

Advanced Fellowship in Mental Illness Research and Treatment



Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship
at VA Connecticut Healthcare
System

New England Mental Illness
Research, Education, and Clinical
Center (MIRECC)

National Center for Post-Traumatic
Stress Disorder – Clinical
Neurosciences Division

Academic affiliate:
Yale School of Medicine

Advanced Fellowship in Mental Illness Research and Treatment at MIRECC and NC-PTSD

Applications due November 27, 2023

Invited interviews will follow for top applicants

Individualized start dates between July 1 and September 1, 2024

VA Connecticut Healthcare System
Psychology Service – 116B
950 Campbell Avenue
West Haven, CT 06516
203-932-5711 X 2468

- Two-year, full-time postdoctoral psychology fellowship
- Individualized, mentored clinical research and clinical training in one of two high-priority areas:
 - Substance use and multi-morbidities at the VISN 1 MIRECC
 - PTSD at the NC-PTSD, Clinical Neurosciences Division
- Several opportunities for pilot funds
- Prior fellows have obtained Career Development Awards
- Fellowship meets postdoctoral supervision requirements for psychologist licensure in the State of Connecticut



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Advanced Fellowship Program

Overview

- The Advanced Fellowship program at VA Connecticut Healthcare System offers **individualized, mentored clinical research training** and **clinical training**.

Research training

- Fellows apply to work with a **primary research mentor** at the MIRECC or NC-PTSD who will supervise the Fellow's individualized training plan.
- Fellows meet weekly with their primary research mentor to work on manuscripts, presentations, grant submissions, according to Fellow's goals.
- Fellows may also work with any number of collaborating faculty members.
- Didactic training occurs at VA Connecticut and through national Fellowship Hub Site.
- Fellows are appointed as advanced trainees at VA Connecticut and nominated for concurrent postdoctoral fellow appointments at Yale School of Medicine.

Clinical training

- Fellows receive clinical supervision from at least two licensed clinical psychologists and provide direct patient care to Veterans
- Clinical training meets postdoctoral requirements for licensure in Connecticut and several other states.

Program philosophy

- Fellowship follows a scientist-practitioner, junior-colleague model.

Advanced Fellowship Program Goals and Philosophy

Goals: The VA Advanced Fellowship Program is designed to help develop the next generation of clinical research experts in two high-priority areas of Veteran mental health: substance use/dual diagnosis and PTSD.

The Fellowship provides advanced clinical research training through individualized mentorship with skilled faculty and didactics in addition to traditional clinical training within an interdisciplinary team focused on one of the two emphasis areas (SUD/dual diagnosis or PTSD). Fellows devote 75% of their time to patient-oriented research and education, and 25% to direct patient clinical care.

Program goals by emphasis area:

- SUD/Dual Diagnosis - To improve health care services for Veterans with co-occurring mental illness and addiction problems through research, education, and training in the science, diagnosis, and treatment of dual diagnoses. These Veterans have unique needs for integrated assessment and care. The MIRECC specializes in research and clinical innovation focused on Veterans with SUD/ dual diagnosis and multiple chronic morbidities.
- PTSD - To advance the clinical care and social welfare of America's Veterans through research, education, and training in the science, diagnosis, and treatment of PTSD and stress-related disorders. The NC-PTSD at West Haven specializes in clinical neuroscience PTSD research.

Philosophy: The Fellowship follows a scientist-practitioner model and places strong emphasis on individual mentoring in clinical research and practice. Fellows operate as junior colleagues and work under supervision to develop greater independence over time.

Program Structure

- Fellows devote 75% of their time to research, educational, and supervision activities and 25% to direct patient care of Veterans
- Each Fellow writes an individualized training plan at the start of their fellowship in collaboration with a **research mentor**
- In collaboration with their mentors, Fellows will develop and implement a research project, publish and present findings, participate in grant writing
- Fellows also participate in educational activities and clinical service delivery
- Over the course of the two-year program, Fellows will be trained in clinical research skills and advanced clinical service delivery with evidence-based treatments among Veteran populations within an interdisciplinary setting
- In addition to the Advanced Fellowship, several other psychology, psychiatry, and allied health Fellowships exist at VACHS, allowing Fellows to be part of a community of other advanced trainees. Information on other psychology Fellowship options can be found at <https://www.va.gov/connecticut-health-care/work-with-us/internships-and-fellowships/>
- The Advanced Fellowship maintains records on supervised training experiences, evaluations, complaints, and grievances for program improvement and for the purposes of future licensing and credentialing

