

PSYCHOLOGY TRAINING PROGRAM

1. PURPOSE: To establish policies and procedures for the Veterans Affairs Maryland Health Care System (VAMHCS) Psychology Training Program comprised of the pre- doctoral externship, doctoral internship, and post-doctoral fellowship training programs.

2. POLICY: The Mental Health Clinical Center (MHCC) is committed to implementing and maintaining a Psychology Training Program that will ensure high quality training of psychological services based in the scientist-practitioner model. The Psychology Training Program models and instills strong ethical, professional practice, and scholarly values. An emphasis is placed on ensuring that training for psychological services adheres to the policies and procedures outlined by the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Academic Affairs (OAA), VAMHCS, American Psychological Association (APA), and the Association of Post-Doctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC). Training Programs will fully employ the APA Implementing Regulations (IRs) as a means of maintaining strict adherence to the Standards of Accreditation (SoA). The training needs of each trainee will be evaluated, and an individual training program will be developed such that each trainee will reach the appropriate developmental milestone for that particular training program.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. Psychology Externship Training Program:

(1) **The Chief Psychologist**, through the Psychology Training Program Director and the Psychology Externship Coordinator, has ultimate responsibility for the implementation of psychology extern training.

(2) **The Psychology Training Program Director and Psychology Externship Program Coordinator** have the full responsibility of implementing the Psychology Externship Program. The Psychology Externship Coordinator serves as the single point of contact for externship training matters within the VAMHCS and coordinates all administrative functions of the Psychology Externship Program. This includes advertising externship placements available, communicating application procedures to participating psychology graduate institutions, accepting applications from prospective externship candidates, forwarding these materials to the prospective psychology extern supervisors to

arrange for interviews, and offering externship placements to qualified candidates based on prospective supervisor post-interview decision. The Coordinator also arranges for WOC (without compensation) appointments for all candidates who have accepted these offers. The Externship Coordinator will also coordinate all educational and didactic opportunities in which the psychology externs will participate as either voluntary or mandatory programmatic activities. The Externship Coordinator will maintain communication with university programs on student progress throughout the year.

(3) **Clinical Supervisors** have the responsibility to evaluate externs' clinical developmental level and devise an appropriate training plan for the clinical placement. Supervisors will provide a minimum of 2 hours of supervision per week, 1 hour of which will individual face-to-face supervision. They will complete a supervision contract with the extern at the start of the training year and provide written and verbal feedback at mid-year and year-end. Supervisors will be doctoral-level psychologists with appropriate credentialing to independently practice psychology. Should an extern receive supervision from another psychology trainee at a more advanced level of training (i.e., psychology post-doctoral fellow or psychology doctoral intern), that advanced level trainee's supervisory activities will be directly supervised by a licensed independent practitioner psychologist.

(4) **Psychology Externs** must be enrolled in an APA approved clinical or counseling psychology doctoral program throughout their tenure as externs at the VAMHCS. Externs are responsible for acquiring knowledge of and adhering to: (1) the most current version of the APA's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct; (2) federal and state law as it applies to mental health practices, and (3) VAMHCS patient care and administrative policies and procedures. Psychology externs are expected to meet standards set for psychology trainees by relevant organizations (e.g., APA) and their respective graduate school institutions. Trainees are expected to have knowledge of their limited scope of practice as trainees, participate in regularly scheduled supervision, and regularly seek additional supervision/consultation when necessary.

b. VAMHCS/UM SOM Psychology Internship Consortium

(1) **The Chief Psychologist**, through the Psychology Training Program Director, has ultimate responsibility for the implementation of psychology internship training.

(2) **The VAMHCS/University of Maryland School of Medicine Psychology**

Internship Consortium Steering Committee, in conjunction with the Internship Consortium Training Committee, has the authority and responsibility for ensuring the quality of all aspects of the Consortium Internship Training Program. The Steering Committee has the responsibility for appointing the Consortium Director of Training and Consortium Associate Directors of Training as well as for providing guidance on the larger directions and values for the Internship Consortium.

