



Psychology Practicum Program

2023-2024

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Program Overview

WELCOME!

The VA Boston Psychology Practicum Program provides focused clinical training to advanced graduate students in psychology. Training emphasizes provision of clinical services to veterans in a variety of specialty areas, as described below. Experiences are designed to be cumulative, with the student acquiring and developing appropriate levels of mastery of a variety of assessment and psychotherapeutic skills over the course of their practicum. Supervision is extensive, with students receiving orientation to both VA Boston Medical Center and Mental Health Service Line policies. Regularly scheduled meetings with an assigned supervisor are required.

The VA Boston Psychology Practicum Program is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming training culture, and practicum students will have opportunities to work with veterans with diverse identities.

Please note that each rotation has assigned days for attendance that are required and that vary across rotations. Please pay close attention to these time commitments for each rotation and discuss any questions you might have with the relevant supervisor(s). These days are typically non-negotiable due to the stringent space demands that exist in this hospital setting. The practicum rotation has the right to rescind an offer to a student who accepts, then states after accepting that they cannot be at the VA on any portion of the days specified when the offer was accepted. Also, the exact start date for practicum can vary across rotations, typically ranging from the third Monday in August to the week after Labor Day. Please check with the rotation with which you are interviewing about projected start dates.

Please also note that the listed practica do not meet Massachusetts requirements as Advanced Practicum, and therefore will not qualify as clinical hours for MA licensure. Please verify this information at the time of your interview.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in modifications to clinical training for practicum students. Specifically, practicum students in most rotations are currently providing a mixture of care via telehealth from their homes and direct (face-to-face) care. Safety procedures consistent with CDC and local facility guidelines are maintained when at the medical center, including mandatory screening upon presenting at the hospital, mandatory mask and other PPE requirements, maintaining distances, and following cleaning protocols. Practicum students will likely continue to provide a combination of in-person and virtual care during the 2023-2024 training year. We anticipate continued delivery of high-quality practicum student training experiences, while also maintaining the health and safety of patients and students.



PTSD Clinical Team

Practicum students working in the PTSD clinical team (PCT) have the opportunity to acquire treatment experience working with veterans diagnosed with PTSD and other trauma-related disorders. This practicum is for advanced students, and acceptance is contingent on availability of office space in the medical center. Trainees have the opportunity to train in semi-structured interviewing for PTSD and evidence-based treatments for PTSD (e.g., Cognitive Processing Therapy, Prolonged Exposure). Veterans presenting to the PTSD clinic are diverse in sociodemographic status and trainees will gain experience treating a variety of military and civilian traumatic events.

- ✓ Accepting one 16 hour/week practicum student
- ✓ Schedule requirements: Must be available on Wednesdays

Supervisors: Gina Poole, Ph.D., Alex Leong Mattern, Ph.D., Scott Litwack, Ph.D., Christine Serpe, Ph.D., and additional staff from the National Center for PTSD

Women's Trauma Recovery Team

The Women's Trauma Recovery Team (WTRT) is an outpatient mental health program affiliated with the Women's Health Sciences Division of the National Center for PTSD, and serves women veterans with PTSD and other trauma-related mental health difficulties. Women veterans treated in WTRT are quite diverse on sociodemographic and other variables, have experienced a variety of military and other lifespan traumatic events (e.g., sexual assault, including military sexual trauma; childhood abuse; intimate partner violence; combat and warzone trauma), and typically have complex clinical presentations. This placement is for advanced students (fourth year or higher). Please note that this is a 12-month practicum experience, and runs through mid-August. The primary focus of this placement is Cognitive Processing Therapy for PTSD. Practicum students attend a two-day CPT workshop at the start of the year followed by weekly CPT consultation groups, and provide CPT to veterans in WTRT. Students may also have the opportunity to conduct comprehensive psychosocial assessments and to provide additional evidence-based individual psychotherapies.

- ✓ Accepting one 8-12-hour/week practicum student
- ✓ Schedule requirements: Tuesday mornings; Wednesdays 11:30-12:30 team meetings. Other scheduling dependent upon medical center space considerations; however, this placement requires time across at least two days of the week.

