



## **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health Administration  
*Columbia VA Health Care System*

Psychology Clinical Training Director  
Mental Health Care Service Line, Building 106 (116)  
6439 Garners Ferry Road  
Columbia, SC 29209

**APPIC Member Number: 9935**  
**Applications Due: December 15**

## **Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Post-Doctoral Residency**

### **Emphasis Area: Primary Care Mental Health Integration**

#### ***Accreditation Status***

The Psychology Postdoctoral Residency Program at the Columbia VA Health Care System was initially funded in 2011 and accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the American Psychological Association on March 4, 2014. Recently, we were successfully re-accredited until 2029. Our program is also a member of the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) and utilizes the APPA CAS system for applicants through [www.appic.org](http://www.appic.org).

#### ***Psychology Setting***

The Columbia VA Health Care System has been an approved training site for psychiatry residents, medical residents, social work interns, and nursing students for more than 20 years. For more information on the Columbia VA Health Care System, please go to the website: <https://www.va.gov/columbia-south-carolina-health-care/>.

Within the medical center, psychology fellowship training is mainly conducted in the context of the Mental Health Service Line (MHSL) and the Primary Care setting, both multidisciplinary departments including professionals from the following disciplines: psychology, psychiatry, social work, nursing, clinical pharmacy, and addictions therapy. The mission of the MHSL is to provide quality patient care, training and research. The Psychology Clinical Training Director, Assistant Training Director, and the Psychology Training Committee members administer the majority of psychology training activities.

Currently, there are more than 40 doctoral level psychologist positions through the Columbia VA Health Care System, some of which are assigned to one of our Merline outpatient clinics. A broad range of experience, interest and expertise is represented by the Psychologists and include areas such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse and co-occurring disorders, primary care & health psychology (Patient Aligned Care Team-Behavioral Health), psychological assessment, military sexual trauma (MST), neuropsychology, dementia, traumatic brain injury (TBI), pain psychology, end of

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life issues, geropsychology, suicide prevention, and serious mental illness. Psychology staff come from diverse academic backgrounds and ascribe to a range of theoretical orientations including cognitive behavioral, psychodynamic, experiential, interpersonal, existential, gestalt, and a hypothesis-driven integrative approach to assessment.

The VA health care system is responding to many national changes in the health care field, including an emphasis on integrating primary care and mental health care and services. The Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) focus is on providing patient-centered, team-based care and partnering with Veterans to provide whole-person care and promote life-long health and wellness.

The Primary Care-Mental Health Integration (PC-MHI) team is a team of mental and behavioral health experts that coordinates with the rest of the PACT to provide optimal patient care. PC-MHI integrates mental health staff into each PACT, allowing the care team to provide services for depression, anxiety, PTSD, and substance use without needing a separate consult with mental health providers outside of the PACT clinic area. PC-MHI staff also provide services which may assist with management of chronic health conditions and promote general wellness. Our fellowship program provides an emphasis in PC-MHI. The resident will be fully embedded into the PACT team and serve as the primary behavioral health consultant. The resident will have the opportunity to provide same day access for patients and receive referrals via “warm hand-offs” from PACT team members for a wide range of mental and behavioral health issues. The resident will gain experience in completing brief, functional assessments and providing brief, problem-focused therapy interventions.

### ***Training Model and Program Philosophy***

**MISSION:** The mission of the Psychology Postdoctoral Residency Program is to provide the postdoctoral resident with the opportunity to refine basic clinical skills to become a fully functioning clinical psychologist. In addition, the resident will have an opportunity to develop and utilize consultation and behavioral health skills needed while providing mental health services in a primary care setting. The model for providing these services, the Primary Care-Mental Health Integration Model, encourages the postdoctoral resident to provide services that are evidence-based, timely, strength-based, and sensitive to the needs of the Veteran.

**TRAINING MODEL:** We will provide training consistent with the Practitioner-Scholar model. We strive to provide each postdoctoral resident with advanced general clinical training, with an emphasis on consultation and behavioral health. The trainee will also be provided with training in core competencies that will help them function within an integrated Primary Care setting. The program will produce psychologists who are capable of understanding and implementing evidence-based interventions and use their skills to further contribute to our scientific understanding and literature in the field of psychology.

There will be an emphasis in our program on the clinical, consultation and behavioral health skills needed to provide patient centered care as part of a multidisciplinary team. Multidisciplinary teams in PACT/Behavioral Health will include primary care doctors, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and administrative staff. Our Resident may have the opportunity to train with other students and developing professionals from varying disciplines including, but not limited to: psychology interns, primary care and psychiatry residents and nursing students of varying levels.

The Psychology Postdoctoral Training Program recognizes and respects the varied interests, backgrounds, and professional goals the post-doctoral resident brings to our training program. Every

effort will be made to accommodate their career aspirations and provide them with individualized career advising, including interdisciplinary collaboration, to encourage membership in professional organizations, attendance at conferences, and pursuit of research interests, such that they may further develop their specific interests and carve out their unique career trajectory.