(3) **The Psychology Training Program Director** works closely with the Associate Directors of Training (representing VAMHCS and UM respectively) as well as the Steering Committee for the Internship Consortium. The Psychology Training Program Director oversees all aspects of the Internship Consortium. The Consortium must conform to guidelines and requirements established by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the American Psychological Association (APA), and other applicable organizations (e.g., the Association of Psychology Post-doctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC)), as well as standards of ethical and professional practice set forth by the APA and state and federal law. Areas of responsibility for the Psychology Training Program Director include recruitment and hiring of applicants, coordinating and evaluating internship training tracks (i.e., sub-specialty training areas, including: trauma, serious mental illness, neuropsychology, health psychology, general mental health, and child/school mental health), chairing Consortium committees, overseeing the supervisory process, and other duties related to the maintenance of the Psychology Training Program and APA accreditation. The Psychology Training Program Director will attend Psychology Practice Council meetings and Monthly Psychology Staff meetings to represent the training programs and discuss relevant training issues with Mental Health leadership.

(4) **The Internship Consortium Training Committee** members are appointed at the discretion of the Psychology Training Program Director and the Chief Psychologist. The Training Committee is composed of the Psychology Training Program Director, Associate Directors of Training, Coordinators of the Research, Assessment, Diversity and Curriculum Subcommittees, and up to two representatives of the internship class. The Training Committee is responsible for maintaining the Consortium's compliance with relevant accreditation criteria (e.g., APA, APPIC); overseeing the recruitment and selection process to ensure equitable treatment of all applicants and adherence to relevant APPIC policies and guidelines; coordinating material and human resources; providing current information on clinical training for trainees and applicants; evaluating facilities and training rotations for continued participation in the training program; maintaining high-quality content in curriculum seminars; maintaining a high level of quality in required research projects; ensuring quality supervision; approving required

research projects; ensuring quality supervision; approving training rotations and supervisors; and ensuring that disciplinary action is consistent with relevant standards of due process (e.g., APA, APPIC, VA, University of Maryland). Additional Training Committee members may be appointed if specific needs are identified that require additional faculty involvement.

(5) **Clinical Supervisors** are responsible for evaluating interns' developmental level and devising an appropriate training plan for the rotation. Supervisors will provide a minimum of four hours of supervision per week, two hours of which will be individual, face-to-face supervision. They will complete a supervision contract with interns at the start of the rotation, provide written and verbal feedback at mid-rotation and at the end of the rotation, and provide this documentation to both the intern and Psychology Training Program Director. Supervisors will be doctoral-level psychologists with appropriate credentialing to practice psychology. According to the APA Implementing Regulations, supervisors have the responsibility of "enhancing the professional functioning of the more junior person(s); monitoring the quality of professional services offered to the clients that she, he, or they see; and serving as a gatekeeper for those who are to enter the particular profession."

(6) **Psychology Doctoral Interns** are responsible for acquiring knowledge of and adhering to: (1) the most current version of the APA's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct; (2) federal and state law as it applies to mental health practices, and (3) VAMHCS patient care and administrative policies and procedures. Psychology trainees are expected to meet standards set for psychology trainees by relevant organizations (e.g., APA, APPIC, training committees) and to assume the role of professional psychologists within their training assignments, with appropriate supervision. To the extent that trainees deliver services, such service delivery is considered to be incidental to the learning process. Trainees are not expected to assume duties, workload, or responsibilities normally assigned to the professional psychology staff. Trainees are expected to have knowledge of their limited scope of practice as trainees, and seek supervision/consultation when necessary.

c. **Postdoctoral Fellowship Program**

(1) **The Chief Psychologist**, through the Psychology Training Program Director, has ultimate responsibility for the Postdoctoral Fellowship Program.