Primary Research Mentors and Collaborating Faculty

- VA and Yale provide a collaborative research environment
- Fellows develop individualized training plans with an appointed VA/Yale primary **research mentor** within the MIRECC or NC-PTSD
- A primary **research mentor** meets weekly with the fellow to establish and supervise the fellow's training plan
 - Research mentors commit each year to devoting time and energy to mentorship
 - Research mentor will supervise development of the fellow's research project and grant applications
- Fellows also work with any number of other **collaborating faculty** who are not expected to meet weekly with the fellow, but may work on manuscripts or other projects with the fellow
- Many fellows write a training grant to fund a subsequent 2-5 years of mentored research, such as a national or regional VA career development award or NIH K award
- Our site has a strong track record: 50% of the regional Veterans Integrated Service Network career development awards funded in 2021 were awarded to VA Connecticut trainees

Primary Mentors: SUD/Dual Diagnosis at MIRECC

- [Mehmet Sofuoglu, MD, PhD](#): medication development and testing for nicotine and cocaine addictions, e-cigarettes, sex differences in tobacco use, and genetics research
- [Steve Martino, PhD](#): motivational interviewing, SBIRT, and implementation science
- [Marc Rosen, MD](#): social determinants of health and addiction
- [Ismene Petrakis, MD](#): pharmacotherapy and other treatments for PTSD and SUD
- [R. Ross MacLean, PhD](#): ecological momentary assessment, chronic pain, opioid use disorder
- [Suzanne Decker, PhD](#): suicidal ideation and behavior and effectiveness and implementation of dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) skills groups
- [Rani Hoff, MPH, PhD](#): epidemiological and program evaluation research, system and program performance monitoring and performance metrics, and mental health informatics
- [Sarah Meshberg-Cohen, PhD](#): trauma-focused treatment for comorbid PTSD and SUD and treatment engagement and retention among individuals with psychiatric comorbidities

We encourage potential applicants to peruse faculty websites to find matches for their specific research interests, and to contact potential mentors directly with any specific questions about potential projects or available datasets.

Primary Mentors: PTSD at NC-PTSD

- [Robert Pietrzak, PhD, MPH](#): psychosocial and genetic epidemiology of PTSD and related disorders
- [Ifat Levy, PhD](#): decision making, learning, aging, PTSD, neuroimaging
- [Irina Esterlis, PhD](#): receptor imaging, PET, fMRI, depression, bipolar disorder, PTSD, cognition
- [Ilan Harpaz-Rotem, PhD](#): treatment and neurobiology of stress related disorders (www.ptsdstresslab.org)
- [Joel Gelernter, MD](#): genetics of psychiatric illness, including PTSD, anxiety disorders, substance use disorders, with both molecular level studies (genetic polymorphism, sequence variation) and population genetics methods
- [Ismene Petrakis, MD](#): pharmacotherapy for PTSD and SUD and other substance use disorder

We encourage potential applicants to peruse faculty websites to find matches for their specific research interests, and to contact potential mentors directly with any specific questions about potential projects or available datasets.

Collaborating Faculty

- **Collaborating faculty** available to work with fellows on both tracks include the primary mentors listed on the previous pages
- Other faculty who may collaborate with fellows on projects of mutual interest include, but are not limited to:
- [Marc Potenza, MD, PhD](#): research on gambling, compulsive sexual, binge-eating, internet-use and impulsive or risk-taking behaviors
- [John Krystal, MD](#): research on ketamine
- [Jason DeViva, PhD](#): engagement in PTSD treatment, and PTSD and sleep
- [MacKenzie Peltier, PhD](#): sex differences in intersection of substance use and stress-related disorders
- [Minnah Farook, PhD](#): sociodemographic variables and treatment outcomes, particularly racial health disparities
- [Ashley Martin, PhD](#): intersection of cannabis use and psychosis; metacognition; neurocognition; simultaneous MEG/EEG
- Fellowship training plans are individualized, allowing fellows and their mentors to invite collaboration with interested and available faculty across the Department of Psychiatry and the broader Yale community

Competency Domains

Fellows must demonstrate an advanced level of skill and knowledge in the following areas by the completion of the Fellowship program, as measured by supervisors' evaluations of the specific competencies.

