

2025-  
2026

VAHCS Salt Lake City Clinical Psychology  
Postdoctoral Fellowship: Health  
Psychology Track



George E. Wahlen Department of Veterans  
Affairs Medical Center

# VAHCS SALT LAKE CITY CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP: HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

George E. Wahlen Veterans Affairs

Salt Lake City Health Care System

Primary Care Behavioral Health Service, (111BH)

500 Foothill Drive

Salt Lake City, UT 84148

(801) 582-1565



Application Due Date: December 8, 2024

Co-Directors of Clinical Psychology  
Postdoctoral Fellowship Training:

Co-Director

Cicely Taravella, Ph.D., PTSD Track  
[Cicely.Taravella@va.gov](mailto:Cicely.Taravella@va.gov)

Co-Director

Christy Rosner Ph.D., Addictions Track  
Email Dr. Sweeney for interest

Co-Director

Karen Jordan, Ph.D., Health Track  
[Karen.Jordan2@va.gov](mailto:Karen.Jordan2@va.gov)

Directors of Psychology Training:

Training Director

Renn Sweeney, Ph.D.  
[Caroline.Sweeney@va.gov](mailto:Caroline.Sweeney@va.gov)

Training Co-Director

Channing Cochran, Ph.D.  
[Channing.Cochran@va.gov](mailto:Channing.Cochran@va.gov)

Chief of Psychology

Edward Varra, Ph.D.  
[Edward.Varra@va.gov](mailto:Edward.Varra@va.gov)

# Table of Contents

Welcome .....	5
Statement Regarding COVID-19.....	6
VA Salt Lake City Health Care System .....	7
VASLCHCS Psychology Training Program Mission .....	8
Fellowship Program Overview .....	9
Goals .....	9
Structure.....	9
Schedule.....	9
Resources .....	9
Due Process .....	10
Self-Disclosure .....	10
Privacy Policy .....	10
Liability Protection for Trainees.....	10
Accreditation Status.....	10
Health Psychology Track .....	11
Rotations .....	11
Rotation Structure.....	16
Additional Fellowship Experiences .....	17
Required Trainings .....	17
Didactics And Seminars .....	17
Fellowship Project .....	19
Presentations .....	20
Evaluation .....	21
Psychology Competency Development.....	21
Exit Criteria .....	23
Postdoctoral Fellowship Project Evaluation.....	24
Fellow Evaluations of VASLCHCS Postdoctoral Fellowship Program.....	24
Application Process.....	25

Eligibility Requirements .....	25
Application Procedures .....	26
Application Evaluation .....	26
Stipend and Benefits .....	27
Medical/Family Leave .....	27
Administrative Policies and Procedures .....	28
Commitment to Diversity .....	29
Commitment to Enhancing Trainee and Organization Multicultural Competency .....	29
Multicultural, Diversity, & Inclusion Committee .....	30
Equal Opportunity Employer .....	31
Fellowship Training Supervisors .....	32
About Salt Lake City and Utah .....	35
Life After Fellowship .....	36

## Welcome

Dear Postdoctoral Fellowship Applicant:

We appreciate your interest in the Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship Program at the George E. Wahlen Department of Veterans Affairs Salt Lake City Health Care System (VASLCHCS). We know you have many choices and are delighted you are considering our site among your options. The postdoctoral training year is an exciting, yet challenging time as fellows continue their growth as professionals, focus on honing their skills in a chosen area of interest, and prepare to enter the job market. We take great joy in being a part of this process and place education and training as a top priority in our program. We value the collegial working relationships with fellows, the opportunity to teach and supervise, and strive to create a positive environment for learning and growth.

The VASLCHCS has a long history of clinical psychology training. The internship program was established in 1952 and has been APA accredited since 1979. In 2007, the VASLCHCS was awarded two clinical psychology postdoctoral positions for PTSD. We also offer a two-year GRECC-funded post-doctoral fellowships in Geropsychology and a two-year postdoctoral position at the MIRECC, with an emphasis in suicide. In 2013, the VASLCHCS was awarded three additional post-doctoral fellowship positions which have been used to develop positions in Health Psychology and, most recently, Addictions Treatment.

