Application Due Dates:

Application is Open Now
Please submit As soon as Possible as application submission is on a rolling basis.

We strongly recommend that you send in all the materials ASAP, as interviews will begin in mid-January, 2027

General Track

- Basic Practicum or Advanced Practicum

Spanish Track

- Basic Spanish Track or Advanced Spanish Track

Two-Year Track

- First Year: Basic Practicum
- Second Year: Advanced Practicum for Seriously Ill Children and Their Families

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES AT THE RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE (Fssrmh.org)

The Family Support Services (FSS) program at the Ronald McDonald House offers a specialized Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) practicum for master's-level students enrolled in MFT programs in good standing. This practicum is designed to address a significant gap in training by providing in-depth experience in couple, family, and child psychology, areas often underserved in traditional practicum settings.

The practicum at www.fssrmh.org is located at the following Ronald McDonald House locations:

- **Los Angeles**
- **Pasadena**
- **Inland Empire**
- **Long Beach**
- **Orange County**
- **West LA**

Many families travel far from home and spend several weeks or months to get treatment for their seriously ill or injured children – a long time to be away or to divide a family. For children facing a severe medical crisis, the absence of their parents' love and support can feel even more overwhelming. A Ronald McDonald House (www.rmhcsc.org) provides a

place for families to call home so they can stay close to their hospitalized child at little to no cost.

Keeping Families Together During a Medical Crisis

Our Houses are built on the simple idea that nothing else should matter when a family is focused on their child's health – not where they can afford to stay, where they will get their next meal, or where they will lay their head at night to rest. We believe that when a child is hospitalized, the love and support of family are as powerful as the most potent medicine prescribed.

Strengthening Families in Difficult Times

Families are stronger when they are together. By staying at a Ronald McDonald House, parents can better communicate with their child's medical team and keep up with complicated treatment plans when needed. They can also focus on their child's health rather than grocery shopping, cleaning, cooking meals, etc.

Providing Access to the Best Medical Care

When your child is sick, you want the best care possible – even if it is hundreds or thousands of miles away. The Ronald McDonald House allows families to access specialized medical treatment by providing a place to stay at little or no cost.

Services Offered to Families

At every House, families can enjoy the following:

- Home-cooked meals
- Private bedrooms
- Playrooms for children

Depending on the House, these services may also be available:

- Unique suites for children with suppressed immune systems
- Accredited education programs
- Recreational activities
- Patient and Sibling support services
- Family Support Services

OVERVIEW OF FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES (PRACTICUM AT RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE)

Family Support Services or FSS (www.fssrmh.org) is an award-winning practicum training program that supports the families staying at the Ronald McDonald House and the staff who work at the House. FSS received the prestigious Hearts and Hands Award from Global Ronald McDonald House Charities for the best new program and the Outstanding Diversity Award from the American Psychological Association.

The health and well-being of every family are our top priorities. The Family Support Services (FSS) team is composed of licensed psychologists, marriage and family therapists (MFTs), and dedicated trainees in psychology and MFT programs. FSS was established years ago in response to a comprehensive needs assessment that identified critical areas of support for both staff and families. Over the years, we have engaged with and listened to thousands of Ronald McDonald House families, shaping our services to meet their unique challenges and needs.

We understand the immense challenges families face during this time. Parents are juggling their child's medical and emotional needs while managing the ripple effects on the entire family—a delicate and often overwhelming balancing act. Family Support Services (FSS) is here to ensure they don't have to face it alone. Research shows that up to 80% of children and families experience some level of traumatic stress following a life-threatening illness, injury, or painful medical procedure. For 20-30% of parents and 15-25% of children and siblings, these stress reactions persist, significantly impacting daily life, treatment adherence, and recovery. Left unaddressed, this stress can disrupt functioning and hinder the path to optimal healing. FSS is dedicated to providing the support families need to navigate these challenges and promote resilience during this critical time.

We understand that every family's journey is unique, with varying needs and preferences both during their stay at the Ronald McDonald House and after they return home. To meet these diverse needs, Family Support Services (FSS) offers a variety of personalized ways to connect with families, both in person and online—all completely free of charge.

- Families are welcome to use our FSS office as a private, safe space to share their thoughts and feelings whenever they need to. Whether they come individually, as a couple, or as a whole family, we are here to listen and support them.
- Family members can attend our FSS Therapeutic Fun Clubs held throughout the day and evening.
- Family members can attend FSS workshops, which offer valuable insights, practical skills, and helpful resources to navigate their unique challenges.
- Families can join our FSS-facilitated support groups where caregivers facing similar experiences come together to share stories, emotions, coping strategies, and valuable information in a supportive community.