(2) **Fellowship Track Coordinators** have the full responsibility for implementing the psychology postdoctoral fellowships. The Coordinators for the

Clinical Psychology and Neuropsychology Fellowship Programs are appointed by and serve at the discretion of the Chief Psychologist. The Postdoctoral Fellowship Program must conform to guidelines and requirements established by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the American Psychological Association (APA), and other applicable organizations (e.g., the Association of Psychology Post-doctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC)), as well as standards of ethical and professional practice set forth by the APA and state and federal law. Areas of responsibility for the Coordinators include recruitment and hiring of applicants, coordinating and evaluating individual training programs, overseeing the supervisory process, and other duties related to the maintenance of the fellowships and APA accreditation.

(3) **Clinical Supervisors** are responsible for evaluating fellows' developmental level and devising an appropriate training plan. Supervisors will provide a minimum of four hours of supervision per week, two hours of which will be individual, face-to-face supervision. They will complete a supervision contract with the fellows at the start of the training year, provide written and verbal feedback at mid-rotation, and at the end of the rotation, and provide this documentation to both the fellow and the Psychology Training Program Director. Supervisors will be doctoral-level psychologists with appropriate credentialing to practice psychology. According to the APA Implementing Regulations, supervisors have the responsibility of "enhancing the professional functioning of the more junior person(s); monitoring the quality of professional services offered to the clients that she, he, or they see; and serving as a gatekeeper for those who are to enter the particular profession."

(4) **Psychology Postdoctoral Fellows** are responsible for acquiring knowledge of and adhering to: (1) the most current version of the APA's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct; (2) federal and state law as it applies to mental health practices, and (3) VAMHCS patient care and administrative policies and procedures. Psychology trainees are expected to meet standards set by relevant organizations (e.g., APA, APPIC, training committees) and to assume the role of professional psychologists within their training assignments, with appropriate supervision. Trainees are not expected to assume duties, workload, or responsibilities normally assigned to the professional psychology staff. Trainees are expected to have knowledge of their limited scope of practice as trainees, and seek supervision/consultation when necessary.

4. ACTION:

a. **Psychology Externship Program**

(1) A description of the training program, application policies, educational opportunities, and training staff will be developed and made available on the

opportunities, and training staff will be developed and made available on the VAMHCS Psychology Training website and upon request to potential applicants and graduate program Directors of Clinical Training (DCTs). The Externship Training Program brochure will be developed and updated on a yearly basis by the Externship Coordinator to reflect the most current training experiences and supervisors.

(2) Applicant materials will be initially evaluated by the Externship Coordinator, who will then forward eligible applications to respective clinical supervisors. The supervisors will perform a second review of materials and select several applicants for an in-person interview, based upon the applicants' experience, career goals, and perceived fit with the particular externship placement for which the applicant is being considered. Following interviews, the clinical supervisors communicate directly to the Externship Coordinator their selection of students to which they wish to offer an externship position. The Externship Coordinator then contacts the selected applicants by phone, verbally offering the positions. Should a selected applicant decline an offer, the Externship Coordinator will contact the next eligible applicant, as listed by the respective externship placement supervisors. Upon verbal acceptance of the position, the Externship Coordinator will send a follow-up e-mail communication confirming the offer, to which the applicant must respond by e-mail to formally confirm their acceptance. Applicants not selected for an interview will receive notification via email from the Externship Coordinator. Applicant selection will be conducted in accordance with policies and procedures established by relevant psychology professional and accrediting organizations. The Externship Coordinator will determine accreditation status of the graduate program for each applicant as well, and will comply with OAA regulations regarding accreditation status.

b. VAMHCS/UM SOM Psychology Internship Consortium

(1) A description of the training program, application policies, educational opportunities and training staff will be developed and made available on the VAMHCS Psychology Training Program webpage. The Consortium brochure will be updated on a yearly basis by the Training Committee, to reflect the most current training experiences and supervisors.

