

**VA OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFILIATIONS
 NURSE RESIDENCY EXPANSION INITIATIVE
 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
 POST-BACCALAUREATE NURSE RESIDENCY
 PSYCHIATRIC-MENTAL HEALTH NURSE PRACTITIONER RESIDENCY
 ADULT-GERONTOLOGY PRIMARY CARE NURSE PRACTITIONER RESIDENCY
 Academic Year 2019-2020**

1. PURPOSE

- A. **Request for Proposals for Nurse Residency Positions:** The Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) solicits proposals to expand the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) **Nurse Residency programs, including Post-Baccalaureate Nurse Residency (PBNR), Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Residency (PMH-NPR) and Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner Residency (AGPC-NPR).**

Registered Nurses (RN) and Nurse Practitioners (NP) are among the top Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Mission Critical Occupations (MCO) identified as a priority for recruitment and retention initiatives. Due to the current national shortage of experienced nursing workforce, VHA has, similar to counterparts in the private sector, resorted to filling nursing vacancies with new graduate nurses. Both observation and literature demonstrate that newly graduated RNs and NPs benefit from additional experiential training to master their clinical skills. The VA OAA Nurse Residency programs are designed: (1) to ensure supervised transition of newly graduated nurses to safe and competent clinical practice in an academic residency model and (2) to enhance recruitment and retention of VA nurses.

Please note that this proposal for OAA Academic Nurse Residency programs is different from the Office of Nursing Service’s Transition to Practice (TTP) program. The TTP is an employee-based, local facility-funded model in which the RN trainees are employees and their time is counted as part of the unit’s nurse staffing. **VA OAA Academic Nurse Residency program positions are funded centrally by OAA trainee funds.** The OAA academic training program is a one year (12 months) program during which the trainees have 100% protected time to master the complexities of caring for Veterans.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) provides information, policies, and application procedures for VA facilities that wish to implement nurse residency programs at post-baccalaureate (PBNR) and/or post-graduate (PMH-NPR or AGNP-NPR) levels in **Academic Year 2019-2020. Proposals will be considered for new PBNR programs at VA facilities with up to 10 resident positions per site and new NPR programs with up to 4 resident positions per site.**

VA OAA Nurse Residency Program	Educational Levels	Number of Positions per VAMC site	Funded Hours per position
PBNR	Post-Baccalaureate Nurse Resident	Up to 10	2080
NPR (Psychiatric Mental Health or Adult-Gerontology focus)	Post-Graduate Nurse Practitioner Resident (post-master and/or post-doctoral)	Up to 4	2080

Proposal approval decisions are based primarily on the quality of the proposals and supporting documentation submitted.

- B. **Eligibility to Apply:** All VA facilities that currently do not have an OAA-funded nurse residency program in place are eligible to apply. Successful sites will demonstrate strong executive and programmatic leadership support and a documented record of quality in education and clinical practice. Demonstrated leadership in strategic planning and program planning, implementation, and evaluation are highly desirable elements. VA facilities and nursing school affiliates must be strongly committed to the goals and objectives defined in this program announcement and provide evidence of existing or new academic collaboration.

A letter of intent to submit a proposal should be submitted to OAA by October 29, 2018 and a full proposal must be submitted by January 31, 2019.

2. **BACKGROUND**

Access to high quality, timely care for Veterans requires an adequate supply and presence of competent nursing staff. Both practice and research demonstrate that newly graduated RNs and NPs benefit from additional experiential training to master their clinical skills. There is extensive evidence that nursing residency programs increase retention of nurses and decrease turnover cost leading to a positive return on investment. Historically, accredited residencies have been available for medicine, dentistry, psychology, pharmacy and other clinical professions, but not for nursing.

Since 2011, the VA OAA implemented and pilot-tested 17 PBNR and 17 NPR programs within VHA. National evaluation of these programs effectiveness revealed a strong relationship between the VA OAA nurse residency training and improvement in residents' competency levels and residents' confidence in assuming clinical responsibility. In 2016, the VA OAA conducted a Return on Investment Study (ROI) of its nursing residency programs to determine the organizational impact of these programs on VHA nursing workforce recruitment and retention goals. The economic impact studies were conducted for both PBNR and NPR programs. The results of ROI study indicated substantial positive payoff for the investment across all VA OAA nursing residency programs. The OAA Nurse Residency Pilot identified the characteristics of successful nurse residency programs and provided a platform and structure for a successful launch of this VA Nurse Residency Expansion Initiative.

