

Psychology Internship Training Program 2023-2024

VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System
2601 Veterans Drive
Harlingen, Texas 78550

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System



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Applications Due: November 10, 2023 at 11:59 PM

MATCH Numbers

General Psychology: 221311

Health Psychology: 221312

Accreditation Status

The Psychology Internship Program at the VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System (VATVCBHCS) is an **APA-accredited program**. Our program had the APA site visit in 2023 and the accreditation as been reaffirmed until 2033.

Questions related to the program's accredited status should be directed to the Commission on Accreditation:

Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation
American Psychological Association
750 1st Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002
Phone: (202) 336-5979
e-mail: apaaccred@apa.org
Web: <http://www.apa.org/ed/accreditation>

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A Letter from the Training Directors:

Thank you for your interest in the VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Psychology Internship Program! Our Internship program is located in the Rio Grande Valley, or “the Valley,” at the southern-most tip of Texas. Our Internship takes place across clinics in both Harlingen and McAllen, Texas. We serve a predominantly Latinx Veteran population in addition to “Winter Texans,” or Veterans primarily from the northern part of the United States, who migrate to the Valley between the months of October and March. In addition to core training offerings (such as rotations through the Mental Health Clinic (BHIP), Substance Abuse Treatment Program, Trauma, and Primary Care Mental Health Integration), we also provide training in specialized areas and psychotherapies. For instance, our Psychology Internship Training Program offers Interns the opportunity to become certified in Cognitive Processing Therapy for PTSD (CPT) following an intensive minor rotation training experience (this certification is conferred upon obtaining licensure).

In addition to our training in CPT, our internship also offers brief training experiences (i.e., four month minor rotations) in Bilingual Services, Suicide Prevention, Health Behavior and Prevention, Community-Based Recovery for Serious Mental Illness and Administration, and training in Tele mental Health. *Our trainees and staff reflect a wide range of socioeconomic, cultural, and religious affiliations.* We have a diverse training faculty with extensive education and training in an eclectic array of therapeutic interventions and assessment. Drawing from developmental and competency-based supervisory models, our faculty strive to help Interns become professional, competent, and culturally sensitive clinicians who are well-prepared for the next step in their career. We strive to incorporate innovative ideas both within our clinics and our Internship Training Program. That allows us to be flexible and open to change, which frequently results in the addition of new rotations based on the interest and preference of our Interns.

Our internship rotations take place across two of our system locations, Harlingen and McAllen, Texas. Both locations serve a significant proportion of rural Veterans. The Valley is home to a cross-section of burgeoning, beautiful, and safe settings, from small, rural towns to big, suburban cities. The Rio Grande Valley is known for its strong influence of Mexican and Mexican American cultures, tropical climate, low cost of living, and proximity to South Padre Island and three international airports (in Brownsville, Harlingen, and McAllen). We strongly believe that our Internship Training Program provides both rich training and self-care opportunities throughout the internship year. If this piques your interest, we encourage you to continue reading. Please feel free to email us if you have any questions. We look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,
Drs. Carlos Morales-Rodriguez and Bernardo Flores

Setting: VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend

The VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System (VATVCBHCS) is one of the newest Health Care Systems within the VA, having officially established itself in October of 2010. Prior to that time, the area now known as the VATVCBHCS was included in the South Texas Health Care System. The VATVCBHCS serves Veterans residing within the southern-most 20 counties of Texas, 80% of which are classified as rural, via four Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs), a specialty clinic, and an Ambulatory Surgery Center in Harlingen, McAllen, Laredo, and Corpus Christi. Of these facilities, two will serve as training sites for Interns: the McAllen VA Outpatient Clinic and the VA Health Care Center at Harlingen.

The Mental Health Service Line is continuously growing and currently consists of 204 full-time employees (FTE) staff members across locations. This includes 45 psychologists and 15 psychiatrists, in addition to clinical social workers, licensed professional mental health counselors, licensed marriage and family therapists, vocational rehabilitation specialists, psychology technicians, peer support specialists, and administrative support staff across all four clinic locations and a Clinical Resource Hub that supports all of VISN17. Additional staff members involved with mental health programs include registered nurses and clinical pharmacy specialists. An environment characterized by collaboration and scholarly inquiry is supported and encouraged.

McAllen:

McAllen is the largest city in Hidalgo County, Texas. Its southern boundary is located about five miles from the U.S.–Mexico border and is about 70 miles west of South Padre Island and the Gulf of Mexico. The 2010 census put the city's population at 129,877 and the McAllen–Edinburg–Mission metropolitan area population at 774,769. Travel to and from McAllen is easily facilitated through the McAllen-Miller International Airport. Prominent local attractions of this vibrant and growing area are The Botanical Gardens, State Farm Arena, McAllen Convention Center, Valley Symphony Orchestra, and Quinta Mazatlan-World Birding Center. McAllen has over 800 restaurants representing a large variety of cuisine on varying budgets, as well as La Plaza Mall, Las Tiendas, and RGV Premium Outlets within close proximity for all of your shopping needs. McAllen is home to many recreational and cultural arts activities, most of which can be discovered through [McAllen Chamber of Commerce - Leading the Region.](#)

McAllen VA Outpatient Clinic (McAllen, TX) – Opened in 2014, this site serves as the primary care clinic for Veterans from four surrounding counties, three of which (75%) are classified as rural. It is located 38 miles from the VA clinics in Harlingen. In addition to primary care services, this facility also offers a full array of specialty care services, such as mental health, podiatry, lab, pharmacy, and infectious disease clinics. Current rotations taking place at the McAllen VA Clinic include Outpatient



Mental Health, Substance Abuse Treatment Program, Primary Care-Mental Health Integration, and several minor rotations.