The following brochure describes the philosophy and goals of the Psychology Fellowship Program for the Health Psychology Tracks, possible clinical experiences, requirements, and application procedures. We hope that this brochure provides you with a sense of the fellowship training experience at the VASLCHCS and reflects our enthusiasm for training. It is difficult to represent the character of a training program in writing, so please do not hesitate to contact me directly with any questions about our program. We wish you the best during this exciting time in your training!

Karen Jordan, PhD  
Co-Director of Psychology Fellowship Training  
VA Salt Lake City Healthcare System  
801-582-1565 x3385  
[Karen.Jordan2@va.gov](mailto:Karen.Jordan2@va.gov)



## Statement Regarding COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has created numerous personal and professional challenges for us all. One of these challenges is uncertainty about what will happen next week, next month, and especially one year from now.

The Salt Lake City psychology training program has prided itself on its transparency providing detailed and accurate information about our program and training opportunities. With COVID, transparency means we cannot definitively predict how specific rotations and adjunctive training opportunities may evolve for the upcoming training year.

With confidence we can say that there will likely be continued utilization of telehealth and technology-based delivery platforms. We do not expect there to be any significant changes to the base clinical services or populations served through relational and adjunctive experiences described in our materials.

A lot has happened these last few years with all trainees and many staff abruptly shifting to providing clinical services and training remotely. However, we want to assure you, that even through these challenging times our dedication to high-quality clinical care, psychology training, and our dedication to the trainees themselves has never been stronger. These will always be cornerstone elements of the VA Salt Lake City psychology program. This we can predict!

We will update our public materials as we know more about the upcoming training year. Please feel free to reach out to us if you have any questions.

Karen Jordan, PhD  
Co-Director of Psychology Fellowship Training  
VA Salt Lake City Healthcare System  
801-582-1565 x3385  
[Karen.Jordan2@va.gov](mailto:Karen.Jordan2@va.gov)

## VA Salt Lake City Health Care System

The Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship Program is sponsored by the VA Salt Lake City Health Care System (VASLCHCS) located in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The main facility is the George E. Wahlen Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center located on an 81-acre campus adjacent to the Salt Lake City Veterans Affairs Regional Office and the University of Utah. It's a midsized primary and tertiary care facility with 133 beds providing a full range of patient care services. Comprehensive health care is provided through medicine, surgery, psychiatry, physical medicine and rehabilitation, neurology, oncology, dentistry, geriatrics, and extended care.



The VASLCHCS is part of VA Network (VISN) 19, which encompasses the largest geographic area in the 48 contiguous states. We serve an area covering the entire state of Utah, the majority of Montana, Wyoming and Colorado, and portions of Idaho, Kansas, Nebraska, Nevada, and North Dakota. We have eleven Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) and two Outreach Clinics in remote areas of Utah, Idaho and Nevada. During fiscal year 2010, the VASLCHCS served 45,2829 Veterans in over 500,000 outpatient visits.

In terms of demographics, 86% of the veterans served by VASLCHCS identify as male; 14% identify as female. Eighty-seven percent identify as Euro-American, 6.5% as Latino/Latina, 5% as African-American, 1% as Native American, and 0.5% as Asian American. The socioeconomic status of our veterans varies widely. A vibrant LGBTQ community is served by our VA. We would like to respectfully acknowledge that the VASLCHCS sits on lands that have always been indigenous lands, and that Utah is currently home to five Native American tribes: the Ute, Shoshone, Paiute, Navajo, and Goshute.

As a Dean's Committee Medical Center, VASLCHCS is closely affiliated with the University Of Utah School of Medicine, located less than one mile away. In addition to this longstanding affiliation, VASLCHCS maintains active affiliations with several other Utah colleges and universities and serves as a training site for students, interns, residents, and fellows from a variety of health care professions. VASLCHCS is also home to the Salt Lake City Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center (GRECC), Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC), and the VHA Office of Rural Health Resource Center (RHRC). Finally, VASLCHCS serves as the location for the VHA funded Mental Health Strategic Health Care Group Informatics Section.

