Can Complex Counseling Skills Be Taught At A Distance?: Update On Applications Of Videoconferencing Techniques

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Abstract: This presentation will demonstrate updates to the programmatic model, developed by the University of Arkansas at Little Rock’s online Master of Rehabilitation Counseling program, for teaching students at a distance the complex skills needed to be effective counselors. Utilizing an approach, that combines traditional methodologies and technical innovations, acquisition of needed competencies is facilitated. The model uses: 1) Videostreaming technology and chroma key equipment to present online curriculum that, while being in an asynchronous video format, gives students the basic knowledge needed to be effective counselors; and 2) Webcams, web-based videoconferencing technology, and uploaded digital recordings to facilitate face-to-face individual and group interaction and feedback with students at distant field sites. This distance-learning model has potential to be adapted for the complex skill development needs of a wide variety of disciplines.

Overview

This presentation will discuss and demonstrate updates to the programmatic model, developed by the University of Arkansas at Little Rock’s (UALR) Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC) program, for teaching students at a distance the complex skills needed to be effective counselors. Feedback from our rehabilitation educator colleagues around the USA indicates that our methodology truly represents one of the “Best Practices” in our discipline. Utilizing an approach that combines traditional methodologies and technical innovations, acquisition of needed complex competencies is facilitated. The model uses: 1) Videostreaming technology and chroma key equipment to allow presentation of online curriculum that, while being in an asynchronous video format, gives students basic knowledge needed to be effective counselors; and 2) Webcams and web-based videoconferencing technology to facilitate face-to-face individual and group interaction and feedback with students at distant field sites that gives them a chance to refine their counseling skills in a safe environment. This distance-learning model has potential to be adapted for the complex skill development needs of a wide variety of disciplines.

The goals are for the attendees to understand the instructional strategies, procedures, and evaluation process issues involved in developing counseling skills at a distance and to understand the techniques and new technologies available to assist in the process. The discussion will also include the model for supervision of Practicum and Internship students at distant sites that the online MRC Program has now further refined. Multiple technologies (including interactive webcams, web-based videoconferencing, WebCT, and secure web-based uploads of digital recordings of counseling sessions) are combined with traditional methodologies to enhance students’ acquisition of counseling and rehabilitation skills in the field. The presentation will follow an interactive discussion and demonstration format with demonstrations using a laptop computer to show actual online webcam digital recordings, and videoconferencing techniques. Attendees will receive handouts that direct them to websites and other resources that will help them implement the model presented.