Governance Committee

1. Create effective lines of accountability, responsibility, and authority for information lifecycle governance functions.
2. Formalize ownership and stewardship responsibilities as organizational policy.
3. Establish effective communication channels with functional leaders, information owners, and stewards to ensure that stakeholders are fully informed of current policies and practices and facilitate exchange of ideas that build continuous improvement in information governance and management across the organization.
4. Set priorities for strategically aligned initiatives to improve and assure the value for information assets in terms of quality, efficiency, usability, interpretation, and compliance.
5. Approve policies, procedures, guidelines, and data standards for Clinical Services, Academics, Research, External Relations, and Operations.
6. Ensure comprehensive audit practices to identify opportunities to strengthen research and programs to achieve full compliance with regulations and standards.
7. Develop measures and metrics reflecting desired goals for information management.
8. Oversee business associates and other agreements for access and sharing information beyond the organization.

Research Proposal Application

Investigators who wish to conduct research at The Family Institute at Northwestern University must submit an application of no more than **five** pages, using the following guidelines. An internal review committee will consider each application, and, in consultation with The Family Institute's administrative personnel, determine whether permission to conduct the research will be granted. Projects requesting the participation of clinical staff or students must also be approved by The Family Institute's Steering Committee. Northwestern Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is required before the project begins. All proposals will be reviewed by TFI's Data Governance Committee (DGC) consisting of the Director of the Center, Director of Research, the Chief Clinical Officer, the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), the Director of the Program Management Office, and the Director of Clinical Operations. The DGC will meet monthly or as needed, whichever is less. All proposals must be received 1 week prior to each scheduled meeting.

A. Description of the Research Plan

Describe the research plan, including the following:

- Purpose of the research and justification for it within the literature
- Major hypotheses
- Number and type of participants involved
- Type of data collection or assessment instruments used



B. Human Subjects Protection

Describe the research project's protection of human subjects.

- Attach all relevant Northwestern University IRB application materials.
- Attach documentation that you have also completed TFI's HIPAA on-line course.
- If the DGC approves the application, the researcher must get Northwestern University IRB approval and that approval letter needs to be submitted and the application must be signed again by the Director of the Center for Applied Psychological and Family Studies (CAPFS).

C. Estimated Research Costs

Provide information about the costs of the research and relevant sources of funding.

D. Mission Statement - General

What is the impact that this research will have on couples, families and individuals? The Family Institute wants to assure that all research is consistent with its strategic plan. Please describe the relevance of the research to the mission of The Family Institute. The Mission Statement can be found at <https://family-institute.org/about-us/mission-values>

i. Impact on The Family Institute

Indicate how the research will affect the *functioning* of The Family Institute. Describe what resources are being requested from The Family Institute to support this research project (if any), including the following:

- Family Institute facilities (therapy or meeting rooms, research lab)
- Therapists
- Supervisors
- Intake Personnel
- Other Family Institute Resources or personnel (describe)

Sustainability, What will happen to the procedures once the research element of the project is complete?

ii. Research Oversight

Sponsor

Each research project must have an internal sponsor, or a Family Institute staff member who agrees to oversee the project. Please provide a letter of support from the internal sponsor. All researchers must provide the DGC with annual updates as well as provide the DGC with a project results summary at the conclusion of the project. Furthermore, all researchers must notify the DGC if there are any changes in the protocol. If the project is university-based, please also provide a letter of support from the Department Chair indicating their support



for the project.

Researcher Contribution

Given the impact on The Family Institute described in section D, describe what contribution (in terms of time, resources, or personnel, oversight) the researcher will make to this research program.

Authorship agreement

- Please provide the names of all study personnel that have been identified to date. Include the principal investigators, any students and any other staff, with their affiliations.
- Please provide the expected authorship order for the primary paper or presentation that is expected to come from this work. It is understood that other authorship arrangements are possible with subsequent papers or if there is a major shift in the responsibilities on the team.

Initial Approval by Director of CAPFS

Date

Final Approval **once** NU IRB Approval

Date



L. MSMFT COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy Course Descriptions

Note: Online students should consult with their Student Success Advisor for their course sequence based on their declared track (Full-Time, CA Full-Time, or Part-Time)

Note: the “-0” course designation refers to courses in the on-campus branch (e.g. MS_FT 401-0); the “-6” designation refers to courses in the online MFT@NU branch (e.g. MS_FT 401-6)

MS_FT 400-0/6: Professional Identity Seminar (0)

This seminar is designed to introduce students to the personal and professional issues in becoming and developing marriage and family therapist, both during graduate training and beyond. This will include a focus on the development of self-awareness to define and differentiate themselves and their practice effectively. An optional research seminar is geared towards those interested in pursuing a PhD. The focus is on finding the right PhD program how to make yourself competitive for PhD work.

MS_FT 401-0/6: Basic Concepts (1)

This course is an introduction to the central theoretical underpinnings of systemic family therapy, providing a basic framework for assessment of and intervention in the problems clients bring to therapy. Particular attention is paid to the assumptions, concepts, frameworks, and clinical guidelines of the Integrative Systemic Therapy (IST) perspective. The course provides a set of constructs for planning and conducting therapy, a structure for organizing bodies of knowledge associated with the field of marriage and family therapy, and a foundation for lifelong, professional learning and growth.

MS_FT 402-0/6: Methods in Systems Therapy (1)

This course introduces students to a range of methods used in systems therapy. The methods will be drawn from the integrative traditions emphasized in the Integrative Systemic Therapy perspective and will prepare students to engage, work with and terminate cases.

MS_FT 403-0/6: Self and Other Systems (1)

This course's purpose is to deepen students' understanding of self and systems. Particular emphasis will be given to aspects of self-development and the therapist's understanding of self when working with systems.

MS_FT 410-0/6: Human Development (1)

This course utilizes the development metaframework to understand individual, relational, and family development across the life span and the dynamic interactions within families. Physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development will be presented at each age level, including issues regarding culture, gender, and sexual orientation. Commonly presented problems and therapeutic interventions will be discussed for each age group.

MS_FT 411-0/6: Intimate Relations I (1)

This course will elaborate on the Integrative Systemic Therapy (IST) approach for working with couples, which involves a focus on sequences of interaction, affective intensity and subtlety of communication. The most common problems that couples present, including communication issues, intense conflict, trust and attachment, sexual difficulties, and lifespan changes, will be addressed. Theoretical models, case conceptualization, and intervention will be taught from a cultural perspective, considering the social positioning of both the client(s) and the therapist



MS_FT 412-0/6: Special Problems & Populations (1)

The purpose of this course is to provide the concepts and develop the skills necessary for working with particular client-lived experiences and problems. The course will address unique considerations presented in working with populations such as BIPOC community; chosen, divorced and blended families; LGBTQIA clients/families; client and families living with severe mental and/or physical disorders; and more. This course raises awareness of issues related to the systemic treatment of families navigating complex constraints. Participants will be challenged to integrate knowledge of these topics with the Integrative Systemic Therapy (IST) approach and with their own clinical experiences to develop an understanding of how to work systemically with these problems and populations.

MS_FT 413-0/6: Intimate Relations II (1)

In this second course on intimate relations, students will increase their skill set for working with couples in therapy, building on what they have learned throughout first year courses, and most particularly in Intimate Relations I (MS_FT 411-0). This advanced course will provide the techniques and skill building derived from evidence-based models of couples therapy and focus on some of the more challenging kinds of couple problems including sexual issues, infidelity, individual problems, and cultural issues impacting therapy.

MS_FT 421-0/6: Systemic Assessment (1)

Students will learn how to define the parameters of systemic assessment and how it differs from, and can be integrated with, individual assessment. Students will learn how systemic assessment operates within the current legal and medical context. Students will learn the DSM-5-TR diagnostic system and how to apply it systematically. Students will learn specific biopsychosocial systemic assessment guidelines, treatment planning that draws from their assessment, and the means to navigate, utilize and critique the research available to address diagnostic criterion.