3. **PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS**

Overall Commitment: The VA facility's commitment to meet the following strategic and operational expectations of the Nurse Residency program must be clearly discussed in the core narrative and letter(s) of support.

A. **The VA Facility must:**

- 1) Demonstrate medical center executive leadership support and commitment to the VA Nurse Residency Program.

- 2) Guarantee a release time for 1FTEE Nurse Residency Program Director (PD) to manage and coordinate the onsite residency program.
- 3) Guarantee sufficient clinical, education, and administrative space to support the program.
- 4) Guarantee sufficient number of qualified preceptors to provide adequate trainee supervision.
- 5) Provide sufficient release time for VA clinical faculty to serve as preceptors and participate in nurse residency activities.
- 6) Develop and implement a robust recruitment and retention program for VA Nurse Residency graduates and establish a local priority for hiring residency graduates.

B. Nurse Residency Program Director:

- 1) Each Nurse Residency program at the post-baccalaureate and post-graduate levels must have a designated PD.
- 2) PD must have at minimum a master's degree, with a doctorate preferred.
- 3) NPR PD must be board certified in the same program specialty area (Psychiatric Mental Health or Adult-Gerontological Nurse Practitioner certification) as the program's focus.
- 4) PDs will be expected to assume teaching as well as program administrative responsibilities.
- 5) PDs must be clinically *and* academically qualified to provide effective leadership to the program in achieving its mission, goals, and expected outcomes.
- 6) PDs must be willing and able to develop and maintain collaborative partnerships with academic and clinical leaders and facilitate development and implementation of the education initiatives, including curriculum development and program evaluation components.
- 7) PDs will support clinical faculty and preceptor development, participate in hiring and evaluating clinical faculty, lead program evaluation activities, and complete an annual report of the accomplishments of the program.

C. Nurse Resident Qualifications:

1) Post-Baccalaureate Nurse Resident must:

- a. Be a graduate of baccalaureate or master's level entry to practice program accredited by Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) or the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN).
- b. Possess a current, full, active, and unrestricted registration as a graduate professional nurse in a state, commonwealth or territory of the United States, or the District of Columbia, prior to the start of the PBNR program.
- c. Be a citizen of the United States.
- d. Be serving in his or her first nursing role with no prior experience as a registered nurse, graduate nurse (GN), or graduate nurse technician (GNT).
- e. Be a recent graduate within the past 12 months.

2) Nurse Practitioner Resident must:

- a. Be a graduate of master's or doctoral level Nurse Practitioner program accredited by CCNE or the ACEN.

- b. Possess a current certification as a Psychiatric Mental Health or Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner from the American Nurses Association or another nationally recognized certifying body. *Please note: Applicants with Family Nurse Practitioner certification interested in AGPC specialization may be accepted into the AGPC-NPR program.*
- c. Possess a current, full, active, and unrestricted registration as a graduate professional nurse AND nurse practitioner in a state, commonwealth or territory of the United States, or the District of Columbia, prior to the start of the NPR program.
- d. Be a citizen of the United States.
- e. Be serving in his or her first Nurse Practitioner role.
- f. Be a recent graduate within the past 12 months.

D. VA Training Cohort and Trainee Funding:

1) Training Cohort:

- a. VA OAA Nurse Residency is a cohort-based training program.
- b. Residents are expected to complete training within one year (12 months).

2) Trainee Funding:

- a. **Selected PBNR program:** A minimum of 6 and a maximum of 10 resident positions will be funded each academic year (AY) at each selected site.
- b. **Selected NPR program:** A minimum of 2 and a maximum of 4 resident positions will be funded each AY at each selected site.
- c. All positions requested must be for one year full-time appointments (2080 hrs.) and solely for residency training. *Please Note: Shift differential or premium pay is not approved for the OAA nurse residency trainees.*
- d. If any of the nurse residency positions are not filled in subsequent years, OAA has the authority to reallocate the stipend(s) to another facility.
- e. Continuation of funding will depend on successful implementation of the proposed programs and attainment of accredited status at the appropriate time intervals.

