



Alabama Department of Mental Health

Office of Deaf Services

Pre-Practicum Checklist

1. **Why are permitted interpreters not accepted for the practicum?**

Alabama State Code defines that a Qualified Mental Health Interpreter must first be licensed or licensed-eligible. Beyond that, mental health interpreting requires a high degree of fluency in both the target and source language in order to distinguish between normal language, psychotic language, and alingual or dysfluent language.

2. **I wasn't able to attend the full forty hour training at MHIT. Can I go ahead with the practicum?**

Generally, no. As stated in the Alabama Code 580-3-24-.06 Training and Certification of Qualified Mental Health Interpreters:

An interpreter desiring recognition as a qualified mental health interpreter must accumulate a minimum of 40 clock hours of training in the content areas enumerated in sections 580-3-24-.01 through 580-3-24-.05.

Therefore, attendance at all forty hours of the MHIT training must be documented and submitted before the practicum can begin. In cases of emergency, -portions of the training you missed may be satisfied by substitution- for portions of the MHIT training; however, the suggested substitution must be equivalent in content. Approval for substitutions must be approved through the Office of Deaf Services' [MHIT Coordinator](#). Until the forty hours are documented as being complete, you cannot move on to the practicum experience.

3. **Who -qualifies as a supervisor?**

Alabama State Code states that a supervisor:

"...must be approved by the Office of Deaf Services and may include an interpreter who holds certification as a qualified mental health interpreter issued by the Office of Deaf Services, an interpreter who is known to the Office of Deaf Services as having significant experience and knowledge in the field of mental health, an interpreter who also holds a degree in psychology, clinical social work, psychiatry or counseling, or a staff interpreter assigned to the Office of Deaf Services of a DMH/MR facility."

NOTE: This does not mean that an individual holding these credentials is automatically assumed to be a supervisor; any supervisory agreements must first be approved by the Office of Deaf Services. Such agreements are contingent -upon -completion of supervisor training and passing a written and performance examination.

4. **Why does the Office of Deaf Services recommend that I come to Alabama for my practicum experience?**

Alabama is - one of the few states in the nation what have a statewide system of care for deaf people with mental illness. We have a specific in-patient unit identified for deaf people and are staffed with ASL-fluent direct care staff supported by clinical staff from the Office of Deaf Services. Our patients run the gamut from being psychotic to developing competency to stand trial to being stable and awaiting placement. Language competencies run from proficient ASL to extreme dysfluency. In addition to the aforementioned, there are interpreters on staff who are certified and have held the "Qualified Mental Health Interpreter" credential for years.

Additionally, we have a broad array of placement options in the community leading to a highly varied exposure to mental health interpreting opportunities. These will range from medication checks to 28-

day primary substance abuse treatment to crisis intervention.

5. **Should I go ahead and purchase my travel tickets as soon as we have decided what my practicum dates will be?**

No. When you're ready to do your practicum and you and your practicum supervisor have agreed on a date, the coordinator will begin the process to get your contract approved through our Legal Department and then signed by the Commissioner for Mental Health. Please do not make airline reservations until the practicum contract has made its way back to the practicum coordinator from the Commissioner. There should be plenty of time to make reservations at a savings after the contract comes back, but we have no way of knowing how long the approval procedure will take. We cannot be responsible for potential costs if you do purchase your ticket before the contract is complete and some unforeseen delay forces you to make changes in your travel plans. We will contact you as soon as we have the legal requirements in place.

6. **What if I am unable to secure 10 - 15 hours of observation at my local site?**

If you are unable to secure observation hours, you may substitute actual work time in mental health (clinical) settings. You should prepare and present case studies for the time. The case studies should follow a Demand Control (EIP) perspective. You will want to consult with your practicum supervisor to make sure that the hours would be suitable for this purpose prior to appointment.

7. **Will practicum experiences be similar for every person?**

Your practicum experiences will not be the same as any other participant's, as mental health settings are an ever changing dynamic. But, there are required elements that must be completed within each practicum experience. These elements are listed on the checklist found in the handbook.

8. **May I have more than one supervisor?**

During your practicum, you will have one Primary Practicum Supervisor, but you may work with other qualified supervisors. This allows the practicum interpreter to examine different perspectives of interpreting and mental health. You will also receive feedback on your written case summaries from several supervisors.

9. **What format should be used for case presentations of the observation hours?**

You should be able to identify demands and controls through the Demand Control Schema developed by Robyn Dean and Bob Pollard. (Please review your notes from MHIT on the EIP and Demand - Control discussion.) This will include such items as setting, patient diagnosis, goal for the session, all observed demands and all possible controls including phrases or concepts that you recognize would be difficult to interpret or that you're unfamiliar with the meaning, etc. Notes should be done in Word or Excel. You will then upload them to CourseSites. We recommend that you write up your first observation and submit it to your supervisor so that they can make sure you're on the right track before you work too many hours on notes that may be unacceptable.

