

Updated August 27, 2021

2022-2023

Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Internship Training Program Brochure



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Columbia, South Carolina

This document contains links to sites external to Department of Veterans Affairs. VA does not endorse and is not responsible for the content of the external linked websites.



Columbia VA Health Care System

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

APPIC MATCH Number: 2174
Applications Due: November 7th

Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Internship

Accreditation Status

The predoctoral internship program at the Columbia VA Health Care System in Columbia, SC was founded in 2011. The program has been accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the American Psychological Association since 2014. Our program is also a member of the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) and follows the match process.

Psychology Setting

The training program is at the Columbia VA Health Care System. It has been an approved training site for psychiatry residents, medical residents, social work interns, and nursing students for over 20 years. For more information, please go to the web site:

<http://www.columbiasc.va.gov/>

Within the medical center, psychology training is mainly conducted in the context of the Mental Health Service Line (MHSL), a multidisciplinary department 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 Internship Clinical Training Director(s) and the Psychology Internship Training Committee members facilitate the majority of psychology training activities.

Currently, there are over 40 doctoral level psychologist positions through the Columbia VA Health Care System, some of which are assigned to one of our VA 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 and health psychology (Patient Aligned Care Team-Behavioral Health), psychological assessment, military sexual trauma (MST), neuropsychology, dementia, traumatic brain injury (TBI), pain psychology, end of 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.

Training Model and Program Philosophy

The Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Internship Training Program adheres to the Practitioner-Scholar Model of academic training and practice. A generalist approach to training is believed to set a firm foundation for professional competence. At Columbia VA Health Care System, we believe a core general base is needed prior to becoming a competent and skilled specialist. The goals are to train interns to deal with issues found in the VA medical system, as well as other medical and mental health settings. We encourage learning that is culturally sensitive, diverse, creative, thoughtful, and we facilitate the use of empirically based and supported practices, scholarly inquiry, and good clinical judgment. It is the intention of the internship training program to allow interns to choose specific areas of interest to explore and develop further, while obtaining a general understanding of the Veteran population. This will allow for exposure to breadth of generalized training experiences, while also allowing interns to choose specific areas of interest to explore and develop further. Our application of the Practitioner-Scholar Model can be seen in the core design of the Columbia VA Health Care System internship training program and is demonstrated throughout the training year.

The training year focuses on the practical application of scholarly knowledge through assessment, diagnostics, treatment, training, research, inter and multi professional collaboration, supervision, and professional development. The intention is to build upon an intern's knowledge base and extend that knowledge to specific situations and obstacles encountered during the internship year, thus preparing the intern for a post-doctoral residency and the entry-level practice of professional psychology. Interns are involved in direct patient care in all treatment settings, while taking increasing responsibility for treatment decisions as their knowledge and skill level increases. Interns are expected to begin to understand their own limitations and strengths while demonstrating professional behavior and conduct.

Program Goals & Objectives

The goals and objectives of this program reflect our dedication to providing a broad training experience designed to prepare Interns for working in a variety of settings. Each trainee is measured on many aspects of 9 profession-wide competencies to ensure they are prepared for independent practice by the end of the training year. The nine competencies are as follows:

1. Broad-Based Skills in Psychological Assessment
2. Broad-Based Skills in Psychological Interventions
3. Research
4. Consultation and Interprofessional/Interdisciplinary Skills
5. Professional Values, Attitudes, and Behavior
6. Supervision Skills
7. Effective Communication and Interpersonal Skills
8. Understanding of Ethical and Legal Standards
9. Sensitivity to Individual and Cultural Diversity

Program Structure

The internship requires a one-year, full-time training commitment beginning approximately the first week of August and ending approximately the last week of July the following year. Interns will work 40 hours a week on site. We emphasize training and tasks are primarily learning oriented and have a workload that is appropriate for a trainee and not expected to assume the same duties, responsibilities, and workload of a full-time staff psychologist. Interns are expected to complete 2,080 hours within the 52-week training year. Federal holidays, accrued leave, and authorized absences for professional development activities are counted towards the 2,080 hours. Interns are entitled to 11 federal holidays and will earn sick leave and annual leave at a rate of 4 hours every two-weeks (each pay period). The training program at Columbia VA Health Care System offers a primary rotation [12 months] in General Outpatient Mental Health Service. This main 12-month-rotation occupies two full days a week (16 hours) for the entire year.