- **Competency 1: Assessment, Diagnosis, and Intervention:** Fellows will develop advanced competencies in the use of empirically derived treatments and systemic means of psycho-diagnostic and neuropsychological evaluation of patients.
- **Competency 2: Consultation, Supervision, and Teaching:** Fellows will gain advanced skills in delivering consultation to inter-professional teams, develop advanced skills in the supervision of psychology trainees including interns and practicum students, and gain experience providing psycho-education to patients, family members and providers.
- **Competency 3: Scholarly Inquiry:** Fellows will acquire competencies in several aspects of clinical research and scholarship. Key competency areas are discussed below.
 - **a) *Integration of Science and Practice*:** Fellows will learn to utilize the scientific literature to guide their clinical practice, and will use “lessons learned” from clinical practice to foster and shape their scientific hypotheses. Fellows will learn to use their emerging competencies in clinical science to identify solutions to emerging clinical problems they encounter in practice and will systematically evaluate the effectiveness of their clinical work (e.g., monitoring patient outcomes).
 - **b) *Conducting Clinically Informed Research*:** Fellows will gain advanced skills in conducting clinically focused research pertinent to the mental health needs of today’s veterans.
- **Competency 4: Organization, Management, Administration, and Program Evaluation:** Fellows will gain experience in organizational management and administration pertinent to the career development of clinical Psychologists and scientists. Fellows may choose additional training experiences that facilitate the development of advanced competencies in program evaluation.
- **Competency 5: Professional, Ethical, and Legal Issues:** Fellows will become competent (as appropriate for an entry level professional) in professional and collegial conduct, knowledge of the ethical guidelines of clinical psychology, and those ethical guidelines that govern the appropriate conduct of human subjects research. They will also become appropriately familiar with the wide array of legal issues relevant to the proper conduct of clinical psychology and human subjects related research.
- **Competency 6: Cultural and Individual Diversity Issues:** Fellows will further develop their awareness and appreciation of cultural and individual differences and will attain cultural competence regarding the delivery of mental health services to a diverse population of Veterans.
- **Competency 7: Confidence and Professional Identity:** Fellows will develop a strong professional identity, confidence, and professional demeanor commensurate with their status in the profession.

Seminars

The training experience includes formal didactic seminars as well as ample opportunity to attend a wide array of formal seminars, grand rounds, and presentations

Fellows on both tracks:

- Advanced Fellowship Seminars: twice-monthly national seminar organized through the Advanced Fellowship Hub Site. Topics include 1) advances in clinical research in mental health, 2) all aspects of career development from grant and manuscript preparation to the role of mentorship, 3) multi-site workshops on manuscript and grant preparation, 4) biostatistics seminars
- VACHS Social Issues and Advocacy seminar: covering skills and approaches treating the full spectrum of Veterans served at VACHS, led by VACHS psychology faculty
- VACHS Professional Development seminar: covering issues related to professional development, led by VACHS psychology faculty

SUD/ Dual diagnosis fellows at MIRECC:

- Didactics on SUD treatment and research, including grantwriting, provided through Yale Department of Psychiatry's Division of Addictions and MIRECC

PTSD fellows at NC-PTSD:

- Meetings of the NC-PTSD and a seminar that links the various National Centers for PTSD using video conferencing

Optional for all fellows:

- Other didactics offered within other clinical and research programs: Clinical Neuropsychology, Clinical Mental Health, Psychosocial Rehabilitation, and Primary Care
- Grand Rounds at Yale University School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry
- Fellows are encouraged to attend relevant national and regional conferences in their specialty area and/or areas of general interest
- Authorized absence up to 10 days is offered for attendance at conferences

Clinical Skill Development

- Fellows provide 10 hours of face-to-face clinical interventions with Veterans per week
- Each fellow is assigned two clinical supervisors from the VACHS psychology service faculty
- In accordance with the fellow's focus, one of the two supervisors is housed in the Outpatient Addiction Recovery Service (SUD/dual diagnosis) or the PTSD Clinic (PTSD)
- The other clinical supervisor may work with the fellow on clinical cases reflecting more specific interests such as depression, anxiety, Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Group, or psychodynamic approaches to treatment
- PTSD Fellows also receive specific training in PTSD assessment and conduct routine assessment as part of the NC-PTSD's research assessment battery
- In this two-year fellowship, fellows have the opportunity to gain exposure to a wide variety of supervision, assessment, and clinical service delivery experiences
- Typically, in the second year of Fellowship, fellows conduct 'supervised supervision' of a more junior trainee
- Clinical experiences prepare fellows for licensure application in the state of Connecticut. Licensure requirements for other states can typically be met if discussed with the Director