Furthermore, Ronald McDonald House staff and volunteers utilize FSS for support and training.

APPROACH TO TRAINING

Model
The FSS Training Program provides a strength-based and systems-based framework for working with families, children, parents, volunteers, and staff. Services are sensitive to the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds and medical issues of the children and families served.

We utilize Feedback-Informed Treatment (FIT), which has been added to SAMHSA's official database of evidence-based practices (EBP). Each session incorporates a well-being rating scale to measure treatment outcomes and an assessment tool to evaluate the strength of the therapeutic alliance. As part of feedback-informed treatment, students are trained in a differentiation-based approach, which emphasizes balancing self-regulation and connection—a methodology that is adaptable and relevant across all cultural contexts. Students will also have the opportunity to learn acceptance and commitment therapy, functional family therapy, structural family therapy, triple P parenting program, and mindful self-compassion.

Person of the Therapist
The most critical skills for therapists are interpersonal relational skills, including attunement, empathy, and responsiveness. These skills are necessary for all models of therapy. Research suggests that therapists' relational skills have more than 10x the impact on therapy outcomes than their choice of model or adherence to a model (Wampold & Imel, 2015). These relational skills are limited by trainees' intrapersonal/inner skills and psychological capacity to stay attuned while the trainee experiences discomfort.

This training program will emphasize developing trainees' intrapersonal skills and psychological resilience, equipping them to navigate and manage interactions with individuals, couples, and families they may find personally challenging. By fostering self-awareness and emotional capacity, the program enables trainees to approach their work with greater effectiveness and satisfaction, enhancing both their professional growth and the quality of support they provide.

Social Justice Work
Social justice is deeply embedded in the RMH practicum training, shaping both the didactics and professional development of our trainees. We are firmly committed to a social justice perspective, recognizing and appreciating differences while critically examining the unequal distribution of power and its impact on individuals and communities. This perspective informs our work with families and guides our training approach. We believe social justice involves addressing systemic inequities and rectifying the harm caused by unequal access to power. We acknowledge that some voices are amplified while others are marginalized, and we dedicate time in training to explore these dynamics and develop strategies to address them effectively.

As part of this commitment, trainees engage in a year-long social justice project, furthering their understanding and ability to contribute to meaningful change.

Spanish Track

Cultural and language diversity are of the utmost importance to the FSS team. The Spanish Training Track seeks to bridge the discrepancy between the lack of appropriate training in the USA and the need for more linguistically and culturally competent providers. Training, didactics, and supervision are done in Spanish. The founder and Director of our Spanish track, Dr. Martha Hernández, was a past practicum trainee and has recently been awarded the American Psychological Association Henry Tomes Awards for advancing ethnic minority psychology.

BASIC PRACTICUM OVERVIEW

This practicum focuses on the breadth of experience by preparing students to work with diverse children, couples, and families of all presenting issues. Students also spend considerable time gaining exposure to medical psychology. These practicum students conduct Welcome Meetings and ongoing sessions with individuals, couples, families, and sometimes children. They also interact therapeutically with the families in the milieu and provide groups, therapeutic fun clubs, and workshops.

ADVANCED PRACTICUM OVERVIEW

Advanced practicum trainees focus on depth of experience, increasing independence, and rounding out their skills by working one-on-one with individuals, couples, and families. They will also interact therapeutically with the families in the milieu and provide support groups, therapeutic fun clubs, and workshops for families.

Trainees are expected to take on significant leadership, supervisory, and teaching roles at RMH. They oversee the Therapeutic Fun Club program, team building, and workshops. These advanced practicum students also participate in leading staff and volunteer training and do peer supervision of beginning practicum students. Trainees in the advanced practicum are expected to operate more independently as part of a multidisciplinary team.

TWO YEAR PRACTICUM

Current students can request more information regarding a second-year advanced or supplementary practicum. This is for students interested in supervision, training, teaching, program development, and possibly running a training program.

SPANISH TRAINING TRACK OVERVIEW

This is an additional component of the practicum. The Spanish Track was created for trainees interested in receiving training, didactics, and supervision in Spanish. Given that most education in the United States is received in English, the Spanish Training Track seeks to bridge the discrepancy between the lack of appropriate training in the US and the need for more linguistically and culturally competent providers. Practicum students receive additional supervision in Spanish.

A *small* stipend will be provided to Spanish-speaking practicum students. All Spanish speakers will be given additional Spanish supervision in Spanish. They will be competent in doing therapy in Spanish.

