



PSYCHOLOGY TRAINING PROGRAM
George E. Wahlen Department of Veterans Affairs
Health Care System
550 Foothill Drive
Salt Lake City, UT 84148

**PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICUM TRAINING PROGRAM
2020-2021**

Dear Psychology Graduate Student:

The Salt Lake Veterans Affairs Medical Center is proud to offer a variety of training opportunities for emerging psychologists in a supportive, collegial environment. We strive for excellence in caring for veterans and encourage our trainees to do the same. Here are just a few reasons to consider our practicum training program:

Top-level training. The VA is the largest training institution for healthcare professionals in the United States. Training is one of the top priorities at the VA, with an emphasis on education and furthering development. Most current VA staff psychologists competed training here. In addition, completing practicum training at the VA offers a strong background to apply for the many highly sought-after VA internships.

Opportunity to serve veterans. Veterans are a diverse population that nevertheless present with a unique collection of strengths, experiences, and challenges. The gap between the civilian and the veteran experience can be wide and deep, making the ability to work with veterans highly valuable. In addition, many find helping veterans to be highly satisfying.

VA experience. The VA offers excellent career opportunities for psychologists, in a variety of fields including general outpatient mental health, posttraumatic stress disorder, behavioral health, medical psychology, assessment, polytrauma/traumatic brain injury, pain and palliative care, serious and persistent mental illness, and more. Mental health care is valued and well-integrated into a holistic model of care. In addition, the VA is involved in cutting edge-research and providing innovative services in many areas. The practicum program is a great chance to explore career options within this setting.

Thank you for your interest in our program. Feel free to contact me with further questions, I'd be happy to discuss the program further with you.

Sincerely,

Ben Swanson, PhD
Director of Psychology Training
Leland.Swanson@va.gov
801-582-1565 ext. 3493

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROGAM INFORMATION.....	3
Eligibility Requirements.....	3
Time Commitment.....	3
Supervision	3
Onboarding.....	3
Orientation & Starting Date	3
Using VA Work for Presentations.....	4
APPLICATION PROCESS.....	4
AVAILABLE PLACEMENTS.....	4
PTSD Assessment.....	4
Cognitive Assessment/Neuropsychology	6
Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL)	7
General Outpatient Mental Health	7

PROGAM INFORMATION

Eligibility Requirements

- Enrolled and in good standing in an APA accredited Ph.D. or Psy.D. program in counseling or clinical psychology
- Completed at least two years of graduate training with at least one year of practicum training
- Enrolled in graduate level practicum/clerkship credit hours at respective university during the entire VA practicum
- US Citizen

Time Commitment

The practicum program requires a commitment of **12 months, beginning in June 2020 and ending in May 2021**. While this is longer than many other sites, we have found this is the minimum time length required to fully take advantage of the training experience here. The hours per week may range from 8 to 15-ish and are determined in collaboration with your supervisor largely based on matching your availability with training opportunities and supervisor available. The weekly schedule tends to change over the course of the year as your course schedule shifts.

Supervision

All practicum students are provided with at least one hour of supervision per week from a licensed psychologist on staff. In addition, postdoctoral fellows may provide an additional hour of supervision on some rotations. Finally, some rotations may involve additional group supervision, which is led by a postdoctoral fellow or staff member, in addition to the individual supervision. Practicum students may also be invited to attend the many training opportunities offered year-round.

Onboarding

Onboarding is the process that we use to enter you into the VA system so you can access our computer systems and get an ID badge allow you into patient areas.

Your DCT will send us a letter confirming you are approved and ready for a practicum placement here. You will fill out a packet of government forms, get fingerprinted for a background check, and get tested to see if you've been exposed to TB. For the TB test, you'll go to your medical provider and they draw the blood and test it. These are all required by the federal government. The steps aren't difficult, but the process can be time consuming and you'll to submit requested information in a timely manner. If you are selected for the training program, we'll send you a packet of instructions and help you through the process. At this point, we just wanted you to be aware of the entire process.

Orientation & Starting Date

There is a mandatory orientation in late May/early June (TBD), where we welcome you to the VA and orient you to some of our policies and processes. You'll then work with your supervisor

to determine your actual starting date based on what works for you and their availability. Some prefer to start right away and work through the summer, others prefer to start in the fall.

Using VA Work for Presentations

Practicum students are permitted to utilize case information (devoid of any identifying information) drawn from their veteran patients for academic and professional development purposes in their graduate programs. It is our policy NOT to allow any tapes of sessions or testing material to leave the medical center due to confidentiality and privacy.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications are due February 20, 2020. Only complete applications will be considered.

Basic process:

- Applicants identify 2-3 placements they are interested in applying to, and rank order them by their preference.
- The practicum training program and supervisors review applications, send out invitations for interviews with 2 or possibly 3 supervisors.

PLEASE email the following documents, in PDF format to Leland.swanson@va.gov.

(note: the materials ***MUST be in a PDF*** to be accepted due to security measures not allowing us to access a range of file formats or google documents)

- SLC VA Practicum Application
- Curriculum Vita
- Copy of graduate transcript

You will receive a email confirming we have received your application and it is complete.

We will schedule interviews for early March, and plan to finalize selection and notify everyone by 3/18/20.

AVAILABLE PLACEMENTS

This year, we are pleased to offer practicum placements in the following areas: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Assessment, Neurocognitive Assessment, Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL), and General Outpatient Mental Health.