MS_FT 422-0/6: Family Research (1)

Students completing the course will develop skills to understand common MFT research methods, how research methods are applied, and how to critique research in the field of marriage and family therapy and mental health. Students will also be introduced to empirically based practices in MFT.

MS_FT 424-0/6: Group Therapy Internship (1)

In this course, trainees learn the theoretical basis of group therapy and develop a framework for group work. The course includes didactic, experiential, and clinical elements. Students will learn the fundamentals of group dynamics through lectures/readings, by participation as a member of a group, and by co-facilitating a group. The course also addresses the business aspects of setting up and marketing a group.

MS_FT 427-0/6: Family of Origin (1)

This course offers an in-depth understanding of transgenerational models including a systemic perspective on the development of intrapsychic structure and function. Students will learn the utilization and application of each model with cases and apply the transgenerational framework to strengthen their conceptualization of the self-of-the-therapist.



MS_FT 428-0/6: Legal, Ethical, and Professional Issues (1)

This course will explore legal issues and areas of family law in the practice of Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT). The course objectives include the demonstration of competence in handling legal issues such as confidentiality, duty to protect, malpractice, and expert testimony, and the understanding of the AAMFT Code of Ethics and state requirements regarding ethical practice. Additionally, students will learn how personal values and the “self of the therapist” impact clinical work, and will develop a professional identity as an MFT, and understand how to keep it current. Lastly, the course will pay special attention to underrepresented groups, and how this links to the topics of social justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion in MFT practice.

MS_FT 429-: Sex Therapy (1)

A multidimensional, biophysical approach to the diagnosis and treatment of sexual difficulty in individuals and couples. Sexual problems discussed include disorders of desire, aversion, arousal, orgasm, and pain.

MS_FT 430-0/6: Power, Privilege, & Difference (1)

The purpose of this course is to sensitize students to the influence of race, class, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, and ability on lived experience (generally) and on the practice of marriage and family therapy (specifically). This course will provide students with a theoretical knowledge base and an experiential learning experience to increase cultural humility, develop awareness of personal and institutional bias, and gain insight into the assumptions, values, and beliefs about both themselves and others as a means of working more effectively with diverse populations in the therapeutic process.

MS_FT 436-0/6: Family Therapy Treatment Models (1)

This course is an examination of the major treatment models that have emerged through the development and history of systemic therapy, including the respective philosophies, theories, assessments, and interventions nested within them. This course is designed to provide an overview of the major models of systemic therapy that have been developed and critiqued over time. Course content focuses on discussions of traditional and contemporary systemic therapy models, including these models’ respective theoretical underpinnings, assumptions of systemic health versus pathology, goals, role of the therapist, and means of intervention. In addition, the course will explore how to use models to navigate the matrix of IST.

MS_FT 437-0/6: Family Therapy with Children and Adolescents (1)

This course will provide the theoretical background and practical skills for working with families that present with children and adolescents. A systemic framework will be employed as the basis for understanding and intervening with families, children, and adolescents. Special consideration will be given to intersections of the development and sociocultural systems, with a focus on assessment and intervention.

MS_FT 440-0/6 Systemic Perspective in the Treatment of Substance Use/Misuse & Addiction (1 Unit)

This course reviews distinctions of disease model vs. systemic views of addiction and treatment, discusses the markers of abuse and dependence, illuminates various therapeutic approaches, and explores the efficacy of family therapy approaches. Students develop working theoretical and clinical knowledge of addiction treatment. Issues of substance use, and addiction will be explored through a social justice lens, integrating knowledge of broad cultural systems that impact the prevalence, nature, and treatment of substance use.



MS_FT 480-0/6 Pre-Practicum in Marriage and Family Therapy (1 Unit)

The purpose of this course is to introduce the basic administrative and clinical aspects of conducting systemic therapy, using the Integrative Systemic Therapy (IST) perspective. The course presumes no background as a therapist and aims to provide students with the essential skills needed to conduct the first phone call and the initial sessions with individuals, couples and families. In addition, the course will focus on the role of personal values, beliefs, and interpersonal style in the work of psychotherapy. Students will be encouraged to examine the ways in which their own culture and family background has shaped their perspective, and how to make use of personal experience as a professional marriage and family therapist through the ongoing reflection and development of the self of the therapist.

MS_FT 481-1,2,3/6,7,8 Internship in Marriage and Family Therapy (1)

Students begin clinical internships in the winter quarter of the first year in the program. They do 10-15 hours/week under the supervision of clinical supervising faculty. Clinical faculty provide group and individual supervision on a weekly basis through case discussion as well as direct observation and videotape/audiotape recordings of students' therapy sessions. University regulations require that all students doing an internship be registered. Students earn a total of three (3) units of credit for this series

MS_FT 482-1,2,3 / 6,7,8 Advanced Internship in Marriage and Family Therapy (1)

In their second year, students continue their supervised clinical training in the Advanced Internship with a deeper emphasis on the model in couple and family work, as well as developmental self-of-the-therapist issues. Newly assigned clinical faculty provide group and individual supervision on a weekly basis. Focus remains on clinical cases, direct observation, and videotape/audiotape recordings of students' therapy sessions. University regulations require that all students doing an internship be registered. Students earn a total of three (3) units of credit for this series of Advanced Internship in MFT. Additional units may be required to meet the program's clinical requirements and to comply with clinical competency standards.

MS_FT 495-0/6 Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy Capstone Project I (0 Unit)

MS_FT 496-0/6 Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy Capstone Project II (1 Unit)

The program's Capstone Project satisfies a key requirement the Commission on Accreditation of Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE), as completion of it demonstrates that students have integrated and consolidated their learning in a manner consistent with the program's mission, goals and outcomes. The program's Capstone Project consists of three components: the completion of a case study process that culminates in a paper, a formal case presentation, and the submission of six video segments of therapy session(s) conducted by the student. The project demonstrates the student's ability to accomplish systemic integration with the IST perspective in their practice and, thereby, their readiness to continue their professional growth through the continual integration of new learnings. The student will enroll for this course in the last two quarters of study. MSFT 495-0/6 is for 0 credits and does not carry a tuition unit, MSFT 496-0/6 will be taken in the final quarter where you will present your capstone and receive a grade with credit - this carries the tuition unit.



M. MSMFT FACULTY BIOGRAPHIES | CORE FACULTY

Kristina S. Brown, PhD, LMFT, AAMFT Approved Supervisor, MSMFT Department Chair

Dr. Kristina S. Brown, LMFT (she/her) joined The Family Institute as Department Chair in Fall 2025. She holds a Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy from the University of San Diego (1999) and a Doctor of Philosophy in Marriage and Family Therapy from Syracuse University (2007) and is a full clinical professor at Northwestern University. She is a Licensed Marital and Family Therapist in the state of Missouri with a license held previously in New York. She is an AAMFT Approved Supervisor with her current term expiring August 31, 2029.

Dr. Brown has held leadership positions with the San Diego Chapter of MFT, the Ozark Chapter of MFT, the Missouri Association of MFT, the Illinois Association of MFT, and as a member of the Elections Council for AAMFT. Dr. Brown has been a Site Visitor for COAMFTE since 2013 and trained to be a Site Visit Chair in January 2016. She has also been on Site Visits for the Degree Quality Assurance Board (DQAB) in Canada. Dr. Brown has a strong history of over 50 regional, national, and international presentations including conferences with AAMFT, Collaborative Family Healthcare Association, Missouri Association of MFT, and has delivered over 80 units of continuing education.

Dr. Brown is the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Feminist Family Therapy and Editor of the 2024 AAMFT Systemic Ethics Textbook. Dr. Brown identifies as a feminist (social justice) qualitative researcher with a broad focus on the experiences of women across identities as represented in her publications. Her specific areas of interest are varied including sexual harassment (#metoo) in higher education, the experiences and treatment of endometriosis, infidelity, and other projects such as tattoos in academia.

