

Psychology Internship Program Brochure

Alaska VA Healthcare System

2023-2024



Application Deadline: November 22, 2022

Internship Start Date: July 17, 2023

APPIC Program Number: 2067

NMS Match Number: 206711

Dear Applicant,

The Psychology Internship Training Committee at the Alaska VA Healthcare System greatly appreciates your interest in our APA accredited doctoral-level Psychology Internship Program. We recognize goodness of fit is a key factor in selection of an internship site. We hope this brochure provides a picture of the opportunities our site provides that can aid in your decision.

Our training faculty, consisting of psychologists with a variety of training backgrounds and clinical expertise, upholds a strong commitment to promoting a well-rounded generalist training experience that provides an opportunity for interns to tailor their training towards their individualized professional goals. Our program follows a scholar-practitioner model that places emphasis on the practical application of scientific knowledge and the reflective process between science and practice. Our interns complete two primary year-long rotations that provide a versatile training experience, along with the option for adjunctive experiences that provide an opportunity to hone more specialized skills. The Alaska VA values the contribution interns make during their training year, and a significant portion of psychologists on staff are former interns who chose to remain at or return to the Alaska VA after graduation.

In addition to the benefits of our training program, living in the Anchorage and Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) area offers the comfort of a metropolis, with the best of outdoor living. Situated at the base of the beautiful Chugach Mountains and bordering the 495,000-acre Chugach State Park, Anchorage residents can partake in a plethora of recreational activities, from downhill skiing at the Alyeska Resort, to salmon fishing near downtown Anchorage in Ship Creek, to hiking on the popular Flattop Mountain. Alaska also has vast entertainment and cultural opportunities, including museums and a performing arts center. We truly love working and living here.

While we are hopeful that the worst of the pandemic is over, we continue to value flexibility and prioritize safety during these ever-changing times. In March 2020, we quickly and proactively ensured the continued training needs of our interns were addressed as precautions were put in place by the facility. Rotations were modified, and the training faculty worked with interns on effectively shifting most clinical care to telehealth. Interns were given the opportunity to telework from home. It is anticipated that future intern cohorts will continue to use telehealth and technology-based resources, and we believe we are an excellent site for quality telehealth and in-person training. We can assure you that our commitment to ensuring exceptional training will remain at the forefront of our program no matter what hurdles the world throws our way.

Please let us know if you have any questions as you consider your internship possibilities. Please make sure you are practicing good self-care during the stress of selection season. Best wishes as you begin this exciting journey!

Sincerely,

Micol Levi-Minzi

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THE ALASKA VA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM



The Veteran's Health Administration (VHA) is the nation's largest integrated healthcare system, providing care to more than 9 million Veterans and employing more than 300,000 full-time healthcare professionals and support staff. The VHA is organized into 21 regional districts, known as Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs). The Alaska VA Healthcare System is part of VISN 20 (Northwest Network), which includes the states of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, most of the state of Idaho, and one county in each Montana and California. This VISN covers 23% of the land mass of the United States and provides care to 1.1 million Veterans who live in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. It also has the highest total Veterans served of any VISN.

The Alaska VA Healthcare System provides care to Alaska's diverse Veteran populations. The Alaska VA offers primary, specialty, and mental health outpatient care through its main outpatient clinic, which was newly built in 2011 and offers a beautiful view of the Chugach Mountains from the main lobby. Services are provided through a Joint Venture with the United States Air Force on nearby Elmendorf Air Force Base, as well as through purchased care arrangements with the community hospitals. The facility also features a comprehensive Homeless Veteran Service, which consists of a 50-bed Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program, 22-bed Compensated Work Therapy and Transitional Residence Program, HUD/VA Supported Housing, Homeless Veterans Supported Employment Programs, Homeless Veterans Outreach, and Veterans Justice Outreach. In addition to our main facility in Anchorage, the Alaska VA Healthcare System includes Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) in Fairbanks, Kenai, Homer, and the Mat-Su Valley, and one VA Outreach Clinic in the state capital of Juneau. Since only 20 percent of Alaska is accessible by road, the Alaska VA Healthcare System's flexible and adaptive approaches to reaching rural and underserved Veterans are critical and continually developing.

THE TRAINING PROGRAM

PSYCHOLOGY SETTING

Psychologists play a valued role in the treatment of Veterans at the Alaska VA. Psychology staff frequently hold leadership and administrative positions that assist with the overall improvement of healthcare provided at the facility. Alaska VA psychologists provide a broad array of clinical services in various locations throughout Alaska.

Clinical services provided include, but are not limited to, outpatient mental health, health psychology, primary care mental health integration, psychological assessment, and psychosocial rehabilitation. The doctoral internship program has been a respected component of the psychology department since its inception. Many of our interns have stayed at the Alaska VA following completion of their internship, joining the department as permanent staff members.



Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge the Alaska Native nations upon whose ancestral lands we reside. Our facilities sit on the traditional homeland of the Eklutna Dena'ina. We are committed to recognizing and honoring the land, culture, and language of the Dena'ina people.

ACCREDITATION STATUS

The doctoral internship program in psychology at the Alaska VA is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the American Psychological Association (APA). The next site visit will be during the academic year 2028.

Questions related to the program's accreditation 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 / Email: apaaccred@apa.org
 Web: www.apa.org/ed/accreditation

DIVERSITY

The Alaska VA Psychology Internship Program gladly embraces the emphasis on individual and cultural diversity that contemporary psychology training requires. Interns are exposed to numerous didactic topics that cover a range of diversity issues, participate in a monthly Cultural

Diversity Roundtable Discussion, attend diversity training through a collaboration with the Alaska Psychology Internship Consortium, and are allotted time to visit the Anchorage Museum and Alaska Native Heritage Center during scheduled group cultural outings to learn more about Alaska's indigenous history, arts, and cultures. Supervisions may also include discussions of how life experiences, power, privilege, assumptions, and biases may impact clinical work.

The internship program aims to incorporate individual and cultural diversity within all aspects of assessment, treatment planning, and intervention. We support practices that enhance cultural awareness, sensitivity, and competency, as well as the integration of intersecting identities in clinical practice. We seek to cultivate an environment that supports open dialogue and self-reflection, as this further enhances multicultural competence and the ability to deliver psychological services to diverse populations in a variety of settings. To this end, we aim to provide an open and welcoming experience, recognize and celebrate the identities of our psychology trainees and staff, and take an authentic stance of inclusion with regards to representation of diverse groups in our trainees and staff.

Our dedication to the value of embracing diversity is enhanced by the diversity of Anchorage and Alaska itself. Anchorage contains some of the most diverse census tracts in the country. The Anchorage School District serves students who speak nearly 100 different languages and has become one of the most diverse school districts in the country. One of the most surprising aspects about Anchorage to newcomers is the extent to which the diversity of cultures and cultural influences exist in this community, and as an internship program we strive to incorporate this into our training structure and to offer training opportunities that are unique to our location. Articles such as those listed below highlight the diversity of living in this region.

Alaska is geographically vast and for thousands of years has been home to many cultural groups. Alaska Native cultural groups may be defined by spoken language or geographical region, and within each group there may be different tribes. Several Alaska Native cultures include Ancient Beringian, Alaskan Athabaskans, Ahtna, Deg Hit'an, Dena'ina, Eskimo, Eyak, Gwich'in, Haida, Hän, Holikachuk, Koyukon, Lower Tanana, Tanacross, Upper Tanana, Upper Kuskokwim (Kolchan), Tlingit, Tsimshian, Iñupiat (an Inuit group), Yupik, Siberian Yupik, Yup'ik, Cup'ik, Nunivak, Cup'ig, Sugpiaq - Alutiiq, Chugach Sugpiaq, Koniag Alutiiq, and Aleut (Unangan).



Map created by the Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage, Alaska

<https://www.alaskanative.net/cultural-knowledge/>

Online: <https://www.uaf.edu/anla/collections/map/>

[Most Diverse Place in America? It's Not Where You Think](#)

[Newcomers Center](#)

COVID-19 RESPONSE

As information began to unfold related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Alaska VA Psychology Internship Program quickly responded to ensure the safety of both the interns and the Veterans they serve. Since March 2020, the training faculty have worked to make adjustments to our training program as appropriate and in response to the ongoing pandemic, aligned with the direction of leadership at the facility. Training faculty continue to stay up to date with guidance from governing bodies. Interns are provided training in telehealth services at the outset of the training year, working with our technology experts, tele-mental health experts in the VISN, and on-site supervisors.

Many rotational training experiences have shifted to include telehealth modalities. Outpatient assessment and individual therapy may be conducted via videoconference using VA Video Connect (VVC), and outpatient groups are primarily offered via VVC at this time. Within the Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (MH RRTP), many services have also shifted to telephone or videoconference. Some group psychotherapy services may be provided in-person when utilizing physical distancing precautions (sitting at least six feet apart) within a sufficiently large space and with personal protective equipment.

Under leadership's direction to decrease physical presence on-site and practice increased physical distancing, many of our supervisors moved to telework off-site several days per week. In alignment with guidelines from the training governing bodies, telesupervision is being utilized for part of supervision. Our supervisors have consulted with outside experts in the VISN who had previously provided telesupervision to ensure best practice. As the importance of telesupervision was being highlighted, the Alaska VA internship program chose to begin participating in a pilot project in 2021, "A Multisite Evaluation of Clinical Supervision Delivered via the Clinical Video Telehealth Modality", to help explore the utility of competency-based supervision when delivered in person and via telesupervision. It is likely that participation in this pilot project will continue into the 2023-2024 training year.

