BRINGING HEALING TO RELATIONSHIPS

PIU PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY

A GUIDE TO A MASTER'S IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

PACIFIC IUTHERAN UNIVERSIT

This resource is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of what it means to be a marriage and family therapist. In this resource, you will find information about the unique counseling approach of marriage and family therapy, an overview on how to become licensed to practice as a marriage and family therapist in Washington state, and a look at how Pacific Lutheran University's Master's in Marriage and Family Therapy program prepares you to step into this meaningful field.

ABOUT PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY

Pacific Lutheran University purposefully integrates the liberal arts, professional studies, and civic engagement in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. Founded in 1890 by Norwegian immigrants, PLU continues the distinctive tradition of Lutheran higher education as it seeks to educate students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership, and care – for other people, for their communities, and for the Earth. PLU is committed to the advancement of knowledge, the preparation of citizens in service to the world, and to its ongoing reform.

The Division of Social Sciences at PLU fosters a community of active scholars. Supported by staff, students, and faculty work collaboratively within and across diverse disciplines to seek, build and apply empirically driven knowledge about human, social and institutional interaction.

Instruction is vibrant and relevant to the time and world in which we live and encourages responsible citizenship for today and tomorrow. Through classroom learning and applied settings such as supervised internships and mentored research projects, students in the social sciences acquire an understanding of society while developing the analytical tools with which to provide solutions to a diverse range of social problems.

CONTENTS

OUR COLLECTIVE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS AND THE NEED FOR STRONG RELATIONSHIPS	05
WHAT IS MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY?	08
CAREER OPPORTUNITY FOR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS	10
THE PATH TO LICENSURE FOR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS IN WASHINGTON STATE	13
A CLOSER LOOK AT PLU'S MASTER'S IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY	16
HEAR FROM STUDENTS AND FACULTY IN PLU'S MASTER'S IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY	20

CONNECT WITH PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY 24

OUR COLLECTIVE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS AND THE NEED FOR STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

It's no secret that we are facing a collective mental health crisis. Every person has been touched by mental illness, either personally or through a family member, friend, or colleague who has suffered or is suffering.



Mental illness is just one expression of the growing stress experienced by families and communities in our fastpaced, highly connected age. Society has grown increasingly fragmented and polarized, and issues like economic uncertainty, substance abuse, fractured families, poverty, and homelessness are everywhere.

According to the <u>National Alliance on</u> <u>Mental Illness</u>:

- **1 in 5** U.S. adults experience mental illness each year
- **1 in 6** U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year

8.4 million

people in the U.S. provide care to an adult with a mental or emotional health issue

- **70.4%** of youth in the juvenile justice system have diagnosed mental illness
- **20.1%** of people experience homelessness in the U.S. have a serious mental health condition
- **31.0%** increase in overall suicide rate in the U.S. since 2001



The quality of our social relationships plays a major role in our overall health, both mental and physical.

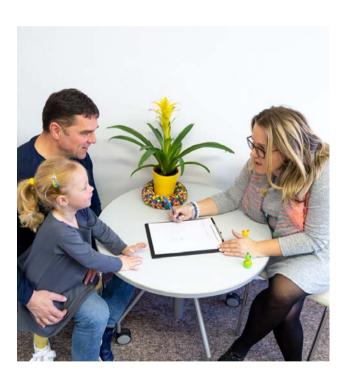
We all need strong relations at home, at work, and within our community in order to thrive.

The tremendous growth of family and community stressors and the rise of mental illness has increased the need for skilled, dedicated mental health professionals who can help repair and build relational systems.

Working in the field of therapy and mental health is an important career, providing support and help to those in crisis and working toward a more diverse, inclusive, and healthy society.

There is no better time to begin a career in this healing profession as a Marriage and Family Therapist.







WHAT IS MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY

Marriage and Family Therapy is a form of therapy that addresses individual well-being in terms of the systems in which an individual operates - the workplace, family, friendships, and community. Marriage and Family Therapy situates mental health in the context of relationships with the people who are closest to you. Because Marriage and Family Therapy focuses on the systems level of human experience, this therapeutic approach helps the individual explore the connection between their human challenges and the systems around them and encourages people to find growth and healing in the midst of these ongoing relationships.