In her free time, Dr. Brown loves travel adventures, quilting, going to the movies, spending time with her family and friends, and the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Samuel Allen, PhD, LMFT, Core Faculty, AAMFT Approved Supervisor

Dr. Samuel Allen (he/him) is a clinical assistant professor and core faculty member in the MSMFT Program at Northwestern University. He completed his COAMFTE-accredited M.S. in Couple and Family Therapy and his Ph.D. in Family Science at the University of Maryland-College Park, from which he also received a graduate teaching certificate. Dr. Allen's research, teaching, and clinical work are all grounded in an unwavering commitment to social justice. His scholarly expertise centers on the study of gender and sexuality in families—especially among LGBTQ populations—with a particular emphasis on intersectionality and how intersectional minority experiences influence mental and physical health outcomes. Dr. Allen's clinical work is client-centered, emotionally focused, and integrative. He treats couples, non-romantic relationship dyads (e.g., sibling-sibling, parent-child, friend-friend) and individuals, and has a particular expertise working with sexual and gender minorities, racial minorities, non-monogamous couples, and couples with partners who are of different faiths, races and/or cultures. **Online**



Connor Callahan, MS, LMFT, Core Faculty, AAMFT Approved Supervisor

Connor Callahan (he/him) is a doctoral candidate at the COAMFTE-accredited University of Minnesota in the Department of Family Studies specializing in Marriage and Family Therapy. His research interest focuses on how LGBTQ young people develop their identity and how family and school environments can serve as supports or barriers to this development. Connor completed his master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy at The Family Institute at Northwestern University.

He has worked in academic, agency, and group practice settings, including completing the postgraduate fellowship in treating adolescent depression and anxiety at TFI. Connor practices Integrative Systemic Therapy in his work with individuals, couples, and families. Within the IST framework, Connor utilizes interventions from several therapy models including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and Internal Family Systems Therapy (IFS). He is currently an AAMFT Approved Supervisor Candidate. **On-Campus**

Alyssa Campbell, PhD, LMFT, Core Faculty, AAMFT Approved Supervisor

Dr. Campbell (she/her) is a clinical lecturer of psychology and core faculty member in the Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy (MSMFT) Program at Northwestern University. She completed her COAMFTE-accredited M.S. in Couple and Family Therapy and her PhD in Family Sciences at the University of Kentucky, from which she also received a graduate certificate in Gender and Women's Studies. Dr. Campbell is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in Illinois and has worked in private practice, group practice, and academic settings, including her work as a Postdoctoral Clinical Scholar Fellow at The Family Institute (TFI) and as a clinical staff therapist on the couples services team.

Dr. Campbell's research focuses on the psychological and relational impacts of sexual violence while also considering the various sociocultural factors that maintain and perpetuate sexual violence. She has disseminated her research in scholarly journals (e.g., *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect*, *Marriage and Family Therapy Review*, etc.) and at regional, national, and international conferences and meetings including the National Council on Family Relations and the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies. Dr. Campbell characterizes her clinical work as a collaborative process that is systemically integrative, relationally- and emotionally-focused, and trauma-informed, while pulling most notably from narrative and emotionally focused therapies. She works with individuals and couples and has particular expertise in working with shame-prone individuals and couples, infidelity, life-stage transitions, and attachment related concerns. In her free time, Dr. Campbell enjoys traveling, live music, dancing, and spending quality time with her cat. **On-Campus**

Stephanie N. Gilak, PhD, LMFT, Visiting Core Faculty, AAMFT Approved Supervisor Candidate

Dr. Stephanie N. Gilak (she/her), is a clinical lecturer of psychology and core faculty member in the Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) program at Northwestern University. She is the recipient of numerous fellowships and holds a PhD in couple and family therapy from COAMFTE-accredited Adler University and a master's degree in psychology, with an emphasis in marriage and family therapy, from COAMFTE-accredited Chapman University. Additionally, she has earned degrees in Sociology from the University of Toronto and University of California at Berkeley. She is a licensed marriage and family therapist



and has been since 2012. Dr. Gilak's clinical work has been in community mental health her entire career and has experience treating individuals, couples, and families with significant time dedicated to working with children and adolescents. She has been published in peer reviewed journals and has presented her research at regional, national, and international conferences. She adopts socioculturally attuned therapy using a variety of treatment models, including postmodern approaches such as feminist family therapy, dialogism, narrative therapy, and solution-focused therapy, as well as traditional approaches such as Bowenian family systems theory. Her primary focus as a therapist is working to ensure that each client feels seen and heard and does so by directly addressing the ways in which race, culture, and community impact both the client and the therapeutic relationship. Dr. Gilak also has a background in social research and has worked on various government-funded projects. Research continues to be a major interest and she is currently working on projects in the following areas: ambiguous and nonfinite loss, social trust, work and family, and research as bricolage. In her free time, Dr. Gilak enjoys hanging out with her husband and children, traveling, and watching sports. ***On-Campus***

Laura Golojuch, PhD, LMFT, Core Faculty, AAMFT Approved Supervisor

Laura Golojuch, Ph.D., LMFT is a core faculty member in the Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) program at Northwestern University. She received her COAMFTE-accredited M.S. in Couple and Family Therapy and her Ph.D. in Family Science from the University of Maryland.

Dr. Golojuch considers herself to be a clinician-scholar-advocate and holds each of these identities as central to her professional identity. She has been practicing therapy for a decade and is licensed in Washington DC, Virginia, and Maryland. Dr. Golojuch has taught a variety of courses at both the undergraduate and graduate level and has provided clinical training to students and resident therapists throughout the past several years. Dr. Golojuch has collaborated on research projects that explore the experience of marginalization through various lenses. Her current program of research focuses on the promotion of social justice and equity within the field of Couple and Family Therapy. Dr. Golojuch previously served on the board of MetroMFT, a local advocacy and networking group for MFTs. She is currently a clinical fellow of AAMFT and an AAMFT Approved Supervisor. ***Online***

Racine Henry, PhD, LMFT, Core Faculty, AAMFT Approved Supervisor

Dr. Racine R. Henry, PhD, LMFT, is a core faculty member in the Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) program at Northwestern University. She received her Master's in MFT at COAMFTE-accredited Valdosta State and her PhD in couple and family therapy from COAMFTE-accredited Drexel University, where she participated in the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) Minority Fellowship program and later returned as a visiting assistant clinical professor.

Dr. Henry has been practicing psychotherapy since 2008 and currently holds MFT licenses in New York and New Jersey. Dr. Henry has given academic presentations at national and international conferences for several professional organizations along with publications in peer-reviewed journals, textbooks, and popular media literature. In addition to extensive work with couples, she is experienced in group therapy, family therapy, anger management training, and treating various mental health diagnoses including depression, infidelity, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and adjustment issues. Dr. Henry specializes in treating Black women, Black



couples, interracial couples and non-monogamous couples. She has taught at several universities and worked in a variety of clinical settings including public schools, the Department of Defense, community agencies, and private sector companies. Dr. Henry is the founder of Sankofa Marriage and Family Therapy and the creator of Integrative Culinary Therapy. She is a clinical fellow of the AAMFT and an AAMFT-approved supervisor. **Online**

Lisa René Reynolds, PhD, LMFT, Core Faculty, AAMFT Approved Supervisor

Dr. Lisa René Reynolds has Master of Science and PhD degrees in Marriage and Family Therapy. She is a licensed MFT in New York and Connecticut and Florida with fully certified telehealth practices and is a former associate professor and program director at a COAMFTE-accredited program near New York City. She also served as chair on the AAMFT Ethics Committee, chair of the AAMFT Judicial Committee, and chair of the Code of Ethics Revision Task Force. She has enjoyed attending and presenting at several AAMFT conferences. Her academic focuses are on integrative and postmodern theories, intimate relationships, sexual health and wellness, the intersectionality of ethics and self-of-the therapist, and the impact of divorce on children and families. She was the co-creator of the Focus on Kids high-conflict divorce parenting program for the state of Connecticut and has written several self-help books and mainstream articles on this topic. She has also written many book chapters and articles and is the author *Creative Play in Family Therapy: Effective Strategies and Interventions in Child-Centered Treatment* (2025), and *The Ethical Therapist: A Guide to Confident Decision Making in Clinical Practice* (2026). Additionally, her frontline involvement in the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings in 2012 led her to much research and work with communities impacted by such traumatic experiences. She most frequently teaches Introductory MFT courses, Ethics, Family Therapy with Children and Adolescents, Parenting, Intimate Relationships, Human Lifespan Development, and Sexuality/Sex Therapy courses. Dr. Reynolds is a long-time AAMFT clinical member and approved supervisor.