Interns will receive telehealth training at the start of the year to ensure readiness if further increased telehealth is needed, as well as address the reality the pandemic highlighted regarding the need for competent and comprehensive mental health telehealth providers. As updates are constantly occurring related to the pandemic, we believe on-going communication is important. We also encourage interns to be mindful of the heterogeneity of how state licensing boards may view telesupervision, consider the rules/regulations for the jurisdiction(s) in which they want to

become licensed, and convey any concerns to the training director. If you have any questions regarding updates at our site, please do not hesitate to contact the training director.

TRAINING COMMITTEE

The Psychology Internship Training Committee oversees the running of the program to ensure its continued quality and adherence to APA accreditation standards. The Training Committee consists of a training director, deputy training director, the chief of psychology, and supervising psychologists. The committee meets regularly to review programmatic concerns and intern development. An intern representative is invited into the monthly training program meeting to provide input on the training program. Each intern has an opportunity to participate in this role. Interns participating within the Training Committee meeting will not be privy to a discussion of other interns' performances or evaluations. As part of meeting participation, interns are encouraged to discuss concerns regarding training and ideas for program development.

MISSION STATEMENT

Psychologists honor and serve America's Veterans through a commitment to shared healing and evidence-based practices. We recognize each individual's strengths, needs, abilities, and preferences, as we collaborate to optimize well-being and recovery. The Alaska VA Psychology Internship Program supports psychology trainees in the lifelong development of their individual identities as psychologists, while ensuring they possess the necessary skills and competencies to advance towards independence.

AIMS OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM

Our internship program adheres to a scholar-practitioner model that focuses on training future psychologists in the scientific practice of psychology. We work to train interns to be practitioners and consumers of research. While we emphasize science and empirically validated treatments, we recognize the importance of tailoring treatment to account for individual and cultural differences. The Alaska VA Psychology Internship Program is generalist in nature, ensuring interns obtain a wide range of training experiences that prepare them for working in a variety of culturally diverse urban, rural, and frontier health environments. Our program works to prepare interns to transition successfully, upon graduation, to advanced postdoctoral training programs or to secure entry level employment in psychology at the GS-11 or equivalent level.

EXPECTED COMPETENCIES

In accordance with the training program's primary aims, the program measures intern progress over the course of the year against the Profession-Wide Competencies identified by the American Psychological Association's *Standard of Accreditation in Health Service Psychology*. A professional developmental model is used to assist interns in obtaining competency over the course of the year. Competencies are developed through clinical practice, didactic training, mentorship, and other training opportunities.

Assessment: Interns demonstrate knowledge of DSM-5 diagnoses and provide well formulated and coherent conceptualizations of assessment issues. They become skillful in assessing clients who present with multiple complications and appropriately assess clients' strengths and psychopathologies with sensitivity to cultural and individual differences.

Examples:

- Interns construct, administer, score, and interpret test batteries for the assessment of a variety of clinical presentations.
- Interns engage in measurement-based care and risk evaluation initiatives (e.g., PHQ-9, C-SSRS, comprehensive suicide risk evaluation).
- Interns can observe and conduct specialized evaluations such as pre-surgical psychological assessment for candidates for spinal cord stimulators, bariatric surgery, and/or solid organ transplant.
- Interns can gain experience conducting screening evaluations for a Veteran's eligibility for a national pilot program where Veterans with PTSD assist in training service dogs.
- Interns can also gain experience observing and conducting Psychological Evaluations for Gender Affirming Surgeries.

Intervention: Interns demonstrate knowledge and skill in implementing intervention, including flexibility, individualizing care, tracking progress, and responding to crises. Interns effectively implement evidence-based intervention in a variety of settings. They successfully establish and maintain effective therapeutic relationships with their clients. They develop the ability to function as a post-doctoral level psychotherapist.

Examples:

- Interns implement and verbalize familiarity with a variety of cognitive behavioral therapy approaches (e.g., CBT for insomnia, chronic pain, substance use, posttraumatic stress disorder).
- Interns gain familiarity with VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guidelines for the management of obesity, as well as the guidelines for treating tobacco use and dependence.
- Interns engage in co-facilitation of group therapies (e.g., mindfulness-based stress reduction, CogSMART, STAIR).

Ethical and Legal Standards: Interns have an advanced awareness of and adherence with the APA Ethical Code of Conduct, state laws, and policies governing health service psychology. They recognize ethical dilemmas as they arise and apply ethical decision-making processes to resolve dilemmas.

Examples:

- Interns address informed consent with clients, document informed consent in client records, and obtain signed consent for recording sessions.
- Interns manage ethical dilemmas that evolve in the therapeutic relationship and within a healthcare setting (e.g., working on interdisciplinary teams and/or committees).
- Interns manage complex clinical situations, with increasing degrees of independence.

Professional Values, Attitudes, and Behaviors: Interns interact in a professional and respectful manner in all interactions. They discuss differences in opinions or theory thoughtfully. Interns' professional identity evolves and matures over the course of the year, building integrity, responsibility, and sound judgment through collaboratively established goals, supervision, supervised practice. They self-reflect and identify growth areas.

Examples:

- Interns respond professionally within clinical situations, demonstrate self-reflection, engage in activities to maintain and improve performance, remain open and responsive to feedback, and behave in ways that reflect the values and attitudes of psychology.
- Interns document clinical encounters in a timely manner.
- Interns collaborate/consult with a client's treatment team when necessary for the welfare of the client.
- Interns verbalize awareness of rewards and challenges inherent in providing trauma-informed care.

Research: Interns learn how to apply current literature, research, and theory to their assessment and intervention activities. They demonstrate independent ability to critically evaluate and disseminate research at a local, regional, or national level.

Examples:

- Interns are provided with and seek relevant literature to guide treatment planning and critically evaluate clinical care.
- Interns receive exposure to a wide range of evidence-based psychotherapy and VA Clinical Practice Guidelines
- Interns work with a licensed psychologist with research expertise to formally present on clinical literature at the local level.

Consultation and Interdisciplinary Skills: Interns demonstrate knowledge and respect for the roles of various professions. They directly collaborate with those from other disciplines. They become comfortable in their role as professionals in mental health and are able to translate psychological principles across disciplines.

Examples:

- Interns provide services in multidisciplinary settings (e.g., nursing, peer support, pharmacy, police, psychiatry, social work).
- Interns regularly engage in staff and treatment team meetings, as well as integrate additional services into treatment planning.
- Interns frequently consult with professionals from other disciplines (e.g., nutrition, psychiatry, neuropsychology, occupational/vocational services).
- Interns can co-facilitate groups with staff from other disciplines.
- Interns assist with community-based referrals when indicated and in consultation with their supervisor.

Individual and Cultural Diversity: Interns demonstrate the ability to work effectively with a range of diverse peers, providers, staff, and Veterans. They critically address sensitive diversity

client issues including those related to culture, sex, gender, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability status, and ethnicity. They reflect on their own cultural background and how it impacts their professional relationships.

Examples:

- Interns participate in several Cultural Outing didactics throughout the training year in the Alaska community.
- Interns engage in diversity roundtable discussions throughout the training year.
- Interns incorporate cultural diversity into local recovery-based approaches (e.g., co-facilitation of Talking Circles group).
- Interns review and discuss in individual supervision the intersection of historical trauma and PTSD, as it pertains to LGBTQ+ Veterans and Alaska Native Veterans.

Supervision: Interns demonstrate knowledge of supervision models and practices. They apply this knowledge in direct or simulated practice with other psychology interns or health professionals. Providing supervision directly to a trainee is not a requirement for this competence at this internship.

Examples:

- Interns will engage in simulated supervision roleplays.
- Interns utilize individual supervision constructively, engaging in weekly individual supervision per internship standards. For this training year, interns will receive at least three hours of weekly individual supervision.
- Interns engage in peer-based interaction/supervision.

Interpersonal and Communication Skills: Interns communicate in a manner that is organized, informative, well integrated, and effective. They demonstrate a thorough grasp of professional language and concepts. They demonstrate effective interpersonal skills through developing and maintaining successful relationships with a variety of individuals.

Examples:

- Interns frequently engage in multidisciplinary staff and treatment team meetings.
- Interns provide psychoeducation to clients in a collaborative manner.
- Interns communicate effectively with the computerized medical record in a timely fashion.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The internship's policy and procedure manual is reviewed and updated by the training committee each year. It outlines relevant administrative and training domains, providing clear guidance and structure to our interns. Included in the manual is a policy that ensures due process for all interns when needed. Formal grievance processes covered by this policy include ways to address concerns about aspects of the internship program, including intern performance evaluations by supervisors and decisions reached by the Internship Training Committee. This policy does not deny the intern's right to address concerns directly with the Chief of Staff, Equal Employment Opportunity, or the Human Resources Management Service.

LIABILITY

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). Many interns also elect to have their own liability insurance through their school's available policy.

THE TRAINING YEAR

THE TRAINING TERM

The dates for the 2023-2024 internship training year are July 17, 2023 to July 12, 2024. The internship is for one full year (2080 hours). Approximately 15-25 hours per week will involve provision of direct clinical care, with an expectation of accruing 500 hours of direct clinical service over the course of the training year. The remainder of weekly time is dedicated to at least three hours of weekly supervision, two hours of weekly didactic seminars, and additional time devoted to interdisciplinary team meetings or other program-specific activity, staff meetings, or administrative tasks.

As an introduction to a sense of work-life balance, we typically adhere to a Monday through Friday schedule, averaging 40 hours per week. There is no on-call duty, nor any scheduled work obligations outside of work hours or on weekends. We believe interns should have a training experience that closely parallels that of staff psychologists. Scheduling, workload, and time management skill development will be collaboratively addressed in supervision with graduated levels of responsibility anticipated throughout the training year. We want to enjoy where we live, and so should interns.

TRAINING LOCATIONS

Most training activities will take place at the main VA clinic at Muldoon (1201 North Muldoon Road), although additional internship activities may also occur at other locations, including the Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (MH RRTP) in midtown Anchorage (3001 C Street). The internship works to minimize travel between the two locations to better facilitate time spent in clinical training. Throughout the year, additional experiential community learning opportunities may take place at other locations such as the Alaska Native Heritage Center, Alaska CBOCs, or Alaska Vet Centers.