This type of therapy is <u>solution-focused</u>, <u>effective</u>, <u>and brief</u>. Research indicates that this type of therapy can be more effective than individual therapy.

According to the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT):

"Almost 90% of clients report an improvement in their emotional health and nearly two-thirds report an improvement in their overall physical health. A majority of clients report an improvement in their functioning at work, and over three-fourths of those receiving marital/couples or family therapy report an improvement in the couple relationship. When a child is the identified patient, parents report that their child's behavior improved in 73.7% of the cases, their ability to get along with other children significantly improved and there was improved performance in school."

There are many challenges and needs at the family and community level that can benefit from the systemic approach of Marriage and Family therapy.

Behavorial challenges in children

Loss and trauma in families

Marital or relationship difficulties between partners

Support for refugee families

Community engagement with homelessness and the homeless

Sexual issues in families and communities



CAREER OPPORTUNITY FOR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS

We all live and work within systems of relationships so the career opportunities for Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) are multi-faceted and numerous. Let's explore the settings in which MFTs can work, the opportunities for further education, and the salary and demand for MFTs in Washington state specifically.

Types of Places where Marriage and Family Therapists can work

- Community agencies
- Mental health centers
- Private practice and group practice settings
- Medical settings
- Schools
- Churches
- Community Colleges

Opportunities for Further Education and Specialization

Getting a Master's in Marriage and Family Therapy is enough to allow you to practice as a licensed therapist, but many students choose to go on to get their Ph.D. in Marriage and Family Therapy. Some do this right after completing a master's degree, while others wait and work for a while before pursuing a doctorate in the field.

As a Marriage and Family Therapist, you can also specialize in your area of expertise. Potential specializations in this field include things like Medical Family Therapy, Sex Therapy, Family Studies, School Counseling, Addiction and Recovery in Families, and more.



Career Outlook and Salary

According to Occupational Employment Statistics gathered by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the <u>annual</u> <u>mean wage</u> for marriage and family therapists in the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue area is \$51,170, and the career outlook for mental health professionals nationwide is strong. A combination of growing demand and the retirement rate of a generation of mental health professionals makes this a growth field.



Nationwide, the demand for Marriage and Family Therapists is expected to grow 22% by 2028, a rate much faster than the growth rate for other occupations. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at the US Department of Health and Human Services has also identified that "serious workforce shortages exist for health professionals and paraprofessionals across the United States."

There are also indications that high demand exists in Washington state specifically. 44.3% of Marriage and Family Therapists in Washington are over the age of 55 and issues like the opioid crisis are increasing demand for counseling and behavioral health services

TABLE 2. Distribution, Age, and Sex of Select Behavioral Health and Related Occupations in Washington, 2017

Occupation	Number Credentialed with Addresses in Washington	Rate per 100,000 State Population	Mean Age	Percent Age >55 years	% Female	% Rural
Psychiatrists*	727	10.1	55	55.6%	40.7%	3.3%
Psychologists	2,295	31.9	52	45.8%	62.6%	3.8%
Licensed Advanced Social Worker	77	1.1	49	31.2%	89.6%	0.0%
Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker	3,619	50.4	52	44.7%	82.0%	3.8%
Psychiatric ARNP	530	7.4	53	51.9%	87.2%	4.0%
Mental Health Counselors	5,923	85.5	52	45.5%	76.2%	4.1%
Marriage and Family Therapists	1,387	19.3	51	44.3%	76.9%	2.7%
Chemical Dependency Professionals	2,629	36.6	51	44.1%	64.9%	5.1%
DBHR-Certified Peer Counselors	2,346	32.7	NA	NA	NA	NA
Community Health Workers [†]	1,473	20.5	NA	NA	86%	NA

Data source: Washington State Department of Health, 2017 Health Professions Licensing Data System

NA – not available
* Data from 2016 AMA Physician Masterfile
* Washington Department of Health Training Program only

Source: Washington State Behavioral Health Workforce Assessment

A 2017 study, commissioned by Washington state concluded that "[the] demand for behavioral healthcare - mental health and substance use disorder treatment - exceeds the availability of services throughout the state...Ensuring Washington's behavioral health workforce is able to meet the state's needs will require more than just "turning on the spigot" at education programs across the state."