DESCRIPTION OF WHAT SERVICES PRACTICUM STUDENTS OFFER

DIRECT SERVICES PROVIDED BY ALL PRACTICUM STUDENTS:

Crisis Intervention: Addressing critical issues, including post-traumatic stress, intimate partner violence, child abuse, and suicide risk assessment and management.

Ongoing Work with Individual Adults, Children (Patients and Siblings), Couples, and Families

- All families at the RMH are assigned practicum students when they check into the RMH.
- Practicum students are responsible for Welcome Meetings and ongoing meetings with their assigned families. They can attend meetings as individuals, couples, or families. Practicum students help families decide which Family Support Services to take advantage of.
- Practicum students have ongoing scheduled individual, couple, and family sessions and office hours for families to drop in.

Telehealth

- Trainees will learn to work with individuals, couples, and families on our support community platform.
- New skills in telehealth will be taught.
- Trainees will provide telehealth meetings and support groups for RMH families who have returned home.

Hospital Visits

- There may be times that practicum students visit the patients in the hospital.

Therapeutic Fun Clubs and Workshops

- Practicum students will lead Therapeutic Fun Club Activities and Workshops for Children, Parents, and Families.

Milieu Support

- Practicum students are available at various times throughout the House (including meals) and at the hospital to engage in conversation and help problem-solve.

Milieu Events

- Practicum students participate in creating large-scale therapeutic events for the House that they have learned are missing in RMH families' lives while they are at RMH (such as a Super Bowl party, Halloween event, carnival, camp out, etc.)

Camp Ronald McDonald for Good Times

- Students may have the opportunity to spend weekends at our beautiful Camp in Idyllwild where they may provide support groups, workshops, and therapeutic activities.

Parent, Sibling and Family Support Groups

- Weekly support groups are held for Parents and Children

Staff Support and Training

- FSS provides support to staff working at other RMH Houses.
- FSS is responsible for developing programming aimed at improving staff wellness.
- Practicum students provide volunteer and staff training.

INDIRECT SERVICES PROVIDED BY PRACTICUM STUDENTS:

Help with the Transition Back to Home

Practicum students are expected to:

- Help parents connect with resources in their hometown.
- Prepare families for what they might encounter when they return home.
- Check-in with families who have gone home to make sure that they have connected with resources in their hometown.

Program Development: Family Support Services

- Practicum students are encouraged to take the initiative to develop new programs that will help the RMH children, couples, and families.
- Practicum students are encouraged to participate in the FSS expansion to other RMH Houses.

ADDITIONAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY ADVANCED TRAINEES

Supervision:

- Advanced practicum students play a role in welcoming and facilitating the learning of beginning practicum students.
- They will learn the art of peer supervision and live supervision. They supervise weekly.
- They will receive supervision of their supervision and teaching.

Supervisor of Therapeutic Fun Clubs:

- Coordinate the Fun Club Program for student volunteers and provide supervision.

Teaching Skills - Lead Parent Workshops:

- Tolerating the anxiety of having a sick child
- Helping siblings deal with family changes

- Maintain a relationship with a spouse/partner during this challenging time
- Handling significant relationships back home
- Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) workshops

Teach Staff Training:

- Child Abuse and Domestic Violence Workshops
- Customer Service
- What to Say and What Not Say to Families with a Sick Child
- Keeping Good Boundaries
- Multicultural Training
- Dealing with Staff Burnout

Teach Volunteer Training:

- Good Customer Service
- What to Say and Not Say to Families with Sick Child
- Multicultural Training
- Keeping Good Boundaries

Program Development:

- FSS is being expanded to new Houses. Advanced students will participate in setting up a training site.

SUPERVISION AND TRAINING

Initial Training/Orientation

- The initial training will occur over the first three weeks at the beginning of the practicum. It will consist of didactic and experiential workshops focusing on how to work with adults, children, couples, and families. Additional training will be placed on the medical, psychosocial, and clinical issues associated with children with severe illness and their families. In addition, this training will cover program administration and Ronald McDonald House Rules, Policies, and Regulations. All practicum rules and regulations and paperwork will be covered in depth.

Didactic Training

- The ongoing training by experts in the field consists of weekly activities in the form of workshops and applications to cases. This training occurs every Wednesday.

Individual Supervision

- A **minimum** of one hour of individual supervision is provided each week. Supervision will entail live supervision as well as audiotape/videotape review.

Spanish Supervision

- All Spanish speakers will have additional supervision in Spanish.

Group Supervision

- Two-hour group supervision is provided weekly.

