

## **CFS 480: CO Practicum Basics**

- 510 hours/semester at a placement of your choice (related to children and/or families in some way), weekly evening class meeting (1x/wk), individual meetings, various assignments
  - There is an orientation in the fall (for spring) and spring (for summer and fall)
  - You are responsible for setting up your placement, it is similar to an interview process. You contact the agency, express your interest, set up a meeting, and signed a contract (i.e., Practicum Agreement Form). Both you and the agency must decide if it's a good fit.
  - **You must be *cleared* to register for the course, which will occur AFTER all documents have been received and all requirements have been met.** This typically occurs near the end of the semester prior to the semester you intend to complete the practicum. Once you have been cleared, any holds would need to be discussed with your faculty advisor directly. **This does not mean you are registered for the course, only cleared to do so!**
  - You typically are not paid during your practicum so make some financial decisions early in your academic career. Also, be aware that there are some fees associated with the practicum (liability insurance – appx \$28, fingerprinting – appx \$48)
  - *Summer ONLY:* The first class begins the Tuesday after spring commencement
  - *ETCH Child Life ONLY* -if in interested in this placement, you will need to make some decisions early. Please contact Dr. Sams ASAP to discuss the process for these.
  - *As a courtesy, please always check your orientation packet, our website (listed below), or blackboard before you ask questions! ☺ After that, ask away—I am happy to help!*
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### **\*Below are some questions that are frequently asked regarding the practicum.\***

(In no particular order, so please review them all)

#### **Do I have to choose a place on the practicum placements list?**

No! These are meant to serve as ideas and so that you are aware of placements that have experience with CFS practicum students. You may choose your own as long as it fits in to the following criteria: 1) in/around Knox County, 2) related to children and/or families in some way, and 3) can accommodate 510/semester with a pre-determined supervisor. **You will be required to submit a current resume, detailed description of potential responsibilities, and your potential site supervisor will need to email to confirm that this is a suitable placement (and that he/she can accommodate 510 hours/semester).**

#### **How to pick which practicum is best for you when you get multiple offers that all seem like a good fit?**

Please contact Dr. Sams ([julisams@utk.edu](mailto:julisams@utk.edu)) to talk through which may be the best fit (both short- and long-term) for you. The practicum is good for finding out what you want to do...and some times what you do not want to do. It is always helpful to think of where you hope to be down the road and how to best position yourself to reach that goal now.

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**CONTACT:** Juli Sams, PhD  
**EMAIL:** [julisams@utk.edu](mailto:julisams@utk.edu)

**WEBSITE:** [cfs.utk.edu/ug/practicum/community](http://cfs.utk.edu/ug/practicum/community)  
**FACEBOOK:** UTK Department of Child and Family Studies

### **What do I do if none of the places I interviewed seem like a good fit?**

Please contact Dr. Juli Sams ([julisams@utk.edu](mailto:julisams@utk.edu)). Also, keep in mind that it is best to have multiple options so speak with several agencies.

### **Can the place I work *now* be my practicum site?**

Sometimes. These are approved on a case-by-case basis (do not assume it will get approved--ask!) and your practicum experience needs to be markedly different than your previous work experience with the agency. For instance, if you served as a part-time after school counselor and your practicum experience would be as an assistant director, your request *may* be approved. **You will be required to submit a current resume, detailed description of current AND potential responsibilities, and your potential site supervisor will need to email to confirm that this is a suitable placement.**

### **Will I be paid at my practicum?**

Probably not. There are a few placements that offer a small stipend, but these are rare. This, however, does NOT mean that you are not allowed to get paid. If your agency does offer payment, all the better. Just do not expect this to be the case.

### **If I don't get paid, how will I pay my rent during my practicum semester?**

Some students take a semester off to work and save while others take out a loan. The recommendation is that you address this as early in your academic career as possible so that you do not feel the additional strain the semester of your practicum.

### **Can I be employed somewhere else the semester of my practicum?**

It is not recommended (especially during summer semester) as you are at your placement for 510 hours/semester in addition to class time and assignments. **The practicum should be your top priority for the semester!** If you have questions about your situation, please discuss your case with the faculty practicum coordinator (email: [julisams@utk.edu](mailto:julisams@utk.edu) ).

### **May I take additional courses while completing my practicum?**

Technically, yes, but with a statement of caution: it is important that you understand the time requirements associated with the practicum (min. of 510 hours on-site, class meetings, and assignments). This typically is an individualized decision and Dr. Sams would be happy to discuss whether it is a viable option for you. Typically, this would NOT be recommended for summer semester given the limited time structure.

### **May I begin earning hours early?**

**IF** you have been cleared to register (and, therefore, met all requirements for the practicum) and signed up for the course you may begin earning hours up to one week before the first class meeting. **If you have not been cleared to register, do not begin at your placement!** Please contact the faculty supervisor before starting your placement.

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### **How does the summer semester compare to spring/fall semesters?**

It is mostly the same except that you have fewer weeks (approximately 13) in the summer than in spring/fall (approximately 16). This means that you should expect to work around 40 hours a week during the summer and around 32-33 in spring/fall.

Please note: The first class for summer session begins the Tuesday after spring graduation (typically the second Tuesday in May) and extends through full session (ending around the first week or so in August).

### **May I split my practicum between two sites?**

Effective Spring 2017 semester forward, students are no longer allowed to split her/his practicum between sites (due to multiple reasons including, but not limited to, your time/effort, logistics with assignments, and challenges for your site supervisors). There are MANY wonderful practicum placement options and Dr. Sams will be happy to help you with choosing one that fits your needs and interests!

### **May I split my practicum between two semesters?**

No. However, if you feel that this timeframe will be challenging, please discuss with Dr. Sams. Although the timeframe cannot be changed, we can discuss various placements or scheduling options that may be helpful in your unique situation.

### **May I choose a placement outside of Knoxville?**

You must choose a placement in or *around* Knox County (assume it if it is not touching Knox County, it is too far). The reason for this is twofold: 1) this makes it possible for you to attend class each week as well as regular 1-on-1 meetings and fulfill other course requirements and 2) so that the Practicum Advisor may have the opportunity to visit your site throughout the semester, as needed.

### **I've already been fingerprinted, do I have to do it again?**

If you have been fingerprinted in the past year for UT's purposes, you probably do not have to be re-fingerprinted. Please check with Dr. Sams to confirm (**do not assume that it is taken care of**).

### **If I already have liability insurance, do I need to purchase it again?**

The liability insurance goes from 9/1-8/31 each year and you must show proof of coverage for the ENTIRE semester you complete the practicum. For Spring and Summer students, this means you will purchase liability insurance at orientation and previous coverage should not affect this. Fall students will be reminded to purchase it mid-summer; however, students with previous coverage may need to wait to insure they are covered from early August through the semester.

### **What is the typical process before the practicum so I can prepare?**

Please see the Practicum Checklist (available on the practicum website and blackboard).

**Have another question not seen here? Contact Dr. Juli Sams ([julisams@utk.edu](mailto:julisams@utk.edu))**

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