Harlingen:

Harlingen, located at the southern tip of Texas and just forty minutes from beautiful South Padre Island, represents a blend of South Texas charm and the cultural traditions of Mexico. Harlingen enjoys a year-round tropical climate, numerous outdoor activities, and was recently cited as having one of the lowest costs of living in the nation (<https://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/10-cheapest-places-to-live-in-the-us/>). With an estimated population of 75,000, Harlingen has its own International Airport making travel convenient and affordable. It is home to 17 elementary schools, 5 middle schools, two high schools and an early college high school that allows high school seniors to graduate with an Associate's Degree. Adjacent to the Harlingen VA Outpatient Clinic is the University of Texas Regional Academic Health Center, which serves as the Medical Education branch for the University of Texas- Rio Grande Valley and boasts an array of classrooms and a full medical library. Texas State Technical College is also located within the city limits, and one of the main campuses for the University of Texas- Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) is just 20 minutes to the south in Brownsville. Additional information is available at: [Visit Harlingen, Texas | South Texas Outdoors, Rio Grande Valley Vacation \(visitharlingentexas.com\)](http://VisitHarlingenTexas.com)



Health Care Center at Harlingen (Harlingen, TX) - The Health Care Center at Harlingen (HCC) is a state-of-the-art ambulatory surgery center. Activated in January 2011, this facility offers a full range of outpatient specialty services including six surgical suites, clinics for prosthetics care, oncology, neurology, mental health and specialty mental health, pulmonology, CPAP calibration, cardiology, orthopedics, dermatology, ophthalmology, and outpatient surgeries (e.g., cataract removals,

diagnostic colonoscopies, and prostate biopsies) in addition to primary care. The HCC serves Veterans from the entire VATVCBHCS catchment area. Currently, the Health Care Center at Harlingen hosts rotations in Outpatient Mental Health, Trauma, and various minor rotations.

Training Model and Program Philosophy

The mission of the VATVCBHCS and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is to honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care to improve Veterans' overall health and well-being. The VATVCBHCS Internship Program fully supports this mission through its aim to train highly qualified graduate psychologists who are well prepared to utilize empirically-grounded interventions, serve as valued members of interdisciplinary teams, facilitate the development and research of innovative models of care, and employ a scientist-practitioner approach to mental health and well-being. To

achieve this aim, our philosophy is that all practicing psychologists should have a solid foundation in general health service psychology including the ability to apply empirical data to clinical procedures and assessment. Given this philosophy, our program provides a year of training in evidenced-based practices in health service psychology. The main goal of VA internship programs is to prepare psychologists for positions within the Department of Veterans Affairs.

There are two separate tracks within the Psychology Internship Training Program. Two Interns will be matched with the General Track and two Interns will be matched with the Health Track. All four Interns will have the same core requirements and will participate in the same didactic activities. All Interns are required to obtain training in assessment and interventions across an array of Veteran populations. Rotations are designed for maximizing Intern professional experience with various diagnostic, cultural, and age groups complemented by brief training experiences, which allow for more focused training in the Intern's area of interest. The **Health Track** Interns will receive training in a primary care setting, completing two rotations in Primary Care-Mental Health Integration (PCMHI), and the third rotation in a program of choice; while the **General Track** Interns will have one required rotation in the Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program (BHIP) and the option to participate in a wider range of major rotations, having a more generalist focus.

Program Goals & Objectives

During orientation, Interns' prior training experiences are reviewed. This is done to identify areas of strength and weakness in order to facilitate the development of a training program that best meets the specific training needs of each Intern. In keeping with our generalist philosophy, Interns are encouraged to address those growth areas (e.g., working with certain populations such as those with serious mental illnesses or substance use problems, particular assessment approaches such as personality testing, or exposure to various theoretical orientations).

It is expected that upon completion of the program all Interns will demonstrate competence in the following nine general domains:

- A. Intervention
- B. Assessment
- C. Research
- D. Supervision
- E. Individual and Cultural Diversity
- F. Professional Values, Attitudes, and Behaviors
- G. Ethical and Legal Standards
- H. Communication and Interpersonal Skills
- I. Consultation and Interprofessional/Interdisciplinary Skills

These competencies are assessed within a framework of increasing understanding of, and sensitivity to, individual and cultural diversity in the delivery of psychological assessment, treatment, and consultation, as well as in the Intern's development of a code

of professional ethics. Competency is enhanced by both supervised clinical experience and didactics.

Training Schedule and Rotations

During orientation, Interns meet with the Training Directors to plan their training schedule for the entire year. The 12-month (2080 hour) internship year will be divided into three rotations, each lasting four months. Each intern will complete three major rotations with the option to incorporate brief training experiences (minor rotations) during the second, and/or third rotations. It is anticipated that the intern will spend between 40-50 hours working each week with 40-60% of their time engaging in clinical services. Interns are required to complete at least 500 hours of direct care by the end of the training year which includes six integrated psychological assessments. The specific Training Plan developed by each Intern must be approved by the Training Directors and Training Committee.

MAJOR ROTATIONS:

Outpatient Mental Health Rotation – The Outpatient Mental Health Rotation takes place within the Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program (BHIP) teams and affords Interns with generalist training in the provision of care to a broad array of Veterans with diverse diagnoses. Emphasis on the application of specific empirically-based treatments will include training in CPT, PE, CBT and IPT for Depression, ACT for Depression, and Motivational Interviewing (VHA Handbook 1160.01). Interns will have ample opportunity to develop such skill sets in both individual and group therapy formats. During the course of this rotation, Interns will be expected to complete a minimum of two comprehensive psychological evaluations which combine data from both a clinical interview and objective assessment (e.g., MMPI-2, WAIS-IV, WMS-IV, etc.). The Veteran population served in this context will include Vietnam and OEF/OIF/OND era Veterans as well as a smaller subset of Desert Storm, Korea, WWII, and peace-time enrollees. In addition, Interns rotating in Outpatient Mental Health during the months of October to May will encounter "Winter Texan" Veterans who will require time-limited services with care coordination back to their assigned VA facility upon termination. This rotation is likely to be available at both the Harlingen and McAllen VA Outpatient Clinics.