Supervisors: Staff from WTRT and Women's Health Sciences Division, NCPTSD

Substance Abuse Treatment Program

Practicum students are typically involved in conducting audiotaped short-term and longer-term individual psychotherapy under licensed staff supervision, in doing measurement-based care assessments, and in co-leading cognitive-behavioral substance use relapse prevention psychotherapy groups and in co-leading various psycho-educational groups (with members of our treatment team) in the Substance Abuse Treatment Program (residential and outpatient components) at the Jamaica Plain campus of VA Boston HCS. Both the shorter-term and longer-term treatments of choice are, typically, different types of empirically-supported cognitive-behavioral therapy. The patient population consists of Veterans with a primary diagnosis of a substance use disorder (who typically use some combination of alcohol, cocaine, and heroin/oral opiates). Patients frequently present with co-morbid psychiatric diagnoses of depression, PTSD, and anxiety disorders, and with personality issues, medical problems, and legal and psychosocial difficulties.

- ✓ Accepting one 20-24 hour/week practicum student
- ✓ Schedule requirements: Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays

Primary Supervisor: Monica Roy, Ph.D.

Additional Supervisors: Travis Slesinski, Ph.D. and Anne Banducci, Ph.D.

Behavioral Medicine Program

The Behavioral Medicine Program provides comprehensive mental health and behavioral health services for Veterans with a broad range of medical conditions and health concerns. Practicum students in the Behavioral Medicine Program co-lead a variety of outpatient cognitive-behavioral groups (e.g., depression related to chronic medical illness, stress management, smoking cessation, weight management, and insomnia), participate in multidisciplinary care, and may have the opportunity to conduct problem focused short-term therapy. In addition, the practicum student may do consultation/liaison in the context of the renal dialysis unit. The practicum student also attends the weekly Behavioral Medicine Team Meeting where cases and didactics are presented. Additional opportunities may be available depending upon the days the practicum student is present on site.

- ✓ Accepting one 16-20 hour/week practicum student
- ✓ Schedule requirements: Monday and/or Tuesday and Friday

Supervisors: Rebecca Ametrano, PhD, Arielle Horenstein, PhD, Michelle Kovacs, PhD, Sarah Leone, PhD, ABPP, Morgan McGillicuddy, PhD, and Amy Silberbogen, PhD, ABPP

Neuropsychology Program

The neuropsychology practicum is 16-20 hours per week and takes place at the Jamaica Plain Campus. Students typically see 1 patient per week for neuropsychological evaluation and gain experience in interviewing, test administration, scoring, interpretation, report preparation and feedback to patients, patient families and referral source. The primary clinical setting is the outpatient Neuropsychology Consult Service. Group and/or individual therapy experiences are available but are dependent upon training needs, space and time allowances (will be in addition to assessments). Students may attend weekly case conferences. Attendance at monthly Neurobehavioral Rounds (4th Thursday of the month 9am-11am) and Neuropsychology didactics (1pm-3pm on Thursdays) are required (open to discussion if there is a significant schedule conflict). Research opportunities are available. Prior coursework in assessment is required. Prior coursework in cognitive assessment, neuroanatomy, and/or neuropsychology are recommended, as is prior neuropsychology assessment experience.

- ✓ Accepting one-two 16-20 hour/week practicum student(s)
- ✓ Schedule requirements: Thursday afternoons are required. Mondays and Tuesdays are preferred for clinic days.

Primary Supervisors: Laura Grande, PhD, ABPP/cn, David Marra, Ph.D., and Elizabeth Leritz, PhD, ABPP/cn

Additional Supervisors: William Milberg, PhD, ABPP/cn and Deepa Acharya, PhD, ABPP/cn

Center for Returning Veterans

The Center for Returning Veterans (CRV) focuses on providing evidence-based therapy to post-9/11 veterans, with an emphasis on post-deployment and post-military readjustment concerns. CRV practicum students gain experience with treating a range of presenting difficulties such as PTSD and sub-diagnostic PTSD symptomatology, as well as mood, anxiety, substance use, and adjustment disorders. CRV practicum students also develop competency in understanding military culture and addressing the unique developmental/identity considerations as experienced by this era of veterans, including the influence of life stages, values, and personal characteristics (e.g., race, ethnicity, country of origin, sexual orientation, gender identity) on veterans' military experiences. Students will have opportunities for training in a range of evidence-based practices, including attending a two-day workshop in Cognitive Processing Therapy. Practicum students also participate in a weekly team seminar with staff psychologists and other psychology trainees.

- ✓ Accepting one 12-16 hour/week practicum student
- ✓ Schedule requirements: Tuesday/Thursday preferred

Supervisors: Kevin Brailey, Ph.D., Erin Daly, Ph.D., Sarah Krill Williston, Ph.D. and Jill Scott, Ph.D.

