

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

For Pre-Licensed Mental Health Providers



VIRGINIA
TELEMENTAL
HEALTH
INITIATIVE

ABOUT VTMHI

WHAT IS VTMHI?

The Virginia Telemental Health Initiative (VTMHI) is a pilot program focused on meeting the mental health needs of Virginians who are medically underserved and cannot access care due to limited income, being un- or under-insured, and provider shortages. VTMHI expands access to timely and appropriate telemental health services by collaborating with Virginia's free and charitable clinics and mental health providers who are in the process of meeting their licensure requirements.

HOW DOES VTMHI WORK?

To help accelerate licensure, VTMHI will match volunteer pre-licensed mental health providers (pre-LMHPs) with clinical supervisors to achieve needed client contact hours while providing pro-bono support in free and charitable clinics – a win-win-win for patients, providers-in-training, and clinics! In addition, a robust curriculum of training and educational resources regarding telehealth will be available at no cost to help prepare Virginia's future providers to be best equipped to serve the needs of Virginians. In Year 1, VTMHI will focus on collaborations with individuals who are in the process of achieving licensure as a Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT), or Professional Counselor (LPC).

WHY SHOULD I JOIN VTMHI?

The goal of VTMHI is to help professionals advance through the licensure process so that they can begin seeing patients as licensed mental health providers sooner and with comprehensive experience.

VTMHI will provide volunteers with:

- Individual and group supervision with a clinical provider who is committed to professional growth and clinical competency
- Direct experience in mental health services, telehealth, and with the medically underserved
- Ongoing educational opportunities
- Opportunities to engage with other pre-LMHPs in group supervision, training, and networking

HOW WILL VTMHI HELP TO CREATE AND EXPAND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AVAILABLE IN FREE AND CHARITABLE CLINICS?

125 out of 133 cities and counties in the Commonwealth of Virginia are designated as mental health professional shortage areas. Many of Virginia's free and charitable clinics are currently providing mental health services and are unable to meet the needs of the community due to the provider shortage. VTMHI connects pre-LMHPs with clinics to provide additional telemental health services to their clients.



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ELIGIBILITY

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR PARTICIPATION?

Mental health providers actively seeking licensure (pre-licensure) are eligible to participate in VTMHI. Volunteer qualifications for this program include:

- A master's degree in social work or counseling
- Actively working toward licensure in the Commonwealth of Virginia (completed necessary process with applicable licensing board)
- Currently serving patients and receiving primary supervision
- Able to commit to at least six (6) months of volunteer service and a minimum of approximately five (5) hours of work per week, on average
- Completed volunteer application
- Successful completion of background and National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB) checks

Additional competencies include:

- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Ability to receive feedback and constructive criticism well; ability to resolve conflicts
- Willingness to maintain open communication with program and clinic staff and ask for help as needed
- Able to adapt to changes in process
- Demonstrated knowledge and sensitivity related to anti-racism, social justice, multicultural issues, and ability to interact effectively with diverse individuals and groups
- A heart for and commitment to caring for Virginia's medically underserved
- Curiosity for learning and growing and excitement for being an active part of Virginia's mental health safety net

CAN PEOPLE WHO ARE GRADUATING SOON OR FINISHING THEIR CLINICAL YEAR PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM AS IT IS GROWING?

During VTMHI's first year, we are collaborating with a pilot group of clinics. Because of this, our volunteer positions are limited and therefore we are only able to accept pre-licensed applicants. There will be additional volunteer opportunities as the program grows.

IS IT REQUIRED TO BE FLUENT IN LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH?

No, fluency in another language is not required. However, many clinics are in need of providers who are fluent in additional languages, especially Spanish, to serve their patients. Please note that in order to provide effective mental health services in another language the provider must be fluent and should consider potential competency in supporting a client in their native language.

I AM A MILITARY SPOUSE; WILL I STILL BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM IF OR WHEN MY SPOUSE GETS ORDERS?

If you are actively seeking licensure in Virginia, you are eligible to participate in the program.



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PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM

WHAT IS THE TIME COMMITMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM?

Pre-LMHPs are expected to commit to at least six (6) months of volunteer service and a minimum of approximately five (5) hours of work per week, including at least three (3) hours of direct client service per week.

WHAT ARE EXPECTED WORKING HOURS? IS THERE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR EVENINGS OR WEEKENDS?

We understand that many of our pre-LMHPs also have full-time jobs and other time commitments. During the first phase of this program, pre-LMHPs will mostly provide services when the clinic they are paired with is in operation until a patient can safely and logistically connect from an alternative location. Operating hours vary but many include evening and weekend appointments. Pre-LMHPs will provide their availability during the application process to ensure we are making the best matches possible.