### ***Program Goals & Objectives***

Overall goals of the program include refining fundamental skills necessary for being a competent and independent psychologist. In addition, consistent with our emphasis area, the resident will develop and refine the consultation and behavioral health skills necessary for working in a multi-disciplinary hospital setting. Each trainee is measured on many aspects of nine profession-wide competencies to ensure they are prepared for independent practice by the end of the training year.

The nine competencies are as follows:

- Research
- Ethical and Legal Standards
- Individual and Cultural Diversity
- Professional Values, Attitudes, and Behaviors
- Communication and Interpersonal Skills
- Assessment
- Intervention
- Supervision
- Consultation and Interprofessional/Interdisciplinary Skills

### **Method and Frequency of Evaluation of Core Competencies**

Each resident is expected to develop and demonstrate certain core competencies in various psychological skills during the postdoctoral year. These core competencies will be carefully monitored and evaluated quarterly by all the psychology faculty that have significant interaction with the resident. Successful completion of the postdoctoral program requires the demonstration of these competencies at a predefined level that are reviewed with the resident at the beginning of the year. Satisfying core competencies requires demonstration and observation of a level of knowledge and skill expected of a resident who is preparing to enter the practice of psychology as an independent professional. Competency Evaluations are completed quarterly.

### ***Program Structure***

The resident will participate in a wide variety of clinical and consultation experiences during their training year. Core clinical activities will include individual and group therapy, functional assessments, initial psychotherapy intakes, warm hand-offs, and suicide risk assessments. Consultation activities will include curbside consultation with Primary Care staff, participation in mental health and primary care meetings, and potential educational trainings for Primary Care staff. The resident will also participate in didactic and professional development activities with at least two hours of supervision weekly.

### **Supervision**

Supervision is based on a developmental model, taking into account that residents are mature learners who, throughout the fellowship year, are expected to perform with increasing degrees of independence. The fellowship provides for open and ongoing contact between supervisors and the

resident. The resident will function as a colleague in the mental health service line and within a Primary Care setting, with daily access to supervisors and other professionals. The resident will meet for regularly scheduled formal supervision and attend required didactic trainings and group supervision series.

### ***Training Experiences***

The postdoctoral resident will learn and refine a wide range of clinical, consultation, behavioral health, assessment, and psychological professional skills throughout their postdoctoral resident year. The resident will spend at least 25% of their time providing direct patient care services.

### ***Summary of Training Experiences***

The resident will be able to refine their psychological competencies in a variety of didactic and experiential activities.

### **Didactic training and specialized programming**

Each training year will begin with a series of didactic trainings targeted towards the common needs of the resident in this specific training setting, with a focus toward ensuring that the resident has the required knowledge and skills for a successful and smooth start to the residency year. Didactic topics are chosen by the Training Committee based on required core competencies, common diagnoses and problems found in the VA system, and feedback/goals of the resident. The initial trainings are intended to provide a strong foundation of knowledge and skills for all trainees, regardless of past experiences. There will continue to be formalized trainings throughout the year by staff and community members. There will be certain didactic trainings that will be required of the resident and some that will be optional based on the Resident's interest. The resident is required to teach three didactic sessions per year. One of the didactics will be on the Resident's project and the other two didactics can focus on topics of the resident's choosing that are relevant to the setting. Past resident's having chosen to present on their dissertation and either assessment or intervention topics in which they have experience and interest. Additionally, the resident will attend two of the Resident Pharmacy Series didactics and monthly didactics for the resident directed at Professional Development, areas of relevance for being in a Primary Care setting, and on topics of interest for the resident.

Peer tiered group supervision will occur weekly with our Psychology Interns. The resident will be responsible for leading and developing topics to address during this one-hour peer supervision. This can include helping the Interns with difficult cases, case conceptualization, professional development, managing work-life balance, and other topics that the Resident feels would be helpful for the trainees.

### **Seminars and Group Supervision Series**

The resident is required to attend seminars that emphasize the development of competencies and professional development. Trainees will also meet with the Training Director bi-monthly for professional development to aid in meeting professional goals. Additional meetings with the Training Director can be scheduled as needed.

### **Leadership, Supervision, and Professional Development Group Supervision Series**

Once per month for two hours, the trainees and staff meet to discuss professional development and engage in a leadership series with an emphasis on leadership within the VA setting. One of the aims of this series is to help the trainee establish themselves as a leader within a larger healthcare system and to facilitate their ability to implement process improvement.

## **Cultural Diversity Group Supervision Series**

The resident engages in a cultural diversity learning activity once a month for two hours to develop the core competency area of cultural sensitivity. Research-based instruction, case presentation, and clinical application are all utilized in this series. Previous topics covered include increasing self-awareness and exploration, southern culture, desegregating diversity in therapy, diversity training in psychology, cultural factors in psychology training and supervision, ethical issues and considerations to name a few.

