

Using Science to Guide Practice: Marriage and Family Therapy

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The Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy (MSMFT) program was launched in 1990. Originally designed to replace the shrinking market in postgraduate training at The Family Institute, the MSMFT program is now one of the nation's leading programs of its kind. The program attracts a talented and diverse cohort of students. They come to the program knowing the reputation of The Family Institute and the brand name of Northwestern University. They also value the program's accredited status, the faculty's national reputation, the volume of clinical work, the extensive supervision and the thoughtful curriculum around which their courses are built.



STIC®

The STIC® is the first instrument in the field of family therapy for studying how people change over the course of therapy and the primary research tool of the Psychotherapy Change Project. The STIC employs self-report questionnaires to track client change during therapy as well as an Internet-based system for analyzing the data and providing feedback to the therapist.

Programs that train marriage and family therapists are unique because they focus on working with relationships, particularly families and couples. The clinical approach is grounded in a systems theory that suggests human problems are a function of the context in which they occur; therapy must change that context for the problem to be resolved. This translates into having the relevant relationships (people) present for the therapy.

As the field of marriage and family therapy evolved, many approaches developed. Our MSMFT program uses an integrative approach that transcends the many models of therapy. Our faculty developed the approach, called Integrative Problem Centered Metaframeworks (IPCM). IPCM provides a map that enables trainees to learn how to navigate the complex terrain of relationships, and enables students to choose clinical strategies that help clients solve their problems.

The MSMFT program aspires to prepare graduates for practice in the 21st Century. Therapy has always been

part art and part science but the science of therapy is getting better and will increasingly be emphasized over the science of art. Accordingly, the emphasis of our program is to train therapists in the scientist-practitioner model that uses science to guide practice. Trainees are taught to use the STIC® (Systemic Therapy Inventory of Change), created at The Family Institute, which tracks the progress of therapy over time.

Graduates of the Marriage and Family Therapy program have a range of post-degree options. Some go on to doctoral studies while others work in agency settings or private practices. Following the accrual of postgraduate clinical experience with supervision, graduates can take a licensing exam and become licensed marriage and family therapists.

To learn more about the Marriage and Family Therapy program, email Mr. Breunlin at dbreunlin@family-institute.org.