In her free time, she enjoys spending time with family and friends, traveling, reading, writing, and cooking. Dr. Reynolds is thrilled to be part of the Family Institute at Northwestern University's MS in MFT online program. Online

Betsy Scott, PhD, LMFT, Visiting Core Faculty, AAMFT Approved Supervisor Candidate

Dr. Scott is a clinical lecturer of Psychology, Core Faculty member in the MSMFT program at the Family Institute at Northwestern University, and AAMFT Approved Supervisor Candidate. Dr. Scott obtained her doctorate degree from Eastern University in Marriage and Family Therapy. Dr. Scott brings extensive experience in clinical practice, graduate education, leadership, and cross-cultural work. Dr. Scott's clinical interests include family-of-origin work, family therapy, Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy, therapeutic repair and apology, complex trauma, cross-cultural clinical training, and the integration of religion and spirituality into clinical practice. She has advanced training in Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy and has presented her work on parental therapeutic apologies at national systemic family therapy conferences. Her multicultural perspective has been shaped by a decade of living, teaching, and leading in Europe, where she worked within diverse communities and managed multicultural teams. Across her work as a clinician, educator, and supervisor, Dr. Scott seeks to create learning and therapeutic environments characterized by cultural humility, psychological safety, curiosity, collaboration, and respect for the dignity and lived experience of each person. Dr. Scott's scholarly research and publication interests include examining the relationship between histories of complex trauma



and current PTSD, complex PTSD, and burnout scores, attachment-based emotion coaching for parents, exploring imaginative empathy as part of repair in dyadic relationships, and cross-cultural training models adapted for three domains: Teacher-Student, Supervisor-Supervisee, and Therapist-Client. ***On-Campus***

Jennifer White VanBoxel, PhD, LMFT, Core Faculty, AAMFT Supervisor

Dr. White VanBoxel is a clinical lecturer of Psychology, Core Faculty member in the MSMFT program at the Family Institute at Northwestern University, and AAMFT Approved Supervisor. Dr. White VanBoxel obtained her doctoral degree from COAMFTE-accredited Michigan State University in Couple and Family Therapy. Dr. White VanBoxel brings over a decade of experience in leadership, clinical intervention, research, and teaching in the MFT field. Her career has focused heavily on advancing therapeutic intervention for interpersonal trauma populations in systemic family therapy. As follows, Dr. White VanBoxel's scholarly research focuses on testing, integrating, and adapting systemic interventions for Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (C-PTSD) for couples, families, and individuals. She has advanced training in systemic intervention models including Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy, Internal Family Systems, and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) trauma therapy. In supervision, Dr. White VanBoxel draws from diversity, intersectionality, and inclusion frameworks in addition to a strong focus on the Aponte person of the therapist training model. Dr. White VanBoxel has several forthcoming publications in press, which include a clinical handbook for treating Couples in the context of C-PTSD and several empirical studies on systemic family therapy interventions. ***On-Campus***

CONSULTING FACULTY

Douglas C. Breunlin, MSSA, LCSW, LMFT is a clinical professor of Psychology at Northwestern University, senior clinician and Coordinator of IST Development at The Family Institute at Northwestern University. Mr. Breunlin received his master's in social work from Case Western Reserve University. His undergraduate degrees from the University of Notre Dame are in arts and letters and aeronautical engineering.

Mr. Breunlin was the Director of the Marriage and Family Therapy Program at The Family Institute at Northwestern where he taught multiple courses, providing clinical supervision and administration (2009-2020). Mr. Breunlin is co-author (with Schwartz and MacKune-Karrer) of *Metaframeworks: Transcending the Models of Family Therapy*; editor of *Stages: Patterns of Change Over Time*; co-editor of the *Handbook of Family Therapy Training and Supervision* (with co-editors Liddle and Schwartz). He has recently published a new book with several co-authors titled: *Integrative Systemic Therapy (IST)*. This book addresses the perspective being taught in the Program. He is also an Editor-in-Chief (with Jay Lebow and Anthony Chambers) of the *Encyclopedia of Couple and Family Therapy*. workshops nationally and abroad.

Mr. Breunlin is licensed both as a clinical social worker and a marriage and family therapist and is a certified mediator. His clinical interests include family business issues; couples; siblings; male development; mediation and conflict resolution; intimacy and sexual problems; marital conflict; long-term marriages; school problems.

Nancy Burgoyne, PhD, LCP is the Chief Clinical Officer of The Family Institute and a licensed clinical psychologist and a marriage and family therapist. She is a staff therapist at The Family Institute at Northwestern University



and a Clinical Lecturer in the Department of Psychology at Northwestern University. Dr. Burgoyne received her bachelor's degree in human development from Boston College, and her Master's and Doctoral degrees in clinical- community psychology from DePaul University, where she was an Arthur J. Schmidt Academic Fellow. Dr. Burgoyne did her internship and post graduate work in The Family Systems Program at the Institute for Juvenile Research, University of Illinois. Dr. Burgoyne is a member of The American Psychological Association, Division 43, Family Psychology.

She treats families, school age and adolescent children, and adults. Clinical Interests: Life stage transitions (including adolescent adjustment, emerging adults, adult children and parent relationship issues; personal/existential/ identity exploration & growth; cultural transition). Systemically focused family of origin work. Families with chronically mentally ill members. Divorce recovery; post-divorce co-parenting, Loss and Grief, culturally sensitive, LGBTQally.

Anthony Chambers, PhD, LCP is the Chief Clinical Academic Officer of The Family Institute at Northwestern University, an Assistant Clinical Professor in the Department of Psychology at Northwestern and is a Staff Licensed Clinical Psychologist at The Family Institute at Northwestern University. Prof. Chambers received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Hampton University where he majored in Psychology (with departmental honors) and minored in Chemistry and Mathematics. He completed his M.A. & Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Virginia (Department of Psychology). He completed his internship and post-doctoral clinical residency at Harvard Medical School & Massachusetts General Hospital, specializing in the treatment of couples.

Prof. Chambers also completed the Dr. John J.B. Morgan Postdoctoral Clinical Research Fellowship specializing in couples' therapy and psychotherapy research at The Family Institute at Northwestern University. His professional activities have included being appointed to the American Psychological Association's Minority Fellowship Program's Initial Grant Review Committee, being appointed to the American Psychological Foundation's Randy Gerson Family Systems Grant Review Committee, reviewing articles for several journals including the Journal of Marriage and Family, and is currently on the Board of Directors for the American Psychological Association's Society for Family Psychology. Prof. Chambers has frequent requests for guest appearances on radio and television programs and has been interviewed for several national magazines. His media appearances revolve around various issues pertinent to healthy relationship functioning.

Jay Lebow, PhD, LCP, ABPP, LMFT is a Clinical Professor of Psychology in Northwestern University's Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy Program and leads a practicum group for the doctoral clinical psychology program at Northwestern University. He is also a licensed clinical psychologist, licensed marital and family therapist and research consultant at The Family Institute at Northwestern University. Dr. Lebow received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Northwestern University and is also a graduate of The Family Institute's training program. He has maintained a large clinical practice in individual, couple and family therapy for more than thirty years. Dr. Lebow is also involved in ongoing treatment research at The Family Institute concerned with assessing progress in psychotherapy and the development of the Systemic Therapy Inventory of Change.