Substance Abuse Treatment Program (SATP) Rotation – The SATP rotation is uniquely designed to project its services via tele mental health, to Veterans at all VATVCBHCS clinical locations. Utilizing a centrally based team composed of a Psychologist, LMFT, and RN at the HCC as well as an additional part-time Psychologist at the McAllen VA Outpatient Clinic and a full-time Psychologist, the SATP offers the following services through both face-to-face and tele mental health formats: an Intensive Outpatient Program, After Care Group, Seeking Safety, individual therapy for dual diagnosis, and coordination of care for residential and detoxification admissions with contract facilities and neighboring VAMCs. The SATP rotation offers a broad exposure to a variety of addictive disorders most of

which are co-morbid with other DSM-5 conditions. Interns will develop skill in differential diagnosis, risk assessment, empirically-based treatments, and tele mental health services. This rotation is likely to be available at the McAllen VA Outpatient Clinic.

Primary Care-Mental Health Integration (PCMHI) Rotation – The PCMHI rotation will afford Interns experience in the application of health psychology using both individual and group psychotherapy modalities. Clinical experience will emphasize the delivery of time-limited empirically based evaluation and intervention for both mental health conditions and medical conditions with a behavioral component. The focus of the PCMHI rotation includes: application of the consultation model, understanding of Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) services, same-day access to PCMHI services, brief evaluation and therapy, shared medical appointments, familiarity in delivering evidenced based treatments (Motivational Interviewing, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Chronic Pain (CBT-CP), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I), and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Depression (CBT-D) in a primary care setting. Additionally, Interns may gain experience in the administration, interpretation, and documentation of bariatric, spinal cord stimulator, and transplant evaluations as well as brief cognitive evaluations for dementia. This rotation is likely to be available at both the Harlingen and McAllen VA Outpatient Clinics.

Trauma Treatment Rotation - The Trauma Rotation will allow Interns the opportunity to assess and treat Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other trauma-related presentations. Regarding assessment, interns will develop skills in differential diagnosis of PTSD, determination of readiness for trauma-focused treatment, and consultation with other clinical providers. Interns will be trained in use of the Clinician Administered PTSD Scale for DSM-5 (CAPS-5) as part of the intake process. Interns will also have the opportunity to complete more comprehensive assessments of personality and possible malingering which will count toward the six required comprehensive assessments for the internship year. In terms of treatment, this rotation emphasizes Empirically-Based Psychotherapies (EBPs) including Cognitive-Processing Therapy (CPT) and Prolonged Exposure (PE). Other treatments that may be used while on this rotation include Written Exposure Therapy (WET), Imagery Rehearsal Therapy (IRT) for nightmares, and Skill Training in Affective and Interpersonal Regulation (STAIR). Since PTSD is highly comorbid with Substance Use Disorders (SUD), Interns may also have the opportunity to learn Seeking Safety and Concurrent Treatment of PTSD and Substance Use Disorders Using Prolonged Exposure (COPE) protocols. Interns will work with Veterans ranging in era from Vietnam War to OEF/OIF/OND. Veterans primarily present with combat stressors, but Interns who are interested will be given priority for working with Veterans who have Military Sexual Trauma (MST), childhood sexual abuse, or other non-combat trauma. Interns on this rotation will be encouraged to participate in local and national didactics such as the VA PTSD Consultation Program Lecture Series, the

Advanced PE Seminar Series, and the MST Teleconference Training Series. This rotation is likely to be available at the Harlingen VA Outpatient Clinic.

MINOR ROTATIONS:

In addition to the above major rotations, Interns are afforded the opportunity to participate in the following brief training experiences:

Telemental Health – Because telemental health treatment modalities will be a frequent treatment modality utilized on all rotations this year due to the COVID pandemic, this will not be offered separately in a minor rotation.

Bilingual Clinical Services – For Interns fluent in Spanish and desiring to conduct concentrated mental health care in Spanish with receipt of Spanish-language supervision, this brief training experience may be selected. Interns may choose to complete two cases of time-limited EBT therapy with Spanish-speaking Veterans, a time-limited workshop for Veterans and their loved ones, or two comprehensive, integrated psychological evaluations in Spanish. This rotation is likely to be available at the McAllen VA Outpatient Clinic.

Administrative Project – The administration rotation will expose Interns to the administrative aspects of Mental Health and/or psychology training within the VA. This experience can be tailored to meet the interests of the Intern and may include things such as participation in administrative meetings (e.g. MH SAIL Committee, VACO-level psychology/mental health meetings) and projects (e.g., program evaluation, needs assessment, participation in facility-level workgroups, or development of information/outreach campaign materials). The admin rotation will be 4-6 hours per week based on the mutually-determined goals/interests of the Intern. Given that this rotation will not provide any direct clinical experience, Interns wishing to complete this minor rotation will need to demonstrate sufficient progress toward the direct clinical hours requirement in order to participate. This rotation is likely to be available at the Harlingen VA Outpatient Clinic.

Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) – This experience will offer the opportunity for Interns to participate in the VA training initiative for this evidence-based, trauma-focused intervention. CPT involves teaching Veterans to identify how traumatic experiences have impacted their thinking, and to challenge their own maladaptive thoughts. Interns must commit to learning the intervention including participation in the 3-day workshop, and a minimum of 6 months of weekly 1-hr Intern-only VTEL consultation sessions (group and/or individual). During the course of the 6 months consultation, Interns will work towards successful completion of a minimum of 2 individual cases and a minimum of 20 consultation meetings. Successful completion renders the Intern eligible for provider status in CPT once licensed, a nationally recognized merit. This rotation is likely to be available at both the Harlingen and McAllen VA Outpatient Clinics.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Rotation – This experience, which will be available as an eight month or year-long minor rotation, provides Interns with the opportunity to learn the theory and practice of DBT for patients with serious and complex clinical problems. Training will be delivered through a two-day training seminar, reading assignments, observation, and Consultation Team discussions. Interns participate in the weekly DBT Consultation Team meeting with VCB psychologists to provide clinical consultation and training with DBT patients. This Consultation Team meeting will serve as one hour of group supervision. Interns will also be assigned to an individual supervisor and will participate in 30-minute weekly supervision that may be provided by VTEL. Interns will serve as a co-therapist for a DBT skills group and will also carry one comprehensive DBT patient through Stage I of treatment. This rotation is likely to be available at the Harlingen VA Outpatient Clinic.

Suicide Prevention (SP) Rotation – Psychology Interns will become acclimated to managing patients with suicidality and/or crisis (including how to conduct a Suicide Risk Assessment and create a Suicide Safety Plan). Interns will participate in monthly staffing for Veterans who are due for review of their High Risk for Suicide Flag. During the 4-month rotation, Interns will complete two Suicide Risk Assessments and two Safety Plans. They will also assist the Suicide Prevention Coordinator in responding to Veterans Crisis Line calls. They will also assist with follow-up care for Veterans with a PRF for 90 days, as well as demonstrate lethal means counseling. This rotation is likely to be available at the McAllen VA Outpatient Clinic.

Program Structure

SUPERVISION:

Each Intern has a primary Supervisor for each of the three main rotations throughout the year. This Supervisor is responsible for the training experience on their specific rotation and assists in selecting psychotherapy cases, making referrals, along with providing scheduled supervision. A minimum of two hours per week are devoted to individual supervision from the major rotation Supervisor. In addition, each Intern is also matched with a Preceptor who provides one hour of weekly supervision over the course of the entire year with emphasis on professional development. This supervision may be telesupervision for at least part of the Internship year. Interns also participate in one hour per week of group supervision for a total of four hours of scheduled, weekly supervision. If minor rotations are selected by the Intern, such experiences may be supervised by a separate psychologist, typically for one hour each week.

DIDACTICS:

The Intern Didactics Seminar takes place for three hours on a weekly basis and is composed of various topics, such as diversity/multicultural competence, ethics, behavioral health consultation, supervision, psychopharmacology, psychological and neuropsychological assessment, evidence-based psychotherapy, and an array of

professional development issues (e.g., career development and job seeking strategies). Didactic seminars are conducted by staff members and include 2-hour presentations followed by a 1-hour journal club discussion each week. The didactic seminar also provides opportunity for case presentations and grand rounds by Interns.

Interns will also be required to conduct a one hour presentation for mental health staff on an ongoing intervention or assessment case. Further, each Intern will be required to present a Grand Rounds Presentation on a topic of his/her choosing. Historically, this one hour Grand Rounds presentation is on the Intern's dissertation; however, it can also be on another research topic of interest. These presentations opportunities help the Interns refine their public speaking skills, case conceptualization abilities, and obtain feedback on their work.

FACILITY AND TRAINING RESOURCES:

All Interns are provided with office space and secure networked computers necessary for Veteran care and administrative responsibilities. They have access to the VA Medical Library services, as well as VA Intranet and Internet resources for clinical work and research.

Administrative Policies and Procedures

Stipends: The stipend for 2023-2024 Interns is currently set at \$32,904. The stipend level is set nationally for Psychology Interns in the VA. Information about benefits for Psychology trainees at the VA can be found on the [VA Psychology Training website](#).

Leave Requests: The VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System's policy on Authorized Leave is consistent with the national standard. Interns will earn 13 days of sick leave and 13 days of annual leave by the end of the internship year, which is in addition to 11 federal holidays.

Family Leave: Interns may use sick leave to provide care for a family member who is incapacitated as a result of physical or mental illness, injury, pregnancy or childbirth, or to make arrangements necessitated by the death of a family member or attend the funeral of a family member. Interns requesting maternity or paternity leave are able to take up to three months of leave; however, paid leave is only granted for the intern's earned sick, annual, or donated leave he/she has received. In this event, the VCB Internship Training Director will work with the Intern and Human Resources to coordinate this leave and make appropriate adjustments to the training year so that, upon the Intern's return, he/she continues to work towards successfully completing the requirements of the internship.

Due Process for Grievance and Remediation Procedures: All trainees are afforded the right to due process in matters of problematic behavior, problems in

professional competence and grievances. A due process document will be distributed to all Interns during orientation and subsequently reviewed with them.

Privacy Policy: We collect no personal information from you when you visit our Website.

Self-Disclosure: We do not require Interns to disclose personal information to their clinical Supervisors except in cases where personal issues may be adversely affecting an Intern's performance and such information is necessary to address these difficulties.

Application & Selection Procedures

APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS:

To be considered for the Psychology Internship Program at the VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System applicants must be eligible for employment within the Veterans Health Administration. As such, applicants must be U.S. citizens and a Doctoral student in good standing at an American Psychological Association (APA) or Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) accredited graduate program in Clinical, Counseling, or Combined Psychology or Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System (PCSAS) accredited program in Clinical Science. Persons with a doctorate in another area of psychology who meet the APA or CPA criteria for respecialization training in Clinical, Counseling, or Combined Psychology are also eligible. Male applicants born after 12/31/1959 must have registered for the draft by age 26 to be eligible for any US government employment, including selection as a paid VA trainee. Male applicants must sign a pre-appointment Certification Statement for Selective Service Registration before they can be processed into a training program.

