

2023-2024

COLUMBIA VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
PSYCHOLOGY RESIDENCY TRAINING
PROGRAM BROCHURE



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Department of Veterans
Affairs-Veterans Health
Administration- Columbia,
South Carolina



Columbia VA Health Care System

Psychology Clinical Training Director
Mental Health Care Service Line, Building 106 (116)
6439 Garners Ferry Road
Columbia, SC 29209

APPIC Member Number: 9935
Applications Due: December 30th

Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Post-Doctoral Residency

Emphasis Area: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Accreditation Status

The Psychology Postdoctoral Residency Program at the Columbia VA Health Care System was initially funded in 2011 and accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the American Psychological Association on March 4, 2014. Recently, we were successfully re-accredited until 2029. Our program is also a member of the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) and utilizes the APPA CAS (APPIC Psychology Postdoctoral Application) system for applicants through www.appic.org.

Psychology Setting

The Columbia VA Health Care System (previously WJB Dorn VAMC) has been an approved training site for psychiatry residents, medical residents, social work interns, and nursing students for over 20 years. For more information on the Columbia VA Health Care System please go to the web site: <http://www.columbiasc.va.gov/>.

Within the Medical Center, psychology fellowship training is mainly conducted in the context of the Mental Health Service Line (MHSL) within the Trauma Recovery Program (TRP) a multidisciplinary department including professionals from the following disciplines: psychology, social work, and clinical pharmacy. The mission of the MHSL is to provide quality patient care, training and research. The Psychology Clinical Training Director, Assistant Training Director, and the Psychology Training Committee members administer the majority of psychology training activities.

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a widely seen clinical presentation within the Department of Veterans Affairs settings. This fellowship aims to train the resident to be successful in multiple settings after residency, such as in a VA facility, hospital, or on an outpatient or residential basis. Residents will be assigned to the Trauma Recovery Program (TRP) clinic in order to obtain this specialized training.

Psychology staff come from diverse academic backgrounds and ascribe to a range of

theoretical orientations including cognitive behavioral, psychodynamic, experiential, interpersonal, existential, gestalt, and a hypothesis-driven integrative approach to assessment. Currently, there are around 35 doctoral level psychologist positions through the Columbia VA Health Care System, some of which are assigned to one of our Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). A broad range of experience, interest and expertise is represented by the psychologists who work within the Columbia VA. These areas include posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse and co-occurring disorders, primary care & health psychology (Patient Aligned Care Team-Behavioral Health/PACT), psychological assessment, military sexual trauma (MST), neuropsychology, dementia, traumatic brain injury (TBI), pain psychology, end of life issues, geropsychology, suicide prevention, and serious mental illness.

The VA Health Care System is responding to many national changes in the health care field, including the treatment of PTSD, addictions, and treating both mental health diagnoses concurrently. The resident will have the opportunity to provide treatment for PTSD and if the resident is interested they can also receive training in dual diagnosis treatments for those struggling with both PTSD and SUD. The resident will gain experience in completing intake assessments and more formalized assessments including the Clinician Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS) assessment. Additionally, therapy opportunities exist for the resident to engage in trauma-focused therapy in the form of Prolonged Exposure (PE) and Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) with additional therapy modalities as Written Exposure Therapy (WET) when it is available, Concurrent treatment of PTSD and Substance Use Disorders using Prolonged Exposure (COPE) or CPT with an additional focus on substance use.

This residency is embedded within the MHSL where specialty clinics are housed. The emphasis on trauma treatment is to improve health care services for Veterans who are struggling with posttraumatic stress disorder through education, training, assessment, and treatment. An emphasis in this area will allow a resident to work with Veterans to treat them at multiple steps in their recovery journey. The focus will be on interdisciplinary consultation where the resident will be able to staff cases with the treatment team to engage in treatment planning and coordination of care.

The resident's time will include four days within the Trauma Recovery Program (TRP). The resident will also engage in the weekly team meeting, where the resident will have the opportunity to meet as a team to present new patients and collaborate in treatment planning to determine which treatment option(s) may be best for Veterans based on current goals and clinical presentation.

The Trauma Recovery Program (TRP) is a specialized, intensive, outpatient program for Veterans with a primary diagnosis of PTSD. Our program consists of a multidisciplinary team of psychologists and clinical social workers who are passionate about providing trauma-informed care to our Veterans. TRP is designed to address the specific needs of Veterans from all eras with different trauma experiences. A Veteran does not need to experience a military-related trauma in order to be seen within the TRP. The resident on this rotation will participate at all levels of our program including providing orientation intake sessions, assessment sessions, individual and group psychotherapy (when possible), and case presentations in staff meetings. Additionally, TRP has two ways they offer care: weekly, individual 60-90 minute sessions or in the Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP). In the IOP, each Veteran engages in individual 60-90

minute sessions four times a week and two 45-minute group sessions (one prior to individual session and one post individual session). The Resident will be provided both types of treatment offerings. Orientation intake sessions include psychoeducation on PTSD and the various EBPs for PTSD offered in our clinic, assessing goals for treatment, fit for TRP, resources for treatment decision making, and gathering background information. The TRP uses the Clinician Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS) in addition to self-report measures and psychosocial assessments to determine treatment needs. The resident will receive training and administer these measures weekly during the rotation. The resident will have the opportunity for training and experience in the gold standard PTSD treatments including Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) and Prolonged Exposure (PE). In addition, for Veterans who are dually diagnosed with PTSD and substance use disorders, the resident will be able to provide trauma-focused dual diagnosis treatment. This includes providing Concurrent Treatment of Substance Use Disorders using Prolonged Exposure (COPE) and Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) with additional treatment components focused on substance use to help Veterans learn and use coping skills in order to decrease substance use and decrease using substances as a coping mechanism for trauma-related symptoms. Both treatments will also focus on relapse prevention. The treatments are designed to address mental health concerns in an integrated fashion while employing a harm reduction model. If a Veteran chooses abstinence as their primary goal, then an abstinence-based model will be used.