In addition, each intern will choose two specialty rotations. An Intern dedicates two full days (16 hours) to one specialty rotation for the first six months and then a second specialty rotation for the second half of the training year (also two days a week). Current specialty rotations include Trauma Recovery Program, Serious Mental Illness, Clinical Neuropsychology, and Suicide Prevention.

Rotation placements are in the clinical settings in which direct patient care occurs. In these placements interns participate in all or most of the duties of the psychologist(s) working in that setting. Initially, training may involve considerable instruction, observation, and modeling, depending on the prior preparation and skill level of the intern. However, with time and experience, interns assume greater levels of autonomy. Our intent is to prepare Interns to approximate full professional functioning during the internship year, thereby assisting in a successful start to the post-doctoral or entry-level professional position.

The fifth day a week (8 hours) is filled with formal didactic training, journal club, cultural diversity group supervision, professional development with the Training Directors, leadership seminar series, group peer supervision, and administrative time. If the trainee is engaging in CPT certification, the fifth day will also include seeing CPT cases. This division of time is designed to allow for breadth of experience, while still providing sufficient time within a setting to achieve depth of experience. The interns' specific interests and goals are considered and incorporated into rotations, planning and placement prior to arrival, and as interests and goals change throughout the training year.

Interns and their supervisors work side-by-side in most clinical placements, at times working together in direct patient care, as co-therapists in groups, and in clinic functions. Interns have daily opportunity to closely observe supervisors perform as psychologists in the context of small and large interdisciplinary teams. The intent is for clinical skill building, as well as socialization into the profession through observation and modeling by the supervisor in the clinical setting. Supervisors expect Interns to ask questions and participate in discussion. Socialization is also

accomplished by meeting weekly for individual supervision with the primary rotation supervisor, specialty rotation supervisor, bi-monthly with the Clinical Training Director(s), and through group supervision.

Training Experiences

Individualized training program

Prior to Interns starting the training year they are asked to rank order their preferences for the primary rotation and specialty rotations, while also indicating other specific areas of development, training, and growth they hope to accomplish. During the first two weeks of training, interns are introduced to the structure, procedures, and policies of the Internship Training Program, as well as important aspects of the medical center. Interns will attend Internship Orientation during the initial weeks. During the Internship Orientation time students will be asked to assess their personal areas of strength and need for growth, as well as explore what the strengths and weaknesses of their previous training experiences were. These areas will be discussed directly with the Clinical Training Director and supervisors. Expectations, evaluations, supervision, and progression of the Internship Program will be directly addressed during the internship orientation and in the internship handbook.

At the beginning of the primary rotation and each specialty rotation, interns will complete a goals form, which requires them to describe their individual goals for that specific placement. A copy of the intern's goals is given to the supervisor for the rotation and the Clinical Training Director as a guide to assist with obtaining training goals, and as an assessment of the intern's ongoing and changing educational needs. These goals are maintained in the intern's file.

At the middle of each rotation (primary and specialty), interns evaluate themselves and the placement in order to identify factors that help or hinder the attainment of their specific training goals. Interns are also given feedback continuously throughout the year, and formalized performance evaluations are given at the three, six, nine, and twelve-month intervals during the internship year.

Didactic training and specialized programming

Each training year will begin with a series of didactic trainings targeted towards the common needs of interns in this specific training setting, with a focus toward ensuring that all interns have the required knowledge and skills for a successful and smooth start to the internship year. Weekly 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 interns. The initial trainings are intended to provide a strong foundation of knowledge and skills for all interns, regardless of past experiences. There will continue to be formalized trainings throughout the year by staff and community members. Interns are required to teach two didactic sessions per year, once in their earlier development and once closer to the conclusion of the year. One didactic will focus on an intervention topic and the other on assessment with a focus on case presentation/conceptualization as relevant to the didactic

topic. Interns will be expected to conduct other trainings, journal club contributions, and attend grand rounds as available throughout training.

Seminars and Group Supervision Series

Interns are required to attend seminars that emphasize the development of competencies and professional development. Trainees will also meet with the Training Director(s) bi-monthly for professional development to aid in interns meeting their professional goals.

Leadership Seminar 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.

Diversity Discussion Group

The intern 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, and ethical issues, among others.

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 intern is 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 intern negotiate the internship program and plan for post-internship goals.

