

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Administration
Office of Academic Affiliations
Washington, DC

PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

**Psychology Educational Enhancement:
New Internship Programs with Rural Focus
for Academic Year 2012-2013 (Fiscal Year 2013)**

1. REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP).

This announcement solicits applications for enhancements to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national psychology training program and provides information and procedures for those applications. Only new Psychology Internship Programs that are located predominantly in rural settings or that predominantly serve Veterans who reside in rural areas will be considered.

Funding decisions will be based primarily on the quality of the proposals submitted and on their congruence with VA strategic initiatives to enhance services for Veterans living in rural areas. Selected sites will be provided with funding and positions effective Academic Year 2012-2013 [Fiscal Year (FY) 2013].

There will be 15 positions to be allocated among five to seven new programs; only programs that are demonstrably able to offer high quality or innovative clinical education are encouraged to apply.

2. BACKGROUND

The Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) leads the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) health professions education mission that enables VA to enhance the learning environment, to provide excellent care for Veterans, and to recruit and retain high quality professional staff. Psychology internship training is an effective mechanism for the development of a recruitment pool of psychologists skilled in managing the clinical needs of Veteran patients.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has funded psychology training programs since 1946, providing a significant proportion of internship positions nationally. OAA has funded postdoctoral fellowship programs in VA since 1994. Major expansions of psychology training programs occurred in 2008 and 2011.

3. POLICY

a. OAA's Associated Health Education Office maintains overall responsibility for administration of VA's Psychology Internship Programs.

b. Each applying facility must provide justification for the request and describe how it will meet the requirements of this RFP.

c. All positions will be for one year full-time appointments. Trainees are expected to complete training within the one-year training program. Exceptions may be approved by OAA on a case by case basis.

d. Facilities requesting new positions must demonstrate the ability to provide quality internship training in Evidence Based Practices consistent with VHA Handbook 1600.01, *Uniform Mental Health Services in VA Medical Centers and Clinics*.

e. VA psychology internship programs must become accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA) and approved by OAA. The application for approval as a VA training site must include a realistic timetable and plan to obtain APA accreditation. Sites that fail to obtain APA accreditation within 3 years of the start of the training program will not be funded for subsequent years except in unusual circumstances.

f. Interns recruited by VA facilities must be enrolled in APA-accredited doctoral programs in clinical or counseling psychology and citizens of the United States. In addition, if male, an intern applicant must have registered with the Selective Service System by age 26.

g. OAA will provide approved VA facilities with all necessary funding for stipends, for VA's share of the Federal Insurance Contribution Act (FICA) contributions, and for VA's share of health and life insurance premiums. Continuation of funding will depend on availability of funds as well as on successful implementation of the proposed programs.

4. CRITERIA FOR VA FACILITY ELIGIBILITY

a. The nature of the training program, populations served, training experiences provided, and qualifications and skills of faculty and staff must be appropriate to the VA mission and to the standards of the APA's Commission on Accreditation (CoA). Clinical settings should provide a range of experiences in the application of psychological principles, provide exposure to patients of varying backgrounds and cultures, and foster substantial responsibility in carrying out professional functions.

b. Site Characteristics. The facility must provide evidence of committed leadership, appropriate clinical and educational programming, and sufficient workload to support a culture of excellence in psychology training. The site must demonstrate:

- (1) Ability to provide services to a predominantly rural Veteran population, either because of its location in a rural or highly rural facility or because the population served is predominantly rural. Identification of a VA facility as Highly Rural, Rural, or Urban may be determined through the VHA Site Tracking System (VAST) summaries found at: http://vaww.pssg.med.va.gov/PSSG/pssg_urhr_service_cboc_summary.htm.
- (2) VISN, facility, and clinical leadership commitment to build and sustain an outstanding learning environment.
- (3) Strong leadership by the facility's Designated Education Officer (DEO).
- (4) Evidence-based mental health clinical activities and workload to support proposed training programs.
- (5) Experience with or commitment to interprofessional training and care models.
- (6) Administrative infrastructure to support the proposed psychology training program.
- (7) Evidence of sound strategies for programmatic and learner evaluation.
- (8) An identifiable psychology leader.
- (9) An adequate number of privileged or credentialed psychology staff for provision of supervisory support, professional role modeling, and administrative functions.
- (10) An identified psychology training director who is allowed to set aside time to manage training program-related activities. Support for this set-aside should come from the identified psychology leader, from the training director's service line supervisor (if applicable), and from facility management. Psychology training directors generally

spend 25% or more of their time in training related activities, depending on the size and complexity of the training program.