Training Model and Program Philosophy

MISSION: The mission of the Psychology Postdoctoral Residency Program is to provide the postdoctoral resident with the opportunity to refine basic clinical skills to become a fully functioning clinical psychologist. In addition, the resident will have an opportunity to develop and utilize consultation and psychotherapy skills needed while providing mental health services in an outpatient setting. The focus encourages the postdoctoral resident to provide services that are evidence-based, timely, recovery-based services that are also sensitive to the needs of the Veteran.

TRAINING MODEL: We will provide training consistent with the Practitioner-Scholar model. We strive to provide each postdoctoral resident with advanced general clinical training, with an emphasis on empirically supported care for trauma and substance use concerns. The trainee will also be provided with education in core competencies that will help them function within these specialty clinics and as a general psychologist. The program will produce psychologists who are capable of understanding and implementing evidence-based interventions and use their skills to further contribute to our scientific understanding and literature in the field of psychology.

There will be an emphasis in our program on the clinical, consultation, and brief assessment skills needed to provide patient centered care as part of a multidisciplinary team. Multidisciplinary teams in TRP will include psychologists, social workers, a pharmacist, and administrative staff.

The Psychology Postdoctoral Training Program recognizes and respects the varied interests, backgrounds, and professional goals the post-doctoral resident brings to our training program. Every effort will be made to accommodate career aspirations and provide individualized career advising, including interdisciplinary collaboration, to encourage

membership in professional organizations, attendance at conferences, and pursuit of research interests.

Program Goals & Objectives

Overall goals of the program include refining fundamental skills necessary for being a competent and independent psychologist. In addition, consistent with our emphasis area, the resident will develop and refine the consultation and intervention skills necessary for working in a multi-disciplinary hospital setting. Each trainee is measured on many aspects of 9 profession-wide competencies to ensure they are prepared for independent practice by the end of the training year.

The 9 competencies are as follows:

1. Research
2. Ethical and Legal Standards
3. Individual and Cultural Diversity
4. Professional Values, Attitudes, and Behaviors
5. Communication and Interpersonal Skills
6. Assessment
7. Intervention
8. Supervision
9. Consultation and Interprofessional/Interdisciplinary Skills

Method and Frequency of Evaluation of Core Competencies

Each resident is expected to develop and demonstrate certain core competencies in various psychological skills during the postdoctoral year. These core competencies will be carefully monitored and evaluated quarterly by all the psychology faculty that have significant interaction with the resident. Successful completion of the postdoctoral program requires the demonstration of these competencies at a predefined level that are reviewed with the resident at the beginning of the year. Satisfying core competencies requires demonstration and observation of a level of knowledge and skill expected of a resident who is preparing to enter the practice of psychology as an independent professional. Competency Evaluations are completed quarterly.

Program Structure

The resident will participate in a wide variety of clinical and consultation experiences during their training year. Core clinical activities will include individual and group therapy, CAPS assessments, initial psychotherapy intakes, orienting a Veteran to services offered within the clinic, suicide risk assessments, and individual therapy treating PTSD and PTSD/SUD together (if chosen to do so). TRP currently offers both an Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) (in group and individual formats) and outpatient therapy services. Consultation activities will include curbside consultation with staff, participation in mental health and TRP staff meetings, and educational trainings. The resident will also participate in didactic and professional development activities with at least two hours of supervision weekly.

Supervision

Supervision is based on a developmental model, taking into account that residents are mature learners who, throughout the fellowship year, are expected to perform with increasing degrees of independence. The fellowship provides for open and ongoing contact between supervisors and the resident. The resident will function as a colleague in the mental health service line and within the specialty service of TRP, with daily access to supervisors and other professionals. The resident will meet for regularly scheduled formal supervision and attend required didactic trainings, seminar series, and group supervision.

Training Experiences

The postdoctoral resident will learn and refine a wide range of clinical, consultation, assessment, and psychological professional skills throughout their postdoctoral resident year. The resident will spend at least 25% of their time providing direct patient care services.

Summary of Training Experiences

The resident will be able to refine their psychological competencies in a variety of didactic and experiential activities.

Didactic training and specialized programming

Each training year will begin with a series of didactic trainings targeted towards the common needs of the resident in this specific training setting, with a focus toward ensuring that the resident has the required knowledge and skills for a successful and smooth start to the residency year. Didactic topics are chosen by the Training Committee based on required core competencies, common diagnoses and concerns found in the VA system, and feedback/goals of the resident. The initial trainings are intended to provide a strong foundation of knowledge and skills for all trainees, regardless of past experiences. There will continue to be formalized trainings throughout the year by staff and community members. There will be certain didactic trainings that will be required of the resident and some that will be optional based on the resident's interest. The resident is required to teach three didactic sessions per year. One of the didactics will be on the resident's project and the other two didactics can focus on topics of the resident's choosing that are relevant to the setting. Past residents have chosen to present on their dissertation and either assessment or intervention topics in which they have experience and interest. Additionally, the resident will attend monthly didactics directed at professional development, areas of relevance for PTSD care, and on topics of interest for the resident.