Additionally, VTMHI will provide flexible educational opportunities that can fit into any schedule and be completed when it is most convenient for you.

WILL THE SCHEDULE BE FLEXIBLE?

In order to provide the best quality and most consistent services to the clinic patients, we ask that pre-LMHPs commit to six (6) months of volunteer service and maintain as consistent a schedule as possible. We understand that life happens, and changes may be necessary, so in the event of a schedule change please provide as much notice as possible.

Please remember that when you accept a client you are establishing a provider-patient relationship and have committed to meeting the ethical and clinical standards of such. Schedule changes may have an impact on client care, so please provide as much notice as possible.

WILL THESE HOURS COUNT TOWARD MY LICENSURE?

Yes! Participation in this program should accelerate your ability to complete the required number of hours for licensure.

WILL MY HOURS BE DOCUMENTED FOR LICENSURE?

Pre-LMHPs are responsible for tracking their work for the purposes of meeting licensure requirements. VTMHI may provide summary sheets documenting the number of appointments.



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PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM

WILL I HAVE TO PROVIDE MY OWN COMPUTER/TABLET?

Yes, all pre-LMHPs must have the appropriate equipment, internet access, and private space to provide confidential mental health services. VTMHI will provide a secure telehealth and record storage platform for the volunteer to use.

WILL I EVER HAVE TO GO TO THE CLINIC (NON-REMOTE) TO PROVIDE THERAPY?

Volunteer training, client appointments, and clinical supervision are designed for virtual interaction - so there will be no need to travel. All participating clinics have reserved space and telehealth connections to accommodate patients on-site during telemental health sessions as needed.

DO I GET PAID FOR THIS WORK?

This is a volunteer position and participants will not be financially compensated.

Through participation in this program, pre-LMHPs will experience serving a diverse population, gain valuable telehealth experience, connect with other pre-LMHPs, and have access to free educational opportunities - all while receiving clinical supervision for licensure at no additional cost.

WILL I BE TRAINED?

All pre-LMHPs will be required to complete volunteer onboarding for VTMHI and for their assigned clinic. Pre-LMHPs will be trained on VTMHI's telemental health platform and the EHR at the clinic for which they volunteer.

VTMHI will also offer free educational opportunities to all pre-LMHPs. These trainings will include:

- Telehealth requirements and essentials
- Telemental health best practices
- Supplementary trainings on topics of interest to the cohort

Pre-LMHPs will also be assigned a supervisor for clinical supervision who will share clinical knowledge and interventions.

WILL I HAVE TO CARRY MY OWN MALPRACTICE INSURANCE?

Pre-LMHPs will have liability coverage under the clinic they are serving through the Good Samaritan Act. This insurance will only cover work done for the clinic through the VTMHI program.

WILL I PROVIDE THERAPY AT MORE THAN ONE CLINIC?

It is our intention that each pre-LMHP will be matched with one clinic; however, there may be times when a pre-LMHP has the opportunity to provide coverage to a clinic looking for specific qualifications. Provider-client and provider-clinic fit are important considerations to ensure the individual clinic and patient needs can be successfully met by pre-LMHPs.



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PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM

WHAT IF A CLIENT NEEDS ADDITIONAL LOCAL RESOURCES AND I'M NOT IN THEIR AREA?

Each clinic will provide pre-LMHPs with a list of community and crisis resources that will contain appropriate referral sources for a variety of issues.

WHAT IF A CLIENT IS IN CRISIS OR IF I NEED HELP OUTSIDE OF BUSINESS HOURS?

VTMHI and each clinic will provide their volunteers with guidance/protocol for handling a crisis and after-hours issues.

Each patient encounter will have built-in steps to ensure the pre-LMHP has information regarding the client's physical location so that the appropriate safety management plan can be implemented if needed.

WHAT IF I WANT TO STOP PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM?

In order to provide the best quality and most consistent services to the clinic patients we ask that pre-LMHPs commit to six (6) months of volunteer service and maintain as consistent a schedule as possible.

Should a pre-LMHP decide to end their service to VTMHI we ask that they provide as much notice as possible to ensure a clinically appropriate transition for the pre-LMHP and the clients. This may include transition/discharge sessions with your clients to ensure continuity of care.

WILL I HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT WITH OTHER PRE-LMHPs?

Yes! Pre-LMHPs will have the opportunity to connect through group supervision, supplemental optional trainings, and more casual opportunities.



SUPERVISION

WILL I HAVE A SUPERVISOR? CAN I CONSULT WITH SOMEONE?