Dr. Lebow is board certified in Family Psychology, a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and its Divisions of Clinical and Family Psychology, a clinical member and an approved supervisor of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy, treasurer of the American Family Therapy Academy, past president of The American Psychological Association's Division of Family Psychology, a former member of the Board of Directors of the American Board of Family Psychology, a fellow of the Academy of Family Psychology and a former member of the Board of the Illinois Association of Marriage and Family Therapists. He is a contributing editor and writes a regular column on the relation of research to practice for the Family Therapy Networker and is on the editorial board of the Journal of Marriage and Family Therapy and Family Process.

William P. Russell, MSW, LCSW, LMFT, BCD, AAMFT Approved Supervisor is a Clinical Professor of Psychology, the former Director of Faculty, and a former Program Director of the Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy program at Northwestern University. He is currently an Affiliate Therapist at the Family Institute at Northwestern University. Professor Russell is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. He is a Clinical Fellow and an Approved Supervisor of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, a member of the American Family Therapy Academy, and a Board-Certified Diplomate in Clinical Social Work.

Over the course of his career, Professor Russell practiced systemic psychotherapy, developed and administered community-based mental health services, and trained and supervised therapists. He has worked in academic institutions, community agencies, private practice, a therapeutic school, and the Veterans Administration. He has taught and supervised systemic, integrative psychotherapy in several contexts, with past faculty appointments at The School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University, the Family Systems Program of the Institute for Juvenile Research, and the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Professor Russell has given many presentations on his clinical and academic interests, including talks at national and state-wide professional conferences on the training of marriage and family therapists, the treatment of veterans and their families, and Integrative Systemic Therapy (IST). He has authored journal articles and book chapters on IST as well as other topics related to the practice of couple and family therapy. Professor Russell is lead author of the 2023 book, *Integrative Systemic Therapy in Practice: A Clinician's Handbook* and co-author of the 2018 volume, *Integrative Systemic Therapy: Metaframeworks for Problem Solving with Individuals, Couples, and Families*. He is an editor of the Routledge Family Institute Book Series and an Advisory Editor of *Family Process Journal*.

David E. Taussig, MSW, LCSW, LMFT, AAMFT Approved Supervisor

Professor Taussig received his B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Illinois in 1972. He received his master's degree in clinical social work from Smith College School of Social Work. A 1992 graduate of The Family Institute's Postgraduate Training Program in Marriage and Family Therapy, he also completed its two-year Supervision Program in 1995. He is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, an Approved Supervisor with the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy, and a Board-Certified Diplomate in Clinical Social Work. Mr. Taussig is a Clinical Lecturer in the Department of Psychology at



Northwestern University.

Professor Taussig was a Core Faculty member in the MSMFT program from 2005-2024 administering and leading the programs supervision and training. He is also a therapist at The Family Institute since 1998 and practices family, couple and individual psychotherapy. Prior to joining The Family Institute staff, Mr. Taussig was the Director of Family and Social Services at the Rock Creek Center, a psychiatric hospital in Lemont, Illinois. Mr. Taussig's supervision philosophy is grounded in The Family Institute Perspective. His areas of special interest are couples, divorce and post-divorce issues, families with adolescent/adult children, families with severe/chronic mental illness, and men's separation/divorce issues.



N. THE FAMILY INSTITUTE AT NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

The Family Institute Mission

The mission of The Family Institute is to strengthen and heal families from all walks of life through clinical service, education and research.

Core Values and Beliefs

The family is the singular most significant factor influencing human identity. Family-based therapy is a powerful model for change, one that not only helps people cope with major life issues, but that can ultimately transform how we lead our lives, resulting in healthier communities and societies. Quality mental health care should be available to all who need it, regardless of their financial resources. The definition of “family” takes many forms and is not limited by the boundaries of biology and marriage. These beliefs are as relevant today as they were when The Family Institute was founded in 1968. They guide us as we extend our capacity to help greater numbers of people and an enormous diversity of families.

The Family Institute puts its mission and values into practice every day by:

1. Providing the highest quality mental health services to those who suffer, including those who cannot pay.
2. Reaching out to help underserved populations, including racial ethnic minorities and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender families.
3. Training and mentoring the mental health innovators and leaders of tomorrow.
4. Investigating how psychotherapy works and developing new breakthroughs in treatment.
5. Building preeminent care, teaching and research center, a model for excellence and an internationally recognized leader in the field of marriage and family therapy.

History | The Science and Practice of Family Therapy

The Family Institute helped pioneer the field of family therapy, based on the idea that people's psychological problems could not be understood or treated in isolation from their families. This was a fundamental departure from the traditional practice of treating individuals in isolation, and it gave rise to entirely new models for therapeutic care.

Founded in 1968, The Family Institute is the Midwest's oldest and largest organization devoted to marriage and family therapy, education and research. Much like a teaching hospital in the medical arena, The Family Institute is a center for direct care, for academic learning and for new discovery. The Institute provides counseling and psychotherapy throughout the Chicago metropolitan area including community-based mental health services for low-income, at-risk families. It now helps more than 4,000 people annually.

The Family Institute also operates graduate programs in marriage and family therapy and counseling at Northwestern University and conducts important research projects that lead to better understanding of mental health issues. The distinguished professional staff and faculty include internationally recognized



experts who combine the roles of therapist/teacher/scientist.

This integration of treatment, education and scientific investigation creates a critical mass for making new discoveries, forging creative solutions and developing innovative approaches to therapy.

The Northwestern University Affiliation

Integrating clinical, educational and research areas create a critical mass for developing innovative approaches and forging creative solutions. Through a unique affiliation, The Family Institute is integrated with one of the nation's most prestigious institutions of higher learning, Northwestern University. This relationship permits The Family Institute to remain an independent, not-for-profit organization – with its own governance, programmatic and funding autonomy – while benefiting from the academic richness of a major university.

The Center for Applied Psychological and Family Studies

Under the partnership, The Family Institute operates the University's Center for Applied Psychological and Family Studies in cooperation with Northwestern University's Graduate School and Office of Research.

Graduate Degree Programs

Academic and research activities at The Institute are conducted under the auspices of the Center. They include two graduate degree programs: Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy and Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology. Degrees for both programs are conferred by The Graduate School. While students in these programs receive most of their classroom work and much of their clinical training at The Family Institute, they enjoy the full benefits of a Northwestern University graduate education, including access to university libraries and other Northwestern assets. Qualified faculty hold clinical appointments through Northwestern University's Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Psychology.

Research

Research is an integral part of The Family Institute's mission; researchers and scholars work together collaboratively and as a team with clinicians and students to improve behavioral health outcomes. Through the Center for Applied Psychological and Family Studies at Northwestern University, our faculty develops and implements innovative research based on the Scientist-Practitioner Model, an ongoing feedback loop where research improves practice and our clinical practice informs our research.

Our Scientist-Practitioner Vision

The Family Institute is an intellectual hub for creating and translating scientific, systemically informed knowledge about individuals, couples and families into the best pedagogy and clinical practice available. We live the scientist-practitioner model whereby clinicians inform the questions of our research and research provides the answers that lead to new questions and better outcomes for our clients.

We have the potential to harness our assets (clients, clinicians, students, fellows, & faculty) into an information epicenter that will guide the clinicians of today and serve as a model for researchers of tomorrow.



AAMFT Code of Ethics



PREAMBLE

The Board of Directors of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) hereby promulgates, pursuant to Article 2, Section 2.01.3 of the Association's Bylaws, the Revised AAMFT Code of Ethics effective January 1, 2026.

Honoring Public Trust

The AAMFT strives to honor the public trust in marriage and family therapists by setting standards for ethical practice as described in this Code. The ethical standards define professional expectations and are enforced by the AAMFT Ethics Committee.