Mandatory Practicum Trainee Activities:

- Due to RMH running 24/7, one weekday evening until 9 pm is required, and it is possible that some weekend hours are necessary.
- One-to-one supervision by licensed psychologists
- Didactic Training
- Professional Development
- 2 Hour Group Supervision
- Direct Service (10 hours a week) includes face-to-face services and may include, but are not limited to, individual, couple, and family support, fun clubs, group facilitation, workshops, milieu, staff support, volunteer and staff training, and camp involvement.
- Indirect Service
- Social justice outreach, program development, program evaluation, assessment, and record maintenance

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS FOR PRACTICUM STUDENTS

- Practicum requirement: Minimum commitment of 20 hours per week. Practicum Students must be available at least three days a week, including Wednesdays and one evening or weekend day. Everyone is required to be at RMH Wednesday 9-3 pm. Spanish Supervision is at 8 am, 4 pm, or 5 pm, depending on the supervisor's schedule.
- Trainees receive three weeks of time off—no time off during the first three or the last two weeks of practicum. By participating in various additional FSS activities, trainees can accumulate additional time off.
- The Practicum dates are July 13, 2027- July 11, 2028.

TRAINING FACULTY

Training Director

The Training Director is Dr. Susan Regas, Distinguished Professor and Chair of the Family and Couple/Child Clinical Psychology Emphasis at APA-accredited California School of Professional Psychology. She is the Past President of APA Division 43 (Society for Couple and Family Psychology).

Training Faculty

The practicum training faculty, Drs. Bakaly, Daravi, Hernández, Matuszeski, Regas, and Williby are licensed clinical psychologists with a systemic theoretical orientation and expertise in working with adults, children, couples, families, and groups. All training faculty are either CSPP faculty or alums.

Spanish Track Training Director

Dr. Hernández is Director of the Spanish track and was Vice-President for Public Interest and Diversity at APA Division 43 (Society for Couple and Family Psychology) and Past President of APA Division 43 (Society for Couple and Family Psychology). She recently received the Henry Tomes Award for the Advancement of Ethnic Minority Psychology for Early Career Psychologists.

FSS Executive Assistant

Maggie Balogh is the FSS executive assistant and provides administrative support for Family Support Services and serves as an important resource for trainees and faculty throughout the training year.

DISABILITY ACCESSIBILITY

RMH has total disability access with ramps, elevator alternatives, wheelchair passage accessibility, restrooms designed for disabilities, and handicapped parking.

Application Due Dates:

Application is Open Now
Please submit As soon as Possible as application submission is on a rolling basis.

We strongly recommend that you send in all the materials ASAP, as interviews will begin in mid-January, 2027

A completed RMH practicum application includes:

1. **Cover Letter**

- The cover letter must address: (VERY IMPORTANT)
    A. Why are you interested in the ***basic or advanced practicum*** at Ronald McDonald House? Please indicate why you are a good fit for this practicum.

    B. Indicate whether you want to participate in the ***Spanish Training Track*** and why.

    C. Indicate your ***preferred location***: Los Angeles/Pasadena, Inland Empire, Orange County, or Long Beach.

    D. ***Person of the Therapist*** is a central goal of this practicum. Please discuss your willingness to look closely at yourself to make the changes necessary to make you a great therapist.

E. This is a ***social justice*** practicum. Please discuss your commitment to providing culturally responsive and humble services and your commitment to social justice.

2. **Curriculum Vitae**

- Include the languages you speak fluently

3. **Two Letters of Recommendation**

- Emailed to the supervisor at your preferred location
  - Los Angeles/Pasadena: *Dr. Gargi Matuszeski-* gmatuszeski@rmhsc.org
  - Inland Empire: *Dr. John Bakaly* – jbakaly@rmhsc.org
  - Long Beach/Orange County: *Dr. Kendra Williby* – kwilliby@rmhsc.org

  **Additionally, please CC Maggie Balogh* – mbalogh@rmhsc.org

4. **Up to Date School Transcript** (Does not need to be official)

INTERVIEWS

- All interviews will take place remotely with the Ronald McDonald House training faculty
- The interview process includes a virtual tour of the facility, group interviews and individual interviews with each of the training faculty and some of the present RMH trainees.

This rigorous application process requires considerable energy and time; however, the thoroughness of the process is very useful in applicants' and supervisors' decision-making process.

SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

- Please email your application materials *based on your preferred location*.
  - Please also include Maggie Balogh, mbalogh@rmhsc.org when submitting your application.

Los Angeles/ Pasadena: Dr. Gargi Matuszeski, gmatuszeski@rmhsc.org
Long Beach/Orange County: Dr. Kendra Williby, kwilliby@rmhsc.org
Inland Empire: Dr. John Bakaly, jbakaly@rmhsc.org

For more information about the practicum, please contact the Training Director, Dr. Susan Regas, at sregas@rmhsc.org