**Response to COVID-19**

*\*Please note, these policies were put into action for the 2020-2021 training cohort effective August of 2020. Modifications for the current training class (2022-2023 cohort) are noted separately; however, adjustments to the more stringent safety measures put into place for the 2020-2021 cohort may be reimplemented (in part or fully) if mandated by the University and/or local Departments of Health, and as such are outlined here for public consumption. At this time, our facility remains open and fully operational with minimal changes to the training structure that was put into place during the most recent accreditation cycle.*

Four over-riding principles are core to all safety measures being taken at the FSU MDC in response to COVID-19: use of personal protective equipment (i.e., masks), physical distancing, hygienic practices, and reducing contact/exposure opportunities. The implementation of these principles is expected to impact many facets of internship but is not expected to compromise the integrity of the training program or minimize the emphasis on intern competency. The following information is an overview of the FSU MDC’s response to COVID-19 for our current training cohort:

**GENERAL SAFETY MEASURES IN CLINIC.** All interns and staff are required to wear personal protective equipment in the form of masks. Masks should meet CDC guidelines if wearing a reusable mask; disposable masks are acceptable. Masks may be removed when at your designated workspace while simultaneously honoring physical distancing practices (i.e., 6 feet) and refraining from talking. Masks may also be taken down if *completely alone* in a space. However, masks must be reset when talking or interacting with other individuals in a shared space, even if six feet apart. Intern work stations are preassigned to ensure appropriate social distancing. Please make every effort to maintain this space. When in large rooms (e.g., conference room), seating must remain six feet apart and masks must be worn. If meeting with a supervisor or supervisee in an office or exam room, propping the door open is suggested, masks must be worn, and Plexiglas shields may be used if desired. Supervisors may decide to meet in a space other than their office. In any case, seek as much physical distance as possible. Shared public spaces must restrict the total number of individuals present, proportional to the size of the space. **When moving through the building, masks are required at all times, and physical distancing must be at the forefront of everyone’s minds**.

Hygienic practices are of paramount importance. Handwashing is preferred over the use of hand sanitizer, though both are acceptable if used properly. All bathrooms are equipped with educational materials on appropriate handwashing behaviors; please review and implement these. Additionally, keep hand sanitizer with you as much as possible. Disinfect any shared spaces that you are using and disinfect your work space at the end of each work cycle. FSU MDC will make every effort to make sanitation supplies plentiful for intern use.

Until further notice, all exterior doors to the FSU MDC will remain locked, even during regular business hours. Clients must ring the front doorbell or call the front office to gain access to the building. Interns are encouraged to keep their FSU ID cards with them at all times so they are not locked out of the building, particularly on weekends. Special considerations may be given to working outside, particularly when conducting therapy at schools or supervision at the FSU MDC. We realize, however, that it can be extremely uncomfortable (if not dangerous) to work outside during certain times of the year in Florida. Modifications to the dress code can be requested if an intern intends to conduct therapy or supervision in an outside venue. While professional dress is still required, some concessions can be made with supervisor approval. Please speak to the applicable supervisor regarding attire that is acceptable if you are planning to work outside.

It is the Center’s desire to provide interns with a safe, supportive learning environment, even as we face a global pandemic. The safety expectations outlined in this document and in other places are intended to enhance intern safety. However, illness is always a risk when working with children and in public settings. Interns are encouraged to monitor their physical health and communicate with supervisors regarding any of the following symptoms, as they may result in an intern being asked to stay home, seek medical attention, and/or quarantine:

* Fever
* Chills
* Muscle pain
* Headache
* Sore throat
* Cough
* Gastrointestinal symptoms
* Loss of taste or smell

If an intern is exposed to someone with confirmed COVID-19 or tests positive for COVID-19 themselves, they will be required to self-quarantine for at least 14 days, and may be asked to seek a health screening before being allowed to return to work.