Increasing independence and difficulty for patient care

Interns are provided with increasing responsibility of patient care throughout the course of the internship year. On their primary rotation the case load will increase in number, complexity, and severity of patient problems. In addition to direct patient care duties, interns are required

to take on other professional duties, including teaching and consultation. Thus, throughout the year supervision typically changes from close oversight to a more consultative and collegial relationship, as to support the development of the intern's professionalism.

Internship Primary Rotation (12 months):

General Mental Health Outpatient Clinic

(Primary Supervisors: Robert Howell, PhD; Group Supervisor Paul Rasmussen, PhD)

The Mental Health Outpatient Clinic is staffed by a multidisciplinary teams (BHIP teams) composed of psychologists, psychiatrists, clinical social workers, LPC's, nurses, psychiatric nurse practitioners, clinical pharmacists and specialists in vocational rehabilitation. Interns will receive training and supervision in individual, group, and couple's psychotherapy with a diverse clinical population. Interns will have an opportunity to receive extensive training in a broad transdiagnostic treatment approach grounded in Adlerian Psychology. This growth and strength-based model of mental health focuses on preparing and encouraging Veterans to have a realistic understanding of life and the skills to navigate life more efficiently. This holistic approach will be augmented with the provision of evidence-based and empirically-supported individual therapy modalities such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for depression and anxiety and, as well as evidence-based therapies for PTSD, such as Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT). Interns may also have the opportunity to learn and provide empirically supported group therapy interventions including anger management, mindfulness, and ACT for issues such as pain and depression. Interns will be able to meet weekly with the interdisciplinary therapist work group where they will discuss assessment and treatment issues for complex patients. Within each interns' BHIP team there will also be a Psychology POC for training and education in such areas as intakes, interdisciplinary team functions/roles, and treatment planning. This work will be in addition to the individual and group supervision and will help expose interns to a broader range of skills, tasks and styles of therapists. This work group will also allow interns to gain exposure to the process improvement and systems work that is necessary to organize therapy services for such a large and growing population.

Specialty Rotations (6 months):

Trauma Recovery Program (TRP)

(Supervisors: Drs. Kristina Seymour, Lauren Golden, Kristy Center, Anna Davis, or Lyndsey Zoller)

The Trauma Recovery Program (TRP) is a specialized, intensive, outpatient program for Veterans with a primary diagnosis of PTSD. Our program consists of a multidisciplinary team of psychologists and clinical social workers who are passionate about providing excellent trauma-informed care to our Veterans through a mixture of in-person and telemental health appointments. The TRP is proud to offer the most effective evidence-based PTSD assessments

and treatments for Veterans who have experienced trauma at any time in their lives including combat trauma, sexual trauma, childhood-related events, motor vehicle accidents, serious accidents, interpersonal physical trauma, and more. Interns in this rotation will participate at all levels of our program including providing orientation sessions, assessment sessions, individual and group psychotherapy (when possible), and case presentations in staff meetings. Orientation sessions include psychoeducation on PTSD and the various EBPs for PTSD offered in our clinic, resources for treatment decision making, and general VA resources. The TRP uses the Clinician Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS) in addition to self-report measures and psychosocial assessments to determine treatment needs. The intern will have training in these and will administer them weekly during the rotation. Interns in this rotation have the opportunity for training in gold standard PTSD treatments including Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), Prolonged Exposure (PE), and Written Exposure Therapy (WET). They may also have opportunity to train in dual diagnosis treatments (e.g. CPT-SUD or Concurrent Treatment of PTSD and Substance Use Disorders Using Prolonged Exposure [COPE]), a couples approach to PTSD treatment (Cognitive Behavioral Conjoint Therapy [CBCT]), and a skills-based treatment developed here in the TRP (Optimal Response Initiative [ORI]). Within the TRP team, interns will also be involved in multidisciplinary team meetings and consultation with other VA clinical teams.

Serious Mental Illness (SMI)

(Supervisors: Dr. Karly Warren and Dr. Erin Schuyler)

This rotation includes work with two the VHA's hallmark recovery-based programs, the Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC). The rotation will be based in the PRRC, which provides an opportunity to work with Veterans who have been diagnosed with a serious mental illness, such as a psychotic, bipolar, and/or major depressive disorder, in a multidisciplinary team that includes social work, occupational therapy, nursing and peer support in addition to psychology and psychiatry. Emphasis will be placed on evidence and recovery-based individual and group interventions to promote skills acquisition and community integration. There will also be opportunities for conducting psychological assessments, case consultation, program development, quality management, and leadership development. Additionally, part of this rotation includes experiences on our inpatient unit (8 hours). The acute psychiatry unit is a 20-bed inpatient unit. Veterans who are placed on this unit are usually dealing with symptoms of a Severe Mental Illness (most commonly Major Depressive Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, Schizoaffective Disorder, and PTSD.) Patients struggling with substance abuse/dependence issues are sometimes hospitalized as a first step in dealing with their illness. As a psychology intern, there will be opportunities to participate in multidisciplinary treatment teams and group psychotherapy. The intern also provides psychological testing as a way to clarify diagnosis and assist with treatment planning.