PTSD Assessment

Supervisors

Jacek Brewczynski, PhD

Prerequisites

Completion of two years of graduate studies, including one year of clinical practicum

Hours

Minimum 8-15 hours a week. Must be available on Tuesdays from approximately 10 AM to 3 PM

Population

Veterans who served in WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War, Operation Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation New Dawn, and humanitarian and peace keeping missions

Referrals/Presenting Problems

Veterans are referred via numerous sources including civilian, VA, and military sources for PTSD assessment and treatment. In addition, a wide range of presenting difficulties are encountered including depression, anxiety, psychosis, substance abuse, adjustment disorders, and life transition issues.

Clerkship/Practicum Experience

The PTSD Clinical Team (PCT) is designed to provide assessment and treatment for military related PTSD. Sources of PTSD are primarily combat-related but may also include military sexual trauma or other untoward events occurring during the military service, such as motor vehicle accidents or physical assaults. Goals for practicum students at the completion of this rotation are to have developed diagnostic skills in the assessment of military related PTSD, including acquisition of basic differential & dual diagnostic knowledge. Additionally, there are opportunities to gain exposure to group and individual psychotherapy for PTSD including evidence-based therapies such as Cognitive Processing Therapy.

Training

Initial didactic PTSD assessment training will be conducted prior to students conducting assessments. Clinical observations and supervised assessment experience will also be an integral part of training. During group supervision, on-going assessment training and additional topical issues such as psychopharmacology will be presented. Additionally, practicum students are invited to many of the didactic trainings offered to predoctoral interns, Postdoctoral Pub Club presentations, and staff trainings.

Supervision

Weekly one-hour individual supervision with primary supervisor. Possible additional one-hour individual supervision with Postdoctoral Fellows. Group supervision twice a month.

Cognitive Assessment/Neuropsychology

Supervisors

Patrick Miller, PhD & John Hecker PhD

Prerequisites

Academic courses and prior experience in psychological testing and neuropsychology is preferred. Prior experience with clinical interviewing is necessary.

Hours

Minimum 10-12 hours/week. Must be able to spend up to 6 hours on VA campus one day each week to perform assessments.

Population

The population includes veterans referred for cognitive assessment by providers throughout the Medical Center, including Outpatient Mental Health, Primary Care Clinics, Neurology Clinics, and Geriatrics Clinics. The majority of patients referred are male and range in age from 20's to 80's. Patient diagnoses include history of traumatic brain injury, suspected dementia, history of stroke, Parkinson's Disease, and other conditions affecting the brain.

Practicum Experience

Will conduct diagnostic interviews and administer various neuropsychological testing instruments. Will provide feedback to patient and primary support person(s) as well as to referral sources.

Supervision

Weekly individual supervision and, schedule permitting, may also attend weekly group supervision with pre-doctoral interns.

Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL)

Supervisor

D. Aaron Ahern, PhD
Dennis.Ahern@va.gov
(801) 828-6787

Prerequisites

Testing Track: None

Therapy Track: Completion of at least one year of VA practicum training.

Description of VITAL

In recognition of the fact that veterans face unique challenges and obstacles in the university setting, the VITAL program was established to aid student veterans on campus. The Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership initiative or VITAL program is committed to aiding student veterans in adjusting to the academic setting, helping veterans to overcome obstacles that might impede academic success, and supporting veterans in completing their educational goals. The VITAL program is specifically focused on connecting veterans to appropriate services on campus and within the VA system, providing education and training to faculty and staff about veterans' needs in the academic setting, participating in outreach to student veterans, and providing mental health treatment to veterans on campus. The VITAL program has been providing services to student veterans for over four years and currently serves veterans at several schools in Utah and Idaho.

There are two tracks for practicum students: therapy and educational testing. On the therapy track trainees receive training and supervision regarding the provision of therapeutic services to student veterans. In this role trainees will provide general mental health treatment as well as empirically based treatments for PTSD, such as Prolonged Exposure and Cognitive Processing Therapy. Therapy will primarily be provided via telehealth.

On the testing track trainees will receive training and supervision in the provision of testing for learning disabilities and ADHD. This training opportunity allows practicum students the opportunity to develop the skills of synthesizing information from several sources and to complete several integrated reports. This testing is primarily completed at the VAMC.

In addition to clinical experience, practicum students will gain experience with several elements of working with patients in higher education not commonly available to trainees in the VA. This would include knowledge of veterans' educational benefits, such as the GI Bill and the VBA vocational rehabilitation program, and providing documentation for students seeking academic accommodations.

Supervision

Weekly one hour individual supervision with primary supervisor.

General Outpatient Mental Health

Supervisors

Edward Varra, PhD
801-582-1565 x2712
Edward.Varra@va.gov

Kevin Laska
Kevin.laska2@va.gov

Anne Moore
Anne.moore2@va.gov
801-582-1565 x2339

Prerequisites

Completion of a graduate level psychopathology course, familiarity with DSM diagnoses. Some experience with psychotherapy is necessary.

Hours

8-12 hours a week preferred.

Population/ Presenting Problems

The Outpatient Mental Health Clinic serves both male and female veterans of any era presenting with a wide array of problems. The most common problems seen include mood disorders, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, chemical abuse/dependency, psychotic disorders, and relationship problems. Many veterans present with multiple and complex problems reflecting various axis I and II diagnoses and problems in living.

Clerkship/Practicum Experience

The focus of a practicum in the Outpatient Mental Health Clinic is to provide a structured and supportive opportunity for the student to develop diagnostic and treatment skills in a general outpatient mental health setting. Specific goals for this experience will be discussed with the supervisor at the outset of the practicum. Opportunities that exist include diagnostic interviewing and assessment, individual psychotherapy, and co-facilitating group psychotherapy.

Supervision

Weekly one hour individual supervision with primary supervisor. Possible group supervision.