LEAVE/HOLIDAYS

Our leave policy is the same that applies to all VA psychology training programs. Interns receive 11 days of paid federal holiday, 13 vacation days, and up to 13 sick days. Limited dissertation release time is available upon approval of the Training Committee. Leave is accrued by each two-week pay period, with interns earning 4 hours of sick leave and 4 hours of annual leave each pay period. Interns are encouraged to utilize accrued annual leave throughout the training year in the spirit of developing professional boundaries, prioritizing

self-care, and acknowledging the benefits of work-life balance. Consistent with other psychology staff, annual leave requests should be made 45 days in advance. Except in an emergency, planned leave time must be first discussed with the supervisor, taking into account clinic and patient coverage issues, and subsequently, submitted electronically for approval. Please note that there are certain events throughout the training year that have mandatory attendance, e.g., case conferences, research presentations, etc. Per VA policy, leave may be used only after it is accrued.

STIPEND AND BENEFITS

Interns receive a stipend in 26 biweekly installments. Stipends are adjusted by locality to reflect the relative cost in different geographic areas. Currently, the annual stipend is \$38,279 and may be subject to change and annual increase.

As with other employment within the federal government, interns are eligible for health insurance. VA psychology trainees may qualify for the child care subsidy program if they are VA paid, full-time, and have full family income less than \$144,000 (see: <https://www.va.gov/ohrm/worklifebenefits/vachildcare.asp>); interested employees may contact the local VA Human Resources office or VA Child Care Subsidy Program Service staff for additional guidance. Due to the nature of their temporary appointments, health professions trainees may be ineligible for other benefits such as supplemental dental and vision benefits (separate from Federal Employees Health Benefit plans that may include limited dental and/or vision coverage), Federal Employees Retirement System, Thrift Savings Plan, paid parental and military leave. Please go to the [FEHB Plan Comparison Tool](#) for details on available options. Briefings regarding available benefits are also provided by VA staff at the outset of the training year.

FACILITY AND TRAINING RESOURCES

Each intern has office space with computers and phones. Digital recording equipment and/or software will be available to support clinical supervision and training activities. In addition to the support from the training faculty and clinical staff, interns have administrative and program support for training and consultation on electronic medical record management, telehealth, and other clinical applications. They also receive support with data management related to clinical workload, and program and facility performance improvement programs. Video-teleconferencing is available to support didactics, clinical case conferences, and other trainings. It is also utilized for telesupervision. The Alaska VA Healthcare System has made a considerable investment in telehealth technology which assists with effective provision of tele-mental health services. In an effort to increase the effectiveness and use of telesupervision the Alaska VA Healthcare System participates in a nationally approved quality improvement project: An Exploration of a Competency-Based Framework to Provide Clinical Supervision via the Video Telehealth Modality across Rural Psychology Training Programs.

The Alaska VA Healthcare System Medical Library offers access to all major psychology, medicine, and public health journals. Database searches of the card catalog, Medline, ERIC,

CINAHL, HEALTH, New England Journal of Medicine, PsychInfo (Psychological Abstracts), and many others are available on-site and remotely. There is an excellent electronic inter-library loan system for periodicals that is available through the library. The Alaska VA also has a dedicated librarian who is available to assist as needed, and additional resources (books, manuals) may be ordered with supervisor approval in congruence with training needs.

SUPERVISION

At the beginning of each rotation, a supervision contract is negotiated that defines goals, competencies, and expectations of the rotation. Formal supervision is provided for at least three hours per week. Informal supervision is provided throughout the internship leading to the reality that interns frequently receive more than three hours of supervision per week. Supervisors uphold a standard of being readily available to interns to address needs as they arise.

Telesupervision may be considered when deemed appropriate and authorized. In March 2020, many supervisors shifted to telework off-site to decrease physical presence on-site in congruence with leadership's response to the pandemic. Training governing bodies allowed for supervision to be provided virtually at that time in a way that was not previously authorized. Telesupervision is anticipated to be utilized on a regular basis due to COVID-19 considerations but may be decreasing to less than 50% of supervision provided.

EVALUATION

At the beginning of the internship year, interns complete a learning plan that is created collaboratively with training leadership and their supervisor(s). This written plan allows the intern to communicate their perception of their competencies and outline their training goals, which also helps to establish the beginning of the supervisory relationship.

Timely and specific feedback is essential to high quality supervision. Supervisors provide ongoing informal written and verbal feedback throughout the internship year. Interns are also formally evaluated at scheduled intervals throughout the year, receiving written evaluations and ratings. Evaluations focus on the program's expected competencies, accounting for the learning goals and activities identified by each intern in their individualized learning plan. Evaluations are also shared with the Internship Training Committee who provide input and monitor intern development over the course of the year.

At the mid and end points of the internship year, interns complete a separate rating form and provide feedback regarding their rotations, supervisors, and the internship program as a whole. This invaluable feedback is provided by interns directly to training leadership after final evaluations of the intern have been completed and discussed by the intern and rotation supervisor(s).

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Interns are given opportunities to aid in the development of the training program and the Alaska VA Healthcare System. These opportunities include, but are not limited to, service on the

Internship Training Committee for a portion of the year, participation in internship interviews, and development of orientation and training materials for future interns. Interns have also worked with supervisors to sit in on VA committees, such as the Medical Record Review Committee and the Disruptive Behavior Committee.

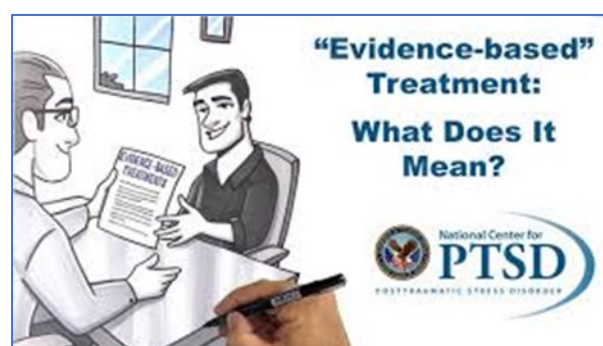
REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPLETION OF INTERNSHIP

Interns participate in the training program for one full year (2080 hours). It is expected that each intern attends all scheduled didactic presentations and actively engages in the training rotations for the full duration of the internship unless there is prior approval for absence. Interns are evaluated and rated on Profession-Wide Competencies as a part of rotational training experiences, as well as case and research presentations during the year. Evaluations utilize a defined rating scale to address each competency. For successful completion of the internship program, interns must achieve ratings that indicate an ability to enter the field as a postdoctoral fellow and/or early career psychologist.

TRAINING EXPERIENCES

The Alaska VA is a generalist internship site, aimed at training well-rounded and skilled clinicians with opportunities to gain specialty experience in various areas. The Alaska VA works from a recovery-oriented model that often uses evidence-based treatments (EBTs) and measurement-based care.

Aligned with this, the internship places emphasis on these throughout training experiences. Our program recognizes clinical work is informed by well-designed research. As part of a commitment to this model, training in EBTs is a strong focus on our program. Our training faculty has training in a variety of EBTs and may also be certified through the VA in specific EBTs. Interns receive both didactic training and in vivo experience providing these therapies as they move through their rotations.



ROTATIONS

Training takes place across two primary year-long rotations. Primary rotations are the same for all interns. An intern's schedule is also established collaboratively based on training needs, intern preference, and supervisor availability.

****Please note rotation experiences may be adapted due to the pandemic and when otherwise deemed necessary or appropriate. Due to the internship being a rural-based program, sometimes there is only one psychologist in each setting, and rotational offerings may change based on available staffing.**

Primary Rotations

Primary Care Mental Health Integration (PCMHI) / Health Psychology

Primary Rotation Supervisor: Dr. Kelley Russell

Rotation Supervisor: Dr. Jill Duke

Rotation Supervisor: Dr. Rebecca Pruitt

Description:

This rotation is comprised of two components that focus on: 1) primary care mental health integration under the supervision of Drs. Russell and Pruitt, and 2) health psychology under the supervision of Dr. Duke. Interns' schedules are anticipated to be split between both components, although consistent availability of both rotational training components may be dependent on supervisor availability.

The Alaska VA Primary Care Mental Health Integration (PCMHI) team provides mental health services for Veterans seen within a busy primary care setting. Interns will work closely with a large team of physicians, nurses, and ancillary providers (e.g., clinical pharmacists, social workers, dietitians) to provide timely and efficient assessment, consultation, and brief psychotherapy services to patients whose care is best served when delivered within the primary care setting. Interns will interact with Veterans presenting with a broad array of mental and behavioral health conditions. The PCMHI model provides for brief treatment for Veterans who experience mild to moderate symptoms associated with mood, anxiety, substance use, and life adjustment concerns, as well as some behavioral health concerns such as insomnia and chronic pain. Referrals to higher levels of care (outpatient, residential, hospitalization) occur as appropriate for Veteran care. Interns will conduct brief (20-30 minute) functional assessments with Veterans who are referred for evaluation by their primary care providers, ideally occurring on the same day as the Veteran's scheduled primary care visit (referred to as "warm hand-offs"). Interns will also manage a caseload of individual psychotherapy patients who fit the PCMHI model. Primary treatment approaches include CBT, ACT, and MI, as well as evidence-based interventions in relaxation training and problem solving. Interns can also get experience with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Chronic Pain, two of the VA's evidence-based treatment protocols. During visits with Veterans, interns administer measurement-based care screenings such as the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9). Currently, group opportunities include virtual Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Chronic Pain group. Interns will also attend the weekly PCMHI meeting, where PCMHI team members include psychologists, the team prescriber (clinical pharmacist or psychiatric nurse practitioner), and the Translating Initiatives for Depression into Effective Solutions (TIDES; depression care management) nurse meet to discuss cases and program level development. Opportunities to present about PCMHI within Primary Care or other VA meetings may be available.

