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 language deprived or dysfluent language use.

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, missed portions of the training may be substituted for classes missed, 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 qualified 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 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 on completing supervisor training and passing a written and performance examination.

   **All supervisors must hold QMHI-S credentials and be in good standing.**

4. **Where can I do my practicum?**

   Alabama is one of the few states in the nation that have a statewide system of care for deaf people with mental illness. We have a specific in-patient unit specified 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. There is a broad array of placement options in the community leading to a highly varied exposure to mental health interpreting opportunities. These opportunities will range from medication checks to 28-day primary substance abuse treatment to crisis intervention. In addition, there are interpreters on staff who are certified and have held the “Qualified Mental Health Interpreter-Supervisor” (QMHI-S) credential for years and have demonstrated competency guiding practicum participants.

Beginning this year, Alabama is not the only option for a practicum site. Several other sites that have been approved for. QMHI-S certified supervisors have set up approved sites in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, and South Carolina. Other sites are being planned.


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

   No. There are processes that must be completed before you are officially accepted into a practicum. Once you are ready to begin your practicum and you have agreed on a practicum date with your practicum supervisor, you must contact the Practicum Coordinator who will guide you through the next steps.

   For Alabama-based practicums, 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 ample of time to make reservations at a reasonable price after the contract comes back, but we have no way of knowing how long the approval procedure will take. We will not be responsible for any potential costs if you purchase your ticket before the contract is completed. We are also not responsible for any unforeseen delay or costs that may force you to make changes in your travel plans. You should consider purchasing changeable or refundable tickets or/trip insurance.

   For other practicum sites, your practicum supervisor will inform you when you are officially accepted and they can advise as to travel arrangements best suited for their area.

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 these hours.

   The case studies should follow a Demand Control (EIPI) perspective. The sample case studies presented earlier in the handbook should help. You should 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 dynamic and ever-changing. However, there are required elements that must be completed within each practicum experience. These elements are listed on the checklist found on pages 53 and 54 of this 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 student to examine different perspectives of interpreting and mental health.

9. What format should be used for case studies 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 EIPI 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. In order to avoid spending too many hours on case studies that may be unacceptable, we recommend that once you prepare your first case study, submit it to your supervisor. This way they can ensure you are on the right track and then you can upload it to CourseSites for further review and discussion.

10. Is there a time limit for how long I can work on the practicum?
Yes, there are specified time limits. The first deadline is January 31. This is when you must declare your interest in the practicum to the Practicum Coordinator.

The second deadline to remember is the August 31, for which all of your observation work must be completed.

Lastly, once you begin working the observation portion of your practicum, you will have 90 calendar days to complete all work assigned to you.

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. In some cases, the Alumni Track will be satisfactory.

12. What does the Written Examination include?
This test will take you approximately six to eight hours to complete. This is not a timed test; however, there is an eight-hour time limit. Because there is a time limit, it is a good idea to read all the questions before you start and allocate your time to address them all.

It is a closed book examination designed to test your ability to synthesize the material, not your rote memory. As such, answers should be in your own words, not "cut and paste."

Some answers will be fairly short, while others will be longer and more complex. Read each question carefully and provide an answer that addresses all parts of the question. Many answers will require a paragraph or two to completely address the question. Some will require more.

The test is constructed in several sections. The first section will cover mental health interpreting as a practice profession. Other sections will address mental illness and substance
use disorders symptomology, interpreting unique situations and working with various types of consumers. Each section will have one or more vignettes and the questions will require you to make use of the information presented in those vignettes.

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

If are doing your practicum in Alabama and complete it successfully, yes. If you do your practicum at other sites, generally no.

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 exam 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 at other sites, 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 do not 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 indicated 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.”

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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 Shannon.reese@mh.alabama.gov. CEU approval must be given BEFORE you begin any portion of the activity.

19. Where can I go for additional information?

You may check our website at www.mhit.org or contact the Practicum Coordinator, Steve Hamerdinger steve.hamerdinger@mh.alabama.gov or the MHIT Project Coordinator, Charlene Crump at charlene.crump@mh.alabama.gov.

You can also follow us on Twitter (@MHITstaff) and Like us on Facebook

Subscribe to the Office of Deaf Services newsletter, Signs of Mental Health by clicking http://www.mhit.org/quarterly-newsletter.html and filling out the form at the bottom of the page.