

# **IFTA RECOGNIZED FAMILY THERAPY PREPARATION 2011**

---

## **Mission Statement of the International Family Therapy Association**

**The cornerstone of every society is the family. With the support of its members, the International Family Therapy Association (IFTA) provides international conferences to promote, strengthen, and improve the quality of family therapy, the quality of relationships within families, and to promote well-being and peace within our world.**

**IFTA, working in a collaborative spirit with other professionals and organizations around the world who share its mission, also promotes continuing education in the development of quality standards for marriage and family therapy for professionals performing family therapy in order that they may better assist families in the communities in which they serve.**

---

IFTA (International Family Therapy Association) has been concerned with the development of family/systemic therapists\* since its foundation in 1987. Family therapy is identified by the focus and emphasis of the treatment and not by the number of persons seen and can be conducted with a family or families, couples, or individuals, so long as the therapy is based on a well grounded understanding and application of family and other systems in which persons develop and function.

A major part of IFTA's mission, as noted above in the IFTA Mission Statement, is to assist in the development of education and training standards for family and systemic therapy where assistance is needed and sought around the world, serving primarily as an advisory organization rather than as a regulatory or specific accrediting entity for programs or individuals.

## **Minimum Education and Training Standards**

The guidelines set forth in this document are intended for application by national/local registration, licensing/registration, and accrediting bodies in a progressive fashion as family therapy develops in an area of the world in and constitute the minimal preparation for practice recognized by the International Family Therapy Association.

Two different patterns for the preparation of family/systemic therapists exist: 1) The profession of family therapy: One is the path of producing through a program of education and training a specific profession of marital and family therapy with masters and doctoral degree preparation underlying the identity and clinical work of practitioners so prepared. This is the case, for example, in the USA where scores of accredited programs exist and licensure for marriage and family therapists (MFTs) is established in all 50 states, as well as in parts of Canada. 2) The practice of family therapy: The other

major pattern involves various forms of preparation of practitioners who were originally educated in another field and who add on specialist preparation—including the acquisition of substantive knowledge and supervised clinical training in family therapy.

These IFTA guidelines are concerned with education and training for the practice of family therapy and not necessarily with the establishment and development of a distinct profession of family therapy. They are intended for guidance in building on theoretical and clinical training and experience generally gained in a mental health or closely related discipline.

Minimum education and training, including a primary degree or equivalent, should be at least seven years in length, normally including three years specifically in family therapy education and training following the completion of an appropriate primary degree.

### **Components of Education and Training**

The knowledge, conceptual understanding, and clinical experience and skills that are required for family therapy preparation should include:

#### **1. Theoretical Foundations**

- a. Principles of Systems Theory and Applications to Families
- b. Individual and Family Life-Cycle Development
- c. Family Forms and Social Systems, . Class and Culture
- d. Psychopathology and Dysfunctional Family Patterns
- e. Models of Family Therapy and Applications in Various Settings

#### **2. Research**

- a. Comprehension of Research Methodology
- b. Current Research Evidence for Family Therapy and Interventions

#### **3. Ethics and Related Professional Issues**

- a. Ethics Related to Individual and Relational Matters
- b. Legal Issues Related to Working with Clients
- c. Relevant Statutes/Regulations/Mores of Family Therapy

#### **4. Clinical Skills Development**

- a. Clinical Practice With Individuals, Couples, and Families  
by Qualified Family Therapy Supervisors
- b. Experience In And Demonstrated Competence In:
  - i. Establishment of Therapeutic Contact With Client System
  - ii. Client Assessment and Diagnosis
  - iii. Treatment Planning
  - iv. Therapeutic Interventions and Case Management

## **5. Personal Development**

Appropriate Experiences That Are Aimed at Increasing The Therapist's Maturity and Self-Awareness, Which May Include Personal Therapy, Group Therapy, Family of Origin Therapy, Or Couples Therapy, As Indicated.