Interns with pre-existing health conditions that make them susceptible to COVID-19 or at increased risk for severe symptoms are encouraged to take whatever additional safety measures may be advised by a physician. While personal health information is considered a private matter, the intern is encouraged to share this information, as well as whatever additional accommodations may be needed, with the supervisory staff. Training adaptations will be made as appropriate to ensure intern health.

At this time, our sick leave policy remains unchanged. We do not place a limit on days that can be used for illness but will monitor the integrity of the training program with interns who are chronically ill (e.g., absent more than 7-10 days) or affected by COVID-19. If it becomes clear that an intern’s overall training experience has been negatively impacted by illness, a written plan will be put into place to assist the intern in achieving expected competencies, including but not limited to extending the training year if necessary. Finally, interns are being asked to undergo COVID testing upon their arrival to Tallahassee, no fewer than seven days prior to the start of internship.

*2022-2023 Updates*

*At this time, masks are optional for trainees and staff unless an individual is showing symptoms of illness, has had a confirmed exposure to COVID-19 and is following the advisement of the CDC isolation-quarantine calculator, or an individual has tested positive for COVID-19 and is returning to work per the recommendations of the CDC quarantine-isolation calculator (see link below). Regardless of the health status of the intern, however, clients and parents of clients may request that an intern wear a mask when working with them or their child. Additionally, interns and staff are expected to utilize the portable HEPA filtration systems that are placed in each room at all times when they are working at the FSU MDC. Physical distancing is still encouraged as much as possible; however, interns are no longer assigned to specific work stations nor are they expected to stagger their attendance to minimize building occupancy.*

*Hygienic practices outlined above remain in effect. Additionally, the facility door remains locked at all times, interns may continue to choose to work outside with therapy clients and interns may request relaxed dress code provisions should they prefer to conduct therapy in an alternate setting. Our health guidelines remain the same as outlined above, though quarantine is no longer mandatory for 14 days; we currently follow CDC guidance as outlined in the isolation-quarantine calculator shared below. Finally, interns are not required to undergo COVID testing prior to starting internship but are expected to test immediately and respond appropriately should they present with symptoms of illness.*

CDC Quarantine & Isolation Calculator:

[*https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html*](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html)

**CAMPUS PRESENCE.** Until further notice, FSU is advising that campus presence be limited. While the exact number of staff that can be in a building at any one time remains a department level decision (and will be changing over time through FSU’s phased program), the University is strongly advising that only a proportion of staff and students are on site during overlapping hours. To that end, the core staff of the FSU MDC, interns, and students will not be able to freely come and go and schedules for supervision and office presence will be provided to interns on a semester-by-semester basis. There will be few occasions in which all interns and supervising psychologists are present simultaneously. Supervision (for both interns and practicum students) and didactic trainings will be accomplished via a combination of live and remote platforms, with interns alternating Mondays between Zoom and in-person meetings. Interns may come to the Center to work in the afternoons, evenings, and weekends, but are asked to limit the number of individuals in the office at any given time.

*2022-2023 Updates*

*Campus presence is no longer limited, nor are interns prohibited from coming to campus or the FSU MDC at any time. Standing supervision meetings via Zoom are no longer required in favor of face-to-face meetings, though remote supervision remains an option for interns or supervisors who cannot be physically present. The need for online meetings is determined on a case-by-case basis and is expected to make up the minority of supervisory and didactic meetings at this time.*

**SCHOOL SAFETY.** Local schools may vary widely in their safety procedures. As such, FSU Psychology Interns will be expected to adhere to similar safety procedures in their schools as those expected at the Center. Namely, interns must wear a mask at all times, maintain physical distance to the greatest extent possible, and practice exceptional hygiene. Additionally, each intern will be provided with a personal Plexiglas shield that will be transported between individual school sites and used for all testing procedures. Please take care to disinfect the shield after each use. Should you use your own sanitation equipment, please make sure that the product is safe for use. Please also make sure the product is approved to kill viruses and bacteria (e.g., alcohol-based, Lysol, Clorox products) and that you follow directions for sanitation/disinfecting. This typically means letting a cleaner sit for at least 10 minutes before wiping it. Shields may present as a barrier to counseling activities; interns may elect to use the shield, work in outdoor venues (when approved and appropriate), and emphasize physical distancing, but a mask or protective face shield must be worn at all times. If a school has a more restrictive safety policy than this, interns are expected to adhere to the more restrictive policy.

