Program Overview

Correctional Counseling in the MS in Counseling Psychology program is a specialty that offers a variety of employment opportunities for counselors who want to work with the offender and victim advocacy populations. It also offers an opportunity for criminal justice students to expand their passion to include rehabilitation services for offenders and their families.

Correctional treatment offers a number of cognitive-behavioral treatment programs to address a variety of issues, with a primary focus on the mental health of offenders and inmates. Particular areas of focus include substance abuse, relapse prevention, DUI offenses, criminal thinking, domestic violence, and anger management. These treatment programs are geared for specific populations including juveniles and adults as well as male and female offenders.

Various therapeutic communities within correctional facilities have implemented Correctional Counseling programs with measurable success in terms of changing criminal thinking and reducing recidivism rates. Departments that have seen success include drug courts, pretrial service agencies, and probation and parole offices. These programs have also been implemented by all levels of correctional settings, from large federal pretrial service programs to smaller, progressive municipal programs.

Students completing the Correctional Counseling concentration will, as a part of their degree program, complete all the educational requirements to sit for the National Counselor Exam and will complete the educational requirements to qualify for Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). This concentration provides a basic foundation in counseling theory and skills with additional coursework in criminological theory, victimology, and correctional counseling practice. The program prepares graduates for success in a wide array of settings including, but not limited to, federal and state prisons, court clinics, forensic psychiatric units, child advocacy centers, victim services, reintegration programs and other institutional and community-based correctional programs.

The total degree hours required for this concentration is 60. This concentration requires a 600-hour internship, a 100-hour practicum, and mandatory faculty mentoring/advising meetings.

Outcomes

• Holy Family University’s Counseling Psychology graduate employment rate in the field has averaged 91% over the past 4 years.
• Holy Family University Counseling Psychology students have an 86% first time pass rate on the licensure exam (NCE).

The job opportunities available for a student with a graduate degree in Counseling with an emphasis in correctional/rehabilitation counseling are varied. Related areas of work may include substance abuse and domestic violence counseling as well as probation, pretrial services, and criminal investigations. Job duties may include developing rehabilitation plans to re-enter society, evaluation of inmates using questionnaires, and psychological tests and planning education and training to improve offender’s job skills.

Increased demand for correctional counselors can be attributed in part to growing prison populations. In some states, prison policy is being reexamined in light of budget concerns, leading to models with potential for an increased emphasis on rehabilitative services and, in turn, counselors, as states try to decrease the expenses of holding offenders in prison for longer than necessary. Private contracting is becoming a growing trend in correctional mental health and specifically in Pennsylvania. With the advent of private contractors in prisons, increased community-based services, and prevention programs, the need for Masters-level clinicians to provide counseling services and to serve in supervisory roles is increasing. It will also be appealing to those in corrections now that want to advance professionally or direct their own programs. We are preparing students for career paths, not just jobs.
Admission Requirements

Applicants must possess the following qualifications for admission to the MS in Counseling Psychology program:

• A baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university.
• An undergraduate cumulative grade-point average of 3.0 or better on a four-point scale. Applicants with an undergraduate cumulative grade-point average less than 3.0 may be required to submit results of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or the Miller Analogies Test (MAT) prior to being considered for admission.
• Two satisfactory letters of recommendation from individuals familiar with the applicant's academic or professional work.
• An application form with a nonrefundable $25 application fee.
• A 250- to 500-word personal statement of applicant's interests in the field, future professional plans and goals, and reasons for requesting admission. The quality of the applicant's statement will be of critical importance to the success of the application for admission.
• Official transcripts of all previous college or university work. Applicants will be considered based on their academic ability, expression of interests and goals, life experience, and personal interview.

Core Course Requirements prior to Internship (27 credit hours)
• Substance Abuse: An Introduction to Identification and Treatment (3cr.)
• Career and Vocational Counseling (3cr.)
• Introduction to Counseling and Guidance Theory (3cr.)
• Introductory Counseling Skills: Laboratory Level I (3cr.)
• Human Development: A Life Span Approach (3cr.)
• Counseling Multicultural and Diverse Populations (3cr.)
• Counseling Practicum (3cr.)
• Research Methods for the Behavioral Sciences (3cr.)
• Assessment: Principles and Application in Counseling (3cr.)

Required Courses for Specialty Area (30 credit hours)
• Group Counseling (3cr.)
• Legal and Ethical Issues in Counseling (3cr.)
• Psychopathology and Diagnosis Using the DSM (3cr.)
• Advanced Criminology (3cr.)
• Management of Special Populations (3cr.)
• Correctional Counseling (3cr.)
• Victimization and Victim Advocacy (3cr.)
• Internship I – Correctional Counseling (3cr.)
• Internship II – Correctional Counseling (3cr.)
• Professional Seminar: Culminating Experience (3cr.)

Counseling Comprehensive Exam

Electives (3 credits)