In 2006, VASLCHCS was designated a Level III Polytrauma Center to respond to the needs of Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts who have suffered multiple traumatic injuries, including TBI and PTSD. Further information about the VA Salt Lake City Health Care System is available at <https://www.saltlakecity.va.gov/>.

## VASLCHCS Psychology Training Program Mission

Training future psychologists is important to us. Psychologists are charged with improving people's lives and fostering a better society. These are challenging and rewarding tasks for which proper training is critical. All of us had teachers and mentors and supervisors who understood this responsibility and who took the time to guide and shape and nurture our growth. We train to continue this service. We train because it matters to us and to the Veterans we serve. From practicum students to interns to postdoctoral fellows, our mission is to train and mentor the next generation of professional psychologists who will serve, mentor, and lead. We aim to provide strong clinical training with a focus on the professional development of the trainee, in the context of providing effective, comprehensive, evidence-based care to our nation's Veterans.

Our specific aims are to both broaden and refine trainees' existing clinical skills, to foster further growth in ethical and culturally competent therapy, assessment, research, supervision, and consultation, to facilitate reflective practice and self-care, to broaden communication and interpersonal skills, and to deepen trainees' sense of professional identity.

We expect that our psychologists-in-training will arrive with solid clinical skills, ethical practices, self-awareness, and sensitivity to diversity, as appropriate to their level of training, with strong clinical interests, and a willingness to learn and grow in higher level skills. We expect that all of our trainees will consistently demonstrate benevolence, ethical behavior, and humility in their practice and training. We expect that you will commit to growing in your transition from student to professional and to actively seek opportunities to facilitate this transition.



We, the faculty, commit to creating a supportive, safe, and nurturing training environment that facilitates this growth in our trainees. We commit to providing ethical and culturally competent, developmentally sensitive supervision, that fosters professional growth, autonomy, and accountability. We commit to consistently demonstrating benevolence, ethical behavior, and humility in our practice and supervision. We commit to continually examining our practices and to growing as supervisors.

# Fellowship Program Overview

## Goals

The Postdoctoral Fellowship Program ascribes to the practitioner-scholar model of training. As such, the goal of the fellowship is to train psychologists to function in an informed, competent, independent, and ethical manner across a wide range of health care settings. The program's structure allows for both breadth and depth of clinical experiences, as well as exposure to a variety of intervention approaches and professional issues. Fellows are here for training and professional development, not service delivery; consequently, didactics, training seminars, and any other educational activities take priority in a fellow's schedule.

The clinical psychology postdoctoral fellowship provides advanced interdisciplinary education and training across a variety of medical settings for the purpose of training future psychologists who are capable of providing the next generation of psychological services within Veterans Affairs. Even though this is classified as a general clinical fellowship training, the health track emphasizes the provision of integrated health psychology services to Veterans within medical settings.

## Structure

The fellowship program at the VHSLCHCS is currently made up of three emphasis areas. This year, the Psychology Department of the Salt Lake City VA Healthcare System will offer five fellowship positions across these emphasis areas:

- Health Psychology - 2 fellows
- PTSD (please see PTSD brochure) – 2 fellows
- Addictions (please see Addictions brochure) – 1 fellow

Although fellows in these tracks are largely working in their areas of emphasis, there is an effort to create a sense of community amongst all of our postdoctoral fellows through fellowship orientation, shared didactics, Pub Club, and fellowship events.

## Schedule

The Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship is a full-time, 12-month continuous appointment and will be primarily clinical in nature. In general fellows work 40-50 hours per week. All fellows complete at least a total of 2080 hours of training, which is a VA requirement. The usual tour of duty is 8:00 – 4:30 pm, although this schedule adjusts to accommodate evening groups or other program activities. However, the completion of clinical duties may require extra working hours. The parameters of each training experience are detailed the first week of orientation.