Within the health psychology portion of this rotation, interns receive assessment and intervention experience with adult Veterans referred from primary care, specialty mental health, and the Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (MH RRTP). The rotation provides opportunities for individual assessment, as well as a variety of group therapies. Interns conduct and interpret pre-surgical psychological assessments (e.g., for candidates for bariatric surgery,

for patients with chronic pain being considered for invasive surgical techniques such as spinal cord stimulator procedures, and for solid organ transplant candidates). Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is the primary treatment modality. Interns also learn to incorporate motivational interviewing (MI) strategies and gain experience in utilizing motivational interviewing to provide a range of group interventions (tobacco cessation and MOVE! Weight Management). Interns frequently co-facilitate groups with other staff, including clinical pharmacists and dietitians.

Rotation Goals/Expectations: PCMHI training goals include increased familiarity with brief functional assessments, utilization of brief evidence-based interventions, increased skill at administering and interpreting measurement-based care tools, and skill building in consultation with other medical providers. Specific health psychology training goals include increased familiarity with behavioral medicine, incorporation of the biopsychosocial model of health and wellness into the practice of health promotion and disease prevention, and utilization of evidence-based practices such as cognitive behavioral therapy and motivational interviewing.

Outpatient Mental Health – Behavioral Health Integration Program Teams / Couple Therapy and Groups

Primary Rotation Supervisor: Dr. Ann Hutcheson
 Rotation Supervisor: Dr. Kun-Yueh (Jayson) Hsieh
 Rotation Supervisor: Dr. Roxanne Cockburn

Description:

This outpatient mental health rotation is comprised of two components that focus on: 1) Behavioral Health Integration Program (BHIP) Teams under the supervision of Dr. Hutcheson, and 2) couple therapy and group therapy under the supervision of Drs. Hsieh and Cockburn.

The outpatient mental health portion of the rotation under the supervision of Dr. Ann Hutcheson provides the intern a training opportunity in developing clinical competencies and experience in a broad array of clinical and administrative activities in an interdisciplinary outpatient mental health team known as a BHIP Team. The outpatient clinic serves Veterans with a wide range of psychiatric disorders, primarily PTSD, Major Depressive Disorder, and Anxiety Disorders. Additional mental health disorders referred to the outpatient mental health include Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective Disorder, and Comorbid Disorders such as PTSD and Alcohol Use Disorder. Given the complexities of living and traveling (i.e., planes, boats, snow machines) in Alaska, interns will have the opportunity to provide mental health services through tele-mental health. The intern will have experience training in EBPs for PTSD, including Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) and Prolonged Exposure (PE). Interventions for depression may include Interpersonal Therapy for Depression (IPT-D), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Depression (CBT-D), and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Depression (ACT-D). Group therapy experiences may include an orientation session for Veterans and their families to learn more about PTSD and treatment options; PTSD symptom management, which is a CBT-based group for skill development; and Problem-Solving Training, a brief group to help Veterans develop strategies for problem solving. In addition to traditional experiences of an outpatient mental health setting, the intern will have the opportunity to attend the Disruptive Behavioral

Committee meetings, learn about violence risk assessments, have experience writing violence risk assessments intended to be used by the VA, and provide the report to the committee.

The outpatient mental health portion of the rotation under the supervision of Dr. Kun-Yueh Hsieh and Dr. Roxanne Cockburn provides the intern a training opportunity to develop clinical competencies and experience in delivering EBP-based couple therapies to Veterans and their significant others. In addition to couple therapy, the intern will also have the opportunity to co-facilitate group therapy for couples (i.e., REACH group). Reaching out to Educate and Assist Caring, Healthy family (REACH) is a multifamily group psychoeducational program for Veterans living with PTSD and their families. Depending on training needs and interest, there is also the opportunity to administer psychological/cognitive evaluations, engage in local program development such as Whole Health and Mindfulness, assist with community outreach activities, and observe justice outreach activities. Interns will also have the opportunity to be involved with the Serious Mental Illness (SMI) re-engagement outreach project, including a brief assessment, triage process, and brief individual session.

Rotation Goals/Expectations: For the BHIP portion of the rotation, interns will have the opportunity to complete biopsychosocial evaluations, which include diagnostic interview; record review; subjective measures such as PHQ-9 and PCL-5; CAPS-5; and consultation. In this rotation interns will be able to learn and implement aspects of the shared decision-making model to help Veterans with treatment planning. Treatment planning using CPRS Mental Health Suite and measurement-based care will assist interns in developing skills for providing time-limited therapies. Interns will have exposure to multiple EBPs through didactics, literature, and case consultation, but will primarily be expected to implement at least two different EBPs on this rotation. For the couple and group therapy portion of the rotation, interns gain further understanding of completing biopsychosocial evaluations in an outpatient setting. Focus is also placed on learning and implementing aspects of the shared decision-making model to help Veterans with treatment planning. Intervention training goals include developing competencies in time-limited individual therapy, which includes gaining experience with at least two empirically-based treatments. Additional training goals include increased familiarity with residential care and ability to provide psychological services within a residential treatment setting, as well as utilization of empirically based practices in couple therapy and group psychotherapy.

Assessment

One of the unique elements of being a professional psychologist is the ability to conduct assessments. As this is a competency domain required by APA, interns will have several opportunities to complete a variety of assessment batteries throughout the training year. These evaluations should be based on a combination of three or more assessment instruments and/or methods that are widely accepted, empirically supported, and clinically informative. The selected assessment instruments must be approved by the supervisor. These evaluations must result in at least four integrated reports throughout the training year, which demonstrate the intern's ability to integrate complex assessment information into a coherent and concise narrative. These assessments may be supervised by a rotation supervisor or by another staff member with appropriate expertise relevant to the referral question. These assessments are to be performed to

enhance patient care and resulting reports are to be written and submitted to the supervisor for feedback and editing. A record of all integrated reports must be submitted to the Psychology Training Director no less than one month before the end of the internship, and that record will become a part of the intern's file as documentation of integrated report writing experiences during internship.

Alaska VA Healthcare is proud to offer a distinctive evaluation component through the Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers for Veterans Therapy Act (PAWS Pilot Program). The Alaska VA is honored to be one of five VA facilities chosen to enact the PAWS Pilot Program, which allows Veterans with PTSD the opportunity to participate in an eight-week training program at Paws For Purple Hearts Alaska. Veterans complete a screening evaluation with the PAWS/PTSD Psychologist and, if found eligible, these Veterans attend the eight training sessions as an adjunctive and complementary therapeutic opportunity. Interns can work with the PAWS/PTSD Psychologist to complete the screening evaluations for Veteran eligibility, communicate with program staff at the local and national and congressional levels, and assist with coordination of the training sessions with Paws For Purple Hearts.

Additional and Adjunctive Training Opportunities

Interns have the opportunity to elect to participate in additional training opportunities as they are available and based on current program development status and supervisor availability.

To further ensure that trainees are exposed to and given a chance to practice the foundational skills in providing supervision, multiple supervision-focused didactics are anticipated throughout the training year during their scheduled didactic time. Several topics being considered will mirror topics presented in the training staff's Supervisor Development meeting. These topics will also be emphasized and open for discussion in various weekly huddles, and supervisors are encouraged to foster discussions that facilitate a trainees' interest and confidence in their own pursuit of supervision in their careers. Finally, training opportunities for appropriate peer supervision and mock supervision/roleplays will be prioritized.

FORMAL PRESENTATIONS

Case Presentation

Case presentations demonstrate an intern's ability to integrate the multiple foundational competencies of being a psychologist. They provide the intern an opportunity to exhibit knowledge of assessment and intervention, along with use of consultation and supervision. They also demonstrate an intern's professionalism and ability to engage in self-reflection, utilize scientific knowledge, and highlight their awareness of diversity issues.

Interns are required to present one assessment/diagnostic case or one psychotherapy/counseling case to the Psychology Internship Training Committee and fellow interns (additional staff welcome by invitation as relevant) in order to demonstrate clinical competencies and promote professional development. As part of the case presentation, the intern should review and discuss research literature relevant to that case, as well as relevant individual difference and diversity

issues. Interns should also outline the assessment and/or treatment approaches used, based on the intern's case conceptualization. Interns present the case for 45 minutes, followed by up to 15 minutes of questions by the Training Committee and other attendees.

After delivering a case presentation and responding to questions, all interns will be temporarily dismissed while the Training Committee discusses the intern's performance and formulates feedback for the intern. If Training Committee staff are not unanimous in their ratings as it pertains to a decision of passing or failing the presentation, they will discuss until consensus is reached. The intern will then meet with the Training Committee for direct feedback about their areas of strength, their growth areas, and their scores on the evaluation form per domain as it applies to the profession-wide competencies. A total of 90 minutes will be blocked for the intern and staff members to allow time for the presentation, responding to questions, Training Committee discussion, and intern feedback.

A member of the psychology staff will provide mentorship and preparation support. This may occur in an individual and/or group format, as needed or requested. The expectation is that in addition to the formal case presentation, informal case discussions will often occur as part of consultation and supervision throughout the year.

Research Presentation

Interns develop and deliver a research presentation to demonstrate their understanding of how science informs clinical practice. This presentation allows interns to practice being a critical consumer of research, as well as practice formulating future research questions based on the current state of the literature. Finally, this activity helps further develop the intern's presentation and communication skills.

Interns should select a research topic of interest and then communicate their proposed idea for the presentation to the Training Committee, fellow interns, and other appropriate staff for discussion and consultation. The idea for the topic must be sent in writing (e.g., email) and approved by the Training Director or Deputy Training Director. The research topic should not be an intern's dissertation topic, as this activity is meant to represent an opportunity to learn new information and expand one's knowledge further into clinical literature.

