

# Clinical Mental Health Counseling Interview Questions

## + Questions YOU want to ask at the end of your Interview!

### Qualification Questions

*Qualifications-focused questions give you the opportunity to summarize the specific skills and other attributes you bring to the role.*

#### 1. Tell me about yourself.

**How to Answer:** This is a very popular interview-opener. It's easy to get off course here, straight out of the gate. Many candidates are tempted to go through a long, meandering account of their entire career. You should think of this answer as your Elevator Pitch -- a succinct overview that highlights the most impressive parts of your education, experience and other accomplishments. Try to answer the question in three-parts: 1) Who You Are 2) Why You're Qualified 3) Why You're Here

#### 2. Walk me through your education and experience

**How to Answer:** This question is a variation on "Tell Me About Yourself." This question is so open-ended that many people just don't know what to say. A common pitfall is to start at the very beginning of your career and ramble on and on about things that are not relevant, leaving out your most recent experience and greatest accomplishments altogether. Similar to telling the employer about yourself, try to provide a succinct overview that highlights the most related parts of your education, experience and other accomplishments. Try to answer the question in three-parts: 1) Who You Are 2) Why You're Qualified 3) Why You're Here

#### 3. What do you know about our company and why do you want to work here?

**How to Answer:** This question allows you to showcase your motivation, enthusiasm, and alignment with the company values and objectives. To do the following four things to ace this question.

- Research the company and role
- Align your skills and experiences

- Show enthusiasm for the company
- Be specific and keep it concise

**4.** Describe your key accomplishments in your internship experience?

**How to Answer:** Your current internship role is the most interesting to the interviewer. Be prepared to describe your top achievements and responsibilities in this job. As always, you should focus on the areas most relevant to the work that you would be doing if hired. Avoid these common mistakes:

- 1) Don't just rattle off your job description. Focus on your accomplishments and how you went above the normal call of duty.
- 2) Stress any impressive statistics, numbers, or details.
- 3) Don't try to describe absolutely everything that you do. Focus on the highlights that this particular interviewer will care about.
- 4) Keep your audience in mind. Define any unfamiliar terms and skip or explain details that could be confusing.

**5.** What are the top 3 strengths you bring to this role?

**How to Answer:** Embrace this question as an opportunity to talk about your best qualities. To prepare your answer, write down a list of your top strengths and decide which 3 are most relevant for the position at hand. Review our competencies list for example strengths that relate to most jobs. Avoid choosing generic strengths that anyone can claim. Don't wimp out with general statements that you're a "hard worker" or "people person." Be specific and prepare an example to demonstrate each strength.

**6.** What is your greatest weakness?

**How to Answer:** Everybody dreads the "weakness" question and with good reason. There is no perfect answer to this question and it's easy to screw it up. Don't choose a weakness that could limit your ability to do the job well. Don't be defensive or dwell on the negative. Show that you are aware of the weakness and striving to improve.

*Choose a weakness you are already working on improving.* Prepare to describe how you are addressing the weakness and make it clear that it's a non-issue for

the position. This allows you to show that you are driven to improve yourself and helps you conclude your answer to the question in a positive way.

7. What made you decide to pursue a career as counselor?
  - a. This question may be supplemented with the population you intend to work with.

## **Behavioral Questions**

*Behavioral questions typically focus on your experience in a specific work situation to evaluate soft skills such as problem solving, conflict resolution and leadership*

1. Describe a time when you had a heavy workload and competing deadlines. How did you set priorities?

**How to Answer:** This interview question can be awkward because nobody enjoys talking about screw-ups or missed deadlines in a job interview. However, most of us have had to ask for more time on a work project at some point in the past. If you say you've never ever missed a deadline, most interviewers will be skeptical. The key with a question like this is to discuss the negative experience in a neutral way and emphasize the lessons learned.

2. What is your experience with providing individual, family, and group counseling?

**How to Answer:** Provide specific examples of your experience providing individual, family, and group counseling. If possible, you can mention any particular successes or challenges that you faced in each type of setting. You should also explain how you have adapted your approach to meet the needs of different clients. For example, if you've had success working with a particularly challenging group of adolescents, talk about what strategies you used to engage them.

3. Describe your approach to crisis intervention and how you would manage a mental health emergency.

**How to Answer:** Start by describing your approach to crisis intervention. Explain any training you have received in this area and how it has prepared you for

working with clients in crises. Talk about the strategies you use to assess a client's situation, de-escalate their emotions, and provide support during a mental health emergency. Make sure to emphasize your ability to think quickly and respond appropriately when faced with unexpected situations. Finally, discuss the importance of follow-up care after an emergency and how you ensure that clients get the help they need.

4. Are you familiar with evidence-based practices such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) or dialectical behavior therapy (DBT)?