Requirements for Completion

- By the end of the two-year training period, fellows must receive satisfactory ratings across competency areas, as measured by their supervisors
- Fellows are expected to maintain good standing within the program, and are expected to appear and conduct themselves in a professional manner
- Fellows are expected to treat patients and staff with dignity and respect. The APA ethical guidelines, HIPAA regulations, and government ethics rules will be strictly adhered to, especially in matters of confidentiality of information, non-exploitation of patients and avoiding conflicts of interests
- A formal system of evaluation is used for fellows to provide feedback on their mentorship, supervision, and overall fellowship program experience
- Fellows are given a copy of our Grievance procedures/ policy at the start of training. This document provides guidelines to assist Fellows who wish to file complaints against staff members. Fellowship Directors are also available to consult to fellows about any conflict with faculty
- Fellows are responsible for conforming to all other Medical Center and Office of Personnel Management regulations concerning conduct and behavior

Setting: VA Connecticut Healthcare System (VACHS)

- Level 1A complexity teaching hospital affiliated with Yale School of Medicine
- Mission is “to provide high quality health care that meets the needs of the veteran patients, to promote health through prevention, and to maintain excellence in teaching and research”
- Includes two major medical centers (West Haven and Newington campuses) and six Community Based Outpatient Clinics. VACHS provides the full spectrum of healthcare services from outpatient primary and specialty care to inpatient medical, surgical, psychiatric, and rehabilitation services
- Home to many training programs, including as a site for the Yale School of Medicine psychiatry residency and fellowship in Addiction Psychiatry
- Serves Veterans from all backgrounds and eras
- Serves a growing proportion of women Veterans, and has an active Women’s Clinic, Women Veterans Program Manager, and LGBT Veterans Coordinator
- Identified as a leader in LGBTQ Health Equality in the Health Equality Index, a designation by the Human Rights Campaign, since 2014

Setting: Psychology at VACHS, affiliated with Yale School of Medicine

- VACHS is home to about 85 psychologists, including research psychologists supported through centers and grants from VA, NIH, DoD, and other funding
- VACHS psychologists are typically involved in some combination of clinical practice, research, and education
- Most VACHS psychologists, including all faculty for the Advanced Fellowship, hold an academic appointment at our academic affiliate, Yale School of Medicine (typically in the Department of Psychiatry)

Setting: VISN 1 MIRECC

- MIRECC: The mission of the VISN 1 New England MIRECC is to improve mental health treatments and access to services for Veterans with co-occurring addictions and mental illnesses, as well as related issues such as multi-morbidities, chronic pain, and social determinants of health. We aim to:
 - Better understand the prevalence and consequences of co-occurring addictions and mental illness
 - Improve the treatment of dually-diagnosed Veterans by developing innovative new treatments, especially behavioral treatments
 - Devise more effective ways to deliver established treatments (implementation science)
 - Create more effective programs by training VA health care professionals in therapies with proven efficacy.

For more information: <https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn1/>



In addition to the faculty at MIRECC, fellows may interact with faculty at other Centers including NC-PTSD Clinical Neurosciences Division, the HSR&D Pain, Research, Informatics, and Multi-Morbidities Education (PRIME) Center, the Northeast Program Evaluation Center, and the NC-PTSD Evaluation Division.

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Setting: NC-PTSD Clinical Neurosciences Division

- The National Center for PTSD Clinical Neurosciences Division focuses on research to establish novel treatments and uncover biomarkers of disease mechanisms related to traumatic stress, as well as paradigms of risk and resilience.
- By leveraging an interdisciplinary approach that includes laboratories specializing in genetics, neuroimaging, treatment interventions, and epidemiological studies, the Clinical Neurosciences Division maximizes efforts to translate discoveries into therapeutic targets for PTSD and associated comorbid conditions.
- For more information:
<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/about/divisions/neurosciences/index.asp>



In addition to the faculty at NC-PTSD Clinical Neurosciences Division, fellows may interact with faculty at other Centers including the MIRECC, the HSR&D Pain, Research, Informatics, and Multi-Morbidities Education (PRIME) Center, the Northeast Program Evaluation Center, and the NC-PTSD Evaluation Division.

