



# JMU Counseling Center

\*\*Please note: to avoid ethical issues that may occur when the CC staff relate to an individual in a role other than as a client, all current and former CC clients will be excluded from training and employment opportunities at the CC. \*\*

## Intern or Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities

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- Assist in various Counseling Center (CC) outreach events which can include but is not limited to tabling, animal assisted activities, and presentations on a variety of mental health and awareness topics
- Assist in promoting CC outreach events through the use of CC social media sites and creation of digital signs/E-boards
- Attend in-service training and weekly supervision meetings
- Develop original outreach project based on area of personal interest related to mental health
- Work with staff members on relevant projects and/or research

## Other Notes

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- Not a counseling placement
- Not direct observation of counseling

## Contact Information

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- Contact Person: Karla Kale; [kalekl@jmu.edu](mailto:kalekl@jmu.edu)
- Address: JMU Student Success Center - 3rd Floor, Harrisonburg, Virginia 22807
- Phone: 540/568-6552
- Website: [www.jmu.edu/counselingctr](http://www.jmu.edu/counselingctr)



**Read about students' experiences at this site below:**

*Fall 2022 – Lauren Hirshorn*

The James Madison University Counseling Center is staffed by mental health clinicians dedicated to the overall development of both undergraduate and graduate students. They provide services within a developmental, proactive, and outreach-oriented framework to ensure the beneficial growth of students, whether they attend clinical counseling or on-campus workshops. This fully accredited organization abides by their mission: "To provide a safe, supportive, trusting, and confidential environment which empowers students to develop the awareness, values, and skills they will need to meet future challenges and lead vital, meaningful lives." The center uses a short-term treatment model, as most students can address their concerns within three to five sessions. However, there is no limit on the number of sessions a student can have, and clinicians may refer a student to an outside clinician for further guidance. Generalized and social anxiety, mild to moderate depression, relationship issues, academic concerns, low self-esteem, and other issues are typical matters addressed in sessions. The JMU Counseling Center offers specialized treatment programs, group therapy, couples therapy, and individual therapy to all students at the university. Additionally, the center facilitates numerous workshops and outreach seminars to educate the JMU Community on preventative measures they can take to better their own mental health. You can also stop by Puppy Office Hours featuring our therapy dogs: Wicket, Calla, Gracie, and Lily!

Out of the many departments within the Counseling Center, I worked most closely with the self-care spaces: the Oasis and the Studio. The Oasis is a mindfully inspired relaxation room for students to decompress in massage chairs, partake in yoga or meditation, and listen to the calming water features within the space. The Studio offers a creative outlet for students to reduce stress and increase emotional awareness through artistic activities.

At my site, I worked under the supervision of Dr. Magali Laitem, a clinical psychologist, and the outreach coordinator on staff. Magali and I met for weekly supervision, where we discussed my experience at the center, how I was balancing both academics and extracurriculars, and anything else that popped into our minds. She was extremely helpful in answering questions or tackling concerns I had regarding graduate school, as well. We focused mainly on professional development, the graduate application process, and how to use my strengths to my advantage. She opened the floor for me to present ideas for my contribution project and provided me with the connections necessary to make it a reality. I have appreciated her guidance dearly. Additionally, I met with Dr. Onestak, the director of the Counseling Center, to discuss matters of the greater JMU community. We focused on a separate project tackling the implementation of TimelyCare, the new telehealth service offered by JMU. I surveyed students across the campus asking them where they would go for private conversations both on and off campus. From these results, I narrowed the list down and shared it with Dr. Onestak. We discussed different ways to advertise this new resource, too.



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One thing in particular that I enjoyed about the Counseling Center was the atmosphere. I have formed incredible relationships with the faculty here and feel as if I have been welcomed into their family. Each clinician that I conversed with offered me insight into their role and the different routes I could take in clinical counseling. They have given me perspective on how rewarding being a clinician could be. Additionally, I loved the location of my desk. I was seated in the wing with doctoral interns, residents, and counseling externs. I took this opportunity to ask these students about their experience in graduate school and if there was anything they would change. Their answers offered me perspective on potential aspects that I would want to incorporate or discard in the remaining years of my education. Everyone in the center is kind, always stopping to say hi, and bringing little sharable goodies to the break room. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here and hope to maintain these connections as I venture into the professional realm.

Something that I learned at the JMU Counseling Center was during a conversation with one of the clinicians on staff. I spoke of my interest potentially working with sexual trauma survivors and incorporating this into my practice. She told me that she holds a second position at the local victim advocacy center, as she hoped to do the same. This showed me that regardless of the license and/or degree I receive, I can always incorporate other aspects either into my own practice or contribute to work outside of my office. As this semester has gone on, my interest in working with trauma has grown. Our conversation sparked a fire in me to educate myself on the impacts that trauma can have on overall well-being, and beneficial ways to heal these wounds. This led me to finalize my concept for my contribution project.

For my contribution project, I created a self-guided trauma-based reflection handout. In order to do so, I researched various psychologists, including James Pennebaker, to determine the most effective ways to complete reflective or expressive writing. After taking extensive notes, I began the works of this three-and-a-half-page handout. The first page consists of what to write, the quantity of writing, and why it is found to be beneficial. The second page includes specific guidelines regarding the safety in writing depending on when the traumatic event(s) took place. It is vital to understand the differences one can approach writing based on whether the event(s) occurred in the past, are happening currently, or are expected to arise. The next page focuses on ways in which the client can beneficially express their emotions. It is important to recognize that there is no right or wrong way to have emotions, emotions just are, and one may experience a multitude of emotions. Any emotional reaction they experience is part of a healthy and normal response. The final portion of the handout provides further instruction to follow prior to the start of the writing journey. This is then followed by seven sample prompts that students can use as a way to ease them into the process. After I completed the informational aspect of the handout, I knew that it needed to have an aesthetically pleasing and calming appearance. I edited multiple drafts before deciding on my final product. My project was then reviewed by the Victim Advocacy Department and the center's STEP coordinator for approval. I am delighted to know that this will be provided to students by clinicians and hopefully help in their trauma-healing journey. I cannot begin to describe the feeling knowing that my project will be utilized for years.

Overall, this has been an incredible experience. I do not believe there to have been anything to prepare me for the responsibilities required of me; yet, through my supervisor's guidance and instruction, I never felt out of place. I am sad to be leaving but am proud of myself



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for knowing that I made an impact on the Counseling Center and the JMU Community. I am grateful for this experience and for the relationships I gained along the way.