THE PATH TO LICENSURE FOR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS IN WASHINGTON STATE

In this section we will discuss the six components to licensure in Washington State

The <u>path to licensure in Washington state</u> involves six components.

1. Complete a master's or doctoral degree

Applicants must have a master's or doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy, or behavioral science master's or doctoral degree with equivalent course work from an approved school.

The areas of study include marital and family systems, marital and family therapy, individual development, psychopathology, human sexuality, research, professional ethics and law, and electives (one course). A total of 45 semester hours or 60 quarter credits are required in all nine areas of study. At least 27-semester credits or 36 quarter credits are required in the first five areas of study.

2. Get supervised clinical experience

Applicants must complete a minimum of two calendar years of full-time marriage and family therapy, and at least:



- 3,000 hours of experience
- 1,000 hours of which must be direct client contact
 - At least 500 hours must be gained in diagnosing and treating couples and families;
- At least 200 hours of qualified supervision with an approved supervisor
 - At least 100 of the 200 hours must be one-on-one supervision, and the remaining hours may be in one-on-one or group supervision
- Of the total supervision, 100 hours must be with a licensed marriage and family therapist (LMFT) who has at least five years of clinical experience
- The other 100 hours may be with an equally qualified licensed mental health practitioner

Applicants who have completed a master's program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (COAMFTE) will be credited with 500 hours of direct client contact and 100 hours of formal meetings with an approved supervisor.



3. Complete continuing education requirements

Applicants must complete 36 hours of continuing education (CE). At least six of the CE must be in professional law and ethics.

4. Take the Association of Marital and Family Therapy Regulatory Boards (AMFTRB) exam

You may register for the exam any time after applying for the licensed marriage and family therapist or the licensed marriage and family therapy associate credential.

5. Complete additional paperwork and training

An applicant must answer personal data questions and complete four hours of HIV/AIDS training.

6. Submit your full application!

PLU's Master's in Marriage and Family Therapy program prepares students for the path to full licensure. Our program is accredited by the COAMFTE, and students graduate with 500 direct client contact hours and 100 supervision hours that count toward state licensure.







A CLOSER LOOK AT PLU'S MASTER'S IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY



Unique Advantages of the PLU MFT Program

The <u>Master's in Marriage and Family Therapy</u> at Pacific Lutheran University is designed to train students to become systemically-oriented, contextually sensitive MFT Professionals who address the diverse needs and clinical concerns of individuals, couples, families, and communities.

1. Small, individualized class sizes

Personalized education in small classes of approximately 20 students means more opportunities for deep learning, collaboration, and mentorship from faculty. Students build relationships with each other that help them grow personally and professionally.

2. One of only five COAMFTE accredited programs in WA

This accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education means that our program has been vetted and accepted as a highquality program that meets industry standards and needs. You can rest assured that the PLU MFT program will prepare you for successful practice as an MFT professional.



3. Practicum placement is built into the program

If you join the PLU MFT program, you are guaranteed a practicum placement at an internship site. While sites are subject to change, PLU has great relationships in the community and will find you a practicum site that fits your needs and interests. Right now, PLU's MFT Department partners with <u>six local community mental health agencies</u> and an AAMFT Approved Supervisor at each site.

4. Diverse and supportive learning community

Students in the PLU MFT program come from a range of racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, various social class backgrounds, and a variety of religious and spiritual backgrounds. Students work on projects together in the program and learn from one another's life experiences.

5. Couple and Family Therapy Center

This on-campus clinic allows you to train as a student therapist with a faculty member as your supervisor. The clinic is equipped with one-way mirrors, every session is recorded, and the faculty supervisor guides you through your first cases.













Program Details









Length: 2 years

Format:

Small cohort of about 20 students that move through the program as a group.

Schedule: The program begins each Fall

Year One: Afternoon and late-afternoon classes take place twice a week.