## **Journal Club**

The purpose of Journal Club is to facilitate the review of a specific research study and to discuss implications of the study for evidence-based clinical practice. A journal club has been defined as an educational meeting in which a group of individuals discuss current articles, providing a forum for a collective effort to keep up with the literature. There are many advantages of participating in a journal club, including keeping abreast of new knowledge, promoting awareness of current clinical research findings, learning to critique and appraise research, becoming familiar with the best current clinical research, and encouraging research utilization. Trainees are required to participate in the monthly Journal Club, with each having the opportunity to lead one meeting over the course of the training year.

## **Mentorship (optional)**

Each resident is offered the ability to be matched to a mentor/advisor for the training year. The mentorship program was developed to help support the trainee's professional development in a non-evaluative environment, which is independent of the supervisory relationship. The primary goals for the mentorship program are to help the resident negotiate the training year and plan for post-residency employment goals.

## **Primary experiential activities include:**

- Conducting brief assessments including brief functional assessments and secondary suicide screens
- Providing individual therapy using a variety of appropriate evidence based therapeutic treatments. The main therapeutic approaches that the resident will gain experience in include among others, Motivational Interviewing, brief Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for depression, anxiety and insomnia, and short-term solution focused therapy.
- Providing psycho-educational and skill building group therapy treatments on issues such as depression, anxiety and stress, mild PTSD, pain management and alcohol misuse.
- In a PACT/BH setting, the resident will also participate in informal and formal consultations with PACT teams including doctors, nurses, pharmacologists and social workers.
- The resident will be required to engage in a project.
  - Possible activities include conducting small research project (i.e.-program evaluation project), implementation of a new treatment group with outcome evaluations, outcome evaluations of various treatment groups, or process evaluations of staff and client satisfaction with PACT based services.
- The resident will have an opportunity to engage in a wide variety of teaching activities. These include leading seminars and group discussions as part of our didactic training series, and informally and formally educating PC teams on various mental and behavioral health issues.

- The resident will present to one other discipline and/or clinic. The resident can choose a topic that they are interested in and is relevant to the staff and may occur within one of the various primary care clinics (e.g. the Women's Clinic, White Team, Freedom Clinic, etc.)
- In order to become familiar with relevant organization, management and administrative issues related to psychological service delivery, practice, training and research, the resident will have multiple opportunities to learn and refine these skills. The resident can bring up such issues in meetings with the training director, in didactic group discussions that will focus on these topic areas, and informally with other staff as relevant at various meetings the resident will attend.
- The program is designed to create a psychologist capable of practicing independently. As such, they will have an opportunity formally in didactic seminars and informally in meetings with other psychologists to make sure they practice their psychology skills in manners that are consistent with APA professional conduct guidelines, and other ethics and law guidelines relevant to the practice of psychology.
- A focus on recognizing and responding to issues of cultural and individual diversity will be present in all activities related to the goals and objectives of the training program. These issues will therefore be discussed in supervision, in meetings with psychologists and other medical center professionals, and in the didactic seminar series.

### **Professional Development**

Opportunities may also exist for participating in meetings, and where appropriate, presenting and teaching to mental health and primary care colleagues in the following settings:

- PACT/BH team meetings: PACT/BH clinical staff meet twice a week. One meeting focuses on systems issues (i.e.-providing new clinical services, interfacing effectively with other units in the hospital) that need to be refined in the program and the other meeting is a case staffing to review the care of specific Veterans in the program.
- PACT team huddles: Primary care teams "huddle" bi-weekly with all staff (doctors, nurses, pharmacologists, PACT/BH staff) to address issues relevant to the whole PACT team.
- MHSL staff meeting: Once a month, all MHSL personnel meet, under the direction of the MHSL Chief, in order to coordinate services among MHSL units and with related services beyond the MHSL (e.g., OIF/OEF, Home-Based Primary Care, MOVE!, etc.). Staff is informed about upcoming events or changes to hospital policy, procedures, etc. Guest speakers from other hospital departments and/or the greater community also present in order to keep the MHSL staff abreast of helpful resources in providing care.
- Primary Care Staff Meetings: PC meetings occur every few weeks to update primary care staff on the latest staff changes, policy changes and to increase morale within the PC unit.

## ***Optional Adjunctive Training Experience***

### **Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)**

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is one of the major presenting concerns seen in the Veteran population at the Veterans Health Administration. Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) is an evidence-based, manualized, time-limited (12 weeks) treatment approach for trauma-related symptoms. It involves teaching Veterans how to identify how trauma experiences have impacted their thinking and to challenge their own thoughts. The goal is for Veterans to learn to make sense of the trauma and incorporate this understanding into their beliefs about themselves, others, and the world in a balanced way. This training includes training during a two-day workshop (including didactics and experiential exercises), supervision, weekly case consultation, and participation as a CPT therapist completing two individual cases. Engaging in the CPT training and consultation process is an optional training experience. The resident can elect to engage in this training if it aligns with his or her training goals.