Peer Group Supervision

Peer tiered group supervision will occur weekly with our psychology interns. The resident will be responsible for leading and developing topics to address during this one hour peer supervision. Topics can include helping the interns with difficult cases, case conceptualization, professional development, managing work-life balance, and other topics that the resident feels would be helpful for the trainees.

Seminars and Group Supervision Series

The resident is required to attend seminars that emphasize the development of competencies and professional development. Trainees will also meet with the Training Director(s) bi-monthly for professional development to aid in meeting professional goals and individually with the Training Directors (one time a month for each Training Director)

Leadership, Supervision, and Professional Development Group Supervision Series

Once per month for two hours, the trainees and staff meet to discuss professional development and engage in a leadership series with an emphasis on leadership within the VA setting. One of the aims of this series is to help the trainee establish themselves as a leader within a larger healthcare system and to facilitate their ability to implement process improvement.

Cultural Diversity Group Supervision Series

The resident engages in a cultural diversity learning activity once a month for two hours to develop the core competency area of cultural sensitivity. Research-based instruction, case presentation, and clinical application are all utilized in this series. Previous topics covered include increasing self-awareness and exploration, southern culture, desegregating diversity in therapy, diversity training in psychology, cultural factors in psychology training and supervision, ethical issues and considerations to name a few.

Assessment Seminar Series

Assessment experiences are complemented by an assessment seminar series to provide more in-depth information about specific-assessment related considerations such as cultural, ethical, neuropsychological, capacity, ADHD, etc. Topics in the past have included: Introduction to Psychological and Cognitive Assessment, capacity evaluations, cultural and ethical considerations in assessment, performance validity/effort/malingering, introduction to ADHD evaluations, transplant and bariatric assessment.

Journal Club

The purpose of Journal Club is to facilitate the review of a specific research study and to discuss implications of the study for evidence-based clinical practice. A journal club has been defined as an educational meeting in which a group of individuals discuss current articles, providing a forum for a collective effort to keep up with the literature. There are many advantages of participating in a journal club, including keeping abreast of new knowledge, promoting awareness of current clinical research findings, learning to critique and appraise research, becoming familiar with the best current clinical research, and encouraging research utilization. Trainees are required to participate in the monthly Journal Club, with each having the opportunity to lead one meeting over the course of the training year.

Mentorship (optional)

Each resident is offered the ability to be matched to a mentor/advisor for the training year. The mentorship program was developed to help support the trainee's professional development in a non-evaluative environment, which is independent of the supervisory relationship. The primary goals for the

mentorship program are to help the resident negotiate the training year and plan for post-residency employment goals.

Primary experiential and professional development activities include:

- Conduct intake assessments as the first step of a Veteran engaging in services within the TRP. Veteran and resident will collaboratively work together to determine if current goals, clinical presentation, and treatment offerings within the clinic are a good fit for the Veteran to move forward within the program. If both decide that TRP is a good clinical option for the Veteran, then the provider will assist the Veteran in scheduling their Clinician Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS) appointment.
- Conduct CAPS assessments to determine Veteran diagnosis of PTSD.
- Provide evidenced-based individual therapy for PTSD and SUD/PTSD if chosen.
 - Treatment offerings the resident may gain experience in include Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), Prolonged Exposure (PE), potentially Written Exposure Therapy (WET), Concurrent Treatment of PTSD and Substance use Disorder using Prolonged Exposure (COPE), and CPT/SUD (a combination of CPT with a focus on relapse prevention and other coping skills).
- Provide group psychotherapy through our Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP).
- Attend the TRP weekly team meetings to discuss administrative components of the program and VA, staff CAPS cases, and engage in clinical consultation for current cases.
- Provide both empirically supported individual and group psychotherapy for the outpatient and IOP program.
- The resident will engage in measurement-based care, which includes providing self-report measures for the Veteran to complete that will then be utilized to help treatment plan, assess treatment progress, and identify specific areas of a Veteran's clinical presentation to aid in increasing treatment effectiveness.
- The resident will be required to engage in a project.
 - Possible activities include conducting a small project (i.e., program evaluation project), implementation of a new treatment group with outcome evaluations, assessing outcome evaluations of various treatment groups to make recommendations and improve patient care, or process evaluations of staff and client satisfaction with the outpatient services.
- The resident will have an opportunity to engage in a wide variety of teaching activities. These include leading seminars and group discussions as part of our didactic training series, and informally and formally educating TRP on various mental health concerns.
 - The resident will present to at least one interdisciplinary team. The resident can choose a topic that they are interested in and is relevant to the staff and may occur within the TRP.
- In order to become familiar with relevant organization, management and administrative issues related to psychological service delivery, practice, training and research, the resident will have multiple opportunities to learn and refine these skills. The resident can bring up such issues in meetings with the training director, in didactic group discussions that will focus on these topic areas, and informally with other staff as relevant at various meetings the resident will attend. The resident will also attend the psychology monthly meeting and the Mental Health Service Line (MHSL) monthly meeting.
- The program is designed to create a psychologist capable of practicing independently. As

such, they will have an opportunity formally in didactic seminars and informally in meetings with other psychologists to make sure they practice their psychology skills in manners that are consistent with APA professional conduct guidelines, and other ethics and law guidelines relevant to the practice of psychology.

- A focus on recognizing and responding to issues of cultural and individual diversity will be present in all activities related to the goals and objectives of the training program. These issues will therefore be discussed in supervision, in meetings with psychologists and other medical center professionals, and in the didactic seminar series.