As an equal opportunity training program, the VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Psychology Internship Program welcomes and considers without discrimination applications from all qualified candidates, regardless of racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, disability or other minority status. We strongly encourage people from diverse backgrounds to apply. We also gladly provide reasonable accommodations as needed to people with disabilities during both the application and training process; please feel free to request such accommodation as necessary.

Interns are subject to fingerprinting and background checks. The background check process ensures that VHA employees are reliable, trustworthy, and suitable for the job. This will include questions about places of residence and employment, educational history, and any military or police records. Match result decisions are contingent on passing these screens. Additionally, all health professions trainees within the VA, including Psychology Interns, must have a [Trainee Qualifications and Credentials Verification Letter \(TQCVL\)](#) submitted by his/her doctoral program prior to starting the Internship. This includes, among other requirements, being vaccinated in accordance with current [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\) guidelines for healthcare workers](#).

Additional information about VA eligibility requirements can be found on the [VA's Psychology Training webpage](#). All VHA employees, including trainees, may be subject to [random drug testing](#). Trainees will have the opportunity to submit supplemental medical documentation of the lawful use of an otherwise illegal drug to a Medical Review Officer. Trainees may be dismissed if found to use illegal drugs on the basis of a verified positive drug test. Additional information regarding all of these eligibility requirements can be found on the [VA Psychology Training website](#).

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.

Qualified applicants will demonstrate completion of at least three years of graduate course work and a minimum of 450 intervention hours and 50 assessment hours, with a range of psychopathology across varied populations and settings. Applicants must be certified as ready for internship by their Director of Training. Only 52-week, full-time internships are available.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

Per APPIC policy, all application materials must be submitted through the APPIC portal. Students interested in applying must submit the following through the APPIC Application for Psychology Internship (AAPI) online system:

1. Cover letter
2. AAPI
3. Current resume/vita
4. Three letters of recommendation from individuals who are acquainted with your academic performance and/or training experience
5. Original (official) transcripts of all graduate work
6. **Supplemental Materials** – A recent, deidentified assessment report

The VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System Psychology Internship Program does not ask for any other information than is allowed by the APPIC Application for Psychology Internships (AAPI Online). To be considered, all application materials for the 2023-2024 internship year are due by **November 10, 2023 at 11:59 PM**.

APPLICATION STEPS:

1. Complete the online AAPI, which is available on APPIC's website, www.appic.org.
2. Submit all materials by **November 10, 2023**. Please remember to include the required supplemental materials. **Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.**
3. Applications will be reviewed and applicants will be notified of their interview status via e-mail by **December 4, 2023**.
4. Video conference interviews will be scheduled for applicants under active consideration to take place in early January. Email notification will be sent to each applicant who remains under consideration with an invitation to attend this virtual interview. Applicants are responsible for responding to the invitation to interview and securing an interview time and date from the options provided in the email notification.
5. Applicants matched with this internship program will be notified of acceptance by APPIC on Match Notification Day.

Applicants should feel free to contact the Training Directors by e-mail or phone with any questions regarding the application process.

Our program follows all APPIC policies regarding the Intern selection process. This internship site strictly abides by the APPIC policy that no person at this training facility will solicit, accept, or use any ranking-related information from any applicant. You are encouraged to read or download the complete text of their regulations governing program membership and the match process from the APPIC website.

CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS:

All interviews will be conducted by synchronous video teleconference and by invitation only. Interviews will consist of a group meeting with training committee members to provide information about our training program as well as individual interviews with training committee members. We regard interviews as a two-way process: a chance for us to meet and learn more about you, and an opportunity for you to meet us and gain a better understanding of our program. Interviews will be scheduled in early January. We adhere strictly to the selection process guidelines established by the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC).

The VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend is committed to providing access for all people with disabilities and will provide accommodations if notified at least two weeks prior to the scheduled interview.

MATCH PROCESS:

We will follow the match policies established by APPIC. Our Program uses one match number for the two General Psychology Internship positions and a separate match number for the two Health Psychology Internship positions. Applicants may choose to be considered for both the General Psychology and Health Psychology positions or for only one track. The only information that we may communicate to applicants prior to the

February deadline is whether they are still under consideration. Additional information regarding the match is available through the National Matching Services.

Training Faculty

MARIA C. ALMARIO-ZGHEIB

Ph.D. Clinical Psychology, University Of Kentucky, 2015

McAllen VA outpatient Clinic – HBPC Staff Psychologist

Dr. Almario-Zgheib is a staff psychologist for the VA at the home-based Primary care clinic in McAllen Texas. Originally from Colombia South America, she obtained a PhD in Counseling Psychology from the University of Kentucky in the United States in 2015. She completed her APA accredited Internship and postdoctoral work at the Multicultural Psychology Internship Program in Massachusetts. Upon graduation, she became faculty for the program. Dr. Almario has a long history of involvement in social justice and the advancement of human rights. She has been a speaker at the United Nations Floor on topics of human dignity, human trafficking and migration distress. Her interests also include post migration distress and coping, identity intersectionality, multiculturalism, linguistic pluralism, freedom of consciousness, and the application of clinical frameworks to vulnerable populations.

ALEX BIONDOLILLO

PhD, Clinical Psychology, University of Southern Mississippi, 2013

McAllen/Harlingen VA Outpatient Clinic – ICMHR RANGE Staff Psychologist

Dr. Biondolillo earned his degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, MS. He completed an APA-accredited predoctoral internship at VA Connecticut Healthcare System in West Haven, CT, where he remained to complete a postdoctoral fellowship in psychosocial rehabilitation for Veterans with severe mental illness at the West Haven VA in conjunction with the Yale School of Medicine. His clinical focus follows this line of specialization, providing individual and group therapy as well as case management services to Veterans who have severe mental illness in rural community and home based settings. He also serves as the clinical team lead for the VCB ICMHR Programs.