Brockton: Women's Integrated Treatment & Recovery



Women's Integrated Treatment & Recovery Program (WITRP)

WITRP is a 7-8 week intensive dual-diagnosis residential treatment program for women veterans with both PTSD and SUD. WITRP admits veterans with all types of interpersonal trauma, not limited to military experiences of MST and/or combat exposure. Veterans admitted to the program typically have a significant history of substance use with difficulty maintaining sobriety, as well as a history of multiple traumas. WITRP offers skills-oriented groups utilizing components of evidence-based treatments including CBT, DBT, CPT-C, EMDR and mindfulness. In addition to developing and honing skills for managing both disorders, there is significant emphasis on addressing the shame and lack of self-compassion that represent significant obstacles to recovery for many substance users and trauma survivors. Cultivating greater self-compassion and self-acceptance and increasing experiences of positive emotion are important components of the therapeutic work. Weekly individual therapy is provided to support and augment the group work. Trainees conduct comprehensive psychosocial assessments; co-lead groups and provide individual therapy; and participate in interdisciplinary team meetings and case conferences.

- ✓ Accepting one 16-20 hour/week practicum student
- ✓ Schedule requirements: Wednesday afternoons required

Supervisor: Sharon Baker, Ph.D.

Inpatient Mental Health Services

Inpatient mental health services at the Brockton campus is comprised of four locked psychiatric units, including two acute units and two long-term stay units. The two acute units are split into a dual-diagnosis unit and severe mental illness unit. The direct clinical hours would be spent in a combination of activities that best serves the training needs of the student. These activities could include, but are not limited to, group psychotherapy, individual psychotherapy, suicide risk evaluation (w/supervisor present), suicide prevention safety planning, treatment team collaboration, and psychodiagnostic and personality assessment. Students would be assigned to a primary unit for treatment team rounds, group psychotherapy, and assessment; therapy cases could be assigned from any unit depending upon the clinical interests of the trainee. The learning objectives of the inpatient training experience include: a) to implement evidence-based interventions for substance use and severe mental health conditions, while adapting to the demands of an inpatient environment, b) to increase skill in engaging in interdisciplinary communication, c) to increase understanding of how criminal justice involvement, homelessness, and other psychosocial factors influence treatment, and d) increase understanding of how to implement trauma-informed, recovery oriented care within the traditionally medical-model setting of inpatient psychiatry.

- ✓ Accepting one 8-20 hour/week practicum student
- ✓ Schedule requirements: any combination of days/times is permitted

Primary Supervisor: Kelly M. Klein, Ph.D.

Additional Supervisors: Holloway Marston, Psy.D. and Justine Swanson, Psy.D.

Rehabilitation Psychology Program

Rehabilitation Psychology is an area of psychological practice concerned with assisting individuals with disabilities to achieve optimal psychological, physical, and social functioning. The Rehabilitation Psychology rotation emphasizes closely supervised clinical experiences in inpatient with some opportunity for outpatient settings for individuals with chronic disabilities within the Spinal Cord Injury / Dysfunction (SCI/D) Service continuum of care, located at the Brockton campus:

(https://www.boston.va.gov/services/spinal_cord/SCIProgramGoalsandOutcomes.pdf). All patients have a primary medical condition such as Spinal Cord Injury/disorder, Multiple Sclerosis, or ALS. This rotation provides systematic training in the application of psychological principles and techniques to treat mental health issues including personality disorders, depression, grief, anxiety, late-onset PTSD, dementia, behavioral concerns, end of life issues, and complex neuro-psychiatric presentations that requires a full "team intervention" to optimize care and enhance quality of life. Interventions include individual sessions and group work with veterans, and team support and development with the treating staff. Assessments include annual psychosocial assessments and consultations for neuropsychological and decision-making capacity assessments. Scholarly inquiry, program evaluation, dissemination and literature reviews relating to clinical cases are a regular part of this rotation. Additional opportunities may be available depending upon the days that the practicum student is present on site and interest of the trainee.

- ✓ Accepting one 16-20 hour/week practicum student
- ✓ Schedule requirements: Wednesdays or Thursdays preferred but not mandatory.

Supervisor: Maggi Budd, Ph.D./ ABPP/rp

The Jamaica Plain Campus is located at

150 South Huntington Avenue

Boston, Massachusetts 02030

[Click for Google Maps](#)

The Brockton Campus is located at

940 Belmont Street

Brockton, Massachusetts 02301

[Click for Google Maps](#)