Adjunctive Training Experience

Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is one of the major presenting concerns seen in the Veteran population at the Veterans Health Administration. Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) is an evidence-based, manualized, time-limited (12 weeks) treatment approach for trauma-related symptoms. It involves teaching Veterans to identify how trauma experiences have impacted their thinking and to challenge their own thoughts. The goal is for Veterans to learn to make sense of the trauma and incorporate this understanding into their beliefs about themselves, others, and the world in a balanced way. This training includes education during a two-day workshop (including didactics and experiential exercises), supervision, weekly case consultation, and participation as a CPT therapist completing two individual cases. Engaging in the CPT training and consultation process is a required training experience.

Requirements for Completion

The resident is expected to progress along a continuum of competence during the fellowship year in the areas of assessment, clinical interventions, consultation, supervision, scholarly inquiry, issues of cultural diversity, organizational and administrative issues as well as professional conduct and development. To successfully complete the fellowship, postdoctoral students are required to meet minimum practice (workload) expectations, achieve competency in all required domains and be in good standing throughout the year. Performance standards within each competency domain are detailed in the evaluation forms which are completed quarterly by supervisors and shared at the beginning of the year with the resident.

To maintain good standing, the resident actively participates in clinical assignments, is receptive to and responsive to supervision, and conducts themselves in a way that is ethical and professionally appropriate. A resident in good standing demonstrates punctuality, is receptive to clinical assignments, completes clinical responsibilities and documentation in a timely manner, recognizes professional limitations, and seeks supervisory assistance as needed.

This post-doctoral residency meets South Carolina licensing requirements for a postdoctoral position. SC State licensing requirements ask for at least 1,500 hours of actual work including direct service, training, and supervisory time. In addition, SC licensure requirements require a minimum of one-hour per week face-to-face supervision from a psychologist licensed in South Carolina.

Facility and Training Resources

The Columbia VA Health Care System Mental Health Department has grown substantially over recent years. Trainees have access to space as needed on assigned placements and outpatient clinics. Our medical center includes state of the art computer equipment, with access to the hospital network, and Windows-based software including computerized patient record system (CPRS), VA Vista, and Office-based applications. Internet and intranet LAN connectivity are provided. This VA maintains a medical library on station, as well as having sharing agreements with the University of South Carolina School of Medicine Library. There is a wide lending library for access to computerized journal articles. Interns receive needed clerical and administrative support and assistance through a specified Mental Health Clinic administrative staff member, as well as through other Medical Center staff if needed to complete clinical duties elsewhere in the hospital.

Columbia VA Health Care System is an active medical center with a diverse patient population providing a rich resource for training. The Columbia VAHCS (which includes the main facility in Columbia and 7 community-based outpatient clinics) treated 60,011 unique patients and 7,010 women Veterans and completed 284,794 outpatient visits through December 2020. This included provision of more than 1.12 million outpatient visits in FY20. Our Veteran and staffing data continue to show increases each year with an increase from 209,409 Veteran enrollees in 2019 to 213,521 in 2020. Our full-time employees also increased from 2783.62 in 2019 to 3025.63 in 2020. The Columbia VA houses 216 inpatient beds, with an average daily census of 197.

Patients seek care for a broad range of medical and mental health conditions, and range in age from 18 to 90+. In the past decade, Vietnam Veterans constituted the largest cohort of patients treated. However, there is now a large and rapidly increasing cohort of Iraq and Afghanistan theater (OIF/OEF/OND) Veterans receiving care at our facility. This increase is due in part to intensive outreach established by the VA in VISN 7 as well as to the range of services created for returning Veterans at the medical center. While Veterans of any economic circumstance can be eligible for care, the public sector nature of the VA system makes it more likely that patients with limited means and fewer social resources will be seen at this facility relative to the Columbia community.

Privacy Policy

We will collect no personal information about you when you visit our Website. The faculty is committed to promoting resident development, respecting resident privacy, and avoiding the misuse of power that can accompany dual roles. Towards these ends, the faculty supervisors respect the ability of residents to choose what personal information is appropriate for disclosure to faculty.

Administrative Policies and Procedures

Stipend: Residents receive a competitive stipend paid in 26 biweekly installments. VA postdoctoral fellowship stipends are locality adjusted to reflect different relative costs in different geographical areas. Currently, the stipend for the Columbia VA Health Care System postdoctoral residency is ~\$52,005 annually.

Benefits: The postdoctoral residency appointments are for 2080 hours, which is full-time for a one-year period. VA residents are eligible for health insurance (for self, married spouse, and legal dependents), just as are regular employees. This now also includes access to FEDVIP (Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program).

Holidays and Leave: Residents receive the 11 annual paid federal holidays. In addition, residents accrue 4 hours of sick leave and 4 hours of annual leave for each full two week pay period as a resident, for a total of 104 hours (13 days) of each during the year. The 2080 hours includes federal holidays and leave provided to the resident.

Authorized Leave Policy: The policy of the psychology postdoctoral residency program on Authorized Leave is consistent with the national standard.

Self-Disclosure: The faculty of the Columbia VA Health Care System fellowship value self-reflection in professional training. We view self-reflection as an integral component of being an effective, compassionate professional. While supervisors vary in the level of self-disclosure they encourage in supervision, some level of self-reflection and self-disclosure is part of the supervisory process. Applicants and residents are encouraged to discuss this issue with prospective supervisors.

As stated in the APA Ethics Code, a resident may be required to disclose personal information if it becomes necessary to evaluate or obtain assistance for the resident whose personal problems are preventing them from performing their training or professionally related activities in a competent manner or posing a threat to students or others. The faculty recognizes the benefit of personal psychotherapy for all psychology trainees. We consider the decision to seek psychotherapy a personal one, but may, in some circumstances, suggest or encourage residents to seek personal psychotherapy.