Commitment to Service, Advocacy, and Public Participation

Marriage and family therapists are defined by an enduring dedication to professional and ethical excellence, as well as the commitment to service, advocacy, and public participation. These commitments are recognized as responsibilities to the profession equal in importance to all other aspects. Further, these commitments promote equitable access to the mental healthcare marriage and family therapists provide. As systemic clinicians, marriage and family therapists embody these aspirations by participating in activities that contribute to a better community and society, including devoting a portion of their professional activity to services for which there is little or no financial return. Marriage and family therapists are concerned with developing laws and regulations pertaining to marriage and family therapy that serve the public interest, and with altering such laws and regulations that are not in the public interest. Marriage and family therapists also encourage public participation in the design and delivery of professional services and in the regulation of practitioners. Professional competence in these areas is essential to the character of the field, and to the well-being of clients and their communities.

AAMFT Code of Ethics

Seeking Consultation

Although the AAMFT Code of Ethics seeks to be comprehensive, it is not exhaustive and there may be behaviors or situations that implicate ethical principles but are not explicitly addressed here. Marriage and family therapists who are uncertain about the ethics of a particular course of action are encouraged to seek counsel from consultants, attorneys, supervisors, colleagues, or other appropriate authorities.

Ethical Decision-Making

Both law and ethics govern the practice of marriage and family therapy. When making decisions regarding professional behavior, marriage and family therapists must consider the AAMFT Code of Ethics and applicable laws and regulations. If the AAMFT Code of Ethics prescribes a standard higher than that required by law, marriage and family therapists must meet the higher standard of the AAMFT Code of Ethics. Marriage and family therapists comply with the mandates of law, clearly communicate their commitment to the AAMFT Code of Ethics, and take steps to resolve the conflict in a responsible manner. The AAMFT supports legal mandates for reporting of alleged unethical conduct.

Marriage and family therapists remain accountable to the AAMFT Code of Ethics when acting as members or employees of organizations. If the mandates of an organization with which a marriage and family therapist is affiliated, through employment, contract or otherwise, conflict with the AAMFT Code of Ethics, marriage and family therapists clearly communicate to the organization their commitment to the AAMFT Code of Ethics and take reasonable steps to resolve the conflict in a way that allows the fullest adherence to the Code of Ethics.

Binding Expectations

Members of AAMFT in all membership categories, including applicants for membership, must know the AAMFT Code of Ethics and its application to their professional services. Lack of awareness or misunderstanding of an ethical standard is not a defense to a charge of unethical conduct. The AAMFT Code of Ethics is binding on members of AAMFT in all membership categories, including applicants for membership.

Resolving Complaints

The process for filing, investigating, and resolving complaints of unethical conduct is described in the current AAMFT Procedures for Handling Ethical Matters. AAMFT members and applicants for membership who are accused are considered innocent by the Ethics Committee until proven guilty, except as otherwise provided, and are entitled to due process. If an AAMFT member resigns in anticipation or during the course of an ethics investigation, the Ethics Committee will complete its investigation. Any publication of action taken by the Association will include the fact that the member, or applicant for membership, attempted to resign during the investigation.

AAMFT Code of Ethics

Aspirational Core Values

The following core values speak generally to the membership of AAMFT as a professional association, yet they also inform all the varieties of practice and service in which marriage and family therapists engage. These core values are aspirational in nature and are distinct from ethical standards. These values are intended to provide a framework within which marriage and family therapists may pursue the highest goals of practice.

The core values of AAMFT embody:

1. The cultivation of an inclusive environment without prejudice and oppression where equity, belonging, and mutual respect are intrinsic.
2. Responsiveness and excellence in service to members.
3. Diversity, equity, inclusion, and excellence in clinical practice, supervision, research, education, and administration.
4. Distinctiveness and excellence in training of marriage and family therapists in systemic and relational therapies.
5. Integrity in ethical and honest behavior within Association governance.
6. Innovation and the advancement of knowledge of systemic and relational therapies.

Ethical Standards

Ethical standards, by contrast to aspirational values, are rules of practice that marriage and family therapists are obliged to follow. Ethical standards are used to adjudicate ethical complaints. The introductory paragraph to each standard in the AAMFT Code of Ethics is an aspirational and explanatory orientation to the enforceable standards that follow.

STANDARD I: RESPONSIBILITY TO CLIENTS

Marriage and family therapists advance the well-being of families, partners, and individuals and make reasonable efforts to find the appropriate balance between conflicting goals within family systems.

1.1 Non-Discrimination. Marriage and family therapists provide professional assistance to persons without discrimination on the basis of race/ethnicity, color, religion, national origin, location, citizenship status, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions), sexual orientation, sexual or gender expression, gender identity, disability (physical or mental), age, genetic information, marital status, veteran or military status, or any other characteristic protected by applicable law.

1.2 Informed Consent. Prior to initiating services, and as often as necessary throughout treatment, marriage and family therapists obtain appropriate informed consent to therapy or related procedures and use language that is reasonably understandable to clients. When persons, due to age or mental status, are legally incapable of giving informed consent, marriage and family therapists obtain informed permission from a legally authorized person, as permitted by law. The content of informed consent may vary depending upon the client and treatment plan; however, informed consent generally necessitates that the client: (a) has the capacity to consent; (b) has been adequately informed of significant information concerning treatment processes and procedures; (c) has been adequately informed of potential risks and benefits of treatments; (d) has freely and without undue influence expressed consent; and (e) has provided consent that is appropriately documented.

AAMFT Code of Ethics

1.3 Multiple Relationships. Marriage and family therapists must not exploit clients. Marriage and family therapists, therefore, make every effort to avoid multiple relationships or conditions with clients that could impair professional judgment or increase the risk of exploitation. Such relationships include, but are not limited to, business or close personal relationships with a client or the client's family. When the risk of impairment or exploitation exists due to multiple roles or conditions, marriage and family therapists document the precautions taken.

1.4 Sexual Behavior with Current Clients, Former Clients, and Others. All forms of sexual behavior with current and former clients or with known members of the client's family system are prohibited.

1.5 Reports of Unethical Behavior. Marriage and family therapists must comply with applicable laws regarding the reporting of alleged unethical conduct.

1.6 Abuse of the Therapeutic Relationship. Marriage and family therapists do not abuse their power in therapeutic relationships.

1.7 Client Autonomy in Decision Making. Marriage and family therapists must respect the rights of clients to make decisions and help them to understand the consequences of these decisions. Marriage and family therapists clearly advise clients that clients have the responsibility to make decisions regarding relationships such as cohabitation, marriage, divorce, separation, reconciliation, custody, and visitation or parenting time.

1.8 Relationship Beneficial to Client. Marriage and family therapists continue therapeutic relationships only as long as it is reasonably clear that clients are benefiting from the relationship.

1.9 Referrals. Marriage and family therapists make reasonable efforts to provide current, former, or prospective clients with appropriate referrals if the marriage and family therapist is unable or unwilling to provide professional help.

1.10 Non-abandonment. Marriage and family therapists do not terminate treatment with clients without making reasonable efforts to provide appropriate arrangements for the continuation of care.

1.11 Written Consent to Record. Marriage and family therapists must obtain informed consent and written authorization from clients or legally authorized persons before recording any images, video, audio, using any transcription services, or permitting third-party observation.

1.12 Relationships with Third Parties. Marriage and family therapists, upon agreeing to provide services to a person or entity at the request of a third party, clarify, to the extent feasible and at the outset of the service, the nature of the relationship with each party and the limits of confidentiality.

STANDARD II: CONFIDENTIALITY

Marriage and family therapists have unique confidentiality concerns because the client in a therapeutic relationship may be more than one person. Marriage and family therapists respect and guard the confidences of each individual client in the client system.

2.1 Disclosing Limits of Confidentiality. Marriage and family therapists disclose to clients and other parties with a legal interest at the outset of services the nature of confidentiality and possible limitations of the clients' right to confidentiality. Marriage and family therapists review with clients the circumstances where confidential information may be requested and where disclosure of confidential information may be legally required. Repeated disclosures to clients and other relevant parties may be necessary due to changes in circumstances.