Interns will then create and deliver their presentation to the Psychology Internship Training Committee and fellow interns (additional staff welcome by invitation as relevant) in order to demonstrate knowledge and skills relevant to empirical literature and to promote professional development. As part of this research presentation, interns should summarize literature on their current topic, facilitate a discussion of how this literature could inform clinical practice in a number of domains (intervention, assessment, diversity, etc.) and end with future areas of research and/or future application of this material to clinical or community settings. Interns must cite relevant and current literature as it applies to their topic and provide a complete reference list. Interns present for 45 minutes, followed by up to 15 minutes of questions by the Training Committee and other attendees.

After delivering a case presentation and responding to questions, all interns will be temporarily dismissed while the Training Committee discusses the intern's performance and formulates feedback for the intern. If Training Committee staff are not unanimous in their ratings as it pertains to a decision of passing or failing the presentation, they will discuss until consensus is reached. The intern will then meet with the Training Committee for direct feedback about their areas of strength, their growth areas, and their scores on the evaluation form per domain as it applies to the profession-wide competencies. A total of 90 minutes will be blocked for the intern and staff members to allow time for the presentation, responding to questions, Training Committee discussion, and intern feedback.

A member of the psychology staff will provide mentorship and preparation support. This may occur in an individual and/or group format, as needed or requested. The expectation is that in addition to the formal research presentation, informal discussions of relevant clinical literature will often occur as part of consultation and supervision throughout the year.

EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS

Didactics

Training through the provision of supervised clinical services is also supplemented by providing didactic seminars. Interns attend weekly didactics throughout the training year, a schedule for which is established by the Psychology Internship Program. Each didactic is approximately two hours in duration. Didactics are specifically oriented to the training needs and interests of the interns, covering identified Profession-Wide Competencies, and to be graduated in content and complexity as the year progresses. Didactics reviewing specific empirically-based treatments are typically delivered earlier in the training year. Throughout the training year, cultural outing didactics are offered to provide off-site opportunities to develop cultural competencies and increase knowledge of cultural factors unique to Alaska and our military population. Suggestions for additional topics are also elicited from interns at the outset of the year, and a didactic schedule is created to provide a well-rounded training experience, with incorporated feedback. Subsequent ratings and feedback from attendees are also used to help guide the content of future didactics and educational opportunities. While our training faculty presents many of the didactics in areas of their expertise, the program invites other Alaska VA staff (from psychology and other disciplines), as well as outside presenters from other settings, to present.

Here is a sample of topics presented in recent years.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ❖ Ethical Considerations and Challenges When Practicing Telemental Health | ❖ Telehealth Safety Planning and Emergency Management |
| ❖ Power, Privilege, and the Supervisory Relationship | ❖ Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Substance Use Disorders |
| ❖ Compensation and Pension Examinations | ❖ Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia |
| ❖ Prolonged Exposure Therapy | ❖ Military Sexual Trauma |

- ❖ Intimate Partner Violence
- ❖ Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction
- ❖ Military Culture's Effect on the Family: Implications for Family and Couples Therapy
- ❖ Psychotherapy with Alaska Natives
- ❖ Kanaka Maoli: Culture and Clinical Considerations
- ❖ Moral Reconation Therapy
- ❖ Driving Capacity: Fitness to Drive in Older Adults
- ❖ Professionalism in Social Media
- ❖ Cultural Outing: Full-Day at the Alaska Native Heritage Center
- ❖ Cultural Outing: Half-Day at the Anchorage Museum
- ❖ Evidence Based Psychotherapies
- ❖ Assessment of Adult ADHD
- ❖ Stigma about Mental Health Challenges among Mental Health Providers
- ❖ LGBT Veterans
- ❖ The Psychological Care at the End of Life
- ❖ EPPP
- ❖ Geriatric Psychiatry
- ❖ Professional Boundaries
- ❖ Skills Training in Affective and Interpersonal Regulation (STAIR)
- ❖ Cultural Outing: Tour and Exposure to Life on a Military Base at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson

Cultural Diversity Trainings

Interns participate in the Cultural Diversity Roundtable discussions, which take place monthly. As part of the roundtables, interns are also encouraged to host one or more of these meetings, where they select a relevant topic and facilitate a discussion amongst the interns, psychology staff, and other attendees. A collaboration with the Alaska Psychology Internship Consortium (AK-PIC) may also provide additional diversity training, as well as opportunity to network with AK-PIC interns.

Off-site Training Opportunities

Interns take advantage of various off-site community and training opportunities. Each year interns are allotted time to visit the Alaska Native Heritage Center, an educational and cultural institution that promotes cultural knowledge and awareness, which has been a favorite experience of previous interns. Previous interns have attended the Alaska LGBTQ Pride Day with members from the Transgender Support Group. Interns have also observed Veterans Court proceedings as part of specific training rotations. Previous interns have presented poster presentations at conferences, such as the American Psychological Association. There are also

many local behavioral health conferences and trainings available for interns (some free and others for a specific training cost).

PSYCHOLOGY TRAINING FACULTY

(Listed in Alphabetical Order)

Roxanne A. D. Cockburn, Psy.D.

Degree: Clinical Psychology, 2020

School: Pacific University

Internship: Alaska VA Healthcare System

Primary Clinical and Research Interests and Expertise: Cultural Diversity and Intersectionality, Culturally Appropriate Care, Couples Psychotherapy, Evidence-Based Psychotherapies, and Health Psychology

Position/Roles: Staff Psychologist in Specialty Mental Health/Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program (BHIP)

Personal Interests: Spending Time with Family, Reading, Baking, Camping, Traveling, and Photography

Jill M. Duke, Ph.D.

Degree: Clinical Psychology, 2012

School: Washington State University

Internship: VA San Diego Healthcare System & University of California San Diego Health System

Postdoctoral Fellowship: VA San Diego Healthcare System/University of California San Diego Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Residency Program. Emphasis in Home Based Primary Care/Geropsychology

Primary Clinical and Research Interests and Expertise: Behavioral Medicine, Geropsychology, Motivational Interviewing, Home-based Primary Care, Behavioral Sleep Medicine, Rehabilitation psychology

Position/Roles: Staff Psychologist, Health Behavior Coordinator, Health Promotion Disease Prevention

Personal Interests: Mountain Biking, Snowboarding, Cross-Country Skiing, Hiking, Traveling

LT Kun-Yueh (Jayson) Hsieh, Ph.D., ABPP

Degree: Clinical Psychology, 2014

School: Palo Alto University

Internship: Alaska Psychology Internship Consortium-Norton Sound Health Corporation

Postdoctoral Fellowship: North Slope Borough-Child and Youth Service

Adjunct Professor: Alaska Pacific University

Primary Clinical and Research Interests and Expertise: Rural Mental Healthcare Service Delivery in Alaska, PTSD and Severe Mental Illness, EMDR for Individuals with Trauma Histories, Mindfulness-Based Intervention as Applied to a Broad Range of Psychopathology, Board Certified in Group Psychotherapy

Position/Roles: Staff Psychologist, Local Recovery Coordinator

Personal Interests: Biking, Cooking, Meditation

Amy Hufstedler, Ph.D.

Degree: Counseling Psychology, 2020

School: University of Central Arkansas

Internship: Alaska VA Healthcare System

Postdoctoral Fellowship: VA Pacific Islands Healthcare System – Military Sexual Trauma and Women’s Health Emphasis

Primary Clinical and Research Interests and Expertise: Individual and Group Interventions for Survivors of Military Sexual Trauma, Considerations for LGBTQ+ Veterans’ Health, Evidence-Based Psychotherapies, VA Certified in Cognitive Processing Therapy

Position/Roles: PAWS/PTSD Psychologist, Assistant Training Director, Backup MST Coordinator, APA Division 18 – Early Career Psychologist Representative

Personal Interests: Spending time with family/pets, cooking, rock climbing, hiking, gardening

Ann G. Hutcheson, Psy.D., CADC1

Degree: Clinical Psychology, 2011

School: Pacific University

Internship: Alaska VA Healthcare System

Primary Clinical and Research Interests and Expertise: Evidence-Based Psychotherapies, PTSD/SUD Treatment, Complex Trauma, VA Certified in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, VA Certified in Cognitive Processing Therapy

Position/Roles: Staff Psychologist in Specialty Mental Health, PTSD-SUD Psychologist, Evidence-Based Psychotherapy Coordinator

Personal Interests: Spending Time with Family, Hiking, Fishing, Boating, Hunting

Micol Levi-Minzi, Psy.D.

Degree: Clinical Psychology, 2012

School: Nova Southeastern University

Internship: Miami VA Healthcare System

Primary Clinical and Research Interests and Expertise: Gender and Sexuality; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Social Justice; Feminist Psychology

Position/Roles: Psychology Training Directory, LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator, Assistant Professor, Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine UNLV, Co-Chair, VA Psychology Training Council Clinical Advisory Committee, Member-At-Large, VA Psychology Training Council Executive Committee

Personal Interests: Natural introvert, reluctant extrovert. Hanging out with Family, Enjoying Animals and Nature, Reading, Indoor and Outdoor Cycling, Cheering on the Miami Dolphins and Miami Heat

Rebecca Pruitt, Ph.D.

Degree: Counseling Psychology, 2020; Minor in Integrated Behavioral Health

School: New Mexico State University

Internship: James H Quillen VA Medical Center

Primary Clinical and Research Interests and Expertise: Health & Primary Care Psychology; Geropsychology; Assessment; Social Determinants of Health; Rural Healthcare; Male Gender Role Conflict; Sex Offender Treatment

Positions/Roles: PCMHI Staff Psychologist; PCMHI Supervisor

Personal Interests: Spending time with Family & Friends, Reading Fantasy/Sci-Fi, Lifting/Barre/Hiking, Musicals, Traveling, Cheering on Wrexham AFC, *sigh* TikTok

Kelley A. Russell, Ph.D.