Application & Selection Procedures

Overview

The Columbia VA Health Care System abides by all APPIC and APA guidelines and requirements regarding residency application and selection procedures.

The APA Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation and the Commission on Accreditation (CoA) can be contacted at:

Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation
American Psychological Association
750 First Street, NE Washington,
DC, 20002-4242
Web site: <http://www.apa.org/ed/accreditation>
Phone: (202) 336-5979
Fax: (202) 336-5978

The Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Residency Program is a member of APPIC.

An internet link to the current APPIC/APPACAS Policies is available at www.appic.org. The Columbia VA Health Care System Residency APPIC Member Number is 9935. The first class of Psychology Residents and Interns started in August 2011.

Eligibility Requirements

All information about VA eligibility requirements is available at: [Resources for Health Professions Trainees Coming to VA | Eligibility and Forms - Office of Academic Affiliations](https://www.va.gov/oaa/hpt-eligibility.asp) (<https://www.va.gov/oaa/hpt-eligibility.asp>)

All applicants to the postdoctoral residency program at the Columbia VA Health Care System must:

- Have a doctoral degree in Clinical or Counseling Psychology from an APA-accredited program or an APA approved respecialization training program in Clinical or Counseling Psychology. Additionally, candidates are eligible for VA training programs if they have attended institutions accredited by the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) or Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System (PCSAS).
- Have completed an internship program accredited by the APA Commission on Accreditation or have completed a VA-sponsored internship (including a new VA internship that is not yet APA accredited).
- Certification of U. S. citizenship is required for all VA employees and trainees. All residents will have to complete a Certification of Citizenship in the U. S. prior to beginning the fellowship. Applicants who are non-citizens will not be considered.
- The Federal Government requires that male applicants to VA positions born after 12/31/59 must sign a Pre-Appointment Certification Statement for Selective Service Registration before they are employed. It is not necessary to submit this form with the application, but if you are selected for this residency and fit the above criteria, you will have to sign it.
- Per Executive Order 12564 the VA strives to be a Drug-Free workplace. HPTs are not drug-tested prior to appointment; however they are subject to random drug testing throughout their entire VA appointment. Please note: Cannabis is not legal at federal facilities, thus drug testing includes testing for cannabis and we cannot employ those who test positive for cannabis. The resident will be asked to sign an acknowledgement form stating you are aware of this practice.
 - For additional information regarding “See the VA Drug-Free Workplace program” please see: [VA Drug-Free Workplace Program Guide for Veterans Health Administration Health Professions Trainees](#)
- Residents are subject to fingerprinting and background checks. Residents are also required to have certain immunizations (including a yearly flu shot and COVID-19 vaccine). Selection decisions are contingent on passing these screens and having required immunizations.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs, like all federal agencies, has mandated that all employees and trainees be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 as a condition of employment. Trainees may request a medical or religious exemption for the COVID-19 vaccine. However, if this is not approved, a trainee would need to get vaccinated prior to starting employment.
- Our training programs are committed to creating a supportive learning environment for

individuals of diverse backgrounds, and as a federal agency, we abide by the U.S. government EEO and Reasonable Accommodation policies.

- To streamline and help with the process of onboarding, all HPTs have to complete a Trainee Qualification and Credentials Verification Letter (TQCVL). An educational Official at the Affiliate must complete and sign this letter. For post-graduate programs where an affiliate is not the program sponsor, this process must be completed by the VA Training Director. The VA appointment cannot begin until the TQCVL is submitted. For more information please visit (<https://www.va.gov/OAA/TQCVL.asp>)
- Department of Veteran's Affairs Psychology Postdoctoral Resident and Advanced Fellow Verification Agreement. The Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) in collaboration with the Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention created a new psychology postdoctoral verification agreement distributed to the field in February of 2022. This form will now need to also be completed prior to start of one's VA Psychology Internship.
- Additional information regarding eligibility can be found at: [Resources for Health Professions Trainees Coming to VA | Eligibility and Forms - Office of Academic Affiliations](#)

If you are interested in our fellowship program, please utilize the APPIC APPACAS Portal to submit your application including:

1. A cover letter that describes your personal training goals and how our post-doc may help you meet your goals. In your letter, please describe your previous educational, research and clinical experience relevant to the post-doc; discuss any trauma training experience you have had and/or plan to have, if relevant to your training goals please also describe your substance use disorder training experience you have had and/or plan to have, your assessment of your training needs; specific clinical settings and experiences at Columbia VA Health Care System that you feel would help you reach your goals; research or educational project ideas that you want to pursue during your fellowship year; and your general career goals.
2. A copy of your curriculum vitae, including anticipated graduation date.
3. Three letters of recommendation from faculty members or clinical supervisors who are familiar with your clinical as well as your research experiences (ideally including a letter from your Internship Training Director as well as from at least one supervisor that is familiar with your work in trauma).
4. A brief statement from your dissertation chair outlining the progress you have made on your dissertation, a likely defense date and likely graduation date from the program. If you have already successfully completed and defended your dissertation this is NOT required, however please submit a brief letter indicating the title of your dissertation and completion date, as the APPACAS portal will require a letter in this section.
5. An official or unofficial copy of your graduate transcript.

Please compile all materials and utilize the APPACAS portal to apply. If you are having difficulties

please reach out to both Lyndsey.Zoller@va.gov and Amy.Untied@va.gov. We look forward to hearing from you.