E. Trainee Appointment and Pay

- 1) Appointments will be made under 38 U.S.C. 7405(b)(1) for a period not to exceed one year and one day.
- 2) The per annum stipend for nurse residents will be established by OAA. OAA will provide approved facilities with stipends, Federal Insurance Contribution Act (FICA) contributions, and health and life insurance premiums.
- 3) Other expenses connected with trainee recruitment, educational activities, or travel must be funded from other sources. Facilities are encouraged to consider using local funds received through the VERA Education Supplement.
- 4) VA OAA PBNR and NP residents are eligible to receive 8 hours of annual leave and 4 hours of sick leave per pay period.
- 5) Residents 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).
- 6) Residents report directly to Residency Program Director. The PBNR/NPR PD is

responsible for the resident's time and attendance.

F. VA OAA Newly-Established Nurse Residency Program Accreditation Guidelines:

1) PBNR Program:

- a. The residency program must agree to seek CCNE accreditation within 3 years of funding implementation.
- b. The application for approval as a VA OAA PBNR training site must include a realistic plan and timetable to obtain CCNE accreditation.
- c. Sites that fail to obtain accreditation within the OAA-specified time period (3 years) will be subject to termination.

2) NPR Program:

- a. As of date of release of this RFP, there is no nationally-recognized NPR accrediting body.
- b. The accreditation requirement for VA OAA NPR programs is currently waived by the Chief Academic Affiliations Officer until further notice from OAA.
- c. NPR programs will have 3 years from the date of approval of a nationally-recognized NPR accrediting body to obtain accreditation.
- d. Sites that fail to obtain accreditation within the OAA specified time period will be subject to termination.

G. Affiliation with a School/College of Nursing:

- 1) Affiliation with a School/College of Nursing (SON/CON) is required to enable mutually beneficial relationships and to support a nursing workforce pipeline.
- 2) VA and SON/CON will work collaboratively to develop, implement, and evaluate education and nursing practice at the VA and the SON/CON.
- 3) The sponsoring VA facility and academic affiliate(s) are expected to collaborate throughout the development of the proposal and in its subsequent implementation and evaluation.

H. Nurse Residency Curriculum: Facilities must demonstrate the ability to provide quality residency training consistent with the OAA national curriculum and established national residency accreditation standards (as applicable), including weekly experiential and didactic education. The VA OAA Nurse Residency training must include Veteran specific topics. The OAA national curriculum will be available as a resource to each selected residency site.

I. Interprofessional educational activities: It is required that VA NPR programs work collaboratively with physician and other health professions residency programs to assure an interprofessional focus for both experiential and didactic learning opportunities.

J. Scholarly Activity Requirements: Evidence-based practice is a central tenet of the VA OAA Nurse Residency program. The VA Nurse Residents are required to complete a quality enhancement and/or system redesign project during their 12-month training at VA. Such activities are normally exempted from human subject research oversight requirements, but only the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has the authority to make that determination. It is

anticipated that the initiative will also generate ideas and opportunities for publication of observational data and hypothesis-driven research. Research projects will be subject to IRB review and must be funded through alternate channels.

- K. Nurse Residency Program Evaluation:** Evaluation is a critical component of any training program. The primary responsibility for evaluation belongs with the local facility, with support from OAA. National evaluation methods to assess residents' performance and program goals have been delineated by OAA. The VA OAA National Nurse Residency program evaluation is multidimensional in nature and includes the following components:
- residents' demographics and characteristics data;
 - residents' competency self-assessment;
 - faculty-rated competency assessment of residents' performance;
 - residents' comfort and confidence in performance of core clinical skills and abilities;
 - residents' overall satisfaction with the PBNR and NPR program;
 - organizational impact and overall program outcomes (e.g., data on recruitment, job placement, retention and turnover of residents hired by the VHA).

Completion of all established national evaluation components is mandatory. The specific instruments required for the PBNR and NPR program evaluation will be discussed with the selected sites prior to initiation of the residency. Additional evaluation instruments may be employed at the discretion of individual programs.