We are also seeking to maximize time in schools in a meaningful, safe way. Interns are strongly encouraged to capitalize on face-time in schools by completing testing and therapy activities that cannot translate to remote platforms whenever you are in schools. However, we are also seeking to minimize unnecessary exposure to potential illness by allowing interns the flexibility to work in settings outside of the brick and mortar schools. To that end, interns are expected to go to their assigned schools per a Master Schedule; however, if there is not a pressing reason to be in the school building, interns may come to the Center or work remotely if approved by the school and your primary supervisor. Specific procedures are provided, however, please note that this is based on an honor system to some degree. While our preference would be for you to work in the Center in these situations, given our simultaneous goal of minimizing traffic in the Center, you may be granted permission to work from another location. If time management becomes a concern or if the school raises questions regarding this format, interns may be asked to work in the Center exclusively.

*2022-2023 Updates*

*Interns are no longer required to mask when working in schools, nor are they required to use a Plexiglas shield when working with students. Physical distancing is encouraged to the extent possible. Although our safety measures have relaxed, should the school require or implement specific safety practices, interns are expected to adhere to the more stringent standard. Furthermore, interns continue to be encouraged to capitalize on opportunities to attend their placements in person, but do have the flexibility to work at the FSU MDC or from home on a designated school day under specific circumstances and with supervisor approval. The appropriateness of this option is determined on a case-by-case basis.*

**SEEING CLIENTS IN PERSON**. Interns will continue to see clients via live appointments. However, additional safety measures and sanitation procedures will be in place for the foreseeable future.

* Personal Protective Equipment, including protective masks, hand sanitizer, and cleaning supplies will be available for use by clients; clients may bring their own PPE. Signs are posted on the front door and in common areas regarding mask requirements to enter the building and hand washing procedures, use of hand sanitizers, and reminders to avoid touching one’s face or hugging/handshaking.
* Interns will adhere to cleaning and disinfection protocols, which include cleaning procedures for offices, testing rooms, and test materials, and the timing and frequency of cleaning (e.g., cleaning of surfaces will occur prior to beginning in-person testing and throughout the day).
* Plexiglass barriers will be used to separate examiners and clients during testing. These barriers are in addition to personal (portable) Plexiglas barriers that will be provided to all interns for use both in and outside of the Center.
* In-person services are being limited to clients in need of testing for “gateway” services; that is, psychological evaluations that are necessary to receive other medical, psychological, or educational services. Any and all portions of the evaluation that can be provided remotely will be continued, including parent interviewing and feedback sessions.
* In-person psychological services will be limited to two-three clients per day, in compliance with FSU’s phase reopening plan. Testing rooms are available on different halls in our clinic and we will place each client in a testing room on a different hallway. We will use our largest rooms for testing to allow more air circulation, as well as video recording for supervisors to review remotely, if needed. The doors will remain propped open during the assessment to promote additional air circulation.
* Two weeks prior to any scheduled appointments the parent will be asked prescreening questions by inquiring if the client or a member of the client’s family has had, within the past 14 days:
  1. Fever
  2. Chills
  3. Muscle Pain
  4. Headache
  5. Sore throat
  6. Cough
  7. Gastrointestinal symptoms
  8. Loss of taste or smell
  9. Traveled outside of Tallahassee area in last 14 days and if so, where? (If Yes, Director will make decision about whether to proceed with testing)
  10. Had contact with someone with COVID-19 in the past 14 days.