(2) Applicants will be evaluated by the Psychology Training Program Director, members of the Consortium Training Committee, and the psychology faculty according to specific procedures outlined in this document. Applicant selection will be conducted in accordance with policies and procedures established by relevant professional psychology and accrediting organizations (e.g., APA, APPIC). The Psychology Training Program Director will receive all completed applications via the APPIC online portal. Applications that do not meet Consortium eligibility criteria

(which are outlined in the online brochure) will not be reviewed, and applicants will be informed of their ineligible status by the Psychology Training Program Director. All eligible applicants will be assigned for further review to faculty members by the Psychology Training Program Director. Applicants will be evaluated using a standardized objective rating scale and other relevant criteria to determine a percentage of applicants that will be extended an invitation for in-person or phone interviews. The Psychology Training Program Director will assign each applicant a minimum of two interviews with psychology staff. Applicants will again be evaluated and ranked through the use of objective rating scales and other relevant criteria, which will be used to determine a preliminary rank order list. Members of the selection committee, as defined above, will attend a meeting to determine the final rank order list. The Psychology Training Program Director, along with members of the Training Committee and the Steering Committee, has the final authority on selection procedures and decisions prior to submission of the rank order list to National Matching Services (NMS). The Psychology Training Program Director will submit the rank order list to NMS on the identified submission date and will be responsible for distribution of the match results on the identified Match Day.

(3) Applicants and VAMHCS/UM SOM supervisors will be given a copy of the APPIC rules and regulations prior to the beginning of the selection process. The Training Committee and the Psychology Training Program Director will provide direct guidance to all applicants and supervisors on rules regarding communication about ranking information before, during, or after the selection process.

(4) Each new trainee will receive an orientation to APA's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, VAMHCS and University of Maryland-Baltimore policies and procedures regarding patient care, employee conduct, available rotations, supervisors, training opportunities, and the policies and procedures of the Psychology Training Program including grievance procedures, and due process.

c. Postdoctoral Fellowship Program

(1) A description of the training program, application policies, educational opportunities, and training staff will be developed for each program and made available on the VAMHCS Psychology Training Program webpage. The online brochures will be updated on a yearly basis by the Fellowship Training Committee to reflect the most current training experiences and supervisors.

(2) Applications will be received by the Coordinators, who may designate a selection committee among the program faculty to review applications. The Coordinators will receive and review all completed applications to ensure minimum eligibility requirements are met. Applications that do not meet eligibility criteria (which are outlined in the online brochure) will not be reviewed, and applicants will be informed of their ineligible status by the Coordinators. Applicants will be

evaluated and ranked through use of objective rating scales and other relevant criteria to determine a percentage of applicants that will be extended an invitation for in-person or phone interviews. The selection committee will conduct interviews, and those individuals that were interviewed will again be rated according to the objective rating scales and other relevant criteria. The selection committee will meet to discuss the highest ranked applicants and make decisions about which applicants to extend offers. All efforts will be made to avoid dual relationships throughout the selection process. The selection committee will identify top tier applicants and the Coordinators will communicate offers to applicants. The Clinical Psychology fellowship adheres to and participates in the Uniform Notification Date. The Clinical Neuropsychology fellowship does not participate in the Uniform Notification Date and, instead, will make offers at the annual International Neuropsychological Society (INS) meeting.

(3) Each new fellow will receive an orientation to APA's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, VAMHCS and Mental Health Clinical Center policies and procedures regarding patient care, employee conduct, available rotations, supervisors, training opportunities, and the policies and procedures of the Psychology Training Program including grievance procedures, and due process.

- 5. REFERENCES:** Joint Commission Manual for Hospitals, Human Resources Chapter Current edition
American Psychological Association Commission on Accreditation: Standards of Accreditation for Health Service Psychology, January 2017
American Psychological Association Commission on Accreditation: The Accreditation Operating Procedures, June 2015
American Psychological Association Commission on Accreditation: Implementing Regulations, November 2015
American Psychological Association Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct
Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers Match Policies
Memorandum of Consortium Agreement between the Veterans Affairs Maryland Health Care System and the University of Maryland, Baltimore
VHA Supervision of Associated Health Trainees; VHA Handbook 1400.04

6. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The Director, Mental Health Clinical Center (116/MH) is responsible for the contents of this document.

7. **RESCISSION:** VAMHCS SOP NO. 116/MH-039, subject: Psychology Training Program, dated September 2011.

8. **RECERTIFICATION:** This document is scheduled for recertification on/before the last working day of September 2021.



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