- L. Residency Completion Certificate:** Upon completion of the VA OAA Nurse Residency program, graduates will receive a Residency Completion Certificate. The PBNR and NPR graduates must complete all required OAA trainee assessments, weekly didactic or direct faculty classroom instruction sessions, weekly experiential learning activities, including implementation of a successful evidence-based practice (EBP) project prior to the completion date of the program in order to qualify for a Residency Completion Certificate.
- M. Recruitment and Retention of VA Nurses:** The VA OAA Nurse Residency programs are designed to enhance RN and NP recruitment and retention with goal of increasing access to care for Veterans. VA facilities are required to:
- Develop and implement a recruitment and retention plan for VA Nurse Residency graduates and give priority to hiring qualified graduates.
 - Collaborate with the VA nurse recruiter network to facilitate job placement within the VA system for any VA OAA Nurse Residency graduate not hired by the participating facility.
 - Consider adding RN and NP positions within the VA facility to enable hiring of program graduates to facilitate the VA goal of increasing access to care.
- N. Nurse Residency Governance:** Successful PBNR and NPR programs require strong internal and external support. Provide a plan that describes program management, oversight, and strategic planning; communication with key internal and external stakeholders; conflict management; decision-making; and recruitment and retention plans, consistent with the current OAA Nurse Residency Expansion RFP. Explain how VA leadership will provide executive and operational oversight of the initiative. Also address the charter and composition of the PBNR/NPR program advisory committee,

explaining how it will advance the major goals and objectives of this initiative.

4. **POLICY**

OAA maintains overall responsibility for administration of VA's health professions clinical training programs and oversees the VA PBNR and NPR programs.

- i. **Program Implementation and Administration:** VHA Handbook 1400.08 "Education of Associated Health Professions" delineates policies relating to the establishment and administration of training programs in the associated health professions in VA health care facilities. As used in this Handbook, "Associated Health" disciplines include nursing.
- ii. **Nurse Resident Trainee Supervision:** VHA Handbook 1400.04 "Supervision of Associated Health Trainees" provides procedural requirements pertaining to the supervision of associated health trainees within Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities from the perspectives of quality education and safe patient health care.
- iii. **Site Visits:** The VA OAA Nursing Program Evaluation Practices Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and the OAA Nursing Program Monitoring and Compliance Guide provide procedural requirements of conducting program compliance monitoring and oversight. Assessment of the nursing education program implementation and program operation is conducted via virtual or onsite visits by members of the OAA nursing team. The purpose of the site visit is to render assistance with program implementation, as well as ensure adherence to objectives of VA OAA RFP and fiscal stewardship. A written OAA site visit formative evaluation report, which includes findings and recommendations, is provided to the VA facility within 30 business days post visit. If necessary, a response from the inspected VA facility is required within 30 business days of receipt of the OAA site visit report.
- iv. **Liability Protection:** When providing services at a VA facility in accordance with this program, trainees will be protected from personal liability under the *Federal Employees Liability Reform and Tort Compensation Act*, 28 U.S.C. 2679(b)-(d). VA faculty will similarly be protected while at the VA facility or the school.

5. **BUDGET**

The resident receives a stipend and benefits while in training status. The annual stipend is based on current post-graduate rates. The facility is responsible for administrative expenses, accreditation fees, and residency PD salaries.

6. **APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS**

- A. **A non-binding Letter of Intent (LOI) to submit a proposal should be sent to the OAA by 5:00 pm Eastern Daylight Time on October 29, 2018.** The LOI must be no more than two pages in length. It must indicate the type of residency requested (PBNR and/or NPR; for NPR program, indicate specialty PMH or AGPC); provide the name and contact number of the proposed residency director; indicate whether a teaching partnership with a SON/CON is

established or planned, and briefly discuss the key items listed in Section 1. The letter should be uploaded in Word or PDF format via OAA's web-based proposal application system; <http://vaww.oaa.med.va.gov/rfp/default.aspx?PID=65>

- B. The LOI will be used by OAA for planning purposes and for establishing a database of proposal information. LOIs will not be scored and programs will not be prioritized on the basis of the information in the LOI.
- C. The full proposal should be submitted electronically via OAA's web-based proposal application system: <http://vaww.oaa.med.va.gov/rfp/default.aspx?PID=65>. **The full proposal must be received in OAA by 5:00 pm Eastern Daylight Time on January 31, 2019.** The core narrative of the application may not exceed 15 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.
- D. The core document of the full proposal (15 pages or less) must include the following elements. Please follow this outline explicitly.

1) **Introductory Information**

- a. Provide Location and Name of Facility.
- b. Type of Proposal (PBNR/NPR).
- c. Identify SON/CON Affiliate(s).
- d. List names and email addresses of individuals to be notified of proposal review outcome.

2) **Background Statement**

- a. Describe any existing nursing pre-degree and/or residency programs at your facility.
- b. Describe how the VA facility would benefit from a PBNR and/or NPR program.
- c. Describe the existing relationship and state of partnership between the VA facility and the SON/CON (e.g., grand rounds, off-site rotation, affiliate faculty appointed in VA, etc.).