### ***Requirements for Completion***

The resident is expected to progress along a continuum of competence during the fellowship year in the areas of assessment, clinical interventions, consultation, supervision, scholarly inquiry, issues of cultural diversity, organizational and administrative issues as well as professional conduct and development. To successfully complete the fellowship, postdoctoral students are required to meet minimum practice (workload) expectations, achieve competency in all required domains and be in good standing throughout the year. Performance standards within each competency domain are detailed in the evaluation forms which are completed quarterly by supervisors and shared at the beginning of the year with the resident.

To maintain good standing, the resident actively participates in clinical assignments, is receptive to and responsive to supervision, and conducts themselves in a way that is ethical and professionally appropriate. A resident in good standing demonstrates punctuality, is receptive to clinical assignments, completes clinical responsibilities and documentation in a timely manner, recognizes professional limitations, and seeks supervisory assistance as needed.

This Post-Doctoral Residency meets South Carolina licensing requirements for a postdoctoral position. SC State licensing requirements ask for at least 1,500 hours of actual work including direct service, training, and supervisory time. In addition, SC licensure requirements require a minimum of one-hour-per-week-face-to-face supervision from a psychologist licensed in South Carolina.

### ***Facility and Training Resources***

The Columbia VA Health Care System Mental Health Department has grown substantially over recent years. Trainees have access to space as needed on assigned placements, outpatient clinics, and testing areas. Our medical center includes state of the art computer equipment, with access to the hospital network, and Windows-based software including computerized patient record system (CPRS), VA Vista, and Office-based applications. Internet and intranet LAN connectivity are provided. This VA maintains a medical library on station, as well as having sharing agreements with the University of South Carolina School of Medicine Library. There is a wide lending library for access to computerized

journal articles. Interns receive needed clerical and administrative support and assistance through a specified Mental Health Clinic administrative staff member, as well as through other Medical Center staff if needed to complete clinical duties elsewhere in the hospital.

Columbia VA Health Care System is active with a diverse patient population providing a rich resource for training. The Columbia VAHCS (which includes the Wm. Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center in Columbia and seven outpatient clinics) treated 60,011 unique patients, treated 7,010 women Veterans, and completed 284,794 outpatient visits through December 2020. This included provision of more than 1.12 million outpatient visits in FY20. Our Veteran and staffing data continue to show increases each year with an increase from 209,409 Veteran enrollees in 2019 to 213,521 in 2020. Our full-time employees also increased from 2783.62 in 2019 to 3025.63 in 2020. The Columbia VA houses 216 inpatient beds, with an average daily census of 197.

Patients seek care for a broad range of medical and mental health conditions, and range in age from 18 to 90+. In the past decade, Vietnam Veterans constituted the largest cohort of patients treated. However, there is now a large and rapidly increasing cohort of Iraq and Afghanistan theater (OIF/OEF/OND) Veterans receiving care at our facility. This increase is due in part to intensive outreach established by the VA in VISN 7 as well as to the range of services created for returning Veterans at the medical center. While Veterans of any economic circumstance can be eligible for care, the public sector nature of the VA system makes it more likely that patients with limited means and fewer social resources will be seen at this facility relative to the Columbia community.

### ***Privacy Policy***

We will collect no personal information about you when you visit our Website. The faculty is committed to promoting resident development, respecting resident privacy, and avoiding the misuse of power that can accompany dual roles. Towards these ends, the faculty supervisors respect the ability of residents to choose what personal information is appropriate for disclosure to faculty.

### ***Administrative Policies and Procedures***

**Stipend:** Residents receive a competitive stipend paid in 26 biweekly installments. VA postdoctoral fellowship stipends are locality adjusted to reflect different relative costs in different geographical areas. Currently, the stipend for the Columbia VA Health Care System postdoctoral residency is ~\$46,334.00 annually.

**Benefits:** The postdoctoral residency appointments are for 2,080 hours, which is full-time for a one-year period. VA residents are eligible for health insurance (for self, married spouse, and legal dependents) and for life insurance, just as are regular employees. As temporary employees, residents may not participate in VA retirement programs.

**Holidays and Leave:** Residents receive the 11 annual federal holidays. In addition, residents accrue 4 hours of sick leave and 4 hours of annual leave for each full two-week pay period as a resident, for a total of 104 hours of each during the year.

**Authorized Leave Policy:** The policy of the Psychology postdoctoral residency program on Authorized Leave is consistent with the national standard.

**Self-Disclosure:** The faculty of the Columbia VA Health Care System fellowship value self-reflection in professional training. We view self-reflection as an integral component of being an effective, compassionate professional. While supervisors vary in the level of self-disclosure they encourage in supervision, some level of self-reflection and self-disclosure is part of the supervisory process. Applicants and residents are encouraged to discuss this issue with prospective supervisors.

As stated in the APA Ethics Code, a resident may be required to disclose personal information if it becomes necessary to evaluate or obtain assistance for the resident whose personal problems are preventing them from performing their training or professionally related activities in a competent manner or posing a threat to students or others.

The faculty recognizes the benefit of personal psychotherapy for all psychology trainees. We consider the decision to seek psychotherapy a personal one, but may, in some circumstances, suggest or encourage residents to seek personal psychotherapy.