Note: At this time, we are unsure about being able to offer this rotation during the 2022-2023 training year due to staff availability.

Clinical Neuropsychology

(Core Supervisors: Dr. Brandon L. Roberg & Dr. Yesenia Serrano -
Supplemental Supervisors: Dr. Trevor Buckley & Dr. Jeffrey E. Musick)

The Clinical Neuropsychology Specialty Rotation is designed to be consistent with Houston Conference Guidelines, preparatory to postdoctoral fellowship. However, the rotation is open to all interns, including those who do NOT wish to pursue neuropsychology as a career, but desire to learn more about psychological and neuropsychological assessment. Interns who complete the rotation automatically meet the minimum assessment requirements of the internship. On the rotation, Interns see Veteran outpatients who are primarily male and older adults. Patients are referred for a variety of reasons, but most commonly for questions related to the diagnosis and treatment of mild neurocognitive disorders and neurodegenerative disorders, such as Alzheimer's disease. Referral questions are answered through a hypothesis-driven approach utilizing a flexible test battery informed by research literature and the medical/emotional/cultural context of the referral question(s). Interns assess one patient each week and work to develop competence in several areas (e.g., pre-assessment chart review, battery selection, clinical interviewing, standardized test administration/scoring, test interpretation, report writing, and providing interactive feedback). Additional opportunities to co-lead cognitive rehabilitation groups and/or to provide co-supervision to practicum students may also be available. Additional readings are a structured part of this rotation.

Suicide Prevention

(Supervisors: Dr. Peter Warren and Dr. Kevin Petersen)

The Suicide Prevention rotation encompasses a broad array of training experiences focused around assessment and reduction of suicide risk in the Veteran population. You will work with the team of Suicide Prevention Coordinators (SPCs) and Case Managers (SPCMs) to provide crisis intervention, case management for High-Risk Veterans, trainings to VA employees, individual and group counseling, consultation services, program development, and community outreach. The Suicide Prevention Team is connected to all areas of the medical center and community-based outpatient clinics, and trainees will have opportunities to engage in both direct clinical care, as well as systems/community based interventions. Primary duties and training experiences will include: Working with the Veteran's Crisis Line, case management for High-Risk Veterans, conducting suicide prevention related trainings, community Outreach trainings and activities, facilitate Safety Planning and High Risk Coping Skills groups for Veterans, and outcomes research opportunities

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 2 individual cases. This training is a requirement for those trainees that elect to complete a rotation on the Trauma Recovery Program (TRP) but is an option for all trainees who match with our program.

Columbia VA Health Care System Internship Program Core Faculty

Below are brief biographies of core internship supervisors. Additional mental health providers also contribute to training and supervision throughout the internship year.

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

Doctorate: Clinical Psychology, University of Louisville (2014)

Internship: Edward Hines, Jr. Veterans Affairs Hospital

Psychology Internship Rotation Supervisors

Trevor Buckley, Ph.D.

Rotation: Clinical Neuropsychology

Doctorate: Combined Clinical, Counseling, and School Psychology, Utah State University (2011)

Internship: Brooke Army Medical Center

Postdoc: Clinical Neuropsychology Fellowship Program at Brooke Army Medical Center

Kristy Center, Ph.D.

Rotation: Trauma Recovery Program

California School of Professional Psychology (CSPP) – San Diego

Internship: Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System

Postdoc: PTSD – Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System

Lauren Golden, Ph.D.

Rotation: Trauma Recovery Program

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech)

Internship: Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS)

Robert Howell, Ph.D.

Rotation: General Outpatient

Doctorate: Medical Psychology, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (1996)

Respecialization: Clinical Psychology, Widener University (2001)

Internship: Widener University

Postdoc: Widener University

Jeffrey E. Musick, Ph.D., ABPP

Board Certified in Forensic Psychology

Rotation: Clinical Neuropsychology

Doctorate: Clinical Psychology, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida (1994)

Internship: USF Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, Tampa, Florida

Kevin Petersen, Psy.D.

