Assignment 6.2: Interview with Clinical Mental Health Counselor

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Section 1: Professional Overview

1. What did you have to do to earn your degree and become licensed?

In order to earn my degree and become licensed, I had to complete all the coursework required by an accredited counseling program, which included both classroom instruction and hands-on practicum and internship experiences. Once my degree requirements were met, I prepared for and successfully passed the National Counselor Examination (NCE), which is a crucial step in the licensing process. After passing the exam, I applied for and received my provisional license, which allowed me to begin practicing under supervision while continuing to work toward full licensure.

2. In what settings have you practiced? With which populations?

I have gained experience in a wide range of settings, including my own private practice, community-based programs, and contractual work. My practice has included working with all populations, individuals, families, and couples, without limiting my services based on age, race, or background. I've provided support for parenting concerns, anger management, and interventions with at-risk children referred through the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). This variety has allowed me to develop flexibility and cultural competence in working with diverse populations.

3. What is your current employment and scope of practice?

Currently, I am a licensed contractor with Lakeside and am also a supervisor candidate. In this role, I provide counseling services while also preparing to step into the responsibility of supervising future clinicians. My scope of practice includes working with a wide range of clients, addressing individual, family, and community needs.

4. What do you find particularly rewarding about your profession? What are the biggest challenges you have had to overcome?

The biggest challenge I face is learning to let go of situations where clients either are not ready to accept help or I have already given all the support I can. It can be difficult to accept that not every person is ready for change at the same time. However, the most rewarding part of this work is knowing that even if I can help just one person or one family, it makes a meaningful difference. Seeing someone gain confidence, find their own voice, or make progress in their healing process is deeply fulfilling and reminds me why I chose this profession.

5. What additional trainings/certifications have you chosen to pursue? Why?

I have pursued a variety of continuing education training through Lakeside, which are required to maintain licensure. These include ethics, cultural diversity, and other CEU-based training. I value these opportunities because they not only keep me current with professional requirements but also enhance my ability to serve clients more effectively in an ever-changing field.

6. Do funding sources and managed care affect your practice?

Funding sources and managed care do not create limitations for me because I am contracted through Lakeside, which accepts multiple managed care organizations (MCOs) and funding sources. This structure allows me to focus on client care rather than being restricted by insurance concerns.

7. If you were starting over, would you still choose to be a clinical mental health counselor? Why or why not?

Yes, I would absolutely still choose to be a clinical mental health counselor. I believe strongly in giving people a place where they can be heard without judgment. Many clients come to counseling feeling like there is no help for them, and being able to provide a safe space where they can find hope and their own voice is incredibly meaningful.

8. What do you value about your professional orientation as a counselor?

What I value most is my ability to embrace diversity in all forms. I consider myself multicultural and multidiverse, and I am comfortable connecting with clients regardless of their background. I truly believe I can talk to anyone, and that flexibility and openness are central to my approach as a counselor.

9. What role does interdisciplinary collaboration (with other professionals) play in your current position?

Interdisciplinary collaboration is not just encouraged in my role, it is required. I regularly collaborate with parents, supervisors, referral agencies, physicians, psychologists, and other community resources. This teamwork ensures that clients receive holistic care and

that no one professional is working in isolation. I see collaboration as a major strength, as it creates a strong support system for both clients and providers.

Section 2: Overview of Place of Work

10. The organizational structure of the counselor's place of employment (outpatient, non-profit, private practice, etc.).

Lakeside operates as an outpatient, community-based practice. This structure allows us to meet clients where they are and provide accessible services without the barriers of inpatient settings.

11. The financial structure of the agency. (Support? Sliding scale? Full pay? Insurance? How are day-to-day financial concerns managed?)

Financial concerns are managed through a billing department, which handles insurance claims, payments, and reimbursements. We accept a wide range of insurance providers, including Medicaid, Medicare, and Tricare, ensuring that services are accessible to many different socioeconomic groups.

12. A general description of the clientele served (e.g., SES, age, gender, ethnicity, presenting problems, diagnoses, etc.).

We serve clients across the lifespan and from all socioeconomic, racial, and cultural backgrounds. Our clientele includes children, adolescents, adults, couples, and families facing a variety of challenges such as parenting concerns, behavioral issues, anger management, trauma, and adjustment difficulties. The only diagnosis we have not

typically worked with is narcissistic personality disorder, but otherwise, our caseloads cover a wide range of presenting problems and diagnoses.

13. Services offered to individual clients, families, and the community, including prevention and outreach.

We offer a comprehensive range of services to individuals, couples, and families. This includes direct counseling, prevention programs, outreach services, and community-based support.

14. How does the agency/practice market its services?

Our agency markets services through multiple avenues, including Psychology Today, Facebook, and our own website. We also partner with hospitals, private physicians, schools, colleges, and other community organizations to reach potential clients. By accepting Medicaid, Medicare, Tricare, and other insurance providers, we make services available to a wide range of people.

15. A general description of the agency's personnel, including employees' backgrounds and areas of expertise. (If a large organization, identify key categories of employees.)

Our staff includes administrators, clinicians, and interns. Each member of the team brings unique backgrounds and areas of expertise, which allows us to offer diverse services to our clients. This diversity within the staff enhances our ability to meet the needs of different populations.

16. If you have worked in multiple settings, how do the settings compare as far as benefits and challenges for counselors?

Private practice offers more control over the types of clients you accept, often allowing you to work with individuals who are committed to therapy. Community or state mental health settings, on the other hand, present challenges such as less client choice, more severe mental health cases, and being on call. While private practice allows for focused therapeutic work, community settings provide broader experience with diverse populations and crisis management skills.

17. What future challenges do you anticipate in the mental health field for your specific setting?

One of the biggest challenges I anticipate is the continued growth of online counseling. While telehealth has expanded access for many clients, it also brings challenges in maintaining engagement, building strong therapeutic relationships, and addressing confidentiality concerns. Navigating these changes will be an important focus for the future of our practice.