## ***Application & Selection Procedures***

### **Overview**

The Columbia VA Health Care System abides by all APPIC and APA guidelines and requirements regarding residency application and selection procedures.

The APA Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation and the Commission on Accreditation (CoA) can be contacted at:

Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation  
American Psychological Association  
750 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC, 20002-4242  
Website: <http://www.apa.org/ed/accreditation>  
Phone: (202) 336-5979  
Fax: (202) 336-5978

The Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Residency Program is a member of APPIC. An internet link to the current APPIC/APPACAS Policies is available at [www.appic.org](http://www.appic.org). The Columbia VA Health Care System Residency APPIC Member Number is 9935. The first class of Psychology Residents and Interns started in August 2011.

### **Eligibility Requirements**

All information about VA eligibility requirements is available at:  
<https://www.psychologytraining.va.gov/eligibility.asp>

All applicants to the postdoctoral residency program at the Columbia VA Health Care System must:

- Have a doctoral degree in Clinical or Counseling Psychology from an APA-accredited program or an APA-approved respecialization training program in Clinical or Counseling

Psychology. Additionally, candidates are eligible for VA training programs if they have attended institutions accredited by the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) or Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System (PCSAS). An emphasis in health or community psychology is preferred but not required.

- Have completed an internship program accredited by the APA Commission on Accreditation or have completed a VA-sponsored internship (including a new VA internship that is not yet APA accredited).
- Certification of U. S. citizenship and drug screening are required for all VA employees and trainees. All residents will have to complete a Certification of Citizenship in the U. S. prior to beginning the fellowship. Applications from non-citizens will not be considered.
- The Federal Government requires that male applicants to VA positions born after 12/31/59 must sign a Pre-Appointment Certification Statement for Selective Service Registration before they are employed. It is not necessary to submit this form with the application, but if you are selected for this residency and fit the above criteria, you will have to sign it.
- Residents are subject to fingerprinting and background checks. Residents are also required to have certain immunizations (including a yearly flu shot). Selection decisions are contingent on passing these screens and having required immunizations.
- The VA conducts drug screening exams on randomly selected trainees as well as employees. Residents are not required to be tested prior to beginning work, but once on staff they also are subject to random selection for testing
- Our training programs are committed to creating a supportive learning environment for individuals of diverse backgrounds, and as a federal agency, we abide by the U.S. government EEO and Reasonable Accommodation policies.

**If you are interested in our fellowship program, please utilize the APPIC APPACAS Portal to submit your application:**

1. A cover letter that describes your personal training goals and how our post doc may meet those for you. In your letter, please describe your previous educational, research and clinical experience relevant to the post doc; discuss any PCMH/primary care experience you have had, your assessment of your training needs; specific clinical settings and experiences at Columbia VA Health Care System that you feel would help you reach your goals; research or educational project ideas that you want to pursue during your fellowship year here; and your general career goals.
2. A copy of your curriculum vitae.
3. Three letters of recommendation from faculty members or clinical supervisors who are familiar with your clinical as well as your research work (ideally including a letter from your Internship Training Director as well as from at least one supervisor that is familiar with your work in integrated care psychology.)
4. A brief statement from your dissertation chair outlining the progress you have made on your dissertation, a likely defense date and likely graduation date from the program. If you have already successfully completed and defended your dissertation this is NOT required, however please submit a brief letter indicating the title of your dissertation and completion date, as the

APPACAS portal will require a letter in this section.

5. An official or unofficial copy of your graduate transcript.

Please compile all materials and utilize the APPACAS portal to apply. If you are having difficulties, please send your application in one email to [Lyndsey.Zoller@va.gov](mailto:Lyndsey.Zoller@va.gov) or [Catherine.Robertson2@va.gov](mailto:Catherine.Robertson2@va.gov). We look forward to hearing from you.

Please direct any questions to:

Lyndsey Zoller, PsyD  
Psychology Clinical Training Director  
Columbia VA Health Care System  
Mental Health Service Line-116  
6439 Garners Ferry Road  
Columbia, SC 29209

Telephone: (803) 776-4000, ext. 54360

Email: [Lyndsey.Zoller@va.gov](mailto:Lyndsey.Zoller@va.gov)

**Past Residents have trained with the following doctoral programs and Internship Sites**

- California School of Professional Psychology
- Brigham Young University
- University of South Carolina
- Regent University
- University of Minnesota-Twin Cities
- Immaculata University
- Widener University
- East Tennessee State University
- Capt. James A Lovell Federal Health Care Center
- Boise VAMC
- WJB Dorn VAMC
- University of South Carolina Counseling and Psychiatric Services
- Hunter Holmes McGuire VAMC
- Upper Bay Counseling and Support Services
- Widener University Counseling Center & Widener Partnership Charter School
- James H. Quillen (Mountain Home) VAMC

## ***Psychology Training Program Leadership***

### ***Lyndsey Zoller, Psy.D.***

Clinical Director of Psychology Training  
Rotation: Trauma Recovery Program  
Doctorate: Clinical Psychology, Nova Southeastern University  
Internship: WJB Dorn Veterans Affairs Medical Center  
Postdoc: North Florida/South Georgia VA Medical Center

### ***Catherine Robertson, Ph.D.***

Assistant Clinical Director of Psychology Training  
Health Behavior Coordinator  
Doctorate: Clinical Psychology, University of Louisville (2014)  
Internship: Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital

**Selection and Interview Process:** Application materials will be reviewed upon receipt by all relevant psychology faculty. Top candidates will be invited for a ***virtual interview***. Candidates for interview will be selected based on several criteria including meeting the requirements described above, clinical experiences, and match with our program. Applicants will be notified of their interview status quickly. Please be sure to indicate daytime and evening telephone numbers in your application materials so you can be reached to schedule an interview.