Rotation: Suicide Prevention

Doctorate: Clinical Psychology, Arizona School of Professional Psychology Argosy University/Phoenix

Internship: Ancora Psychiatric Hospital

Paul R. Rasmussen, Ph.D., DNASAP

Rotation: General Outpatient

Doctorate: Clinical Psychology and Behavior Medicine, University of Georgia (1990)

Internship: West Virginia University Medical Center

Brandon L. Roberg, Ph.D., ABPP

Board Certified in Clinical Neuropsychology

Rotation: Clinical Neuropsychology

Doctorate: Clinical Health Psychology, University of Missouri-Kansas City (2015)

Internship: VA Northern California Health Care System – Neuropsychology Track

Postdoc: Clinical Neuropsychology at UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience & Human Behavior

Erin Schuyler, Psy.D.

Rotation: Inpatient Mental Health

Doctorate: Clinical Psychology, Adler School of Professional Psychology

Internship: WJB Dorn Veterans Affairs Medical Center

Yesenia Serrano, Psy.D.

Rotation: Clinical Neuropsychology

Doctorate: Carlos Albizu University (2018)

Internship: Salisbury VA Medical Center

Postdoc: Clinical Neuropsychology Fellowship at VA Maine Healthcare System

Kristina Seymour, Psy.D.

Rotation: Trauma Recovery Program

Doctorate: Clinical Psychology, Georgia Professional School of Psychology (2014)

Internship: WJB Dorn Veterans Affairs Medical Center

Karly Warren, Psy.D., ABPP

Board Certified in Clinical Psychology

Rotation: Psychosocial Rehabilitation

Doctorate: Clinical Psychology, Alliant International University in Sacramento, California (2012)

Internship: Wasatch Mental Health, Provo, Utah

Postdoc: Oklahoma City VA Medical Center

Peter R. Warren, Ph.D.

Rotation: Suicide Prevention

Doctorate: Clinical-Community Psychology, University of South Carolina (2015)

Internship: WJB Dorn Veterans Affairs Medical Center

Requirements for Completion

Interns are expected to progress along a continuum of competence during the internship year in the areas of research, ethical and legal standards, individual and cultural diversity, assessment, professional values and attitudes, communication and interpersonal skills, clinical interventions, consultation and interprofessional/interdisciplinary skills, and supervision. To maintain good standing, interns actively participate in clinical assignments, are receptive to and responsive to supervision, and conduct themselves in a way that is ethical and professionally appropriate. Interns in good standing demonstrate punctuality, are receptive to clinical assignments, complete clinical responsibilities and documentation in a timely manner, recognize professional limitations, and seek supervisory assistance as needed.

Each intern will successfully complete the following requirements:

1. A total of 2,080 internship hours (includes 11 federal holidays, 13 vacation days, 13 sick days, and authorized absences for professional development activities)
2. Meet the requirements for core competencies as listed on the Competency Evaluation Form.
3. Two speciality rotations of 16 hours per week and primary rotation of 16 hours per week, with a total of 32 clinical hours per week combined
4. A minimum of three comprehensive assessments within the training year. Each assessment must include cognitive and personality/mood component.

5. Two didactic presentations including assessment and intervention that includes topic discussion and case conceptualization resulting in a satisfactory evaluation

Early in the internship year, and early on specific rotations, interns are expected to need fairly close supervision, including observation under certain circumstances. Interns are expected to become more autonomous in their professional activities over the course of each rotation, and across the internship training year. By the end of the internship year, interns are expected to be able to function independently or with minimal supervision in a number of core professional areas. These include the ability to understand referral questions; select, administer, and interpret appropriate evaluation instruments; conduct diagnostic interviews; clearly communicate findings in writing and in person; apply psychotherapeutic techniques; display sensitivity to issues of diversity; and maintain high ethical and professional standards. In more specialized areas, such as neuropsychology, increased competence is expected, but formal training beyond the internship year is needed for independent practice, professional competence, and professional identity.

Interns are formally evaluated quarterly during the internship year. Interns must maintain adequate performance in core areas to remain in good standing. Interns who do not maintain this minimal level of competence will have a remediation plan initiated.

Facility and Training Resources

The Columbia VA Health Care System Mental Health Department has grown substantially over recent years. Interns 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 an active medical center with a diverse patient population providing a rich resource for training. The Columbia VAHCS (which includes the main facility in Columbia and seven VA 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.