(11) Release time for the psychology staff who supervise trainees so they may engage in training-related activities. Support for this set-aside of time should come from the identified psychology leader, from the psychology staff's service line supervisor (if applicable), and from facility management.

(12) Facility willingness to support membership in the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) and accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation of the American Psychological Association.

(13) The proposed program must meet standards for accreditation by the American Psychological Association, including that

- Training must be broad and professional,
- Education provided must not be narrow in focus, but must be generalizable to broader populations,
- When utilized, both telehealth services and telesupervision must be developmental in nature, with interns demonstrating competencies at face to face levels before introduction of electronic versions of the same.

5. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS.

a. A nonbinding Letter of Intent (LOI) to submit a proposal must be submitted to the Office of Academic Affiliations by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on **June 30, 2011**. This LOI must be one page and it should specify the name and contact information for the training director. It need not provide details of the submission under development. The letter should be e-mailed in Word or PDF format to Carla.Ortiz@va.gov. The Letter of Intent will be used for planning reviews and for establishing a database of proposal information.

b. The full proposal should be submitted electronically in one PDF file containing all of the documents. **The proposal must be received in OAA by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on August 11, 2011.** Send the file to Robert.Zeiss@va.gov and to Carla.Ortiz@va.gov. The core document of the application may not exceed 10 single-spaced pages, excluding the transmittal letter and appendices. Longer applications will not be reviewed. Pages must have at least one-inch margins all around and the font size must be no smaller than 11 point.

c. The core document of the application (10 pages or less) must include these elements. Please follow this outline explicitly.

(1) Introductory Information

- (a) Location and Name of Facility
- (b) Number of positions requested
- (c) Names and email addresses of individuals to be notified of proposal review outcome. The facility Director and DEO must be included in this list.

(2) Background Statement

- (a) Describe the existing psychology program at your facility. Describe staffing, recruitment and retention of staff, ongoing training of staff, and desirability of the VA facility as a training site. Statistics related to the proposed program should be presented, including number of patient beds, average daily census, length of stay, number of patients seen in inpatient and outpatient settings during FY 2010, types of clinical programs, and approximate case mix of patients served. Unique features of the patient population served should be described.

- (b) Describe current and previous psychology training programs, including training at the practicum level.
- (3) Training Program Description
 - (a) Training Program Mission Statement. State the purpose of the program, including philosophy, goals, and objectives.
 - (b) Methodology. Describe specific competencies to be developed by trainees, with an emphasis on how evidence based practices will be taught. In addition, address other skills and activities that will be part of the program, including assessment, modalities of treatment, staff consultation, interprofessional treatment team participation, and opportunities for research.
 - (c) Rotations. Describe at least three facility programs where psychological services are provided to patients and which will be available for clinical training. Describe opportunities for interaction between trainees and staff in psychology and other disciplines.
 - (d) Support. Describe facilities and staff available to support the program, including office space, computer availability, library support, and access to SPSS or other statistical packages.
 - (e) Program Evaluation. Specify how the training program's effectiveness for meeting its training goals and objectives will be evaluated. The proposal must include a description of how the program will track the success of its graduates and must include provision of annual end of year reports to OAA to allow evaluation of the program's success.
- (4) Recruitment of Trainees. Describe how trainees will be recruited and selected.
- d. Appendices (20 pages or less, not included in the 10 page limit) should include:
 - (1) Transmittal letter from the facility Director, to include:
 - (a) support for the program including release time for the psychology Director of Training and psychology staff who supervise trainees.
 - (b) names and titles of the Psychology Leader and Director of Training.
 - (c) facility's agreement to pay APA accreditation fees (application fee, \$2000; site visit fee, \$3400; and annual fee, \$2,000), and Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Center (APPIC) fees (initial application fee, \$250; annual membership fee, \$400 for single programs or \$600 for combined internship and postdoctoral program membership; and annual membership match fee, \$115).
 - (2) List of staff who will be involved in the program, including training program director, supervisors, faculty, and consultants. Please include the following information for each: name; degree; date of degree; university from which degree was received; primary clinical and research interests and expertise; the number of hours that will be devoted to the program; university appointments; and ABPP status, if applicable.
 - (3) Abbreviated Curricula Vitae of the Psychology Leader and Director of Training.
 - (4) Letters of support from the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Leadership, Designated Education Officer (DEO), service line supervisors of the Director of Training and individuals involved in the training program, leaders of other professions in the facility, APA accredited universities and internship programs.
 - (5) Specific timeline for receiving accreditation from APA.