Degree: Clinical-Community Psychology (rural, indigenous emphasis), 2019

School: University of Alaska, Anchorage

Internship: Alaska VA Healthcare System

Primary Clinical and Research Interests and Expertise: Behavioral Medicine; Motivational Interviewing; Psychotherapy Process and Outcome Research; Prevention; Program Development, Cross Cultural and Rural Psychology.

Position/Roles: Staff Psychologist in Primary Care Mental Health Integration, Health Promotion Disease Prevention

Personal Interests: Triathlons/Running, Hiking, Photography, Travel, Spending Time with My Family, Reading, Watching Musicals, Art/Graphic Design

Selena P. Smith, Psy.D.

Degree: Clinical Psychology, 2010

School: Nova Southeastern University

Internship: VA Caribbean Healthcare System

Primary Clinical and Research Interests and Expertise: military psychology, health psychology, issues related to gender and sexuality, and assessment.

Position/Roles: Chief of Psychology

Personal Interests: Traveling, camping, fishing, knitting, yoga, spending time with family, friends, and pets.

ALUMNI

As seen below, our interns come from all over the country. We tend to attract candidates who have variable levels of experience with Alaska, from being lifelong Alaskans to those who have never been here. Although we do not have a post-doctoral fellowship in our training program, we have directly hired several interns from internship as permanent staff where they continue to work with our licensed psychologists toward licensure after graduation.

2021-2022 Graduates

- Adler University, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.
- Teachers College – Columbia University, Clinical Psychology, Ph.D.

2020-2021 Graduates

- Fielding Graduate University, Clinical Psychology, Ph.D.
- Midwestern University, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.
- Pacific University, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.

2019-2020 Graduates

- Pacific University, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.
- University of Central Arkansas, Counseling Psychology, Ph.D.

2018-2019 Graduates

- Our Lady of the Lake University, Counseling Psychology, Psy.D.
- Wheaton College, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.
- The Wright Institute, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.

2017-2018 Graduates

- Florida Institute of Technology, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.
- New Mexico State University, Counseling Psychology, Ph.D.
- University of Denver, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.

2016-2017 Graduates

- Fielding Graduate University, Clinical Psychology, Ph.D. (respecialization)
- Florida Institute of Technology, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.
- University of Alaska Fairbanks, Clinical-Community Psychology, Ph.D.

2015-2016 Graduates

- Alder University, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.
- The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.
- The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.

2014-2015 Graduates

- Alliant International University, Clinical Psychology, Ph.D.
- Central Michigan University, Clinical Psychology, Ph.D.
- Pacific University, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.

2013-2014 Graduates

- Florida State University, Counseling Psychology, Ph.D.
- Pacific University, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.
- Ponce Health Sciences University, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.

2012-2013 Graduates

- Alliant International University, Clinical Psychology, Ph.D.
- George Fox University, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.
- Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.

APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURES

Our internship seeks applicants who are doctoral graduate students in good standing in an accredited psychology program. We are seeking applicants who are interested in obtaining a generalist training with an emphasis on cultural diversity and service delivery in urban, rural, and frontier healthcare environments. As an equal opportunity training program, the internship welcomes and strongly encourages applications from all qualified candidates, regardless of gender, gender identity, age, religion, racial, ethnic, cultural, nationality, socioeconomic, sexual orientation, disability, or other minority status.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must be 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. Applicants must be approved for internship status by their graduate program training director. Additional requirements pertaining to VA psychology internships are noted below.

- US Citizenship or Documented Immigrant, Non-Immigrant or Exchange Visitor
 - Trainees who anticipate receiving direct VA-pay (direct VA-paid by bank deposit, VA paycheck) must be citizens of the United States. Non-US citizen trainees may be eligible to receive a without compensation (WOC) appointment if legally able to live and work in the US. Proof will be current immigrant, non-immigrant, or exchange visitor documentation.
- US Social Security Number
 - All trainees must have a US social security number (SSN) prior to beginning the VA pre-employment, onboarding process.
- US Selective Service System Registration
 - Males born after 12/31/1959, between the ages of 18 and 25, must register for Selective Service. Federal law requires that most males living in the US between the ages of 18 and 25 register with the Selective Service System. Male, for this purpose, is any individual born male on their birth certificate regardless of current gender. Males required to register, but who fail to do so by their 26th birthday, may be ineligible for VA appointment.
- Proof of Identity
 - Onboarding requires two source identification documents (https://www.oit.va.gov/programs/piv/_media/docs/IDMatrix.pdf) to prove identity. Documents must be unexpired and names on both documents must match. States have begun issuing Secure Driver's Licenses. Be sure yours will be accepted as a Real ID (<https://www.dhs.gov/real-id>).
- National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB)
 - Trainees who are currently licensed, or who previously held a license in the same or a different discipline, must be screened against the NPDB. Visit the site (<https://www.npdb.hrsa.gov/>) to perform a self-query and confirm you are eligible for VA appointment.
- List of Excluded Individuals and Entities (LEIE)
 - The Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General has compiled a list of individuals excluded from participation in Medicare, Medicaid, and all other Federal healthcare programs. Visit the site (<https://exclusions.oig.hhs.gov/>) to confirm you are not on this list.
- Health Requirements
 - As a condition of appointment, trainees must: furnish evidence or a self-certification that they are physically and mentally fit to perform the essential functions of the training program have up-to-date vaccinations for healthcare workers as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/rec-vac/hcw.html>); and have undergone baseline tuberculosis (TB) screening and testing per CDC health care personnel guidelines (<https://www.cdc.gov/tb/topic/testing/healthcareworkers.htm>). For direct VA-paid trainees, this means within 90-days of Offer and Acceptance.

- Of note, the VA has also mandated that all health professions trainees adhere to the VA requirement for COVID vaccination, requiring that trainees be fully vaccinated or have an exemption filed (medical or religious).
- Fingerprint Screening and Background Investigation
 - Trainees will be fingerprinted and undergo screenings and background investigations. A VA Human Resources Security Specialist will determine suitability. Additional details can be found here: <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/10450.html>
- VA Onboarding Forms
 - Additional pre-employment forms include the:
 - Application for Health Professions Trainees (VA 10-2850D)
 - Declaration for Federal Employment (OF 306)
 - HPT Random Drug Testing Notification and Acknowledgement memo
 - These documents, and others, are available online for review at <https://www.va.gov/oaa/app-forms.asp>.
- Drug-Free Workplace
 - Trainees are not drug-tested prior to receiving an appointment; however certain trainees are subject to random drug testing throughout the entire VA appointment period. Trainees sign an acknowledgement form stating awareness of this practice. Be aware that trainees may be terminated of VA appointment due to illegal drug use, even if a drug is considered legal in the state where training and even if the trainee has a prescription for the drug. Based on the current stance of the federal government, illegal drug use includes the use of cannabis (THC) even with the possession of a Medical Marijuana card approved by a physician.

For general information pertaining to eligibility requirements for a VA psychology internship, please refer to the information and links below pertaining to VA psychology trainees. If you have more specific questions regarding eligibility requirements, including drug testing and background checks, please refer to the OPM website (<https://www.opm.gov/>).

- [Resources for Health Professions Trainees Coming to VA | Eligibility and Forms - Office of Academic Affiliations](#)
- [Am I Eligible? Checklist for VA HPTs](#)
- [Trainee Qualifications and Credentials Verification Letter \(TQCVL\) - Office of Academic Affiliations \(va.gov\)](#)
- [VA Drug-Free Workplace Program Guide for Veterans Health Administration Health Professions Trainees](#)

Notice About COVID Vaccination Requirements

COVID vaccinations are, of course, an emotionally and politically charged issue for many of us. Regardless of one's personal beliefs about the topic, the fact remains that some individuals have factors that make the decision about vaccination a complicated one, even more so given that many agencies are implementing policies and requirements in this area. At the same time, federal-level policies that require VA employees, including psychology interns, to be vaccinated have been disseminated. The VA has currently mandated that all health professions trainees adhere to the VA requirement for COVID vaccination, requiring that trainees be fully vaccinated

or have an exemption filed (medical or religious). At this time, it is difficult to provide guidance as to how vaccination policies will look in the Fall of 2023 when the next training class begins. This training program will make every effort to update applicants and trainees as new information becomes available.

APPLICATION

To apply, submit the following materials electronically through the on-line APPIC Application for Psychology Internships:

- APPIC Application for Psychology Internships (APPI), which includes a cover letter in which you elaborate how our training opportunities are consistent with your needs for internship; a detailed vita describing background training, experience, and scholarly activity and research; three letters of recommendation; and official transcripts of your graduate work sent directly by your university.

APPIC Program Number: 2067

NMS Match Number: 206711

DEADLINES

Deadline for completed applications is November 2, 2022.

Applicants will be notified of invitation for interviews no later than December 14, 2022.

INTERVIEW PROCESS

A selection committee comprised of training faculty reviews applications, with focus on goodness of fit of applicant with facility training opportunities. A subset of applicants is offered interviews. All applicants will be notified via email of invitation for interviews by December 14, 2022.

Historically, the Alaska VA Psychology Internship Program has conducted interviews via telephone or videoconference due to the time and money needed for applicants to travel to Alaska.

For the 2023-2024 cohort, all interview and recruitment activities will be conducted virtually utilizing Microsoft Teams.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Alaska VA Psychology Internship Program adheres to guidelines established by APPIC and follows match policies. Our internship site agrees to abide by the APPIC policy that no person at our training facility will solicit, accept, or use any ranking-related information from any intern application. Applicants must obtain an Applicant Agreement Package from NMS and register for the Match in order to be eligible to match to our internship program.