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 Healthcare 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.

Application & Selection Procedures

Overview

The Columbia VA Health Care System abides by all APPIC and APA guidelines and requirements regarding internship 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
Web site: <http://www.apa.org/ed/accreditation>
Phone: (202) 336-5979
Fax: (202) 336-5978

The Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Internship Program is a member of APPIC. An internet link to the current APPIC Match Policies is available at www.appic.org. The Columbia VA Health Care System Internship APPIC Match number is 2174.

Past Interns have trained with the following doctoral programs

Adler University - Chicago	Pepperdine University
Georgia Professional School of Psychology	Regent University
Georgia State University	Tennessee State University
Florida Institute of Technology	The Virginia Consortium
Fuller Seminary	University of Georgia
Immaculata University	University of Missouri
Nova Southeastern University	University of South Carolina
Pacific University	

Application Requests

The Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Internship Program uses the APPIC Application for Psychology Internships (AAPI) available at the APPIC website (www.appic.org). Requests for information beyond what is described in this website may be made by email to:

Lyndsey.Zoller@va.gov or Catherine.Robertson2@va.gov

Or by mail at the address below:

Dr. Lyndsey Zoller
Columbia VA Health Care System
Clinical Director of Psychology Training
Mental Health Care Service Line, Building 106 (116)
6439 Garners Ferry Road
Columbia, S.C. 29209

Applications

Applicants must register for the Match using the online registration system on the Match website at www.natmatch.com/psychint. It is recommended that students register for the match by October 15. Our Match number is 2174.

Each applicant is required to submit standard electronic online AAPI application materials including the following:

Cover letter indicating intent to apply to the internship program and internship training interests, Completed APPIC Application for Psychology Internships (AAPI), Curriculum Vita, three letters of evaluation from individuals familiar with recent academic and clinical performance. At least one letter of evaluation should be from a clinical supervisor with direct knowledge of the applicant's clinical skills, and official transcripts of all psychology graduate training.

All materials must be received by the designated submission date each year.

Selection Process

EEO Guidelines – The Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Internship Program adheres to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) guidelines in the selection of intern applicants. Equal employment opportunity is the requirement, based in both law and regulations, that agencies provide employees a full opportunity to enter into, function in, and progress in their careers based on their abilities and performance, rather than on such non-merit factors as race, religion, sex, or age.

Providing equal opportunity requires a coordinated effort among faculty supervisors, VA managers, EEO program officials, and HR officials. Working together, they seek to ensure that all employees are protected: with the opportunity to compete fairly for positions for which they are qualified, by receiving objective ratings based on their performance, and from being subjected to personnel decisions based on non-merit factors. In short, the objective of the EEO program is not to provide special or unfair advantage to any groups or individuals, but rather, to ensure that employees are not unfairly disadvantaged based on non-merit factors that are outside their control. Please refer to http://www.va.gov/orm/docs/eo_Policy.pdf for further EEO information.

Application Reviews – All applications are screened for mandatory requirements and program fit by the Clinical Training Director and other appropriate faculty members. Applicants who appear to be a good match for our internship program and meet mandatory requirements may be offered an interview. Applicants who are not selected for interview, and thus further consideration, following the above reviews will be notified through an email by December 06, 2021. Applicants selected for interviews will be contacted by the Clinical Training Director to schedule an interview.

Applicant Interviews – The Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Internship Program establishes two interview dates. Virtual interviews are required of all applicants who make the final selection round. Invitations to interview will go out in December.

Given the uncertainties surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews for this year will be virtual. This is consistent with APPIC suggestions for the year. We recognize the health and safety concerns for our applicants and believe that not offering in-person interviews will create more of a level playing field for all applicants, while also recognizing the difficulties and health concerns surrounding traveling during the pandemic. It also removes the pressure applicants may feel to attend an in-person interview.

Interviews will take place on Wednesday, January 12 and Wednesday, January 19, 2022. The Applicants selected for interviews will be contacted on or before December 06, 2021 by the Training Director or designee to confirm an interview date. Applicants will receive e-mail confirmation of the interview date and will later be sent an interview schedule and

information on attending the virtual interview day (outline, technology being used, etc.). On the day of interviews, applicants are given an overview of the training program by the Training Director, an introduction to available faculty members, and then are interviewed individually by two or more faculty members. Applicants will have the opportunity to discuss programs. Applicants are encouraged to follow up with phone calls or emails to faculty if they have further questions following the completion of the interview day.