AAMFT Code of Ethics

2.2 Written Authorization to Release Client Information. Marriage and family therapists do not disclose client confidences except by written authorization or waiver, or where mandated or permitted by law. Verbal authorization will not be sufficient except in emergency situations, unless prohibited by law. When providing couple, family, or group treatment, the marriage and family therapist does not disclose information outside the treatment context without a written authorization from each individual competent to provide written authorization. In the context of couple, family, or group treatment, the marriage and family therapist must not reveal any individual's confidences to others in the client unit without the prior written permission of that individual.

2.3 Client Access to Records. Marriage and family therapists provide clients with reasonable access to records concerning the clients. When providing couple, family, or group treatment, the marriage and family therapist does not provide access to records without a written authorization from each individual competent to provide written authorization. Marriage and family therapists limit a client's access to their records only in exceptional circumstances when there is compelling evidence that such access could cause serious harm to the client. The client's request and the rationale for withholding some or all of the record must be documented in the client's file.

Marriage and family therapists take steps to protect the confidentiality of other individuals identified in client records.

2.4 Confidentiality in Non-Clinical Activities. Marriage and family therapists use client and clinical materials in teaching, writing, consulting, research, and public presentations only if written authorization has been obtained in accordance with Standard 2.2, or when appropriate steps have been taken to protect client identity and confidentiality as permitted by law.

2.5 Protection of Records. Marriage and family therapists store, safeguard, and dispose of clinical records to comply with applicable laws and professional standards.

2.6 Breaches. In the event of a breach of clinical records, marriage and family therapists must notify clients in a timely manner that is consistent with applicable laws and professional standards.

2.7 Preparation for Practice Changes. In preparation for moving, selling, or closing a practice, incapacitation, or death, marriage and family therapists arrange for the storage, transfer, or disposal of client records in compliance with applicable laws and professional standards.

2.8 Confidentiality in Consultations. Marriage and family therapists, when consulting with colleagues or referral sources, do not share confidential information that could reasonably lead to the identification of a client, research participant, supervisee, or other person with whom they have a confidential relationship without written authorization. Marriage and family therapists share information only to the extent necessary to achieve the purposes of the consultation.

AAMFT Code of Ethics

STANDARD III: PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AND INTEGRITY

Marriage and family therapists maintain high standards of professional competence and integrity.

3.1 Maintenance of Competency. Marriage and family therapists pursue knowledge of new developments and emerging therapeutic approaches. Marriage and family therapists maintain their competence in the field through education, training, or supervised experience.

3.2 Knowledge of Regulatory Standards. Marriage and family therapists pursue appropriate education, training, or consultation to ensure adequate knowledge of, and adherence to, applicable laws, ethics, and professional standards.

3.3 Seek Assistance. Marriage and family therapists must not engage in therapeutic services when those services are compromised due to impairments to their clinical competence. Marriage and family therapists seek appropriate supervision, consultation, or professional assistance for issues that may impair work performance or clinical judgment.

3.4 Conflicts of Interest. Marriage and family therapists do not knowingly provide services that create a conflict of interest that may impair work performance, compromise clinical judgment, or cause harm to a client.

3.5 Maintenance of Records. Marriage and family therapists maintain accurate and adequate clinical and financial records in accordance with professional standards and applicable law.

3.6 Development of New Skills. While developing new skills in specialty areas, marriage and family therapists take steps to ensure the competence of their work and to protect clients from possible harm. Marriage and family therapists practice in specialty areas new to them only after appropriate education, training, or supervised experience.

3.7 Harassment. Marriage and family therapists must not engage in sexual or other forms of harassment of clients, students, trainees, supervisees, employees, colleagues, research participants, or other persons with whom they have a professional relationship.

3.8 Exploitation. Recognizing the potential for power imbalances, marriage and family therapists do not exploit clients, students, trainees, supervisees, employees, colleagues, research participants, or other persons with whom they have a professional relationship.

3.9 Gifts. When deciding whether or not to accept from or give gifts to clients, marriage and family therapists consider cultural norms and meaning, professional standards, and client perceptions. Marriage and family therapists consider the potential effects that receiving or giving gifts may have on clients and the therapeutic relationship.

3.10 Scope of Competence. Marriage and family therapists do not diagnose, treat, or advise on problems outside the recognized boundaries of their competencies.

3.11 Public Statements. Marriage and family therapists, because of their ability to influence and alter the lives of others and the public perception of the profession, adhere to professional standards when making professional recommendations or giving opinions through testimony or other public statements.

AAMFT Code of Ethics

3.12 Professional Misconduct. Marriage and family therapists may be in violation of this Code and subject to termination of membership or other appropriate action if they: (a) are convicted of any felony; (b) are convicted of a misdemeanor related to their qualifications or functions; (c) engage in conduct which could lead to conviction of a felony, or a misdemeanor related to their qualifications or functions; (d) are expelled from or disciplined by other professional organizations; (e) have their licenses or certificates suspended or revoked, or are subject to any order, settlement, or disciplinary action by a regulatory body; (f) continue to practice marriage and family therapy while no longer competent to do so because they are impaired by physical or mental causes or the abuse of alcohol or other substances; or (g) fail to cooperate with the Association at any point from the inception of an ethical complaint through the completion of all proceedings regarding that complaint.

STANDARD IV: RESPONSIBILITY TO STUDENTS AND SUPERVISEES

Marriage and family therapists recognize and attend to power differentials with students and supervisees, and promote the professional development of students and supervisees.

4.1 Multiple Relationships. Marriage and family therapists must not exploit students and supervisees. Marriage and family therapists, therefore, make every effort to avoid multiple relationships or conditions that could impair professional objectivity or increase the risk of exploitation to students and supervisees. When the risk of impairment or exploitation exists due to multiple roles or conditions, marriage and family therapists document the precautions taken.

4.2 Therapy with Students or Supervisees. Marriage and family therapists must not provide therapy to students or supervisees over whom they exercise professional authority.

4.3 Sexual Behavior with Students or Supervisees. Marriage and family therapists must not engage in sexual behavior with students or supervisees over whom they exercise professional authority.

4.4 Oversight of Supervisee Competence. Marriage and family therapists do not knowingly permit students or supervisees to perform, or to hold themselves out as competent to perform, professional services beyond their training, level of experience, and competence.

4.5 Oversight of Quality of Care Provided by Supervisees. Marriage and family therapists make reasonable efforts to ensure that services provided by supervisees meet minimum standards of ethical and clinically appropriate care.

4.6 Confidentiality with Supervisees. Marriage and family therapists do not disclose supervisee confidences except by written authorization or waiver, or when mandated or permitted by law, or when providing assessments of supervisee competence to licensing boards, professional organizations, and other entities that provide clinical credentials. In educational or training settings where there are multiple supervisors, disclosures without authorization are permitted only to other professional colleagues, administrators, or employers who are involved in the training or management of the supervisee. Verbal authorization is not sufficient except in emergency situations, unless prohibited by law.

4.7 Payment for Supervision. Marriage and family therapists providing clinical supervision must not enter into financial arrangements with supervisees through deceptive or exploitative practices, nor shall marriage and family therapists providing clinical supervision exert undue influence over supervisees when establishing supervision fees.

AAMFT Code of Ethics

STANDARD V: RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION

Marriage and family therapists respect the dignity and protect the welfare of research participants, and uphold applicable laws, regulations, and professional standards governing the conduct of research.

5.1 Institutional Approval. Marriage and family therapists submit accurate and honest research proposals, obtain institutional approval prior to conducting the research, and maintain institutional approval throughout the research process, in accordance with applicable laws and professional standards.

5.2 Protection of Research Participants. Prior to collecting data, marriage and family therapists must evaluate the potential risks and benefits for participants in relation to the potential knowledge to be gained through the research.

5.3 Conflict of Interest in Research. To protect research participants, marriage and family therapists must identify and continually monitor conflicts of interest during the research process, and disclose such conflicts to participants, institutional review boards, and research consumers.

5.4 Informed Consent to Research. Marriage and family therapists involved in research obtain appropriate voluntary informed consent from participants or persons legally authorized to provide consent where mandated by law.