JESSICA A. CARMONA

PhD, Clinical Psychology, Brigham Young University, 2019

VA Health Care Center at Harlingen- PTSD Psychologist

Dr. Carmona completed internship at the James J. Peters VA Medical Center and a postdoctoral fellowship in Rural Mental Health at the South Texas Veteran Healthcare System. She has a strong interest in multiculturalism and providing culturally sensitive psychological services to underserved populations, particularly monolingual Spanish speaking individuals. Dr. Carmona has completed clinical training in Peru and conducted research in Mexico with a focus on improving her clinical skills in Spanish. Her theoretical orientation is primarily grounded on third wave CBT with a focus on mindfulness-based interventions, ACT and DBT. Dr. Carmona has a strong interest in PTSD treatment and

emotion regulation. She currently serves as an in clinic psychologist with the Virtual PTSD Treatment Team (VPTT) and the Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) Team.

BERNARDO FLORES

**Psy.D., Clinical Psychology, The Illinois School of Professional Psychology, 2009
McAllen VA Outpatient Clinic – SATP Psychologist, Chief of Psychology and
Assistant Training Director**

Dr. Flores earned his degree from Illinois School of Professional Psychology. He completed his internship at community mental health center in Northwest Indiana and focused his delivery of clinical services to the underserved Latino mono-lingual population. Dr. Flores' professional/research interests include the impact of diversity on the assessment and treatment of mental health clients. Dr. Flores is currently designated as the Recovery Services Program Manager and one of the Substance Use Disorder Psychologist serving the McAllen VA Outpatient Clinic. His current clinical focuses are in the provision of group and individual evidence-based treatments. He provides consultation on a variety of evidence based group and individual treatments for Veterans and supervises Interns on the SATP Rotation at the McAllen VA Outpatient Clinic.

JESSICA E. GROGAN

**PhD, Clinical Psychology, University of Houston, 2011
VA Health Care Center at Harlingen – Associate Chief of Staff (ACOS) of Mental
Health**

Dr. Grogan earned her degree from the University of Houston in 2011. She completed her internship and a postdoctoral fellowship specializing in PTSD at the VA Pittsburgh Health Care System. Her clinical interests include differential diagnosis of PTSD and other combat stress reactions, education and treatment related to military sexual trauma (MST), transdiagnostic treatment of anxiety spectrum disorders, and use of routine outcome measures to inform treatment decisions. Dr. Grogan works clinically with the VPTT, and she has previously served as the Behavior Health Interdisciplinary Program (BHIP) Manager. She is also a Cognitive-Processing Therapy (CPT) Regional Trainer and formerly served as the Evidence-Based Psychotherapy Coordinator for Valley Coastal Bend. As such, she is strongly invested in increasing access to evidence-based treatments and episodes of care within our health care system, as well as incorporating measurement based care to inform the course of treatment.

JEREMY HENN

**Ph.D., Counseling Psychology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2010
Plaza Lecea, San Antonio – Tele mental Health Psychologist**

Dr. Henn completed internship at the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System and postdoctoral residency at the South Texas Veterans Health Care System. His theoretical orientation is primarily cognitive behavioral with an emphasis on acceptance-based treatments. Clinical services are delivered via telehealth and include individual therapy, group therapy, and psychological assessment to several clinics as well as directly to Veterans' homes. Special interests include transdiagnostic treatment approaches to trauma and emotional disorders and the role of individual differences (e.g., interests, values, personality) in learning and treatment outcomes.

JOHN A. MILLER**PHD Clinical Psychology, California School of Professional Psychology, 1981****VA Health Care Center at Harlingen – Whole Health Partnership Program Manager**

Dr. Miller currently functions in the role of the VCB Whole Health Program Manager. He joined VHA in March 2008. Prior to arriving at VATVCBHCS in 2014 as the Health Behavior Coordinator, he was the Psychology Service Chief at STVHCS-AMD from 2011 thru 2014, and served in multiple positions at the VA Medical Center, Spokane, WA from 2008 thru 2011 to include the Program Coordinator of the Veterans Trauma Recovery Program (VTRP-PCT), the Health Behavior Coordinator, and as an additional duty, he functioned as the Acting Chief of the Behavioral Health Service at that facility from October 2009 through July 2010. Dr. Miller is a Clinical Psychologist licensed in Alaska with over 20 years of private practice experience there. He was the Chair of the Alaska psychology licensing board and served as a member for over 4 years. During his more than 23 years in Alaska, he maintained two group private practice offices and has been the Director of a rural Community Mental Health Clinic, a contracted consultant who trained rural community mental health clinic staff to become compliant with State and Federal regulations, and a trainer who presented workshops covering a diffuse range of mental health topics to members of the military and their family members, mental health professionals, and law enforcement groups. Dr. Miller completed his PhD program as a U.S. Army AMEDD scholarship recipient, completed his internship in Clinical Psychology at William Beaumont Army Community Hospital, Ft. Ord, CA, and performed 8 years of active duty as a psychologist with the Army while serving tours of duty with the:

101st Airborne Division, Air Assault

82nd Airborne Division;

6th Infantry Division; and

172nd Support Brigade, 6th Infantry Division, as the Medical Company Commander.