Applicant Ratings – At least two faculty members review and rate each applicant packet prior to in-person interviews. Faculty members evaluate clinical training, assessment training, clinical experience, assessment experience, and letters of recommendation. Clinical training and experience are rated based on breadth and depth, as well as consistency with the program’s generalist training philosophy. Assessment training and experience are evaluated for the variety of assessment instruments, number of instruments administered, and number of integrated reports written. Experience with both objective and projective assessment is preferred, either through training or practicum experience. For both clinical and assessment experience, supervised practicum experiences are given more weight.

Letters of recommendation are reviewed to determine applicants’ strengths and weaknesses, acceptance of and response to supervision, demonstration of professional behaviors and ethical practice, and personal characteristics indicative of successful internship completion. Considerable weight is given to how well the prospective intern’s professional experience and career goals match with the training philosophy and goals of the Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Internship Program and relevant contribution to the program based upon evident individual/cultural diversity. These factors are also evaluated through the interview, and rated by the interviewer, as are professional demeanor and interview style.

The Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Internship Program faculty prefers applicants who have their dissertation proposal approved by the start of the internship.

Applicant Rankings – Following applicant interviews, members of the Psychology Training Committee, primarily members of the Internship Supervision Committee, meet to review application packages and interview performance. Applicants are ranked based on interview ratings, ratings of applicant materials, and discussion among the Training Committee members. Applicants are placed on a rank order list, and low-rated applicants may be eliminated at this time. The final rank list is submitted to National Matching Services (NMS).

The preceding criteria serve as general guidelines for rating and ranking applicants. These guidelines are not inflexible and reviewers must rely on professional judgment when evaluating applicants that do not meet the standards noted above.

Applicant Matching- The Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Internship Program participates in the Matching Program administered by National Matching Services Inc.

(NMS) on behalf of the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC). Only those applicants who participate in the Match can be matched to our internship program. All applicants must apply through APPIC utilizing the online application process. Applicants can request an applicant agreement package from NMS through their web site at <http://www.natmatch.com/psychint/> or by e-mail at: psychint@natmatch.com.

The Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Internship submits a final rank list via computer to National Matching Services (NMS). At the appointed time, the list shown by NMS is verified by computer link. Applicant candidates are advised of their status in the match according to the NMS program schedule. Acceptances and notification procedures follow the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) Match Policies. This internship site agrees to abide by the APPIC policy that no person at this training facility will solicit, accept, or use any ranking-related information from any intern applicant. On the designated match day, NMS sends an e-mail to the program and to the applicants indicating the final outcome of the match. If positions remain open we will also participate in the second APPIC match.

The Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Internship APPIC Match number is **2174**. APPIC Match Policies are available on the APPIC web site: <http://www.appic.org>

Intern Appointment- On match day, the Clinical Training Director or designee calls each intern by telephone to confirm that he or she has matched with our program. A letter of confirmation is sent within 72 hours of notification. Each selected intern must respond in writing that he or she accepts the appointment with the Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Internship Program.

If you are selected as an intern, you will be considered a Federal employee, and the following requirements and processes will apply:

When these letters are received from the new intern, 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 an intern or will result in the intern's immediate dismissal from the training program. The appointment to an intern position is contingent upon the individual's application being cleared through a national data bank to screen for possible ethical and legal violations. All interns 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.

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. All interns will have to complete a Certification of Citizenship in the United States prior to beginning the internship. 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. Interns and 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. Match result and 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](#)

To comply with Federal and VA rules, a current and valid Affiliation Agreement between VA and the sponsoring doctoral program must be on file before the intern can be appointed. Most APA-accredited doctoral programs already have an agreement on file. Following the match and prior to the start of internship, the Training Director will contact the Directors of Clinical Training (DCTs) for all three interns. Each DCT for each matched intern will be asked to complete the Trainee Qualifications and Credentials Verification Letter (TQCVL). This document is required for all VA Psychology Internship programs. Overall, this document confirms that you (as a VA trainee) are in satisfactory physical condition to meet the requirements of the internship program (and have had a physical within the last 12 months), as well as attesting that interns have met appropriate tuberculosis screening as well as having other immunizations. Appointment to the internship cannot happen until this document is signed by both the intern's graduate program and senior leadership at the Columbia VA Health Care System. We will work closely with your graduate program to ensure this document is completed in a timely manner. For more information about this document, please see the web address linked here (<https://www.va.gov/OAA/TQCVL/2021TQCVLGuideFINAL.pdf>).