A review of safety measures and procedures that will be in place on the day of testing will likewise be reviewed with the parent. Finally, a waiver will be mailed prior to testing and completed form brought to MDC on day of testing.

* The day before the appointment, front office staff will review the same screening questions when calling to confirm appointment(s) and remind parents of the mandatory masks procedures in place.
* At this time, we are modifying most testing batteries to be highly efficient and time sensitive. This will typically translate into a shorter evaluation than we would prefer. However, given our need to limit exposure, test batteries will be much more targeted than what our traditional training model would entail. The needs of the client will be balanced with the needs of the trainee in terms of competency as much as possible.
* Finally, 14 days post-appointment, families will be contacted for a third time to again screen for COVID-19 symptoms.

*2022-2023 Updates*

*Live appointments make up the majority of client contacts at this time, with the exception of scheduling parent interviews and feedbacks. Specifically, interns and/or parents may choose to participate in interviewing and feedback meetings via FSU Zoom, while testing appointments are always scheduled in-person. When clients are here, they are not required to use personal protective equipment, but may choose to do so. Interns are expected to clarify with parents regarding their preference for interns to utilize personal protective equipment when working with them or their child. Interns are expected to use the portable HEPA filtration systems placed in each testing room throughout the testing appointment. Interns are also expected to sanitize the workspace and any shared materials used during the testing session once the session is completed. Plexiglas shields are no longer utilized. Scheduling and capacity limits are also no longer in place. Furthermore, clients are no longer screened for illness, but are asked to contact the Center should the client or persons accompanying the client to their appointment present with symptoms of illness and/or test positive for COVID-19 up to 48 hours after the appointment is concluded. Pre-screening questions are no longer administered to families prior to the appointment, however, should a family need to cancel or reschedule an appointment due to illness, they will be given priority when appointments are available (preferably with the same intern). Finally, testing batteries are no longer being modified.*

**ADAPTATIONS TO TRAINING EXPERIENCES.** While the FSU MDC has sought to minimize the impact of COVID-19 on the overall integrity of the internship, some modifications to training experiences and formats are to be expected in line with safety procedures previously outlined, as well as factors beyond the control of the training staff (e.g., school schedules, school closures, etc.).

As an example, specialty clinics are temporarily altered from a traditional “rotation” model to a combined model. Interns will be synchronously trained to conduct Attention Disorders and Autism Spectrum Disorder evaluations and will have simultaneous exposure to both assessment protocols throughout the internship experience. Additionally, while interns will be trained on administration and coding of the ADOS-2, the ADOS-2 cannot be administered fully at this time due to concerns about the validity of the instrument. Namely, use of masks, Plexiglas shields during testing, restricted use of shared materials, and physical distancing protocols are not only discouraged, but also clinically contraindicated for conducting the ADOS-2. Once restrictions have been lifted interns will have been fully trained on the instrument and will have opportunities to administer it while being supervised. In the interim, interns will learn to conduct gold standard clinical evaluations for Autism using an array of traditional assessment procedures (i.e., parent interviewing, checklists, direct observation) and newly developed protocols (e.g., BOSA, remote testing procedures). The expectation is for interns to exit internship with similar, if not a wider range, of assessment expertise as in Non-COVID years.

Intern schedules will also be somewhat altered. While they will continue to spend two to three days per week in schools conducting evaluations, consulting with teachers, and providing mental health services (barring any school closures), one day per week they will alternate between school placements and the MDC clinic conducting specialty clinic assessments. Specialty clinics have traditionally been reserved for Fridays; however, in the interest of providing interns more time and flexibility to conduct parent interviews, conduct school observations, or participate in school-based activities, Fridays will be treated as a flexible day. This time can also be used for report writing, supervision, and case management as needed.