### ***Notification Process:***

**Resident Appointment:** Offers will be made initially over the phone. If a candidate accepts the offer, a letter of confirmation is sent within 72 hours of notification. Each resident must respond in writing that he or she accepts the appointment with the Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Fellowship Program.

When these letters are received from the new resident, copies of the application folders are sent to Human Resources Management Service (HRMS), which will then begin the process of employment. The applicants are required to complete Application for Health Professional Trainees (VA 10-2850D), the Declaration for Federal Employment (OF 306), and the Health Professions Trainee Random Drug Testing Notification and Acknowledgement Memo. Falsifying any answer on the federal documents will result in an inability to appoint a trainee or will result in the trainee's immediate dismissal from the training program. The appointment to a resident position is contingent upon the individual's application being cleared through a national data bank to screen for possible ethical and legal violations. All residents must pass employment screenings through the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General, List of Excluded Individuals and the National Practitioner Health Care Integrity and Protection Data Bank, as well as a fingerprint and background check, before the appointment becomes official. A resident must also pass the pre-employment physical completed by a VA hospital before he or she can begin the residency. The resident must also complete Training for VA Trainees, Online Cyber Security Awareness Training, Privacy Training and sign the Rules of Behavior before arriving for orientation. The postdoctoral program begins as soon as August 1 of each training year.

Applicants who match with our site must also be aware of the following Federal Government requirements: The Federal Government requires that male applicants to VA positions who were born after 12/31/59 must have registered for the draft by age 26 to be eligible for any US government employment. Male applicants must sign a Pre-appointment Certification Statement for Selective Service Registration before they are employed. The resident will have to complete a Certification of Citizenship in the United States prior to beginning the residency. VA is unable to consider applications from anyone who is not currently a U.S. citizen and verification of citizenship is required following selection.

VA conducts drug screening exams on randomly selected personnel as well as new employees. Fellows may be required to be tested prior to beginning work and once on staff, they are subject to random selection as are other staff members. Interns and Fellows are also subject to fingerprinting and background checks. Selection decisions are contingent on passing these screens. Please see the following link for additional information regarding the VA Drug-Free Workplace Program.

[VA Drug-Free Workplace Program Guide for Veterans Health Administration Health Professions Trainees](#)

Residents will be asked to complete the Trainee Qualifications and Credentials Verification Letter (TQCVL). This document is required for all VA Psychology Training programs. Overall, this document confirms that you (as a VA trainee) are in satisfactory physical condition to meet the requirements of the residency program (and have had a physical within the last 12 months), as well as attesting that residents have met appropriate tuberculosis screening as well as having other immunizations. Per recent changes, in regards to the COVID19 vaccination: HPTs onboarded/hired on or after November 22, 2021, must be fully vaccinated (or an approved exception) before beginning employment and/or training rotations with VA. Per VA Notice 22-01, "HPTs seeking an exception for medical or religious reasons must be evaluated using the processes set forth in this notice. The denial of an accommodation request must be supported by the relevant facts and meet the applicable legal standard." If a waiver is not approved, the applicant will have to be fully vaccinated prior to beginning the fellowship. Appointment to the internship cannot happen until this document is completed. For more information about this document, please see the web address linked here (<https://www.va.gov/OAA/TQCVL/2021TQCVLGuideFINAL.pdf>).

All resident information is kept in a locked confidential file. This file is kept confidential; however, it will be available for site visitors for the next accreditation review with the understanding that specific identifying content will be kept confidential by the site visitors.

Health Professions Trainees (HPTs) are appointed as temporary employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs. As such, HPTs are subject to laws, policies, and guidelines posted for VA staff members. There are infrequent times in which this guidance can change during a training year which may create new requirements or responsibilities for HPTs. If employment requirements change during the course of a training year, HPTs will be notified of the change and impact as soon as possible and options provided. The VA Training Director for your profession will provide you with the information you need to understand the requirement and reasons for the requirement in timely manner.

### ***COVID-19 Related Changes to Residency***

The COVID-19 pandemic has created numerous personal and professional challenges for us all. One of these challenges is uncertainty about what will happen next week, next month, and especially one year from now.

The Columbia VA Health Care System psychology training program has prided itself on its transparency, and in providing detailed and accurate information about our program and training opportunities. With COVID-19, transparency means we cannot definitively predict how specific training opportunities may evolve for the 2022/2023 training year.