Diversity at VACHS

- VACHS serves Veterans from all backgrounds and all walks of life
- VACHS serves a growing proportion of women veterans, and has an active Women’s Clinic, Women Veterans Program Manager, and LGBT Veterans Coordinator
- VA Connecticut has been identified as a leader in LGBTQ Health Equality in the Health Equality Index, a designation by the Human Rights Campaign, since 2014.
- Psychology Colloquia at VACHS, and Grand Rounds and other discussions at Yale School of Medicine, have included topics such as unconscious bias, understanding the health needs of sexual and gender minority individuals, dealing with patients who voice racist views, and translating minority stress research into LGB-affirmative interventions.



Diversity in Fellowship

- We actively welcome applications from applicants from historically underrepresented backgrounds. We work to attract a diverse cohort of Fellows each year
- Fellowship abides by federal equal opportunity employment laws and policies. As stated by VA Secretary 03/15/2021, “VA does not tolerate unlawful discrimination, workplace harassment or retaliation based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex (including gender identity, transgender status, sexual orientation and pregnancy), age (40 or older), disability, genetic information, marital status, parental status, political affiliation or retaliation for opposing discriminatory practices or participating in the discrimination-complaint process. This applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including recruitment, hiring, promotions, transfers, reassignments, training, career development, benefits and separation.”
- We are proud to have worked with Fellows at different life stages, including Fellows starting families or with young children. A lactation room is available for Fellows.
- At the academic affiliate, 24% of new residents at Yale-New Haven Hospital and Yale School of Medicine in 2021 were from backgrounds underrepresented in medicine

Diversity Training

- An on-site social issues and advocacy seminar with VACHS psychology faculty focuses on supporting Veterans from all backgrounds in VHA care
- Fellows are required to consider how diversity issues may affect their research as well as their clinical work
- Fellows are invited to monthly Psychology Diversity Committee, with subcommittees on supervision, mentoring, identity language, and trainee/staff recruitment and retention
- Fellows are invited to VACHS Anti-Racism Coalition and other initiatives at VACHS
- Yale University hosts several affinity groups supporting education, advocacy, community building, and more. These groups are typically open to Fellows
<https://your.yale.edu/community/diversity-inclusion/affinity-groups>

Living in the New Haven Area

- Vibrant University city with eight universities and colleges in the region
- US Census Data, 2021 reports 135,081 residents:
 - 43.6% White
 - 33.6% Black
 - 0.4% American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 5.2% Asian
 - 0.0% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
 - 5.7% two or more races
 - 30.8% Hispanic or Latino
 - 17.4% born in nation other than the United States
- Several neighborhoods feature walking access to public art, restaurants, theaters, parks, farmers' markets, yoga studios, and more: see <http://visitnewhaven.com/> and www.downtownnewhaven.com
- Family friendly options include city and state parks, a “rail trail”, local beaches, orchards, and more
- *Pizza Today* magazine lists a New Haven brick-oven pizzeria as the 2023 pizzeria of the year
- Travel time to New York: 90min; Boston: 2h; local airport: 20min

Local Information

NEW HAVEN AREA

New Haven Tourism (www.infonewhaven.com) - (203) 773-9494

30 Things to Know about New Haven (www.movoto.com/new-haven-ct/move-to-new-haven)

Yale University (www.yale.edu)

Newspaper – New Haven Register (www.nhregister.com)

Airports – Tweed New Haven Airport (www.flytweed.com)
Hartford Bradley Airport (www.bradleyairport.com)

Events and Community (www.dailynutmeg.com)

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT CONNECTICUT

The State of Connecticut Tourism Website (www.ctvisit.com)

Connecticut Magazine (www.connecticutmag.com)

Train - Metro North (www.mta.info/mnr)
Amtrak (www.amtrak.com)

Connecticut Schools (www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/connecticut)

Former Fellows

The Advanced Fellowship continues to launch careers for the next generation of SUD/dual diagnosis and PTSD clinical research experts. Former fellows have been successful in research, clinical, and academic settings, including:

Academic Institutions and Centers:

Yale School of Medicine

Harvard School of Medicine

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Emory University School of Medicine

Baylor University School of Medicine

Healthcare Systems:

Department of Veterans Affairs:

VA Connecticut

VISN 1 MIRECC

Pain Research, Informatics, Multi-Morbidities, & Education Center

Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center

Northeast Program Evaluation Center

National Center for PTSD

James A. Haley VA Medical Center (Tampa)

Oakland Vet Center

Other healthcare systems and organizations:

New York University Langone Health

Veterans Yoga Project

Emmes Clinical Research Organization

Private practice

Application and Selection Procedures

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

Applicants must meet the following minimum requirements:

- Successful completion of all requirements towards earning a doctoral degree from an APA- or CPA-Accredited Clinical, Counseling, or Combined Psychology training program, or from a PCSAS-accredited Clinical Science program (including dissertation defense).
- Successful completion of an APA- or CPA-Accredited Psychology Predoctoral Internship Program or have completed a VA-sponsored internship program.
- U.S. Citizenship.
- Successfully meet mandatory requirements for appointment as a Federal Employee, including, but not limited to:
 - Willingness to participate in the government's drug testing procedures. All marijuana (**even with a prescription**) is currently a prohibited substance for employment and grounds for termination. Please be aware that many products with cannabis/hemp may contain trace amounts of THC.
 - Consent to participate in a background check to verify your application information and/or criminal history. Applicants who do not successfully pass this background check and/or drug test are ineligible for our program.
 - Proof of COVID-19 vaccination.
 - Must meet physical and health requirements, including a physical examination, which will be verified via documentation from a healthcare professional.
- We are an equal opportunity training program, and we welcome and strongly encourage applications from all qualified candidates, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, parental status, military status, or other minority status.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

Applications are due **November 27, 2023 via email.**

Invited interviews will follow for top candidates and continue until available slots have been filled.

To apply, please submit the following via email to the Fellowship Director for your selected track:

SUD/Dual Diagnosis: Suzanne Decker, PhD
suzanne.decker@va.gov

PTSD: Ilan Harpaz-Rotem, PhD
ilan.Harpaz-rotem@va.gov

Document	Required Document Title
CV	Lastname_CV
A statement of interest that addresses the following: 1) Fellowship track (SUD/Dual diagnosis or PTSD) 2) Your research area(s) of interest within your track area 3) Research goals you hope to achieve on fellowship 4) Specific VA MIRECC or NC-PTSD faculty of interest as potential primary research mentor 5) Specific faculty of interest as potential collaborating faculty 6) Clinical goals for fellowship	Lastname_Cover letter
Three letters of recommendation from supervisors familiar with your work. Include at least one letter from a research mentor and at least one letter from a clinical supervisor	Lastname_LOR_research_Letter writer's name or Lastname_LOR_clinical_Letter writer's name
Graduate school transcripts (unofficial transcripts are acceptable for application but official ones will be required if applicant is selected)	Lastname_transcript

Interview Process:

- Interview travel can place a financial and personal burden on applicants
- We have selected a virtual interview process
- Applicants who interview will be invited to meet with the Fellowship Director, core faculty, and prospective research mentor(s)
- Applicants who interview will also be invited to meet with current fellows to hear more about fellowship experience in a nonevaluative setting
- Videoconference / telephone interviews for this fellowship will occur in December or early-mid January
- Individualized fellowship start dates are set between July 1 and September 1 for a two-year period of fellowship training

Policy Statement

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.

Stipend

- A stipend is provided both for the first year and second year of the program with a stipend increase in the second year. These stipends are reviewed biannually and are adjusted according to rates paid by comparable non-VA postdoctoral fellowship programs. For the 2024-26 training years, the stipend for is \$60,446 for year one with a stipend increase to \$63,363 in year two.
- Special note for individuals who are completing a VA predoctoral internship: converting from an intern salary to a postdoc salary within a pay period is not permitted. Therefore, individuals who wish to go from a VA internship to a VA postdoc without a break in service (e.g., internship until 6/30, fellowship starting 7/1) must continue on at the intern salary for the duration of the last internship pay period. This would reduce the advertised postdoctoral fellowship salary accordingly for one pay period. The alternative would be to terminate internship at the appointed date, then begin VA postdoctoral fellowship at the start of a new pay period to receive the entire fellowship training year at the full advertised salary.