## Resources

Fellows have office space for use in assessment and psychotherapy. Fellows have access to computers with a Microsoft Office Suite, printer access, and a nationwide integrated electronic medical chart named CPRS. There is also computer support through IRMS. The VA Salt Lake City has a medical library that provides a wide range of psychology, psychiatry, gerontology, and other journals consistent with the

needs of staff and the training program. Fellows have access to the VA library and may access the libraries at the University of Utah by either personal access or inter-library loan. Fellows receive administrative support from administrative support assistants who help fellows with several aspects of the fellowship.

## Due Process

All trainees are afforded the right to due process in matters of problematic behavior and grievances. Due process documents are a part of the orientation manual and are reviewed during orientation. A copy of our due process policy is available on request.

## Self-Disclosure

We do not require trainees to disclose personal information to their clinical supervisors except in cases where personal issues may be adversely affecting a trainee's performance and such information is necessary to address these difficulties.

## Privacy Policy

We collect no personal information from you when you visit our web site.

## Liability Protection for Trainees

VA-sponsored trainees acting within the scope of their educational programs and when providing professional services at a VA healthcare facility are protected from personal liability under the Federal Employees Liability Reform and Tort Compensation Act 28, U.S.C.2679 (b)-(d).

## Accreditation Status

The Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship Program at the VASLCHCS is currently accredited by the American Psychological Association. For information regarding APA accreditation of this or other accredited training programs, please contact:

Commission on Accreditation (CoA)  
American Psychological Association  
750 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20002-4242  
Phone: (202) 336-5979  
FAX: (202) 336-5978

## Health Psychology Track

The Health Psychology emphasis area allows the fellow the opportunity to develop advanced training skills in integrated behavioral medicine in inpatient and outpatient settings throughout the hospital. Fellows will work with inpatient medical teams, primary care Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACT), as well as other interdisciplinary medicine teams to address Veterans' healthcare needs through a collaborative approach with shared decision-making. Fellows will have opportunities to provide brief interventions, short-term counseling, assessment, facilitate interdisciplinary health behavior groups, and provide consultation and training for medical team members. Fellows will also have opportunities to develop quality metrics for the facility's Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (HPDP) efforts. Finally, fellows will also have the opportunity to develop expertise in complementary areas of interest including geriatrics and rural populations. Generally, health psychology fellows spend approximately 75% of their clinical time in health psychology rotations and approximately 25% of their time in Geropsychology rotations (see Geropsychology Emphasis rotations for description). Fellows will select opportunities offered from the rotations listed below. Experiences can be designated as year-long or time limited. Ultimately, fellows will work with the training director and supervisors to customize the training year to meet their individual needs, preferences, and abilities.

### Rotations

#### Pain Psychology (Health Psychology)

Supervisor: Amber Martinson, PhD

The Pain Psychology Rotation consists of a combination of experiences available under the MedPsych Service, including:

- **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for Chronic Pain Program:** Psychology trainees will have the opportunity to co-lead the CBT for Chronic Pain Groups with Dr. Martinson that occur on Wednesdays at 3:00PM-4:00PM via telehealth (VA Video Connect), as well as the groups offered on Tuesdays 9:30AM-10:30AM in Building 9, Classroom A. This is a closed group and runs for 6 weeks, with each week building on the previous week. This group takes a cognitive-behavioral approach with an acceptance and commitment therapy lens. Trainees are provided with a therapist manual for this group to facilitate consistency between rounds (for research purposes), though new perspectives and techniques are welcomed. The role trainees take in this program is dependent upon interest and familiarity with treating complex chronic pain.
- **Brief Outpatient Therapy/Assessment:** Psychology trainees will have the opportunity to carry a caseload of individual patients for brief outpatient therapy. Referrals on this rotation will primarily focus on chronic pain, though could include adjustment issues (i.e., adjustment to chronic illness, current life stressors, end of life issues) and mild depression/anxiety.
- **Research:** Dr. Martinson is currently the Principal Investigator for multiple IRB-approved studies examining outcomes for her Brief CBT-CP intervention. Psychology trainees, upon request, can participate in different levels of the research process which could result in authorship on peer-reviewed publications.

- **Military Sexual Trauma (MST):** Dr. Martinson also serves as the MST Coordinator for the facility. Trainees will have the opportunity to conduct brief assessments and coordinate care for Veterans with history of MST and comorbid chronic pain.