Pre-LMHPs will have a clinical supervisor as part of the VTMHI program. These hours will count toward the overall minimum volunteer requirement (approximately five (5) hours of service a week).

In alignment with professional licensure requirements, pre-LMHPs will receive regular individual and group supervision.

CAN I CHOOSE MY SUPERVISOR?

VTMHI will make every effort to match clinical supervisors with pre-LMHPs based on areas of expertise, professional interests, and developmental goals. We recognize that there may be times when a “match” may not be an exact fit – and this can provide an opportunity for growth too! Knowing that not every clinical supervisor can be all things to all pre-LMHPs, VTMHI will establish supplementary learning and networking opportunities that will offer each volunteer additional “mentors” and subject matter experts from which to learn if you decide to take advantage of these opportunities.

Due to the structure of the program, the ability to change clinical supervisors is limited by clinical supervisor capacity. Should an issue or concern arise between a pre-LMHP and their clinical supervisor, please contact the VTMHI director to discuss opportunities for resolution.

WILL MY CLINICAL SUPERVISOR BE AT THE FREE AND CHARITABLE CLINIC?

Your clinical supervisor is contracted by the Virginia Telehealth Network (VTN) for the purposes of VTMHI and may not be directly associated with the clinic you serve.

WILL YOU HAVE ANY LICENSED CLINICAL SUPERVISORS OUTSIDE OF LPCs AND LCSWs?

During the program’s first year we are only able to accept social work clinical supervisees, residents in counseling, and marriage and family therapy residents. In the future, we plan to expand the opportunity to include other disciplines and needed areas of expertise.

WOULD WE NEED TO HAVE THE PROGRAM’S CLINICAL SUPERVISOR AS OUR SOLE CLINICAL SUPERVISOR? ARE WE ABLE TO HAVE OUR OWN (THROUGH EMPLOYMENT/ PERSONAL OUTREACH) AND ANY CLINICAL SUPERVISOR PROVIDED BY THE PROGRAM?

Eligible pre-LMHPs should be receiving primary clinical supervision elsewhere. VTMHI will provide each pre-LMHP with a clinical supervisor specific to this program.



SUPERVISION

HOW MANY CLINICAL SUPERVISION HOURS DO PRE-LMHPs GET PER WEEK OVERALL?

Clinical supervision will occur a minimum of one hour every other week.

HOW WILL THE BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK/PSYCHOLOGY/COUNSELING KNOW THAT I AM GETTING THESE HOURS AND CLINICAL SUPERVISION?

Each pre-LMHP is responsible for collecting and maintaining all clinical supervision documentation and hours, communicating with the licensure board, etc. Your clinical supervisor will confirm and sign off on any needed hours, documents, etc. based on the documentation you provide.

CAN YOU ELABORATE ON HOW THE GROUP SUPERVISION WILL BE SET UP?

We envision a combination of one-on-one and group supervision so that pre-LMHPs are able to benefit both from the expertise of their clinical supervisor and also learn from each other. A schedule will be established based upon volunteer time commitment to the program, mutual availability, and clinical supervisor areas of expertise.



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TECHNOLOGY AND TRAINING

HOW WILL VTMHI ADDRESS ISSUES FOR PATIENTS EXPERIENCING BARRIERS TO ACCESS VIRTUAL CARE?

Internet access is a challenge for many Virginians. In an effort to ensure that everyone has access to this opportunity the clinics will be providing hardware and space for clients to receive services. If clients have a reliable internet connection and access to appropriate hardware (computer, tablet, phone, etc.) then they may receive services outside of the clinic. Clients will be encouraged to participate in the first few telemental health appointments at the clinic, so that technology challenges and any clinical documentation can be addressed.

WILL TRAVEL BE REQUIRED? IS EVERYTHING DONE BY TELEHEALTH?

No travel will be required. Pre-LMHPs will provide all services virtually and therefore must have access to appropriate hardware, a reliable internet connection, and a safe and confidential space. Further, provider orientation will occur virtually.

WILL TRAINING BE PROVIDED ON TELEHEALTH OR OTHER TOPICS?

All pre-LMHPs will be required to complete volunteer onboarding for VTMHI and their assigned clinic. Pre-LMHPs will be trained virtually on VTMHI's telemental health platform and the EHR at the clinic for which they volunteer.

VTMHI will offer free educational opportunities to all pre-LMHPs. These trainings will include:

- Telehealth
- Telemental health best practices
- Supplementary trainings on topics of interest to the cohort

Pre-LMHPs will also be assigned a supervisor for clinical supervision who will share clinical knowledge and interventions.