Please direct any questions to:

Lyndsey Zoller, PsyD
Psychology Clinical Training Director
Columbia VA Health Care System
Mental Health Service Line-116
6439 Garners Ferry Road Columbia, SC 29209
Telephone: (803) 776-4000 x4360
Email: Lyndsey.Zoller@va.gov

Past Residents have trained with the following doctoral programs and Internship Sites

California School of Professional Psychology
Brigham Young University
University of South Carolina
Regent University
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities
Immaculata University
Widener University
East Tennessee State University
Capt. James A Lovell Federal Health Care Center

Boise VAMC
WJB Dorn VAMC
University of South Carolina Counseling and Psychiatric Services
Hunter Holmes McGuire VAMC
Upper Bay Counseling and Support Services
Widener University Counseling Center & Widener Partnership Charter School
James H. Quillen (Mountain Home) VAMC

Psychology Training Program Leadership

Lyndsey Zoller, Psy.D.

Clinical Director of Psychology Training
Rotation: Trauma Recovery Program
Doctorate: Clinical Psychology, Nova Southeastern University
Internship: WJB Dorn Veterans Affairs Medical Center
Postdoc: North Florida/South Georgia VA Medical Center

Amy Untied, Psy.D.

Assistant Clinical Director of Psychology Training
Doctorate: Clinical Psychology, Xavier University (2013)
Internship: Dayton VA Medical Center

Selection and Interview Process: Application materials will be reviewed upon receipt by all relevant psychology faculty. Top candidates will be invited for a ***virtual interview***. Candidates for interview will be selected based on several criteria including meeting the requirements described

above, clinical experiences, and match with our program. Applicants will be notified of their interview status as soon as all applications are reviewed. Please be sure to email address in your application materials so you can be reached to schedule an interview.

Notification Process:

Resident Appointment: Offers will be made initially over the phone. If a candidate accepts the offer, a letter of confirmation is sent within 48 hours of notification. Each resident must respond in writing that he or she accepts the appointment with the Columbia VA Health Care System Psychology Fellowship Program. All applicants will be notified within the timeframe and policies outlined by APPIC Postdoctoral Selection Standards. This includes the new APPIC Common Hold date (CHD) procedures.

When these letters are received from the new resident, copies of the application folders are sent to Human Resources Management Service (HRMS), which will then begin the process of employment. The applicants are required to complete Application for Health Professional Trainees (VA 10-2850D), the Declaration for Federal Employment (OF 306), and the Health Professions Trainee Random Drug Testing Notification and Acknowledgement Memo. Falsifying any answer on the federal documents will result in an inability to appoint a trainee or will result in the trainee's immediate dismissal from the training program. The appointment to a resident position is contingent upon the individual's application being cleared through a national data bank to screen for possible ethical and legal violations. All residents must pass employment screenings through the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General, List of Excluded Individuals and the National Practitioner Health Care Integrity and Protection Data Bank, as well as a fingerprint and background check, before the appointment becomes official. A resident must also pass the pre-employment physical completed by a VA hospital before he or she can begin the residency. The resident must also complete Training for VA Trainees, Online Cyber Security Awareness Training, Privacy Training and sign the Rules of Behavior before arriving for orientation. The postdoctoral program begins as soon as August 1 of each training year.

Applicants who match with our site must also be aware of the following Federal Government requirements: VA conducts drug screening exams on randomly selected personnel as well as new employees. Fellows are not drug-tested prior to appointment, but may be required to be tested once on staff and they are subject to random selection as are other staff members. Interns and Fellows are also subject to fingerprinting and background checks. Selection decisions are contingent on passing these screens. Please see the following link for additional information regarding the VA Drug-Free Workplace Program.

[VA Drug-Free Workplace Program Guide for Veterans Health Administration Health Professions Trainees](#)

Residents will be asked to complete the Trainee Qualifications and Credentials Verification Letter (TQCVL). This document is required for all VA Psychology Training programs. Overall, this document confirms that you (as a VA trainee) are in satisfactory physical condition to meet the requirements of the residency program (and have had a physical within the last 12 months), as well as attesting that residents have met appropriate tuberculosis screening as well as having other immunizations. Per recent changes, in regards to the COVID-19 vaccination: HPTs onboarded/hired on or after November 22, 2021, **must** be fully vaccinated (or an approved exception) **before** beginning employment and/or training

rotations with VA. Per VA Notice 22-01, “HPTs seeking an exception for medical or religious reasons must be evaluated using the processes set forth in this notice. The denial of an accommodation request must be supported by the relevant facts and meet the applicable legal standard.” If a waiver is not approved, the applicant will have to be fully vaccinated prior to beginning the fellowship. Appointment to the internship cannot happen until this document is completed.

All resident information is kept in a locked confidential file. This file is kept confidential; however, it will be available for site visitors for the next accreditation review with the understanding that specific identifying content will be kept confidential by the site visitors.

Health Professions Trainees (HPTs) are appointed as temporary employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs. As such, HPTs are subject to laws, policies, and guidelines posted for VA staff members. There are infrequent times in which this guidance can change during a training year which may create new requirements or responsibilities for HPTs. If employment requirements change during the course of a training year, HPTs will be notified of the change and impact as soon as possible and options provided. The VA Training Director for your profession will provide you with the information you need to understand the requirement and reasons for the requirement in timely manner.

COVID-19 Related Changes to Residency

The Columbia VA Health Care System psychology training program has prided itself on its transparency, and in providing detailed and accurate information about our program and training opportunities. Although a lot has happened during the pandemic, our dedication to high-quality clinical care and psychology training and our dedication to the trainees themselves has never been stronger. We will be utilizing both in-person and virtual modalities for our training experiences and trainees are expected to report on-site for training. The resident has their own office where they work. We do not expect there to be any significant changes to the base clinical services or populations served through rotations and the experiences described in our materials.