New interns will also complete pre-employment Online Cyber Security Awareness Training, Privacy Training and sign the Rules of Behavior before arriving for orientation. After all documentation is complete, interns will be ready to start at the beginning of the pay period around the end of July/beginning of August.

All intern 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.

Privacy Policy

We will not collect any personal information about you when you visit our website.

COVID-19 Related Changes to Internship

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 rotations or adjunctive 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.

Hour requirement changes: We realize that the current pandemic may have affected applicant hours. We want to acknowledge this and allow for some flexibility in required hours. If your hours are below the intervention and assessment required hours please write in your cover letter why your hours do not meet the minimum requirements and what your projected hours are to be for intervention and assessment by start of internship.

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 internship 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 surgical masks, interns will have their own offices. At the current time there is a mixture of both in-person and virtual care being provided. Veteran's 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.

Internship Admissions, Support, and Initial Placement Data

Internship Program Admissions

Date Program Tables are updated: August 20, 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:

The training program at Columbia VA Health Care System offers a yearlong rotation (General Outpatient Mental Health Service and two six-month specialty rotations (Trauma Recovery, Serious Mental Illness, Clinical Neuropsychology, and Suicide Prevention. Rotation placements are in the clinical settings in which direct patient care occurs. In these placements, interns participate in all or most of the duties of the psychologist working in that setting. Initially, training may involve considerable instruction, observation, and modeling, depending on the prior preparation and skill level of the intern. However, with time and experience, interns assume greater levels of responsibility. As mentioned, our intent is to prepare our interns to approximate full professional functioning during the internship year, thereby assisting in a successful start to the post-doctoral or entry-level professional position.

The main rotation placement occupies two full days a week (16 hours) for the entire year. The specialty rotations fill another two full days (16 hours) with a rotation change every six months. The fifth day a week (8 hours) is filled with formal didactic training, seminar series, journal club, group supervision, supervision with the Clinical Training Director(s), and administrative time. This division of time is designed to allow for breadth of experience, while still providing sufficient time within a setting to achieve depth of experience. The interns' specific interest and goals are considered and incorporated into rotations, planning and placement prior to arrival and as interest and goals change throughout the training year.

Does the program require that applicants have received a minimum number of hours of the following at time of application? If Yes, indicate how many:

COVID-19 related changes: We realize that the current pandemic may have affected applicant hours. We want to acknowledge this and allow for some flexibility in required hours. If your hours are below the intervention and assessment required hours please write in your cover letter why your hours do not meet the minimum requirements and what your projected hours are to be for intervention and assessment by start of internship.

Total Direct Contact Intervention Hours	N	Y	Amount: 500 hours
Total Direct Contact Assessment Hours	N	Y	Amount: 150 hours

Describe any other required minimum criteria used to screen applicants:

All applicants for VA internships must be U.S. citizens enrolled in an APA accredited Ph.D. or Psy.D. program in clinical or counseling psychology. To be considered for acceptance, a candidate must be approved by his or her Director of Clinical Training as ready for internship. All applicants must have completed three full years of graduate study leading to the doctorate (less than three years may be acceptable with special recommendation by the sponsoring university).

Financial and Other Benefit Support for Upcoming Training Year*

Annual Stipend/Salary for Full-time Interns	\$26,297	
Annual Stipend/Salary for Half-time Interns	N/A	
Program provides access to medical insurance for intern?	Yes	No
If access to medical insurance is provided:		
Trainee contribution to cost required?	Yes	No
Coverage of family member(s) available?	Yes	No
Coverage of legally married partner available?	Yes	No
Coverage of domestic partner available?	Yes	No
Hours of Annual Paid Personal Time Off (PTO and/or Vacation)	104 hours	
Hours of Annual Paid Sick Leave	104 hours	
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?	Yes	No
Other Benefits (please describe): 11 paid Federal Holidays		

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

Initial Post-Internship Positions

(Provide an Aggregated Tally for the Preceding 3 Cohorts)

	2017-2020	
Total # of interns who were in the 3 cohorts	9	
Total # of interns who did not seek employment because they returned to their doctoral program/are completing doctoral degree	1	
	PD	EP
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	3	1
Military health center	0	1
Academic health center	2	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	1	0
Not currently employed	0	0
Changed to another field	0	1
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.