INTERNSHIP ADMISSIONS, SUPPORT, AND INITIAL PLACEMENT DATA

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?	<u>Yes</u>	No
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Staff and trainees work within the Veterans Health Administration, which includes compliance with VA policies. Information pertaining to these policies may be found on the VA webpage (<https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/>). Relevant policies are reviewed as part of orientation to the internship program and each rotation.

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM ADMISSIONS

The narrative below describes important information to assist potential applicants in assessing their likely fit with our program. This description is consistent with the program's policies on intern selection and practicum and academic preparation requirements. Internship program data and tables are updated each year.

Our internship program adheres to a scholar-practitioner model that focuses on training future psychologists in the scientific practice of psychology. Our program focuses on goodness of fit between intern goals and our training opportunities. The Alaska VA Psychology Internship Program is generalist in nature, ensuring interns obtain a wide range of training experiences that prepare them for working in a variety of culturally diverse urban, rural, and frontier health environments. The program focuses on a breadth of clinical skills in specific areas (health psychology, primary care mental health integration, outpatient mental health, couples therapy, and PTSD specialization), with opportunities for other specialized experiences based on the training needs of the intern. We also emphasize sensitivity to individual differences and diversity, and value attracting a diverse group of interns. All things being equal, consideration is given to applicants representing elements of diversity, including, but not limited to, age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, national origin, race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, social economic status, and military service (please also refer to Application Procedures above).

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:

Total Direct Contact Intervention Hours	<u>No</u>	Yes
Total Direct Contact Assessment Hours	<u>No</u>	Yes

Describe any other required minimum criteria used to screen applicants:

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Approval for internship status by graduate program training director
- ✓ Matched applicants will need to meet eligibility requirements for a VA internship ([Am I Eligible? Checklist for VA HPTs](#)), including US citizenship status, US social security number, US Selective Service Registration, Proof of Identity, National Practitioner Data Bank, List of Excluded Individuals and Entities, Health Requirements, Fingerprint Screening and Background Investigation, VA Onboarding Forms, Drug-Free Workplace requirements. Match results are contingent upon meeting eligibility requirements.

FINANCIAL AND OTHER BENEFIT SUPPORT FOR UPCOMING TRAINING YEAR

Financial and Other Benefit Support for Upcoming Training Year*		
Annual Stipend/Salary for Full-time Interns	\$38,279 (current stipend may be subject to change and annual increases)	
Annual Stipend/Salary for Half-time Interns	N/A	
Program provides access to medical insurance for intern?	<u>Yes</u>	No
If access to medical insurance is provided:		
Trainee contribution to cost required?	<u>Yes</u>	No
Coverage of family member(ss) 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)	104	
Hours of Annual Paid Sick Leave	104	
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?	<u>Yes</u>	No
Other Benefits (please describe)		
Interns are eligible to receive health coverage. Interns may also be eligible for the Child Care Subsidy Program. Additional leave for sickness associated with COVID or pandemic related quarantine may also be authorized in certain cases.		

*Note. Programs are not required by the Commission on Accreditation to provide all benefits listed in this table

INITIAL POST-INTERNSHIP POSITIONS

(Provide an Aggregated Tally for the Preceding 3 Cohorts)	2019-2022
Total # of graduated interns who were in the 3 cohorts	7
Total # of interns who did not seek employment because they returned to their doctoral program/are completing their doctoral degree	1

	PD	EP
Academic teaching	0	0
Community mental health center	2	0
Consortium	0	0
University Counseling Center	0	0
Hospital/Medical Center	0	0
Veterans Affairs Health Care System	2	3
Psychiatric facility	0	0
Correctional facility	0	0
Health maintenance organization	0	0
School district/system	0	0
Independent practice setting	0	0
Other	0	0

*Note: "PD" = Post-doctoral residency position; "EP" = Employed Position. Each individual represented in this table is counted only one time. For former trainees working in more than one setting, the indicated setting represents their primary position.

ALASKAN LIVING

The Alaska VA Healthcare System is in Anchorage, Alaska, a city of nearly 300,000 people, or roughly the population of Cincinnati, Ohio or Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Due to the large land area of Anchorage, the city is not densely populated, with only 171 people per square mile. When considering the outlining Matanuska-Susitna Borough, the population of the total Anchorage metropolitan area is over 400,000 people. This one area is the population center of the state and includes slightly over half of the Alaskan population. Anchorage is located on the Kenai Peninsula in south-central Alaska, bordered by the Knik Arm of the Cook Inlet to the north, and the inlet's Turnagain Arm to the South. To the east, the city is flanked by the Chugach mountains and the 495,000-acre Chugach State Park. The city has various economic sectors, including resource development, tourism, education, government, and transportation. Anchorage is also home to the state's largest public university, the University of Alaska Anchorage which has a student population of 18,000. The city has a large military presence with the Joint United States Army and Air Force Base Elmendorf-Richardson. In terms of racial/ethnic diversity, the U.S. Census estimates the most common racial groups in Anchorage include Caucasian (65%), Asian (9.6%), Alaska Native/American Indian (8.7%), multiracial (8.2%), Black/African American (6.1%), and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (2.5%).



The beauty of Anchorage is unquestionable. In addition to the perks of city living, Anchorage residents also have access to the magnificence of Alaskan wildlife. While many types of wildlife are readily seen within the city, residents can also travel to the various state parks and areas outside of the Municipality to see wildlife in its most natural habitat. Anchorage has received numerous acknowledgments of its status as a great city to live in. Anchorage has won the National Civic Leagues' All-American City four times (1956, 1965, 1984, and 2002). To learn and see more of what Anchorage has to offer, visit the below hyperlinks.



[Anchorage Economic Development Corporation promo](#)

[10 Best Cities for New College Grads](#)

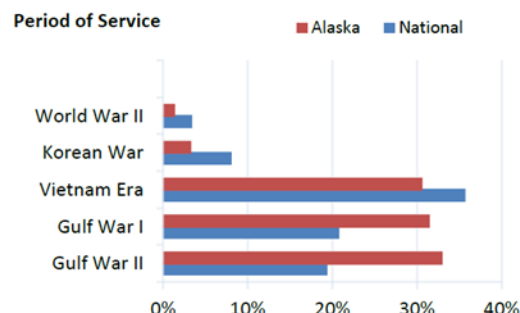
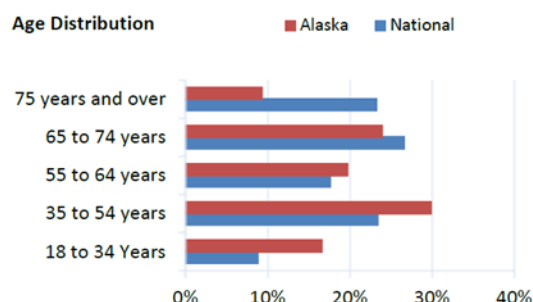
[Why Anchorage, AK, is one of the Top 100 Best Places to Live](#)

VETERAN POPULATION

Alaska is more densely packed with Veterans compared to the national average. Veterans are often drawn to the active lifestyle Alaska provides. Many were also based in Alaska while active-duty military. The diversity of Alaskan Veterans allows interns at the Alaska VA Healthcare System unique opportunities to gain solid skills in multicultural competence and to work with particularly diverse Veteran populations.

The National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics published the below data on Alaska Veterans (https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/State_Summaries_Alaska.pdf). This data includes projected demographics.

Veteran Population (as of 9/30/2017)		Alaska	National
Number of Veterans		68,719	19,998,799
Percent of Adult Population that are Veterans		13.12%	6.60%
Number of Women Veterans		9,465	1,882,848
Percent of Women Veterans		13.77%	9.41%
Number of Military Retirees		10,908	2,156,647
Percent of Veterans that are Military Retirees		15.87%	10.78%
Number of Veterans Age 65 and Over		20,421	9,410,179
Percent of Veterans Age 65 and Over		29.72%	47.05%



Alaska		9/30/2015	9/30/2020	9/30/2025	9/30/2030	9/30/2035	9/30/2040	9/30/2045
Age	Less than 40	15,438	19,149	20,344	20,715	21,027	21,201	21,255
	40-64	32,325	28,975	28,023	28,787	30,275	32,064	33,310
	65+	20,245	20,760	20,567	19,293	17,337	15,215	13,993

Alaska		9/30/2015	9/30/2020	9/30/2025	9/30/2030	9/30/2035	9/30/2040	9/30/2045
Gender	Male	58,978	58,937	58,187	57,327	56,554	55,907	55,597
	Female	9,030	9,946	10,747	11,468	12,085	12,572	12,961

Alaska		9/30/2015	9/30/2020	9/30/2025	9/30/2030	9/30/2035	9/30/2040	9/30/2045
Period of Service	WWII	582	162	29	3	0	0	0
	Korea	2,479	1,276	494	129	22	2	0
	Vietnam	20,922	16,414	12,320	8,495	5,144	2,583	1,006
	Gulf War	33,771	42,179	46,454	45,775	43,372	39,930	35,082

Note: The total for Period of Service does not equal the total Veteran Population because peace time veterans were excluded

Alaska		9/30/2015	9/30/2020	9/30/2025	9/30/2030	9/30/2035	9/30/2040	9/30/2045
Race	White, Not Hispanic	50,862	50,087	49,475	49,394	49,840	50,794	52,172
	Minority	17,146	18,796	19,459	19,400	18,799	17,686	16,387

Note: Minorities are all races/ethnicities except non-Hispanic White Veterans

CLIMATE

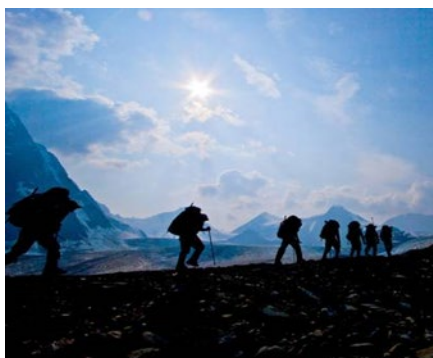
Individuals new to Alaska are often concerned about the possibility of frigid temperature and icy/snowy roads. January tends to be the coldest month of the year in Anchorage, with average lows of 11 degrees Fahrenheit and average highs in the low 20s. While many Alaskans aim to take vacations during this December to February timeframe to get a brief reprieve from the cold temperatures, many others particularly enjoy the season's opportunities for skiing, snowboarding, ice skating, and seeing the Northern Lights. Many people utilize auto-starts to

warm up their cars and heated blankets to provide extra warmth. In contrast, the summer months in Anchorage have average temperatures of low 50s to mid-60s, occasionally reaching the 80s or higher on the warmest days of recent years. In terms of precipitation, Anchorage averages from a high of 3.27 average inches of precipitation in August to a low of 0.47 average inches of precipitation in April. December tends to be the month with the largest average snowfall, with an average of 17 inches of snowfall. Despite this, roads tend to be consistently maintained in ways that are not always true of areas with less snowfall.

