

Graduate Counseling Program Clinical Experiences Newsletter

Written by Dr. Amber Pope & Elizabeth Orrison



Military Family Teen Socialization Groups

The Military Family Teen Socialization Group was an initiative in Spring 2021 led by Dr. Amber Pope in collaboration with a local military parent social media group. Master's level School & Clinical Mental Health Counseling students facilitated weekly virtual socialization groups over a 10-week period for teens of military families. Students Tom Bischof, Jayne Epaloose, Ashlee Erstain, Karina Lozano, Deanna Robertson, and Patrice Whilite served as socialization group leaders.



The socialization group provided military teens a space to connect and interact with other middle or high schoolers who live in the local area. Teens were provided short-term support for current challenges and/or concerns they may have been experiencing given the unique nature of military life, the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic, and the disruption to the school year. The group leaders invited the teens to share about themselves, current events in their lives, and their successes and challenges during this past year. Group topics included self-care, building and maintaining friendships, and life at home during the pandemic.

The group leaders described the teens' experiences as beneficial. "One of my students was homeschooled so she was able to meet students that she never would've outside of the group," said Jayne Epaloose. "[The teens who participated] were able to talk to each other about shared experiences that made them feel better and less isolated."



The socialization groups served as an outlet for participants to share their thoughts and emotions with other military teens experiencing similar circumstances. "They appeared to feel comforted and supported knowing that we, as community volunteers, were committed to help them and they were not alone," said Tom Bischof. "It was a time for them to have some fun with other teens."

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Compassion Fatigue:

What is it and how can I prevent it?

MSEd Clinical Mental Health Counseling student,

Amanda Bartolome, can answer this question.

Compassion fatigue occurs when helping professionals take on the stress or trauma experienced by their

clients. Compassion fatigue typically has a quick onset, as compared to burnout, exhaustion brought on by stress over an extended period of time. As crises subject helping professionals to high levels of stress, mental health and medical professionals unsurprisingly indicated higher rates of compassion fatigue, burnout, and post-traumatic stress during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 than in previous years (d'Ettore et al., 2020; Nelson, 2020).

To assist local mental health professionals and graduate students in preventing and coping with compassion fatigue, Bartolome developed a 4-week long compassion fatigue workshop. She facilitated the sessions via telehealth in November 2020 at her internship site, Virginia Beach Christian Counseling. Participants included counseling and social work graduate students from Old Dominion, Norfolk State, William & Mary, and Temple University.



In terms of her professional development, Bartolome learned more about how to assess, prevent, and treat compassion fatigue, and enhanced her skills in group facilitation through telemental health. She stated, "Many [participants] stated that they would use some of the preventative techniques in their daily practice." Bartolome continues to expand her expertise, currently completing the Compassion Fatigue Resiliency & Recovery-Educator training offered by the Traumatology Institute. She suggested the resources below for helping professionals seeking to enhance their own self-care practices.

References

d'Ettore, G.,...Tarsitani, L. (2020). Post-traumatic stress symptoms in healthcare workers dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review. *International Journal of Environmental Research & Public Health*, 18(2), 601-617. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18020601>

Nelson, B., & Kaminsky, D. B. (2020). COVID-19's crushing mental health toll on health care workers. *Cytosource: Current Issues for Cytopathology*, 128 (9), 597-598. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cncy.22347>

Resources to Prevent Compassion Fatigue & Burnout

Web article

- [Running start... to a great career: Avoiding burnout](#)

Book

- [The Resilient Practitioner: Burnout & Compassion Fatigue Prevention & Self-Care Strategies for the Helping Professions](#)

Podcast

- [Progress Notes](#)

Personal & Professional Support

- [Process & Consultation Groups for Therapists](#)

ODU Math and Science Resource Center (MSRC) Wellness Check-Ins for Undergraduate Students

During her Clinical Mental Health Counseling internship in 2020-2021, Andrea Stephen developed the Wellness Check-In initiative in the ODU MSRC. Stephen, an EdS student, conducted brief check-ins with undergraduate students in the College of Sciences who were feeling overwhelmed and disconnected during COVID. The wellness check-ins gave students an opportunity to connect with an employee on campus who provided a listening ear and additional support, such as assisting them in identifying coping strategies to succeed academically during the pandemic.

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ODU MSRC Wellness Check-Ins (cont.)