CARLOS M. MORALES-RODRIGUEZ**PhD, 2016, Clinical Psychology, Carlos Albizu University****MS, 2011, Health Program Evaluation and Applied Biostatistics, University of Puerto Rico****McAllen VA Outpatient Clinic – Health Behavior Coordinator (HBC), Tobacco Cessation Lead Clinician, Psychology Internship Training Director**

Dr. Morales-Rodriguez completed his APA-Accredited Internship at Children's Institute, Inc. in Los Angeles, California focusing on Trauma focused care, Systemic Family, and children psychotherapy. He followed this with a yearlong Post-doctoral Fellowship in Primary Care Mental Health Integration (PCMHI) at the VA Caribbean Healthcare System in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He also worked as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Puerto Rico, Medical Sciences Campus both the Psychiatry Department and School of Public Health on their respective Translational Clinical Research, Public Policy, and Health Research programs. His theoretical orientation is primarily CBT, and he has experience and training in CBT-CP, CBT-I, and TF-CBT models; as well as with Systemic Family therapy models such as Structural Family therapy (SFT) and Transgenerational Family Therapy. Dr. Morales-Rodriguez's professional and research interests include utilizing an integrated, prevention approach when treating anxiety and mood disorders, trauma, and substance use in a Primary Care, Outpatient and Community settings. He

also enjoys working with multicultural aspects of the individual and family systems, applying research to the clinical setting, serving as a research consultant, and providing clinical supervision.

RODOLFO QUINTANA

PsyD, 1997, Clinical Psychology, Caribbean Center for Advanced Studies/Carlos Albizu University

McAllen VA Outpatient Clinic – Suicide Prevention Coordinator

Dr. Quintana completed an APA-Accredited Pre-doctoral Internship at Florida State Hospital in Chattahoochee, FL. During his internship he received training and experience performing psychodiagnostics and forensic evaluations for legally-committed adults with severe mental disorders. He has also provided expert testimony in cases involving Competency to Stand on Trial, Mental State at the Time of the Offense, Mitigating Factors, Dangerousness Assessment and Custody Cases. He was a member of the Examining Committee for the Mental Health Section of the Probate Division of the 11th Judicial Circuit in Miami, Florida. Over the years, he has provided psychotherapy to adolescents and adults with cognitive disorders, depression, mood and anxiety disorders as well as substance-related disorders. His theoretical orientation is primarily cognitive behavioral with a strong biopsychosocial framework. He believes thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, and social factors all play a significant role in human functioning in the context of disease or illness. His current primary area of interest is taking an ethnocultural approach to suicide prevention.

CHANDRA N. STRANGE

PhD, Counseling Psychology, University of Kentucky, 2014

Harlingen VA Health Care Center – PTSD Tele mental Health Psychologist

Dr. Strange earned her PhD from the University of Kentucky in 2014, with a clinical emphasis in trauma counseling and a research emphasis in examining the impacts of providing trauma-related services on care providers. She completed her APA-accredited pre-doctoral internship at The Ohio State University Counseling and Consultation Service, followed by a 2-year postdoctoral position as a Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Southern Mississippi, teaching in the Counseling Psychology Program and supervising in the in-house training clinic. Her theoretical orientation integrates empowerment feminist and multicultural perspectives with a focus on delivering empirically-supported treatments. Her primary clinical interests include trauma-focused therapy, multicultural counseling, and providing clinical supervision. Dr. Strange is a member of the Virtual PTSD Treatment Team (VPTT) and will serve as a preceptor for interested interns.

MARY E. SULLIVAN

Psy.D., Clinical Psychology, William James College, 2017

McAllen VA Outpatient Clinic – BHIP Staff Psychologist

Dr. Sullivan completed an APA-accredited Pre-doctoral Internship at VATVCBHCS in Health Service Psychology in July 2017. She subsequently joined the VCB staff as an outpatient psychologist, providing individual and group psychotherapy services as well as clinical assessment while developing additional training and experience in the area(s) of

suicide prevention and rural mental health. She is a proponent of holistic and integrative mental health interventions, and her clinical orientation is grounded in a humanistic, strengths-based approaches that are influenced by cultural humility and trauma-informed perspectives. Her primary clinical interests are regarding transitional issues faced by veterans, including but not limited to personal growth and development, self-efficacy and autonomy, topics associated with education, employment, and interpersonal relationships, and moral injury.

NICOLE M VELEZ AGOSTO

PhD, Clinical Psychology, Carlos Albizu University, 2019

PhD, Academic Research Psychology, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras, 2011

McAllen VA Outpatient Clinic – PCMHI Staff Psychologist, LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator

Dr. Velez Agosto earned her Clinical Psychology degree from the Carlos Albizu University in San Juan, Puerto Rico and her Academic Research Psychology degree from the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras in San Juan, Puerto Rico also. She completed an APA-accredited predoctoral internship in Multicultural Psychology at School Street Counseling Institute in Springfield, Massachusetts, where she remained to complete postdoctoral requirements and serve as faculty in the internship program. She is an experienced professor with peer-review publications in Developmental Psychology, vulnerable populations and qualitative inquiry. Her clinical focus and research interests are Health Psychology, narrative therapy interventions for trauma and systemic approaches in family and couples therapy. She currently works as a Staff Psychologist in Primary Care Mental Health Integration at the McAllen VA Outpatient Clinic.

MEGHAN I. VON LINDEN

Ph.D., Clinical Psychology, St. Louis University, 2011

Plaza Lecea, San Antonio – Telehealth EBP for PTSD Psychologist; PTSD Tele mental Health Program Manager

Dr. von Linden completed Internship in Medical Psychology at the Phoenix VA Health Care System in 2011, followed by Residency in Rural Mental Health/Telehealth at the South Texas Veterans Health Care System in 2012. Her theoretical orientation is primarily cognitive-behavioral, she is trained in Cognitive Processing Therapy, Prolonged Exposure, Written Exposure Therapy, and Skills Training in Affective and Interpersonal Regulation for PTSD, and is focused on providing these treatments to Veterans in rural locations throughout the VISN. She is currently involved in disseminating CPT for PTSD and Military Sexual Trauma (MST) via telehealth across the VCB health care system and directly into Veterans' homes. She is also a Regional CPT Trainer. Her clinical interests include: PTSD assessment, provision and evaluation of tele mental health EBPs to rural settings, stress and coping skills enhancement, and retention and treatment of OEF/OIF veterans.