6. REVIEW PROCESS

The merit of applications will be assessed by an Ad Hoc Review Committee. Applications will be reviewed within the context of APA accreditation criteria, APPIC guidelines, VA standards, and support of VA's Strategic Plans. The committee will evaluate specific items in the application that reflect:

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| a. | <u>Serving Rural Veterans</u> . Clear and convincing description of how the program will serve rural Veterans, fulfilling VA's goal of enhancing services for Veterans residing in rural communities. Proposals that fail to reflect location in a rural setting or ability to serve a predominantly rural Veteran population will not be scored. | 20 points |
| b. | <u>Facility Commitment</u> . Evidence of a commitment from the VA facility and VISN to establish a Psychology Training Program, including release time for the Training Director and availability of support resources such as support staff, office space, library services, and computer access. | 20 points |
| c. | <u>Breadth of Training</u> to be offered, including availability of sufficient training settings to provide good diversity of training experiences and patients. Facility evidence of successful application of the Uniform Mental Health Services Handbook (VHA Handbook 1600.01) is critical. Evidence-based practices, as supported by the Office of Mental Health Services (OMHS) must be included in the training program. | 20 points |
| d. | <u>Content Delivery For Training Program</u> . The proposal must include a clear description of the various methods for content delivery. In particular, how will quality training be delivered? The description should include the breadth of content, and mechanisms for delivery of content. Specific competencies to be developed must be described. Mechanisms of educational delivery may include distance learning methodologies such as video-conferencing, online resources, and any resources available at nearby academic affiliates. Creative approaches to content delivery such as partnering with other programs for delivery of didactics are encouraged. | 20 points |
| e. | <u>Quality of Supervision</u> . Sufficient number and qualifications of supervisory staff must be available. If there are not at least six psychologists on staff, proposal must describe availability of additional supervision from other disciplines or via V-Tel mechanisms. Such supervision must remain fully in compliance with VHA Handbook 1400.04, <i>Supervision of Associated Health Trainees</i> . Opportunities for interprofessional training or supervision are important. | 20 points |

TOTAL 100 points

7. APPOINTMENT AND PAY

a. The per annum training for Internship and Postdoctoral Psychology positions is locality based and may be found on the OAA Support website (<http://vaww.oaa.med.va.gov/>). OAA will provide approved facilities with stipends, VA's share (7.65%) of Federal Insurance Contribution Act (FICA) contributions, and VA's share of health and life insurance premiums. Other expenses connected with trainee recruitment, educational activities, or travel must be funded from other sources.

b. Appointments will be made under 38 U.S.C. 7405(a)(1) for a period not to exceed three years. Actual salaries will be the proportionate amount of the per annum training rate determined in the manner prescribed by VA Handbook 5007, Part II, Chapter 2, paragraph 2.m. For PAID coding purposes, interns will be identified by the use of Pay Plan N; Series Code 0180; Title Code 72, Assignment Code T1; Title, Psychology Intern; Subaccount, 1051; FTE, 0.5; Grade/Step, 00/N.

c. Psychology trainees may be detailed to other educational institutions without loss of pay for not more than one-sixth of the time of their training period. (Reference: VA Handbook 5007, Part II, Chapter 2, paragraph 2.m.(1)(b))

d. General Schedule annual and sick leave policy applies to trainees under this program. (Reference: VHA Manual M-8, Part II, Chapter 2, Paragraph 2.14). Trainees are eligible for life and health insurance benefits.

e. Trainees will be protected from personal liability while providing professional services at a VA health care facility under the Federal Employees Liability Reform and Tort Compensation Act, 28 U.S.C. 2679 (b)-(d).

8. CONTACT PERSON: For information concerning this program announcement, contact Robert Zeiss, Ph.D., Director, Associated Health Education Office (14), at Robert.Zeiss@va.gov or at 202.461.9493.

9. SCHEDULE

June 2, 2011	Program Announcement
June 30, 2011, 5:00 pm Eastern	Letter of Intent (Nonbinding) due to OAA
August 11, 2011, 5:00 pm Eastern	Application due to OAA. To be sent as a single PDF file to Robert.Zeiss@va.gov and to Carla.Ortiz@va.gov .
October 4, 2011	Notification of selected sites
Between July 1 and October 1, 2012	Initiation of Program
3 Years after Initiation or Expansion of Program (2015)	Program must be APA accredited to receive continued funding.