## **6. Continuing Development**

### **Academic Credits and Contact Hours Guideline**

#### **Credit Hrs\* Contact Hrs**

<b>20</b>	<b>200-300</b>	<b>Theoretical Foundations</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>10-15</b>	<b>Research Methodology</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>10-15</b>	<b>Ethics and Related Professional Issues</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>10-15</b>	<b>Personal Development</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>90-135</b>	<b>Clinical Skills Development</b>

This calls for a minimum of 230 contact hours of theory and substance-based coursework; 250 hours of clinical practice in practica or clinical internship, at least 125 of which should be with relational cases—couple or families; and for a minimum of 100 hours of supervision (individual and group), 25 of which must be directly observed (live or videotaped).

[\*Note: One credit hour contains 10-15 contact hours, some of which may consist of guided individual study, distance learning, and other approved methods of learning.

## **International Family Therapy Association**

### **Guidelines for Basic Preparation of Family Therapy Teachers and Supervisors**

The International Family Therapy Association is committed to encouraging and supporting the education and training/supervision of family/systemic therapists by qualified teachers and practitioners in well designed and adequately functioning programs. While some courses in family therapy programs are appropriately taught by non-clinicians, all persons teaching clinically focused courses and all supervisors of family therapists in training must be qualified family therapists.

These guidelines, as noted at the beginning of this document, are intended for use in countries and programs in which education and training in family therapy are built on a foundation of theoretical and clinical training and experience generally gained in a mental health or closely related discipline. Prior experience in the development of the field in countries in which family therapy has existed for many years suggests that after a time a kind of “second generation” develops in which students will enter into family therapy education and training much earlier in their careers, with little or no clinical experience, thus needing considerably more time in supervised clinical training in particular than the veterans from other fields will require in order to qualify as teachers and especially as qualified and accepted supervisors. Therefore, it is recommended that for a period of three to five years after the establishment of family therapy programs in a country, a “grandfathering” (or “grandmothering”) pattern prevail in which veteran clinicians from other fields who have supervised clinical work previously are accepted as family therapy supervisors after completion of a minimal program of family therapy education and supervision determined by the national family therapy organization.

## **Recognized Family Therapy Supervisors**

In order to be recognized as a family therapy supervisor, an individual must have :

1. Successfully completed a primary degree or equivalent and specialized family therapy education and training coursework as described in the section on **Components and Training** given above.
2. Successfully completed during a minimum period of four years, at least 300 hours hours of relevant experience, composed of:
  - a. Teaching courses
  - b. Observing family therapy supervision
  - c. Conducting family therapy supervision with a variety of types of cases under qualified supervision
  - d. Supervising the supervision of another/others with a variety of types of cases
  - e. Conducting at least two years of clinical practice
  - f. Engaging in personal and professional development experiences

**Note: IFTA recognizes clinicians who are duly licensed and qualified as Marital and Family Therapists elsewhere (e.g., in the USA) who teach or supervise in another country. Interested persons should contact the IFTA Secretariat for additional information.**

## **Recognized Family Therapy Teachers and Supervisors**

Persons who have successfully completed the foregoing requirements are deemed to be qualified and eligible to:

1. Teach in family therapy education and training programs
2. Supervise the clinical work of persons in education and training to become family therapists
3. Supervise already qualified family therapists as part of their continuing professional development
4. Supervise and consult with staff and programs or individuals requesting assistance in working from a family therapy perspective

### **Guidelines for Qualifying As A Recognized School or Institute For Family Therapy Education and Training**

In the absence of legislatively based rules, standards, and/or procedures for identifying qualified family therapy educational and training schools or institutes, IFTA may collaborate with the national or local family therapy organizations and recognize qualified family therapy programs in institutes or schools, provided those programs meet the guidelines outlined in this document, and either have a teaching/training staff composed essentially of qualified/recognized family therapists or present an acceptable plan for securing such personnel in a timely manner.

If you wish to have your program qualified as an IFTA Recognized Family Therapy Education and Training Program, please contact:

Dr. William Hiebert  
IFTA General Secretary  
1800 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, STE 512  
Rock Island, IL 61201 USA  
[wjhiebert@aol.com](mailto:wjhiebert@aol.com) 309-786-4491