Please feel free to reach out to us if you have any questions. Contact information can be found in the Application and Selection Procedures section.

Facility Safety Procedures

Trainees will be expected to be on-site for the duration of their clinical duties. Staff are to stay home if they test positive for COVID-19. They will need to be cleared by Occupational Health before returning to work. At the current time there is a mixture of both in-person and virtual care being provided.

The Setting



Columbia is the capital city of South Carolina and is the second-largest city in the state with a population of 132,236 people. It is also a college town and home to the University of South Carolina which is the largest university in the state. The cost of living in Columbia is generally lower than the national average and traffic is minimal. The city is within a couple hours' drive to the Atlantic coast and beaches or the Blue Ridge Mountains. The winters are mild and summers are hot. Staff enjoy weekend trips to Savannah, GA, Atlanta, GA, Charleston, SC, Greenville, SC, Myrtle Beach, SC, Asheville, NC, and Charlotte, NC. Outdoor enthusiasts may enjoy visiting Congaree National Park and boating and fishing at Lake Murray. Columbia offers a variety of festivals, sporting events, concerts, restaurants, and parks to enjoy. The revitalized downtown area includes art galleries, museums, theaters, and a variety of entertainment options.

Columbia is a community that celebrates diversity. There are a variety of art and cultural activities held in and near the Columbia area. Events celebrating heritage and contributions of various ethnic cultures are held throughout the year. Some of these events include the Greek Festival, Jubilee Festival of Black History and Culture, Columbia International Festival, and the Columbia Latin Festival. Each October, Columbia hosts the SC Pride Festival which is the largest LGBT event held in the state and it has grown each year. Columbia is rich in African American history and culture. The city has strong and resilient African American neighborhoods and religious and educational institutions including Benedict College and Allen University.

Columbia offers an art and music scene that includes Columbia Museum of Art, local art galleries, the Koger Center for the Arts, Township auditorium, Colonial Life Arena, with many local venues hosting live music. Each year Columbia hosts the Indie Grits Film Festival, celebrating visionary and experimental culture of the Southeast through film, art, and music. This festival partners with the Nickelodeon Theatre, which is another Columbia landmark known for its independent films, curated series, and

special community screenings. Sporting events include basketball at the Colonial Life Arena, football at Williams-Brice Stadium. The South Carolina State Museum also offers a planetarium, observatory with a 4-D theatre, while the Riverbanks Zoo and Garden is a 170-acre zoo, aquarium, and botanical garden with more than 2,000 animals that represent more than 350 species and 4,000 species of plants. Outdoor recreation is abundant with many areas available for hiking, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, water skiing, and other water sports.

Housing is readily available throughout many parts of the city within easy commuting distance from the medical center, which is located 6 miles from downtown.

The Columbia area is a major educational center in South Carolina. The area fosters training in academics at bachelor's, master's, and doctoral level programs. Area universities include the University of South Carolina, Columbia College, Columbia International University, Midlands Technical College, Limestone College, and South University. There is a state professional organization, the South Carolina Psychological Association, that trainees may join as student affiliates. The state organization holds an annual conference in Columbia, and trainees are encouraged to submit their research for the poster presentation.

Fun Facts about the Columbia Area

- The Riverbanks Zoological Park houses multiple historical landmarks, including covered river bridge abutments dating back to the Civil War. The zoo also is one of less than a dozen zoos that have a permanent koala exhibit.
- The Columbia Fireflies, the Minor League Baseball based in Columbia, SC is named after the fireflies that live here.
- The synchronous fireflies, that are in Congaree National Park, all light up at the same time and are only found in half a dozen places in the world.
- Georgia O'Keefe, taught art at Columbia College in 1915.
- Columbia is the second planned city in the US.
- The Columbia Marionette Theater is one of only a handful of theaters dedicated to puppets.
- The first textile mill run completely by electricity in the world is now the South Carolina State Museum.
- Jasper Johns grew up in South Carolina and attended 3 semesters at the University of South Carolina prior to studying at Parsons School of Design.

Diversity and Inclusion

Thank you for your interest in our Psychology Internship program at the Columbia VA Health Care System. We are very proud of our APA-Accredited program and believe it can offer you a well-rounded experience for your residency training year.

Our training environment is one of warmth and welcoming that is conducive to the resident's professional and personal growth as they navigate moving towards becoming a practicing psychologist. Our program follows a generalist approach to training and follows the Practitioner-Scholar Model of academic training and practice. We encourage learning that is culturally sensitive, diverse, creative, thoughtful, and supports the use of empirically based and supported practices and scholarly inquiry. The Columbia VA Health Care System serves Veterans who represent a wide variety of diversity

including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, regional affiliation, age, and religious/spiritual orientation.

We currently have 1 resident and 3 psychology interns per each training class. We are committed to recruiting and retaining diverse residents and our program adheres to all Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and federal policies regarding non-discriminatory hiring and retention procedures. We encourage applicants with individual and culturally diverse backgrounds to apply to our site. We continue to uphold an inclusive environment once an applicant becomes a resident at our site. Please see below for information regarding how we incorporate diversity into our training program.

Diversity Mission Statement

The Columbia VA Health Care System's Clinical Psychology Internship is deeply committed to fostering multicultural competence and diversity awareness. The overall goal of our training activities is to produce interns who conduct all professional activities with sensitivity to human diversity, including the ability to demonstrate knowledge, awareness, sensitivity, and skills when working with an increasingly diverse population. Additionally, as a psychology team, we are committed to a process of exploring how our biases, power, privilege, assumptions, and life experiences impact our clinical work. We are seeking candidates who share in our diversity mission statement and seek to further our collective efforts towards inclusion and equality for all people- Veterans and staff included. This is a daily effortful process we are committed to.

