

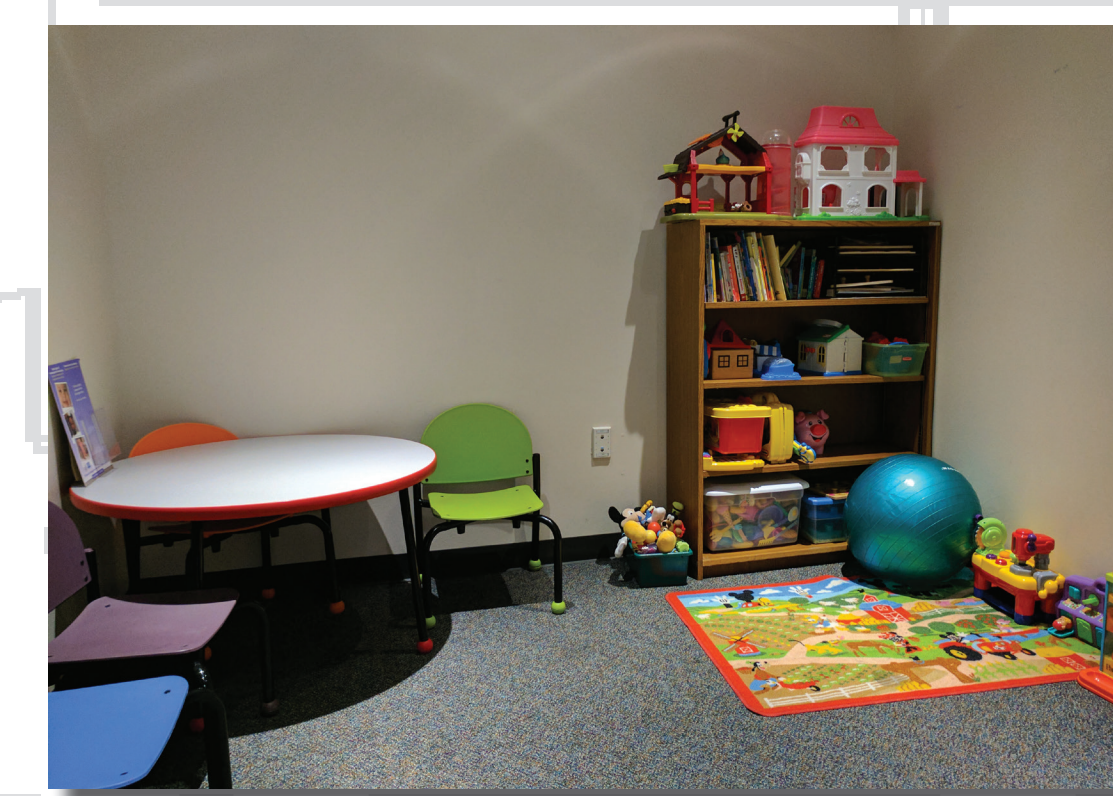
ENHANCING CLINIC RESOURCES TO OPTIMIZE RESEARCH ON EFFECTIVE MENTAL HEALTH INTERVENTIONS AND TRAINING FOR COUNSELORS

Professional Counseling faculty support the University's mission to produce relevant evidence-based research with client-related outcomes

Research Goals: Update and maintain the technology, counseling environments, and human capital necessary to conduct rigorous research on teaching, learning, and various therapeutic approaches by leveraging the 1000+ counseling sessions provided each year.

Current Clinic Resources

- Fully-equipped teaching clinics provide supervised clinical experience for master's degree-seeking counseling students and vital, affordable mental health services to the community
- Over 1000 counseling sessions per year to primarily low-income, underserved clients
 - » couples, families, and individuals ages 3 and older
 - » fees based on sliding scale; no one is turned away due to inability to pay
- Hands-on training through coursework and practicum for ~70 professional counseling graduate students each year
 - » close collaboration with faculty and clinical staff
 - » integrate and apply theory, knowledge and skills, and research-based best practices to develop professional skills
- San Marcos (Education Building) / Round Rock (Avery Building)
 - » waiting rooms
 - » 17 SM/6 RR treatment rooms with built-in audio and video surveillance and recording systems, which transmit data to secure servers
 - » 2/1 play therapy rooms
 - » 3/1 observation rooms – allows students and faculty to observe live or recorded video/audio
 - » FERPA-/HIPAA-secure client records room (SM & RR) – currently use only paper records



Emerging Research Topics

- ANIMAL-ASSISTED COUNSELING
- MINDFULNESS
- PLAY THERAPY
- SANDTRAY THERAPY

Needed Resources

To facilitate rigorous research on training and learning outcomes for continuous program improvement

- FERPA-/HIPAA-compliant electronic clinic data collection and management system to replace current paper files
- Assessment instruments to measure client progress (e.g., OQ-45, Y-OQ, SRS, ORS)
- Data management and storage software to sort, organize, and store session video and audio recordings

To improve client experience and extend clinic impact

- Update treatment rooms – chairs/furniture, rugs, and therapeutic resources for teens and animal-assisted counseling
- Improve parking/access to SM & RR clinics for clients
- Establish school- and community-based clinics

Current Research Activity and Findings

- HUMAN-ANIMAL RESILIENCE THERAPY – examined effectiveness with youth ages 10-18
 - » significant differences between treatment and comparison groups on pre-/post-test scores for anxiety, depression, and disruptive behavior inventories
 - » no significant differences for the self-concept or anger inventories
 - » no significant between-group differences
- ANIMAL-ASSISTED COUNSELING (AAC) ACADEMY, launched in 2016
 - » intensive introductory and advanced professional training program for graduate students and professionals
 - » seeks to improve children and family wellbeing through positive human-animal interactions and related research



- MINDFULNESS – tool to enhance client-counselor therapeutic relationship, increase counselor trainee effectiveness
 - » counselor trainee mindfulness was associated with client perceived empathy
 - » mindfulness and self-compassion were associated with lower experiential avoidance and greater session depth as rated by counselor trainee
 - » self compassion was positively related to tolerance for ambiguity

Future Research

- Mine electronic client databases and videotaped sessions in real time and longitudinally to
 - » track client progress
 - » compare efficacy of different therapeutic approaches
 - » evaluate and continually improve training methods and learning outcomes
- Introduce new variables and track progress using new measures
 - » impact of emotionally-focused therapy as compared to solution-focused therapy in working with couples
 - » influence of sandtray therapy on youth ages 10-18
 - » measure impact of animal-assisted counseling vs. talk therapy on stress measures for college students ages 18-25
- Develop and validate Animal-Assisted Counseling Competency Scale (AACCS) through the AAC Academy
- Conduct randomized control study of counseling-specific mindfulness training and positive client outcomes

Researchers

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