

# Saint Mary's University of Minnesota Turns Tracking MFT Practicum Hours from a Nightmare to a Dream



## THE CHALLENGE

### Waking Up from a Filing Nightmare

Before Saint Mary's University of Minnesota began using Time2Track, students in their Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) Graduate Program had to manually track their hours, which meant extra work for faculty and staff, as well as a hassle for students. "We literally had to go through paper files, pull practicum logs and make sure individual evaluations were in," said Sara Heinzen, associate professor and clinical director for the program. "There was a lot of time and effort involved with the process."

According to Kate Bowman, MFT program coordinator, Saint Mary's current MFT students "don't realize how difficult it is" to log practicum hours on paper since they've always had the convenience of using Time2Track instead. Time2Track is an online solution for clinical training that includes hour tracking, reports, evaluations, approvals and analytics.

The Saint Mary's program, which recently started its second year using Time2Track, is nationally accredited through the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE). When COAMFTE changed its MFT practicum standards in 2014, Heinzen knew it was time to modernize and adapt the tracking process.

"We knew this was a good opportunity for us to overhaul all of our paperwork and how we were tracking hours for our students," she said, adding that the program wanted an eco-friendly solution. "We were looking for something that saved trees and saved time. Because of the number of students we had and the amount of paper we were dealing with, a lot of their forms — and the valuable data collected on them — were a challenge to even find, let alone compile and review. We had been searching for an online system for quite a while."

The MFT program was aware of Time2Track through the Psy.D. program at Saint Mary's, which was already using the service. But due to the differences in tracking requirements for MFT and Psy.D. practicum hours, the MFT program needed a tailor-made system — and that is where Time2Track's forms and evaluations option entered the picture.

## RESULTS

With Time2Track, St. Mary's found:

**A huge reduction in time and energy** for students and staff alike through transitioning from manual tracking to an efficient online system

**A preventive measure** which helps the University more closely measure student progress

**A portable tool** that students continue to access and enjoy following their graduation



"Time2Track makes a difference for us. We've gone from a filing nightmare to having all of our data readily accessible — and in an actionable form — at our fingertips."

## THE SOLUTION

### An Individualized, One-Stop Platform

By using Time2Track, the MFT program has created customized user guides for Saint Mary's students, encompassing the substantial level of detail and the diversity of options they need when tracking their hours.

"All of our students now have an individualized guide so that they're inputting their hours correctly. We're dealing with a lot fewer errors," Heinzen said. "We're one of the first programs to use the forms and evaluations options with Time2Track, and that was something very important to us. We wanted to have everything in one place for students."

Bowman said the implementation of Time2Track came at a

particularly auspicious time for Saint Mary's due to COAMFTE's new requirements. For instance, the MFT program never had to track 50 live supervision hours when it was using a manual system. Time2Track also empowered the graduate program with new reporting capabilities.

"For the activity types that we count as live supervision, I can select those activity types and then see a breakdown of each student, including how far along they are and how many hours they have," said Bowman. "It's really helpful since we have to note that, per our interpretation of COAMFTE education standards."

## THE UNIVERSITY'S OUTCOME

### Nipping Crises in the Bud

By providing Saint Mary's with up-to-date information on students' progress towards fulfilling their practicum hours, as well as a breakdown of the types of hours they are completing, Time2Track enables the MFT program to proactively address potential problems.

Bowman explained, "If we have students who aren't getting as many relational hours as they need, that's something we'll notice and talk about with their practicum site. We can suggest to the student that they try a different site while they still have time to do so."

"Previously, we wouldn't see students' hours until they were complete and ready to be approved," noted Heinzen. "The only time I knew if a student was struggling at their site was if they

made an appointment with me to talk about that, and many times they didn't. Time2Track gives us a bird's eye view, allowing us to go in and look at, per the practicum class section, how everyone's doing and how the numbers are breaking down. It gives us a more preventive timeline to work with students and take any measures before it's too late."

Time2Track has made a longer-term impact on students who need to track their hours after they complete their MFT degree, such as those alumni on the licensure track.

"We wanted our graduates to have that as an option," Heinzen said. "Many students currently using Time2Track have talked to us about continuing to use it post-degree."

### About Saint Mary's University of Minnesota

Saint Mary's University of Minnesota is a private, nonprofit university. Its undergraduate, residential, liberal arts college offers 59 majors at a 450-acre campus in Winona, Minn. Graduate, bachelor's completion and certificate programs are offered at its Twin Cities and Winona campuses as well as in Rochester, other regional locations and Jamaica and Nairobi, Kenya. Saint Mary's mission is to awaken, nurture and empower learners to lead ethical lives of service and leadership.

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