Although a lot has happened during the pandemic, our dedication to high-quality clinical care and psychology training and our dedication to the trainees themselves has never been stronger. We will likely be utilizing more forms of telehealth and technology-based delivery platforms. We do not expect there to be any significant changes to the base clinical services or populations served through rotations and the experiences described in our materials.

Please feel free to reach out to us if you have any questions. Contact information can be found in the Application and Selection Procedures section.

### **Changes to On-boarding**

We do anticipate starting the Residency year on-time and will still require all the normal on-boarding requirements including being up-to-date on immunizations, a physical, and fingerprinting. Safety measures are being taken at the facility for fingerprinting and receiving badges.

### **Facility Safety Procedures**

Our facility has enacted a large number of safety measures to allow for as much social distancing as possible. At this time, trainees will be expected to be on-site for the duration of their clinical duties. Facility-wide safety measures include the following: staff must wear masks at all times when on campus unless they are alone in their office; all staff must stay home if they are not feeling well and cleared by Occupational Health before returning to work if experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms, all staff and trainees are given standard masks and have their own offices. At the current time there is a mixture of both in-person and virtual care being provided. Veterans who are seen on-site are required to enter through one location and are screened upon entry. They are also required to wear a mask for the duration of their visit.

# The Setting

## Living in Columbia, South Carolina



Columbia is the capital city of South Carolina and is the second-largest city in the state with a population of 132,236. It is also a college town and home to the University of South Carolina which is the largest university in the state. The cost of living in Columbia is generally lower than the national average and traffic is minimal. The city is within a couple hours' drive to the Atlantic coast and beaches or the Blue Ridge Mountains. The winters are mild, and summers are hot. Staff enjoy weekend trips to Savannah, Georgia; Atlanta, Georgia; Charleston, SC; Greenville, SC; Myrtle Beach, SC; Asheville, NC; and Charlotte, NC. Outdoor enthusiasts may enjoy visiting Congaree National Park and boating and fishing at Lake Murray. Columbia offers a variety of festivals, sporting events, concerts, restaurants, and parks to enjoy. The revitalized downtown area includes art galleries, museums, theaters, and a variety of entertainment options.

Columbia is a community that celebrates diversity. There are a variety of art and cultural activities held in and near the Columbia area. Events celebrating heritage and contributions of various ethnic cultures are held throughout the year. Some of these events include the Greek Festival, Jubilee Festival of Black History and Culture, Columbia International Festival, and the Columbia Latin Festival. Each October, Columbia hosts the SC Pride Festival which is the largest LGBT event held in the state and it has grown each year. Columbia is rich in African American history and culture. The city has strong and resilient African American neighborhoods and religious and educational institutions including Benedict College and Allen University.

Columbia offers an art and music scene that includes Columbia Museum of Art, local art galleries, the Koger Center for the Arts, Township auditorium, Colonial Life Arena, with many local venues hosting live music. Each year Columbia hosts the Indie Grits Film Festival, celebrating visionary and experimental culture of the Southeast through film, art, and music. This festival partners with the Nickelodeon

Theatre, which is another Columbia landmark known for its independent films, curated series, and special community screenings. Sporting events include basketball at the Colonial Life Arena, football at Williams-Brice Stadium. The South Carolina State Museum also offers a planetarium, observatory with a 4-D theatre, while the Riverbanks Zoo and Garden is a 170-acre zoo, aquarium, and botanical garden with more than 2,000 animals that represent more than 350 species and 4,000 species of plants. Outdoor recreation is abundant with many areas available for hiking, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, water skiing, and other water sports.

Housing is readily available throughout many parts of the city within easy commuting distance from the medical center, which is located 6 miles from downtown.

The Columbia area is a major educational center in South Carolina. The area fosters training in academics at bachelor's, master's, and doctoral level programs. Area universities include the University of South Carolina, Columbia College, Columbia International University, Midlands Technical College, Limestone College, and South University. There is a state professional organization, the South Carolina Psychological Association, that trainees may join as student affiliates. The state organization holds an annual conference in Columbia, and trainees are encouraged to submit their research for the poster presentation.

#### **Fun Facts about the Columbia Area**

- The Riverbanks Zoological Park houses multiple historical landmarks, including covered river bridge abutments dating back to the Civil War. The zoo also is one of less than a dozen zoos that have a permanent koala exhibit
- The Columbia Fireflies, the Minor League Baseball based in Columbia, SC, is named after the fireflies that live here
- The synchronous fireflies, that are in Congaree National Park, all light up at the same time and are only found in half a dozen places in the world
- Georgia O'Keefe, taught art at Columbia College in 1915
- Columbia is the second planned city in the US
- The Columbia Marionette Theater is one of only a handful of theaters dedicated to puppets
- The first textile mill run completely by electricity in the world is now the South Carolina State Museum
- Jasper Johns grew up in South Carolina and attended 3 semesters at the University of South Carolina prior to studying at Parsons School of Design

#### **Diversity Mission Statement**

The Columbia VA Health Care System's Clinical Psychology Internship is deeply committed to fostering multicultural competence and diversity awareness. The overall goal of our training activities is to produce interns who conduct all professional activities with sensitivity to human diversity, including the ability to demonstrate knowledge, awareness, sensitivity, and skills when working with an increasingly diverse population. Additionally, as a Psychology Team, we are committed to a process of exploring how our biases, power, privilege, assumptions, and life experiences impact our clinical work. We are seeking candidates who share in our diversity mission statement and seek to further our collective efforts towards inclusion and equality for all people – Veterans and staff included. This is a daily, effortful process we are committed to.