10. **Is there a time limit for how long I can work on the practicum?**

Yes, there are specified time limits. The deadline to be aware of is time for initial contact with the practicum Coordinator. You must have declared your interest in the practicum by February 7, 2016.

The next deadline to remember is the August 31, 2016 date when all your work must be done. Finally, once you start actually working on the practicum (i.e. the observation hours) you will have 90 days to complete the work.

11. **What happens if I am unable to complete my practicum within one year?**

One of the important things to remember is that our field grows and evolves, sometimes rapidly. The faculty of MHIT is committed to keeping the training as up to date as possible, which means each year there are revisions and updates to the curriculum material. Under certain circumstances, you may request and be granted an extension in order to complete your practicum requirements. Generally

though, if too much time has passed, you will need to retake the MHIT training.

12. What does the Written Examination include?

The Written Examination for “Qualified Mental Health Interpreter(s)” will take you approximately six to eight hours to complete. It is designed to examine your comprehension and synthesis of the material, not your rote memory. As such, most answers will require a paragraph or two to completely address the question. Questions on the test can be categorized into four basic groups:

- Name: a one or two word answer identifying the requested item.
- Discuss: requires explanation, usually in depth, about the topic.
- “What is ...?”: usually shorter, one-sentence responses that do not require elaboration.
- Identify: requires a short answer.

Ask the practicum coordinator where you can find the sample questions.

13. If I complete my practicum, will I be able to go ahead with the Written Examination immediately?

If your practicum is completed successfully, yes. During your practicum, the Practicum Team will be keeping abreast of the scores received from the supervisors (based on standardized rubrics). As your practicum wraps up, the decision will be made as to whether it will be recommended to the Office of Deaf Services that you sit for the written test as the next step toward becoming a “Qualified Mental Health Interpreter”. This decision is made based on strong input from your primary supervisor, the scores you received from all your supervisors and the documentation the practicum coordinator received indicating synthesis of information taught during MHIT as well as the practicum experience. If you are not recommended to sit for the exam, a meeting will be held with you to explain the reason(s) the recommendation was not made and what options are available.

14. Where can I take my written examination?

In Alabama, the exam is usually administered at the Office of Deaf Services’ Central Office. Candidates will need to plan a minimum of five hours for the examination; a maximum of eight hours is allowed. The Practicum Coordinator will provide you with direct contact information to the examination proctor as needed. There are no fees associated with taking the test at ODS.

For candidates from other states, the test may be proctored at a college or university testing site that can meet the requirements for safeguarding and administering the test. It is the candidates’ responsibility to locate such sites and be responsible for any fees that are assessed by that site.

15. What happens if I don’t pass my written examination?

If a candidate’s score is below the passing level, the candidate will be given a summary of the test results outlining strengths and weaknesses shown on the exam. Some candidates’ test scores will be marginal or responses unclear and confusing. They may be asked to sit for an oral examination covering the deficiencies noted on the summary report. Candidates not successfully passing the written/oral exam may retake a different version of the exam after three months or after re-taking the MHIT training. If remediation is desired, contact the Practicum Coordinator.

16. Can I use interpreting for a mental health conference (Consumer Conference, MHIT, State Community Council, etc.) as part of my practicum or annual CEU requirements for maintaining my certification?

No. Assignments must be clinical in nature. Section 4.3 of the Practicum Guidelines states: *“Unacceptable assignments include platform interpreting for workshops, interpreting professional level meetings that are not directly related to treatment planning, social activities, or interpreting assignments primarily educational in nature.”*

17. After being awarded the Qualified Mental Health Interpreter (QMHI) certification, how can I earn 40 clock hours of CEU requirements within twelve months?

Clock hours include training, work hours or a combination of the two. Some suggestions include:

- Clinical work hours;

- Participating in supervision;
- Online article discussions/self-paced activities;
- ODS trainings;
- Trainings offered by other agencies/individuals, etc.;
- Attending MHIT as an alumni

If you are not sure if an activity would satisfy the CEU requirement, you may contact the Office of Deaf Services.

18. Can I earn CEUs for my practicum and testing?

Yes, you may. See the forms included in this document and contact the [CMP Coordinator](#). CEU approval must be given BEFORE you begin any portion of the activity

Where can I go for additional information?

This website is a good resource and you are welcome to contact the [practicum coordinator](#), or the [MHIT Project Coordinator](#). You should also consider joining - one of the several listservs that are associated with MHIT, such as Terpinfo@yahoogroups.com or ALMHI@yahoogroups.com.