Diversity Discussion Group

The resident engages in a cultural diversity learning activity once a month for two hours to develop the core competency area of cultural sensitivity. Research-based instruction, case presentation, and clinical application are all utilized in this series. Previous topics covered include increasing self-awareness and exploration, southern culture, desegregating diversity in therapy, diversity training in psychology, cultural factors in psychology training and supervision, and ethical issues, among others.

We also work to create an inclusive environment by promoting open discussions about various aspects of diversity throughout clinical rotation experiences, didactics, Psychology meetings, and other professional areas within our work setting.

***See Data Tables Below**

Program Tables – Admissions, Support, and Placement Data

As required by the APA Commission on Accreditation, below is the current Postdoctoral Residency Admissions, Support, and Initial Placement Data for the **Clinical Psychology Program**.

Postdoctoral Residency Admissions, Support, and Initial Placement Data

Date Program Tables are updated: 8/21/23

Program Disclosures	
Does the program or institution require students, trainees, and/or staff (faculty) to comply with specific policies or practices related to the institution’s affiliation or purpose? Such policies or practices may include, but are not limited to, admissions, hiring, retention policies, and/or requirements for completion that express mission and values?	No
If yes, provide website link (or content from brochure) where this specific information is presented:	NA
Postdoctoral Program Admissions	
Briefly describe in narrative form important information to assist potential applicants in assessing their likely fit with your program. This description must be consistent with the program’s policies on intern selection and practicum and academic preparation requirements:	
<p>We seek applicants who have a sound clinical and scientific knowledge base from their academic program and internship; strong entry-level professional skills in standard assessment, intervention, and research techniques; and the personal characteristics necessary to function well as a doctoral-level professional in a medical center environment. Our selection criteria focus on all aspects of the application materials, with emphasis placed upon background training and experience and an applicant’s articulation of training goals and professional aspirations. We seek the best fit between applicants and our training program.</p> <p>The mission of the Psychology Postdoctoral Residency Program is to provide the postdoctoral resident with the opportunity to refine basic clinical skills to become a fully functioning clinical psychologist. In addition, the resident will have an opportunity to focus on care for PTSD and develop and utilize consultation and clinical psychotherapy skills needed while providing mental health services in an outpatient setting. The model for providing these services</p>	

encourages the postdoctoral resident to provide services that are evidence-based, timely, recovery-oriented, and sensitive to the needs of the Veteran.	
Describe any other required minimum criteria used to screen applicants:	
<p>Applicants must meet the following prerequisites to be considered for our postdoctoral training program:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completion of doctoral degree, including defense of dissertation, from a clinical or counseling psychology doctoral programs accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA) before the start date of the residency. 2. Completion of an APA-accredited psychology internship program. 3. U.S. citizenship. 4. Matched postdoctoral residents are subject to fingerprinting, background checks, and a urine drug screen. 5. Male applicants born after 12/31/1959 must have registered for the draft by age 26. 6. Completion and following all requirements within the TQCVL outlined above. An additional Postdoctoral Verification Agreement form will also need to be completed. 7. The following eligibility criteria mandated by the VA: Resources for Health Professions Trainees Coming to VA Eligibility and Forms - Office of Academic Affiliations <p>*** Failure to meet these qualifications could nullify an offer to an applicant.</p>	
Financial and Other Benefit Support for Upcoming Training Year*	
Annual Stipend/Salary for Full-time Residents	52,005
Annual Stipend/Salary for Half-time Residents	NA
Program provides access to medical insurance for Residents?	Yes
If access to medical insurance is provided:	
Trainee contribution to cost required?	Yes
Coverage of family member(s) available?	Yes
Coverage of legally married partner available?	Yes
Coverage of domestic partner available?	Yes
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?	Yes
Other Benefits (please describe):	NA

*Note. Programs are not required by the Commission on Accreditation to provide all benefits listed in this table	
Residents are entitled to 11 federal holidays and earn sick leave and vacation days at a rate of four hours of each per two-week pay period. Residents are encouraged to use all their annual leave before completion of the training year. Unused sick leave may be applied to future federal employment. Additional leave may be approved for attendance at conferences and workshops or other continuing education activities. Postdoctoral residents are not covered by Federal Employee retirement and are not eligible for federal life insurance benefits but are eligible for health insurance benefits	
Initial Post-Residency Positions	
(Provide an Aggregated Tally for the Preceding 3 Cohorts)	2019-2022
Total # of Residents who were in the 3 cohorts	2
Total # of interns who did not seek employment because they returned to their doctoral program/are completing doctoral degree	0
Academic teaching	PD=0, EP=0
Community mental health center	PD=0, EP=0
Consortium	PD=0, EP=0
University Counseling Center	PD=0, EP=0
Hospital/Medical Center	PD=0, EP=0
Veterans Affairs Health Care System	PD=0, EP=2
Psychiatric facility	PD=0, EP=0
Correctional facility	PD=0, EP=0
Health maintenance organization	PD=0, EP=0
School district/system	PD=0, EP=0
Independent practice setting	PD=0, EP=0
Other	PD=0, EP=0
Note: "PD" = Post-doctoral residency position; "EP" = Employed Position. Each individual represented in this table should be counted only one time. For former trainees working in more than one setting, select the setting that represents their primary position.	