While at the MDC, interns are required to participate in two immersion activities in line with Diversity Training expectations. Specifically, each intern must attend at least two community events that expose them to regional and cultural themes or that provide them with an opportunity to be around individuals that are from a different from themselves. This might include attending a food or arts festival, attending a lecture series, or participating in a local event. A reflection piece is written and provided to the Director of Internship and experiences are discussed during diversity seminars. *It is understood that this particular activity may not be possible due to health concerns related to COVID-19.* If an intern is unable to complete an immersion activity, the Director of Internship will waive this requirement. However, please communication with the Director regarding your inability to complete this activity.

*2022-2023 Updates*

*Training modifications as outlined above are no longer in place. This includes a return to previously used testing batteries and instrumentation, returning to a traditional “rotation model” for specialty clinic training, and returning to a traditional placement schedule wherein interns are at the FSU MDC two days per week and work in schools three days per week. One exception to the return to pre-pandemic practices is the requirement for interns to complete an immersion activity related to our diversity training. This particular requirement remains optional for interns, particularly while community spread of COVID-19 is considered to be high in the surrounding community.*

**HOURS.** Interns are expected to track their hours very closely. We recognize that it is not beyond the realm of possibility that schools will close again or adopt attendance policies that make it difficult to work in the school setting. In the event that schools close, we will make every effort to continue working remotely, including recording hours used to write reports or conduct distance assessment activities, participating in feedbacks and staffings remotely, and providing school mental health services using telehealth platforms (see school safety procedures). If it becomes necessary to supplement intern activities in order to satisfy training hours and attain competencies, as long as FSU remains fully operational, school-based work may be substituted with clinic-based assessment activities. This is the first time that our schools have such wide variability in their start dates and instructional formats, making it paramount for interns to keep copious records regarding their hours, as you will not be able to compare experiences between placements. Hours will be tracked at every evaluation point (i.e., December/January, April/May and end of internship), and will be closely monitored during the spring semester in particular. Throughout the tracking process, competency attainment will be the primary focus. However, if an intern is projected to fall short of their 2000 hours, plans for supplementing hours up through the possibility of extending internship beyond the projected end date may be considered on an individual basis.

*2022-2023 Updates*

*Interns are still expected to closely track their hours during their training year. While it is* ***highly unlikely*** *that schools will close again or adopt attendance policies that are prohibitive for interns meeting their hour requirements, should this occur, the FSU MDC will continue to make every effort to facilitate interns’ ability to fulfill their training competencies with integrity. Throughout the hour tracking process, competency attainment remains the primary focus. However, should an intern be projected to fall short of their 2000 hours for any reason, plans for supplementing hours up through the possibility of extending internship beyond the projected end date may be considered on an individual basis.*

**TRAVEL.** Traditionally, FSU MDC reimburses interns for travel to their school districts and/or work-related travel that exceeds 20 miles from destination to destination. The state of travel reimbursement remains in flux and interns are asked to be flexible. Please keep a record of your travel using the approved forms and procedures. In the past, interns were asked to engage in carpooling with one another and with practicum students whenever possible. However, given the safety protocols in place, carpooling is discouraged until further notice.

*2022-2023 Updates*

*This policy remains in effect.*

*2022-2023 General Statements*

*The FSU MDC will continue to prioritize the health and safety of our interns, as well as the health and safety of staff and clients, while making every effort to maintain the integrity of the training experience. Interns are encouraged to seek support from their supervisors and are free to seek consultation should they have hesitations or concerns about training experiences and placements in relation to their personal safety and wellness. However, it is important to note that personal health information remains private and there are no provisions or expectations in place that an intern should be required to share personal health information with supervisors or staff. Relatedly, vaccinations are encouraged but are not required, nor is the disclosure of vaccination status required. Our guiding principle is for staff and trainees to* ***conduct themselves ethically and make personal decisions that are in the best interest of both self and others****, as it is our goal to create a culture of caring for one another and to act as ambassadors for the field of psychology.*