LIUDMILA ZAYED

PhD, Clinical Psychology, Fielding Graduate University, 2018

McAllen VA outpatient Clinic - PCMHI Staff Psychologist, MST Coordinator

Dr. Zayed earned her degree from Fielding Graduate University in Santa Barbara, CA. She completed an APA-accredited predoctoral internship at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler, TX with emphasis on Integrated Behavioral Health. During her internship, she received training and experience working with adults with severe mental disorders from rural communities as well as training and experience with neuropsychological testing. She worked as an adjunct faculty at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in the department of psychology. Her theoretical orientation is primarily Cognitive -Behavioral. Areas of clinical interest include health psychology and severe mental illnesses.

INTERNSHIP ADMISSIONS, SUPPORT, AND INITIAL PLACEMENT DATA:

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM TABLES:

Date Program Tables are updated: 8/10/2023

Program Disclosures

Does the program or institution require students, trainees, and/or staff (faculty) to comply with specific policies or practices related to the institution's affiliation or purpose? Such policies or practices may include, but are not limited to, admissions, hiring, retention policies, and/or requirements for completion that express mission and values.	No
If yes, provide website link where this specific information is presented: N/A	

Internship Program Admission

<p><i>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:</i></p>			
<p>Individuals who are interested in obtaining strong, generalist training with adults in a mental health clinic, primary care or other setting within a medical center will be a good fit for our program. Individuals interested in treating Veterans and exploring the option to work in a VA setting following graduation are an especially good fit. Our training program is located along the southern tip of Texas, so applicants who are interested in warm weather, a lower cost of living, and living close to the beach will be pleased with our location. Harlingen and McAllen are located within a region of Texas known as the Rio Grande Valley, which is culturally very rich. Approximately 80-85% of the local community is Latinx, which affords Interns with the opportunity to obtain strong training in multicultural issues and significant experience with diverse patients, particularly patients of Latinx background. Additionally, while McAllen is a large city (more than three-quarters of a million people in McAllen and surrounding communities), many of our patients live and work in rural communities, affording Interns with the experience of providing care, including telemental health care, in a rural setting. Finally, as one of the newest VA systems in the nation, our system is growing and evolving, which is reflected in the growth and evolution of our training program. We are a flexible program that adapts and changes as necessary. As such, we are interested in working with our Interns to meet their training interests and needs whenever we are able to do so.</p>			
<p><i>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:</i></p>			
Total Direct Contact Intervention Hours	Yes:		450 Hours
Total Direct Contact Assessment Hours	Yes:		50 Hours

Describe any other required minimum criteria used to screen applicants:

To be considered for the Psychology Internship Program at the VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System applicants must be eligible for employment within the Veterans Health Administration. As such, applicants must be U.S. citizens and a Doctoral student in good standing at an American Psychological Association (APA) or Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) accredited graduate program in Clinical, Counseling, or Combined Psychology or Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System (PCSAS) accredited program in Clinical Science. Persons with a doctorate in another area of psychology who meet the APA or CPA criteria for respecialization training in Clinical, Counseling, or Combined Psychology are also eligible.

Male applicants born after 12/31/1959 must have registered for the draft by age 26 to be eligible for any US government employment, including selection as a paid VA trainee. Male applicants must sign a pre-appointment Certification Statement for Selective Service Registration before they can be processed into a training program.

Interns are subject to fingerprinting and background checks during the onboarding process if successfully matched with a VA Internship. The background check process ensures that VHA employees are reliable, trustworthy, and suitable for the job. This will include questions about places of residence and employment, educational history, and any military or police records. Match result decisions are contingent on passing these screens.

Additionally, all health professions trainees within the VA, including Psychology Interns, must have a [Trainee Qualifications and Credentials Verification Letter \(TQCVL\)](#) submitted by his/her doctoral program prior to starting the Internship. This includes, among other requirements, being vaccinated in accordance with current [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\) guidelines for healthcare workers](#). Additional information about VA eligibility requirements can be found on the [VA's Psychology Training webpage](#).

All VHA employees, including trainees, may be subject to [random drug testing](#). Trainees will have the opportunity to submit supplemental medical documentation of the lawful use of an otherwise illegal drug to a Medical Review Officer. Trainees may be dismissed if found to use illegal drugs on the basis of a verified positive drug test. Additional information regarding all of these eligibility requirements can be found on the [VA Psychology Training website](#).

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.

Financial and Other Benefit Support for Upcoming Training Year

Annual Stipend/Salary for Full-time Interns	\$32,904 for 2023-2024 training year.	
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	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):		
Life Insurance 11 Annual Federal holidays		

Initial Post-Internship Positions

(Provide an Aggregated Tally for the Preceding 3 Cohorts)

	2019-2022	
Total # of interns who were in the 3 cohorts	12	
Total # of interns who did not seek employment because they returned to their doctoral program/are completing doctoral degree	1	
	PD	EP
Academic teaching	0	0
Community mental health center	1	1
Consortium	0	0
University Counseling Center	0	0
Hospital/Medical Center	1	0
Veterans Affairs Health Care System	1	3
Psychiatric facility	0	0
Correctional facility	0	0
Health maintenance organization	0	0
School district/system	0	0
Independent practice setting	0	4
Other	0	0

Note: "PD" = Post-doctoral residency position; "EP" = Employed Position.