3) **Training Program Description**

- a. **Training Program Mission Statement.** State the purpose of the program, including philosophy, goals, and objectives.
- b. **Methodology.** Describe the clinical competencies that will be emphasized in the curriculum. Describe specific skills to be developed by residents, with an emphasis on how evidence-based care will be taught. Describe the available training sites (e.g., acute, tertiary, primary, ambulatory, long term, and community care), how the training program will focus on VA's health care priorities and special emphasis programs (e.g. Rural Health, OIF/OEF, PACT, Women's Health, Homelessness, etc.).
- c. **Accreditation:** Describe a PBNR program accreditation plan and specific timeline for receiving CCNE accreditation. Please note: This item is currently waived for NPR program applicants.

- d. **Program Evaluation.** Describe how the training program's effectiveness for meeting its training goals and objectives will be evaluated.
- e. **Recruitment of Residents.** Describe nurse resident trainee recruitment plan and selection method.
- f. **Recruitment of Graduates:** Describe VHA recruitment and retention plan for VA OAA Nurse Residency graduates.

4) **Appendices** (20 pages or less, not included in the 15-page limit) should include:

- a. **Transmittal letter** from the facility Director, to include:
 - i. Support for the program per item 3A (p.3).
 - ii. Facility's agreement to pay accreditation fees.
- b. Letter of support from the facility Nurse Executive.
- c. Letter of support from the facility Designated Education Officer (DEO).
- d. Letter of support from the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Leadership.
- e. Letter of support from the affiliated SON/CON dean provides evidence of strong relationship between VA facility and SON/CON. The letter of support from the dean is highly recommended, but not mandatory.
- f. List of staff who will be involved in the program, including training program director, supervisors, faculty, and consultants. You may include the following information for each: name; degree; date of degree; university from which degree was received; clinical specialty; board certification(s); the number of hours that will be devoted to the program; university appointments (if applicable).
- g. Abbreviated Curriculum Vitae of the Residency Program Director.

The letters of support should be addressed to "Karen Sanders, M.D., Acting Chief Academic Affiliations Officer (10A2D)." Please title your files for reviewer clarity.

7. **REVIEW PROCESS**

The merit of applications will be assessed by an Ad Hoc Review Committee appointed by the Chief Academic Affiliations Officer in collaboration with the OAA Director, Nursing Education. Applications will be reviewed within the context of relevant VA standards.

The committee will evaluate specific items in the application that reflect the following criteria:

a)	Demonstrated commitment from the local VA facility and VISN leadership, including executive and program management levels, to establish a nurse residency program, including availability of infrastructure and resources such as protected time for 1FTEE residency PD and availability of clinical, education, and administrative space to support the program.	30 points
b)	Strength of a plan for development and implementation of the residency program, including quality and diversity of specific training settings; proposed clinical, didactic, research and teaching opportunities; interprofessional education and program evaluation.	30 points

c)	Program Director and educators/faculty qualifications to achieve nurse residency mission, goals, and expected outcomes. Availability of qualified preceptors to provide adequate trainee supervision.	20 points
d)	Demonstrated ability of the VA facility to recruit new graduate nurses into the residency program.	10 points
f)	Strength of a proposed plan to recruit VA OAA residency graduates into the VA system.	10 points
TOTAL:100 points		

8. SCHEDULE

DUE DATES	APPLICATION STAGE
September 28, 2018	Program Announcement Released
October 29, 2018	LOI due in OAA
January 31, 2019	Full Application due to OAA
March 4, 2019	Notification of Selected Sites
July 1, 2019	Initiation of Residency

9. CONTACT PERSON

- A. General information:** For information concerning this program announcement, contact Jemma Ayvazian, DNP, ANP-BC, AOCNP, Clinical Director, Office of Academic Affiliations Nursing Education (10A2D), at Jemma.Ayvazian@va.gov.
- B. Technical information:** For information regarding the online submission process, e-mail the OAA Help Desk oaahelp@va.gov or contact David Bernett at (803) 667-4100, David.Bernett@va.gov.

10. NATIONAL PROGRAM REVIEW

Since this is a centrally funded program, its continuation is not guaranteed, but is dependent upon availability of funding and achievement of measurable program outcomes.