5.5 Right to Decline or Withdraw from Participation. Marriage and family therapists respect participants' freedom to decline participation in or to withdraw from a research study at any time without penalty. Marriage and family therapists must provide participants with a clear process for withdrawal.

5.6 Confidentiality of Research Data. Information obtained about a study participant during the course of research is confidential unless a written waiver is obtained. When the possibility exists that others, including family members, may obtain access to such information, marriage and family therapists clearly explain this risk as well as the measures that will be taken to protect confidentiality and keep data secure.

5.7 Truthfulness of Research. Marriage and family therapists do not fabricate or falsify research results

5.8 Authorship of Student Work. Marriage and family therapists do not accept or require authorship credit for a publication based on a student's research without the marriage and family therapist making a substantive contribution beyond being a faculty advisor or research committee member.

5.9 Plagiarism. Marriage and family therapists who are the authors of books or other materials that are published or distributed do not plagiarize or fail to cite sources to which credit for original ideas or work is due.

5.10 Accuracy in Publication. Marriage and family therapists who are authors of books or other materials published or distributed by a third party make reasonable efforts to ensure that the published materials are accurate and factual.

AAMFT Code of Ethics

STANDARD VI: TECHNOLOGY-ASSISTED PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Marriage and family therapists can benefit from a wide range of technologies to support and improve treatment and supervision, and must use them in a responsible manner. This standard addresses basic ethical requirements of using these tools to augment therapy, supervision, and related professional services.

6.1 Technology-Assisted Services. Marriage and family therapists may use technology to support and facilitate the delivery of treatment or supervision services. Prior to doing so, marriage and family therapists and supervisors must: (a) determine that technologically-assisted services or supervision are reasonably appropriate for clients or supervisees; (b) inform clients or supervisees of the potential risks associated with technologically-assisted services; (c) make reasonable efforts to ensure the security of any confidential information that is transmitted or stored; and (d) utilize technologically-assisted services only after obtaining appropriate education, training, or supervised experience using the relevant technology.

6.2 Technology and Treatment Decisions. Marriage and family therapists do not use technology in place of their own independent treatment decisions and decision-making process.

6.3 Technology and Consent to Treat. Marriage and family therapists must obtain informed consent prior to treating clients through technology-assisted means. Marriage and family therapists must inform clients in writing of the risks associated with the technology-assisted means.

6.4 Technology and Supervision. Marriage and family therapist supervisors must adhere to all applicable laws and professional standards associated with the use of technology for supervision.

6.5 Technology and Documentation. Marriage and family therapists must use technology that adheres to relevant professional and legal standards when electronically generating, transmitting, or maintaining documentation containing confidential or identifying client information.

6.6 Location of Services and Practice. Marriage and family therapists follow all applicable laws regarding location of practice and services. Marriage and family therapists do not use technology-assisted means for practicing in jurisdictions where they are not legally allowed to practice.

STANDARD VII: PROFESSIONAL SERVICES WITHIN THE LEGAL SYSTEM

Marriage and family therapists adhere to the highest standards in when providing testimony or other services within the legal system.

7.1 Performance of Forensic Services. Marriage and family therapists may perform forensic services which may include interviews, consultations, evaluations, reports, and formal and informal assessments in accordance with applicable laws and competencies.

7.2 Testimony in Legal Proceedings. Marriage and family therapists who provide expert or fact witness testimony in legal proceedings must avoid misleading or false statements and base conclusions and opinions on appropriate data. The testimony from a marriage and family therapist expert witness must be accurate, independent, and based on reliable principles and methods.

7.3 Informed Consent. When evaluating individuals within the legal system, marriage and family therapists make reasonable efforts to obtain their written consent. Marriage and family therapists inform them about the evaluation process, use of information and recommendations, financial arrangements, and the therapist's role within the legal system using language that is reasonably understandable.

AAMFT Code of Ethics

7.4 Avoiding Conflicts. Marriage and family therapists protect the interests of persons being evaluated and make clear distinctions between therapy and evaluations. To avoid conflicts when legal systems are involved or when therapy is mandated, marriage and family therapists take reasonable steps to define their roles and clarify the extent of confidentiality.

7.5 Avoiding Dual Roles. Marriage and family therapists must not provide forensic services or act as an expert witness for current or former therapy clients, unless otherwise mandated by legal systems. Marriage and family therapists must not provide therapeutic services to individuals for whom the marriage and family therapist has previously provided forensic services or expert witness services unless otherwise mandated by legal systems.

7.6 Separation of Custody Evaluation from Therapy. Marriage and family therapists must not provide custody evaluations for current or former therapy clients unless mandated by law or judicial order. Marriage and family therapists may provide the court or mental health professional performing the evaluation with information about the minor, so long as appropriate authorization to disclose information is obtained.

7.7 Professional Opinions. Marriage and family therapists who provide forensic evaluations must not offer professional opinions or diagnoses about persons they have not directly interviewed, unless mandated by law or judicial order.

7.8 Familiarity with Rules. Marriage and family therapists who provide forensic services must be familiar with judicial and administrative rules prescribing their roles.

STANDARD VIII: FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Marriage and family therapists make financial arrangements with clients, third-party payors, and supervisees that are reasonably understandable and conform to accepted professional practices and applicable laws.

8.1 Financial Integrity. Marriage and family therapists do not offer or accept kickbacks, rebates, bonuses, or other remuneration for referrals.

8.2 Disclosure of Financial Policies. Prior to entering into the therapeutic or supervisory relationship, marriage and family therapists clearly disclose and explain to clients and supervisees in writing: (a) all financial arrangements and fees related to professional services, including charges for canceled or missed appointments; (b) the use of collection agencies or legal measures for nonpayment; and (c) the policy of obtaining payment from the client, to the extent allowed by law, if payment is denied by the third-party payor. Once services have begun, therapists provide reasonable notice of any changes in fees or other charges.

8.3 Notice of Payment Recovery Procedures. Marriage and family therapists give reasonable notice to clients with unpaid balances of their intent to seek collection by agency or legal recourse. When such action is taken, marriage and family therapists will not disclose clinical information unless permitted or mandated by law.

8.4 Truthful Representation of Services. Marriage and family therapists represent facts truthfully to clients, third-party payors, and supervisees regarding services rendered.

8.5 Bartering. Marriage and family therapists ordinarily refrain from accepting goods and services from clients in return for services rendered. Bartering for professional services may be conducted only if: (a) the supervisee or client requests it; (b) the relationship is not exploitative; (c) the professional relationship is not distorted; (d) a clear written contract is established; and (e) the marriage and family therapist documents the rationale for entering into the bartering agreement.

8.6 Withholding Records for Non-Payment. Marriage and family therapists may not withhold records under their immediate control solely because payment has not been received for past services.

AAMFT Code of Ethics

STANDARD IX: ADVERTISING

Marriage and family therapists only engage in appropriate networking, advertising, and marketing activities.

9.1 Accurate Professional Representation. Marriage and family therapists accurately represent their affiliations, licensure, supervision status, educational degrees, competencies, training, and experience associated with the practice of marriage and family therapy, complying with applicable law.

9.2 Promotional Materials. Marriage and family therapists ensure that advertisements and publications in any and all media are true, accurate, and comply with applicable law and professional standards. Marriage and family therapists do not solicit testimonials or endorsements from current clients or from other persons who are vulnerable to undue influence.

9.3 Educational Credentials. Marriage and family therapists do not advertise or claim educational degrees for clinical services that do not demonstrate training and education in marriage and family therapy or related fields.

9.4 Employee, Contractor, or Supervisee Qualifications. Marriage and family therapists reasonably ensure that the qualifications of their employees, contractors, and supervisees are represented in a manner that is true, accurate, and in accordance with applicable law.

9.5 Specialization. Marriage and family therapists represent themselves as providing specialized services only after taking reasonable steps to ensure the competence of their work and to protect clients, supervisees, and others from harm.

9.6 Correction of Misinformation. Marriage and family therapists make reasonable efforts to correct false, misleading, or inaccurate information and representations made on their behalf by others concerning the therapist's qualifications, services, or products.