Living in Alaska offers a unique experience in the seasonal daylight fluctuations of arctic living. On the Winter Solstice in December (the shortest day of the year), Anchorage will see around 5.5 hours of sunlight, with the sun rising slightly after 10:00 am and setting between 3:30 and 4:00 pm. Many Alaskans look forward to the Summer Solstice in June, where they bask in over 19 hours of sunlight, with the sun only briefly dipping behind the horizon just after midnight until it rises again around 4:00 am. When you consider civil twilight, the phase of twilight in which the sun is just below the horizon and there is still visible natural light, there are 24 hours of combined daylight and civil twilight in Anchorage for most of the month of June and early July. Alaskans take advantage of these extra hours of sunlight to enjoy the national beauty of Alaska.



RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES



The opportunity for recreational activities in Anchorage is abundant and tends to vary by season. Local retail shops provide gear rentals so interns can try new outdoor activities without having to purchase gear.



In the winter months, many Alaskans enjoy activities that range from downhill skiing at the Alyeska Ski Resort or Hatcher's Pass to backcountry or cross-country skiing on many groomed and ungroomed trails both inside and outside of the Municipality of Anchorage. The 1,400-acre Kincaid Park, nestled up against the Turnagain Arm, is a popular spot. Ice skating is another popular pastime, with residents skating or playing hockey on Westchester Lagoon or local lakes such as Eklutna Lake. Other winter recreational activities include taking a dog sled tour ride, snow machining, or snow shoeing. More adventurous residents also do ice climbing. The winter is also the perfect time to camp out to see the awe-inspiring starlight sky and legendary Northern Lights, which are

occasionally visible from in the city, although views are almost always more impressive in the backcountry and further north.

In the summer, Alaskans have access to the wonder of the Alaskan frontier. Within the city, Anchorage residents enjoy the local Coastal and Campbell Creek trail systems, which sprawl from one side of the city to the other. They rollerblade, bike, run, and walk their pets. Residents can also fish in numerous municipal lakes, or Ship Creek, which is only a few minutes' walk from downtown Anchorage. People can also travel only a few hours outside the city to various fishing towns on the Kenai Peninsula including Seward, Whittier, and Homer. Many people take fishing charters or wildlife tours of the Prince William Sound of Kenai Fjords National Park from these towns, witnessing the splendor of Alaskan sea life, including beluga whales, puffins, sea otters, and sea lions.



Many wildlife tours also show local glaciers, such as the Portage glacier. For people willing to travel a few hours outside of Anchorage, the Denali National Park, with the United States' tallest mountain, is available for exploration. Alaskans take advantage of seemingly endless sunlight to hike, camp, and backpack. A favorite introductory hike is Flattop Mountain, located in the Chugach range and offering breathtaking views of the city and inlet. There are many public use cabins that are available for rent. Other popular outdoor recreational activities include kayaking (lake or open water), canoeing, or rock climbing. It is also common to see people berry picking both in the Chugach Mountains and further outside the city. Anchorage also has a beautiful 100-acre Botanical Garden.

Alaskans are very active and there are numerous sporting events available. In the summer, running races are abounding. Local favorites include the Mayors Midnight Sun Marathon (5K, half-marathon, marathon, and marathon relay) near the summer solstice and the Anchorage RunFest (5K, half-marathon, marathon, and 49K ultra race). During the July 4th holiday, individuals can sign up for the Mount Marathon race, a competitive 5K race up and down the rocky 2,974-foot Mount Marathon in Seward, Alaska. Many Alaskans choose to witness this event while enjoying the local food festival. There are also several popular bike races, winter ski races, and winter snow machine races.

ENTERTAINMENT, CULTURE, AND THE ARTS

While Anchorage does provide great recreation options for active people, it also has several opportunities for rich entertainment and cultural pursuits. There are many festivals that are popular for Alaskans. In February people can attend the Fur Rendezvous (Fur Rondy) festival, which showcases a snow sculpture competition, carnival, Beard Contest, Running of the Reindeer event, Fur Auction, and Miner's and Trapper's Charity Ball. This festival coincides

with the annual Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, an 1,100 race from Willow to Nome (ceremonial start in Anchorage). Other popular festivals include the Bear Paw Festival and the Girdwood Forest Fair.



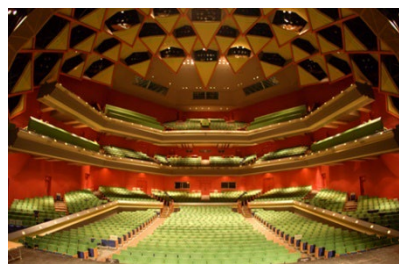
Individuals who love history can enjoy various venues, including the Anchorage Museum and the Alaska Native Heritage Center. The Museum has selected Sundays where admission is free. At the Alaska Native Heritage Center, people can explore replicas of traditional dwellings of Alaska Native peoples (Athabascan, Inupiaq, Yupik, Aleut, Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, etc.) across the state, as well as watch Alaska Native dance and drumming performances, watch cultural films, and purchase Alaska Native art and jewelry.



History lovers can also take a step back in time with gold panning pursuits, available in Crow Creek and Indian Valley, just outside of Anchorage. Another incredible cultural activity is the Native Youth Olympics. This annual event showcases Alaskan middle and high schoolers competing in 10 traditional Alaskan events that were tests of hunting and survival skills and used to practice and refine agility balance and strength.

For the artistic types, Anchorage has The Performing Arts Center which showcases many types of performances including Broadway musicals, dance numbers, opera, and symphony performances. Past musicals include Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella*, the *Lion King*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, and *My Fair Lady*.

There are also many local theatre companies. Many musical performances come to both the Alaska Airlines Performing Center or the Alaska State Fair. Past musical performances at these venues include the Zac Brown Band, the Goo-Goo Dolls, Third Eye Blind, The Band Perry, Old Dominion, Norah Jones, and Alaska's own Portugal the Man. Anchorage also hosts a First Friday Art Walk in Downtown Anchorage where people can tour downtown art galleries.



HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

According to the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the median rental cost adjusted to include utilities for 2022 is \$919/month for a studio apartment rental, \$1,092/month for a one-bedroom, \$1,343/month for a two-bedroom, and \$1,488/month for a three-bedroom (<https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/housing/2/rentnumbedrms.html>). Many Alaska VA employees

either live in Anchorage or the Eagle-River/Mat-Su Valley area. Within Anchorage, commute times on average will be 20-25 minutes, or at the most will be 35-40 minutes if the employee lives on the other side of town or if there are particularly snowy/icy road conditions. Commute for individuals coming from Eagle River is approximately 20-25 minutes, from Mat-Su Valley is approximately 40-45 minutes. Free parking is provided. The local bus system, the People Mover, provides transportation within Anchorage, with a bus stop right outside the main VA clinic. However, some areas of town do not have frequent bus travel, which may make this form of public transportation impractical for VA employees depending on their location. The Municipality of Anchorage also provides a Ride-Share program that helps coordinate local carpooling and provides vanpool group subsidies. There is a free shuttle that runs between the main Alaska VA clinic and the VA MH RRTP, about 8 miles away, which both Veterans and employees utilize. Anchorage also has Uber and Lyft services. While there are public transportation options, many interns have found it useful to have their own car.

For travel within and outside of the state, Alaskans can utilize the road system, train, and airplanes. While there are many rural villages in Alaska that are outside of the road system (and require a bush plane flight, snow machine, or dog sled to get to), Alaskans can travel the 358-mile Parks Highway from Anchorage to Fairbanks, passing through the beautiful Denali National Park, home of the tallest mountain in the United States, Denali. Alaskans also frequently travel on the scenic Seward Highway from Anchorage to the fishing village of Seward, a favorite spot for fishing charters and scenic tours of Kenai Fjords National Park. People who are driving from the Lower 48 to Alaska often travel through Canada along the Alaska-Canadian Highway (ALCAN). Those with an interest in history can travel the 470-mile Alaska Railroad, stretching from Seward to Fairbanks. For airplane travel, the Ted Stevens International Airport, about 13 miles away from the Alaska VA, provides international travel on many major commercial airlines (Alaska Airlines, United Airlines, Delta, American Airlines) on frequent daily schedules.

ADDENDUM

The Office of Academic Affiliations has recently been considering the implementation of a universal window of starting and ending all VA internships during the month of July, we have recently changed our program's start and end dates to the month of July (7/17/2023-7/12/2024) instead of previously starting and ending in mid-August as in years past. We hope this recent change also facilitates interns' experiences with the timings of both applying to and beginning postdoctoral or employment positions.