**How to Answer:** Before the interview, it's important to do some research and refresh yourself on CBT and DBT. You should be able to explain what each practice is and how you have used them in your previous work or studies. It's also a good idea to mention any additional evidence-based practices that you are familiar with. Finally, make sure to emphasize your commitment to continuing education in order to stay up-to-date with new developments in the field.

5. What strategies do you use to build trust with clients who have experienced trauma?

**How to Answer:** You should discuss specific strategies you use to build trust with clients who have experienced trauma. This could include using a trauma-informed approach, being aware of your own biases and assumptions, providing a safe and nonjudgmental environment, and demonstrating empathy and understanding. You can also talk about how you work to create an atmosphere where the client feels seen, heard, and understood. Additionally, it's important to explain how you prioritize the safety of the client in all interactions.

6. Describe a situation in which you had to collaborate with other professionals to provide comprehensive care for a client.

**How to Answer:** To answer this question, think of a situation in which you had to collaborate with other professionals. Describe the client's needs and how you worked with the team to come up with an effective plan of action. Talk about any challenges that arose during the collaboration process and how you overcame them. Finally, talk about the outcome of the collaboration and how it benefited the client.

7. How do you ensure that all ethical guidelines are followed during the course of treatment?

**How to Answer:** Start your answer by discussing the ethical guidelines you're familiar with, such as client confidentiality and informed consent. Then explain how you ensure that those guidelines are followed in practice. For example, you might talk about how you create an agreement with clients at the start of treatment outlining the expectations for both parties, or how you document all interactions to maintain a record of progress. Finally, emphasize the importance of ethics in mental health counseling and how you strive to uphold professional standards at all times.

8. Describe your experience working with patients from diverse cultural backgrounds.

**How to Answer:** Be prepared to discuss your experience working with people from different backgrounds. Talk about any courses or seminars you've taken related to cultural competency, and how those have helped you become more aware of the needs of diverse populations. Also, give examples of times when you had to adjust your approach in order to better serve a patient from a different culture. Finally, emphasize that you understand the importance of being culturally competent and that you're committed to learning and growing in this area.

9. How do you handle a situation when a client's symptoms worsen despite treatment?

**How to Answer:** In your answer, you should emphasize that you are able to assess the situation and make adjustments as needed. You could talk about how you would consult with other mental health professionals or specialists when necessary in order to come up with a new treatment plan. Additionally, you could discuss how you would communicate openly and honestly with the client in order to ensure they understand the changes being made and why they are beneficial. Finally, you could mention that you would be available for additional support if needed.

10. What strategies do you use to motivate clients to stay engaged in their treatment?

**How to Answer:** Your answer should focus on the strategies you use to help your clients stay motivated and engaged in their treatment. You could talk about how you set achievable goals with them, provide positive reinforcement when they reach those goals, or offer incentives for progress. Additionally, you can discuss how you create a safe space where clients feel comfortable sharing their feelings and experiences without fear of judgment. Finally, emphasize that you understand the importance of being empathetic and understanding towards your clients' needs.

## **Examples of Possible End-of-Interview Questions CMHC Counseling Internship/Career**

**\*\*Before the interview, do research via the site's website and social media pages. The best questions are SPECIFIC questions related to the site. Below are some general questions to consider asking at the end of your interview\*\***

### **Type of Work**

- What client population will you be working with/the program you will be working in?
- How does the site maintain a diverse clientele?
- How flexible is the site in scheduling? Could you work nights or weekends?
- How many hours will you be working on-site?
- How does this site accommodate clients wishing to be seen virtually?
- What is the average caseload of interns at this site?
- Are there any required days/times I am expected to be on-site (weekly team meetings, professional development/training, etc.)
- What are weekly intern expectations outside of direct client work?

### **Supervision**

- How much supervision will the site provide? Can I receive a minimum of 1 hour of uninterrupted supervision per week? Do you offer supplementary group supervision?
- Will a fully licensed supervisor always be present on-site when you are seeing clients?
- Who will my supervisor be? What is their style/? What is their experience supervising interns? Will I have an opportunity to meet with them during the interview process?

### **Training**

- What are the orientation/onboarding or training requirements for the site?
- Are there training/continued education opportunities offered within the site?
- Are there opportunities for learning to use assessment instruments?
- Do you allow interns to record sessions with clients?

### **Logistics**

- Will you have a desk or office to see clients and do paperwork?
- Will you be able to co-lead or solo lead groups?

- Will you be expected to travel to off-site locations? Will a licensed supervisor from the site accompany you and transport you?
- What is the most convenient transportation and route to the site?
- How will clients be added to my caseload? Will they be added after I complete an intake? Will I have to do outreach to add clients, or will the site provide them?

### **Billing**

- Does the site offer a sliding scale/Would I be able to see clients receiving services on a sliding scale? Does the site accept Medicaid and Medicare?
- Do you all have a billing department, or will I be responsible for billing? (Private insurance and Medicaid/Medicare)

### **Digital Services**

- What platform/portal/service do you use for documentation and record-keeping?