Requirements for VA Appointment

- **The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) adheres to all Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action policies. As a Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Health Professions Trainee (HPT), you will receive a Federal appointment, and the following requirements will apply prior to that appointment**
- **U.S. Citizenship.** HPTs who receive a direct stipend (pay) must be U.S. citizens. Trainees who are not VA paid (without compensation-WOC) who are not U.S. citizens may be appointed and must provide current immigrant, non-immigrant or exchange visitor documents.
- **U.S. Social Security Number.** All VA appointees must have a U.S. social security number (SSN) prior to beginning the pre-employment, on-boarding process at the VA.
- **Selective Service Registration.** Male applicants born after 12/31/1959 must have registered for the Selective Service by age 26 to be eligible for U.S. government employment, including selection as a paid or WOC VA trainee. For additional information about the Selective Service System, and to register or to check your registration status visit <https://www.sss.gov/>. Anyone who was required to register but did not register before the age of 26 will need to apply for a Status Information Letter (SIL) and request a waiver. Waivers are rare and requests will be reviewed on a case by case basis by the VA Office of Human Resources Management. This process can take up to six months for a verdict.
- **Fingerprint Screening and Background Investigation.** All HPTs will be fingerprinted and undergo screenings and background investigations. Additional details about the required background checks can be found at the following website: <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/10450.html>.
- **Drug Testing.** Per Executive Order 12564, the VA strives to be a Drug-Free Workplace. HPTs are not drug-tested prior to appointment, however are subject to random drug testing throughout the entire VA appointment period. You will be asked to sign an acknowledgement form stating you are aware of this practice. See item 8 below.
- **Affiliation Agreement.** To ensure shared responsibility between an academic program and the VA there must be a current and fully executed Academic Affiliation Agreement on file with the VHA Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA). The affiliation agreement delineates the duties of VA and the affiliated institution. Most APA-accredited doctoral programs have an agreement on file. More information about this document can be found at <https://www.va.gov/oaa/agreements.asp> (see section on psychology internships). Post-degree programs typically will not have an affiliation agreement, as the HPT is no longer enrolled in an academic program and the program is VA sponsored.

- **TQCVL.** To streamline on-boarding of HPTs, VHA Office of Academic Affiliations requires completion of a Trainee Qualifications and Credentials Verification Letter (TQCVL). An Educational Official at the Affiliate must complete and sign this letter. For post-graduate programs where an affiliate is not the program sponsor, this process must be completed by the VA Training Director. Your VA appointment cannot happen until the TQCVL is submitted and signed by senior leadership from the VA facility. For more information about this document, please visit <https://www.va.gov/OAA/TQCVL.asp>
 - **Health Requirements.** Among other things, the TQCVL confirms that you, the trainee, are fit to perform the essential functions (physical and mental) of the training program and immunized following current Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines and VHA policy. This protects you, other employees and patients while working in a healthcare facility. Required are annual tuberculosis screening, Hepatitis B vaccine as well as annual influenza vaccine. *Declinations are EXTREMELY rare.* If you decline the flu vaccine you will be required to wear a mask while in patient care areas of the VA.
 - **Primary source verification of all prior education and training** is certified via the TQCVL. Training and Program Directors will be contacting the appropriate institutions to ensure you have the appropriate qualifications and credentials as required by the admission criteria of the training program in which you are enrolled.
- **Additional On-boarding Forms.** Additional pre-employment forms include the Application for Health Professions Trainees (VA 10-2850D) and the Declaration for Federal Employment (OF 306). These documents and others are available online for review at <https://www.va.gov/oaa/app-forms.asp>. Falsifying any answer on these required Federal documents will result in the inability to appoint or immediate dismissal from the training program.
- **Proof of Identity per VA.** VA on-boarding requires presentation of two source documents (IDs). Documents must be unexpired and names on both documents must match. For more information visit: https://www.oit.va.gov/programs/piv/_media/docs/IDMatrix.pdf

- **Additional information: Specific suitability information from Title 5 (referenced in VHA Handbook 5005 – hyperlink included):**
- **(b) *Specific factors.*** In determining whether a person is suitable for Federal employment, only the following factors will be considered a basis for finding a person unsuitable and taking a suitability action:
 - (1) Misconduct or negligence in employment;
 - (2) Criminal or dishonest conduct;
 - (3) Material, intentional false statement, or deception or fraud in examination or appointment;
 - (4) Refusal to furnish testimony as required by § 5.4 of this chapter;
 - (5) Alcohol abuse, without evidence of substantial rehabilitation, of a nature and duration that suggests that the applicant or appointee would be prevented from performing the duties of the position in question, or would constitute a direct threat to the property or safety of the applicant or appointee or others;
 - (6) Illegal use of narcotics, drugs, or other controlled substances without evidence of substantial rehabilitation;
 - (7) Knowing and willful engagement in acts or activities designed to overthrow the U.S. Government by force; and
 - (8) Any statutory or regulatory bar which prevents the lawful employment of the person involved in the position in question.
- **(c) *Additional considerations.*** OPM and agencies must consider any of the following additional considerations to the extent OPM or the relevant agency, in its sole discretion, deems any of them pertinent to the individual case:
 - (1) The nature of the position for which the person is applying or in which the person is employed;
 - (2) The nature and seriousness of the conduct;
 - (3) The circumstances surrounding the conduct;
 - (4) The recency of the conduct;
 - (5) The age of the person involved at the time of the conduct;
 - (6) Contributing societal conditions; and
 - (7) The absence or presence of rehabilitation or efforts toward rehabilitation.
- For further information, please visit the Department of Veterans Affairs Psychology Training Website at:

<https://www.psychologytraining.va.gov/eligibility.asp>

Postdoctoral Residency Admissions, Support, and Initial Placement Data

Date Program Tables are updated: 08/24/2023
Postdoctoral Program Admissions

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 resident selection and practicum and academic preparation requirements:

Individuals with a strong interest in one of the two emphasis areas (substance use disorder/ dual diagnosis or PTSD) and research interests that align with one or more faculty mentors are likely to be strong candidates for this fellowship. Individuals should demonstrate a history of scientific publication and presentation, have strong letters of recommendation from research and clinical mentors, and have training goals that are in line with Fellowship goals. Individuals must have graduated from an APA-accredited clinical or counseling psychology program and have completed an APA-accredited internship in clinical or counseling psychology. Further, individuals must be eligible for federal appointment as a Veterans Health Administration Health Professions Trainee (below).

Describe any other required minimum criteria used to screen applicants:

- U.S. citizenship.
- A male applicant 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. Exceptions can be granted only by the US Office of Personnel Management; exceptions are very rarely granted.
- Fellows are subject to fingerprinting and background checks. Selection decisions are contingent on passing these screens.
- Have received a doctorate from an APA or CPA accredited graduate program in Clinical, Counseling, or Combined Psychology or PCSAS accredited Clinical Science program. 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.
- Have completed an internship program accredited by APA or CPA or have completed a VA-sponsored internship.
- [See Requirements for VA Appointment](#) section of this brochure for additional details.

Data tables continue on the next page...

Financial and Other Benefit Support for Upcoming Training Year*

Annual Stipend/Salary for Full-time Residents	\$60,446 Year 1 ; \$63,363 Year 2
Annual Stipend/Salary for Half-time Residents	N/A
Program provides access to medical insurance for Resident?	<u>Yes</u> No
If access to medical insurance is provided:	
Trainee contribution to cost required?.....	<u>Yes</u> No
Coverage of family member(s) available?.....	<u>Yes</u> No
Coverage of legally married partner available?.....	<u>Yes</u> No
Coverage of domestic partner available?.....	Yes <u>No</u>
Hours of Annual Paid Personal Time Off (PTO and/or Vacation)	Residents accrue 4 hours of Annual Leave for each full two week pay period, for a total of between 96 and 104 hours of leave.
Hours of Annual Paid Sick Leave	Residents accrue 4 hours of Sick Leave for each full two week pay period, for a total of between 96 and 104 hours of leave.
In the event of medical conditions and/or family needs that require extended leave, does the program allow reasonable unpaid leave to residents in excess of personal time off and sick leave?	<u>Yes</u> No
<p>Other Benefits (please describe): In addition to the above leave, Fellows receive the 11 annual federal holidays. Authorized absence (traveling off site for professional activities) may be available for eligible events like academic conferences. Liability protection for trainees: When providing professional services at a VA healthcare facility, VA sponsored trainees acting within the scope of their educational programs are protected from personal liability under the Federal Employees Liability Reform and Tort Compensation Act 28, U.S.C.2679 (b)-(d). Fellows are eligible for life insurance.</p>	

Data tables continue on the next page...

Initial Post-Residency Positions

	2019-2021 start	
Total # of residents who were in 3 cohorts	6	
Total # of residents who remain in training in the residency program	1 (third year extension requested by resident)	
	PD	EP
Community mental health center	0	0
Federally qualified health center	0	0
Independent primary care facility/clinic	0	0
University counseling center	0	1
Veterans Affairs medical center	1	3
Military health center	0	0
Academic health center	0	1
Other medical center or hospital	0	0
Psychiatric hospital	0	0
Academic university/department	0	0
Community college or other teaching setting	0	0
Independent research institution	0	0
Correctional facility	0	0
School district/system	0	0
Independent practice setting	0	0
Not currently employed	0	0
Changed to another field	0	0
Other: Consultant to DoD Integrated Primary Care centers	0	0
Unknown	0	0

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

Note: This table lists primary employment position. All listed VA employees have a concurrent appointment at our academic affiliate, Yale School of Medicine.