**\*See Data Tables Below**

## Postdoctoral Residency Admissions, Support, and Initial Placement Data

### Postdoctoral Program Admissions

Date Program Tables are updated: October 19, 2021

**Briefly describe in narrative form important information to assist potential applicants in assessing their likely fit with your program. This description must be consistent with the program's policies on intern selection and practicum and academic preparation requirements:**

We seek applicants who have a sound clinical and scientific knowledge base from their academic program and internship; strong entry-level professional skills in standard assessment, intervention, and research techniques; and the personal characteristics necessary to function well as a doctoral-level professional in a medical center environment. Our selection criteria focus on all aspects of the application materials, with emphases placed upon background training and experience and an applicant's articulation of training goals and professional aspirations (i.e., health psychology). We seek the best fit between applicants and our training program.

The mission of the Psychology Postdoctoral Residency Program is to provide the postdoctoral resident with the opportunity to refine basic clinical skills to become a fully functioning clinical psychologist. In addition, the resident will have an opportunity to develop and utilize consultation and behavioral health skills needed while providing mental health services in a primary care setting. The model for providing these services, the Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT)/Behavioral Health Model, encourages the postdoctoral resident to provide services that are evidence-based, timely, strength-based, and sensitive to the needs of the Veteran.

**Describe any other required minimum criteria used to screen applicants:**

1. Completion of doctoral degree, including defense of dissertation, from a clinical or counseling psychology doctoral programs accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA) before the start date of the residency
2. Completion of an APA-accredited psychology internship program
3. U.S. citizenship.
4. Matched postdoctoral residents are subject to fingerprinting, background checks, and a urine drug screen.
5. Male applicants born after 12/31/1959 must have registered for the draft by age 26

**\*\*\* Failure to meet these qualifications could nullify an offer to an applicant.**

## Financial and Other Benefit Support for Upcoming Training Year\*

Annual Stipend/Salary for Full-time Residents	\$46,222.00	
Annual Stipend/Salary for Half-time Residents	N/A	
Program provides access to medical insurance for resident?	<b>Yes</b>	No
<b>If access to medical insurance is provided:</b>		
Trainee contribution to cost required?	<b>Yes</b>	No
Coverage of family member(s) available?	<b>Yes</b>	No
Coverage of legally married partner available?	<b>Yes</b>	No
Coverage of domestic partner available?	Yes	<b>No</b>
Hours of Annual Paid Personal Time Off (PTO and/or Vacation)	104 hours (4 hours every pay period)	
Hours of Annual Paid Sick Leave	104 hours (4 hours every pay period)	
In the event of medical conditions and/or family needs that require extended leave, does the program allow reasonable unpaid leave to interns/residents in excess of personal time off and sick leave?	<b>Yes</b>	No
<p><b>Other Benefits (please describe):</b></p> <p>Residents are entitled to 10 federal holidays and earn sick leave and vacation days at a rate of four hours of each per two-week pay period. Residents are encouraged to use all their annual leave before completion of the training year. Unused sick leave may be applied to future federal employment. Additional leave may be approved for attendance at conferences and workshops or other continuing education activities. Postdoctoral residents are not covered by Federal Employee retirement and are not eligible for federal life insurance benefits but are eligible for health insurance benefits</p>		

\*Note. Programs are not required by the Commission on Accreditation to provide all benefits listed in this table

### Initial Post-Residency Positions

(Provide an Aggregated Tally for the Preceding 3 Cohorts)

	2017-2020	
Total # of residents who were in the 3 cohorts	<b>3</b>	
Total # of residents who remain in training in the residency program	<b>0</b>	
	<b>PD</b>	<b>EP</b>
Community mental health center	0	0
Federally qualified health center	0	0
Independent primary care facility/clinic	0	0
University counseling center	0	0
Veterans Affairs medical center	0	<b>3</b>
Military health center	0	0
Academic health center	0	0
Other medical center or hospital	0	0
Psychiatric hospital	0	0
Academic university/department	0	0
Community college or other teaching setting	0	0
Independent research institution	0	0
Correctional facility	0	0
School district/system	0	0
Independent practice setting	0	0
Not currently employed	0	0
Changed to another field	0	0
Other	0	0
Unknown	0	0

Note: "PD" = Post-doctoral residency position; "EP" = Employed Position. Each individual represented in this table should be counted only one time. For former trainees working in more than one setting, select the setting that represents their primary position.