Year Two:

Afternoon and late-afternoon classes take place once a week. Clinic hours take place at the on-site Couple and Family Therapy Center during the summer or at the beginning of the school year. Later in the academic year, students take on more clinic hours at an off-site internship.

Graduates of the PLU MFT program have a near 100% pass rate on the national MFT exam.

Review detailed program schedule information Read through frequently asked questions Explore a full list of course descriptions Explore a full list of learning outcomes



HEAR FROM STUDENTS AND FACULTY IN PLU'S MASTER'S IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY

The Lavers of Unexpected Death

MFT ALUMNI

"Being a part of a diverse cohort, where open and honest dialogue is encouraged, has really helped me expand my cultural lens and recognize the uniqueness of the human experience. The MFT program at PLU does a wonderful job of facilitating a safe place to deeply explore our similarities and our differences."

- April Knight '16

"The on-site clinic is definitely a plus. Finding out that students start on-site and with a co-therapist made me feel more comfortable with the transition of going from a student to becoming a therapist-in-training. Looking back over the first year, I am so glad that I chose this program, and that this program chose me! I feel like this is exactly where I am supposed to be."

- Mattie Harrison '16





"The faculty challenge and empower students to stretch our thinking and go beyond the invisible mental and emotional boundaries to seek change. We are able to see clients (individuals, couples, and families) at the Couple and Family Therapy Center prior to our internships, so we are able to apply our skills to working with real families in a secure environment that better prepares us to navigate situations such as crises, relational problems, and mental illness."

- Alanah Dillard '15



MFT FACULTY



Dr. David Ward Program Director and Professor

Dr. Ward loves teaching and has presented at the national and local level on various topics, including his research on hope. His dissertation on Hope in Couples Therapy won the Dissertation of the Year Award from the American Association for Marriage and Family

Therapy, and his work in this area is published in the April 2010 volume of the Journal of Marital and Family Therapy. He was honored in 2009 as the Educator of the Year by the Washington Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. Dr. Ward maintains a private practice, where he works with couples, families and individuals.



Lindsey Nice Associate Professor

Dr. Nice's previous work experience includes nursing, medical family therapy and now teaching graduate students and directing PLU's Couple and Family Therapy Center. Her professional interests include families with healthcare challenges, interdisciplinary training

and collaboration, gender and power dynamics in couple relationships, and mentorship in education.





Elisabeth Esmiol Wilson Associate Professor

Dr. Wilson joined the PLU MFT faculty in 2011. Her research interests include training and supervision issues such as integrating larger contextual issues and client feedback into treatment. She is also interested in the interaction between spiritually and relational

well-being, and with her colleague Dr. Nice, co-edited the book: Socially Just Religious and Spiritual Interventions: Ethical Uses of Therapeutic Power (2018). Dr. Wilson has an active sex-positive private practice specializing in relationship therapy, spiritual issues, and sex therapy. She primarily works from an emotionally focused, experiential, systemic perspective integrating larger contextual issues.



Montinique McEachern Visiting Assistant Professor

"There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives". This quote by Audre Lorde sums up Dr. McEachern's teaching and therapeutic approach, merging Black feminism and Narrative Family Therapy. She is a

first-generation college grad, sister, and New York native. Her professional interests include helping folks from marginalized backgrounds access therapy, social justice informed practice and couples therapy with queer women of color couples.



CONNECT WITH PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY

Our world and our communities need skilled therapists and mental health professionals to help bring peace, healing, and support to increasingly stressed family units and systems. A supportive, diverse and individualized master's program in Marriage and Family Therapy can prepare you for job success and thoughtful, impactful work as a counselor.

We invite you to get in touch with us for more information and to ask any specific questions you may have about the path to a career as a counselor through the Master's in Marriage and Family Therapy program at PLU. Begin building your career in mental health today!

Request More Information

Attend an Information Session

Schedule an Appointment

Start an Application

Pacific Lutheran University Connect with the Graduate Admission Team <u>gradadmission@plu.edu</u> (253) 535-8570

Connect with the MFT Program <u>mfth@plu.edu</u>

PLU Division of Social Sciences Division of Social Science

12180 Park Avenue South | Tacoma, WA 98447-0003