She also connected students to appropriate campus resources, such as tutoring, ODU Cares, and ODU's Counseling Services.

According to Stephen, undergraduates discussed concerns such as relationship conflicts, anxiety, time management, feeling isolated and disconnected, issues with instructors, internet/computer issues, and navigating the university system. Stephen was able to advocate for several students. "I received great feedback from the students, stating they were grateful for the service and found that they had found someone who they could relate to their concerns," said Stephen. "This is a service that I would love to continue to offer. It helps connect our students to the tools and resources that are needed to succeed in college."

Are you feeling stressed out or need some tips to cope with balancing life because of COVID-19?

Get FREE Wellness Check-In sessions courtesy of the MSRC!

Join Andrea Stephen, facilitator of MSRC, for 30-minute sessions

Andrea R. Stephen holds a master's degree in Human Services Counseling as well as certifications in Life Coaching, Wellness Coaching, Telehealth, Psychological First Aid and Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS)



Chesapeake Regional Healthcare Initiatives

Chesapeake Regional Healthcare (CRH) is a large, multifaceted medical center with a high volume emergency department and specialized medical in-patient units. CRH is unique in Hampton Roads in that it is the only community-based in-patient medical facility that is independent of larger conglomerates. As an independent health care system, CRH is free to focus, invest, optimize and deliver care by enabling clinicians, staff and employees to treat each patient as a person.

CRH has a well-established behavioral health program, with services predominantly provided by Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) master's and doctoral level interns. The 2020-2021 CRH interns were PhD students Jordan Pearce, Alexandra Gatt, and Suelle Micallef Maramara, and MEd students Melanie Agustin, Maya Birden, Eve Glenn, Nick Holdcroft, Lee-Stroud Laroche, Andrea Stephen, Morgan Xenos, and Jade Williams.

The ODU CMHC interns were active participants in a variety of initiatives to serve both patients and medical staff at CRH. In one initiative, interns facilitated mindfulness exercises for nurses. Conducting mindfulness sessions on site created a space for nurses to process their challenging work during the pandemic and to regularly engage in a form of self-care in their workplace.

The 6E Initiative was launched in an effort to decrease instances of workplace violence for medical professionals at CRH. The ODU CMHC interns utilized a reliable, valid assessment of potential violence to predict possible instances of patient violence. This initiative not only served CRH nurses and doctors, but provided assessment and mental health services to a wide range of patients.

Military Family Teen Socialization Groups

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As developing counselors, the master's students who served as group leaders gained experience working with military families. "I learned so much, not only as a group facilitator," said Deanna Robertson, after leading her group of middle schoolers for 10-weeks, "but just being present with the kids in my group and listening to them share and get to know each other."

Ashlee Erestain also described her experience as a group facilitator as valuable. "My experience with this group has been a really positive one. Being someone who came into the program not sure about wanting to work with middle school students, this has shown me that middle school can be a place for me as a future school counselor. I have always wanted to help with military families in some kind of capacity and this opportunity was just the thing to get my foot in the door."

Reflections from the Graduate Clinical Coordinator

The 2020-2021 academic year was the most challenging one in my decade as a professor, in large part due to the impact of the pandemic on our graduate students' learning as counselors-in-training. Although telehealth has been a viable option for the delivery of mental health services for years, the counseling profession as a whole was not prepared for the abrupt transition to fully virtual education and therapy. As Graduate Clinical Coordinator, I scrambled along with the students in trying to locate new placements or opportunities so students could successfully complete their clinical experiences and graduate on time. Students' practicum and internship requirements total to 700 clinical experience hours for MEd/EdS students and 800 for PhD students, completed at a mental health or school setting in the Hampton Roads community at the end of their graduate program.

I am amazed at the resiliency of our counseling students, particularly those whose clinical placements were impacted by the pandemic over the past year. Our students were adaptable, creative, persistent, and committed to their goals of becoming mental health counselors, school counselors, or counselor educators. I put together this newsletter to highlight some of our students' initiatives from last year, those who took the extra step to not only meet their course requirements, but also to meet a need in our local community. These initiatives are only a sliver of what our students achieve, only a snapshot of the outstanding services they provide to clients and K-12 students throughout practicum and internship.

Congratulations to all of the Counseling students who graduated in 2020-2021. You persevered, and I am excited to see all that you will accomplish in your future careers as counselors and counselor educators!

- Dr. Amber Pope, Graduate Clinical Coordinator