## **Primary Care-Mental Health Integration (PC-MHI) with opportunities in insomnia (Health Psychology)**

Supervisor: Cassie Dance, PhD

PC-MHI provides integrated mental health care services to all primary care patients treated at the VAMC Salt Lake City through the Primary Care Clinic. PC-MHI's role in this clinic is an integrated one, as our service works collaboratively with the primary care providers to enhance treatment of medical and psychological problems presented by clinic patients. We use a blended model to provide both care management and co-located collaborative care to PACT teams and Veterans. Our Veterans present with a range of often complex psychological and physical health concerns, including sleep disorders, coping with chronic illness, grief, MST, PTSD, adjustment disorders, depression, anxiety disorders, compliance issues, and eating/weight disorders. Typical activities for fellows on this rotation include:

- **Primary Care Consult/Triage:** Fellows will conduct Primary Care triage/consult. Fellows will respond to formal and informal (curbside) consults from primary care providers and medical residents for assistance in managing patients who present to the primary care clinic with mental health related issues. Patients are seen immediately during primary care appointments. Consults may require triage to outpatient mental health, assessment for psychiatric hospitalization, recommendations for psychiatric medication management within the primary care setting, immediate brief behavioral interventions, motivational interviewing, or brief follow-up with PC-MHI. This experience requires fellows work closely with primary care providers and PC-MHI team members to provide recommendations, care coordination, and support for patients' mental health care needs.
- **Brief Outpatient Therapy:** Fellows have the opportunity to carry a caseload of patients for brief outpatient therapy. Patients present with a variety of diagnoses, although our primary focus is on adjustment issues (i.e., adjustment to chronic illness, current life stressors), sleep disturbance, and mild depression/anxiety.
- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I):** Fellows respond to consults for insomnia and provide CBT-I as appropriate. Fellows will learn to assess for and differentiate insomnia and other relevant sleep disorders and conditions that may impact sleep. Fellows will learn to implement CBT-I in both group and individual formats.

## **Inpatient Mental Health & Presurgical Evaluation (Health Psychology)**

Supervisor: Karen Jordan, PhD

The Inpatient Mental Health rotation involves working with a variety of inpatient populations as well as conducting in- and outpatient presurgical evaluations. This includes participation in patient-centered rounds, chart review, case conceptualization, treatment planning, conducting diagnostic evaluations, administration of neuropsychological screenings, providing brief inpatient psychotherapy, consulting and providing recommendations for various teams and providers throughout the hospital, and conducting assessments and follow-up therapy for special medical populations.

Training opportunities on this rotation include:

- **Mental Health Consult Team:** Fellows will participate in an interdisciplinary group consisting of Psychology, Psychiatry, Clinical Pharmacy and trainees from several other rotating mental health and medical disciplines. This team provides mental health services to patients within inpatient medical settings, including Acute Medicine, Surgery, Neurology, Telemetry, Dialysis, and Intensive Care Units by utilizing a consultation/liaison model. Common referral issues include medical decision-making capacity, cognitive functioning, adjustment to illness, evaluation/management of psychiatric symptoms (e.g., depression, anxiety, psychosis), and substance abuse/detoxification.
- **Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Team:** Fellows will also play an important role on the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) Team. Within this context trainees have the opportunity to respond to consults for rehabilitation psychology and follow inpatients for brief therapy and supportive counseling. Working with the PM&R team includes attending the interdisciplinary team meeting and “rapid rounds”, seeing patients to support their adjustment to debility or chronic illness, and making recommendations to PM&R providers on how best to support rehab and recovery.
- **Presurgical Transplant Evaluations:** Fellows in this rotation will also gain exposure to the process of presurgical mental health evaluations, primarily for organ transplant, and brief follow-up intervention with these patients as needed. Evaluations involve brief mental health and cognitive screeners, formal interview, and recommendations for listing and improving transplant candidacy.

## VISN 19 Clinical Resource Hub (Geropsychology Emphasis) (Health Psychology)

Supervisor: Erin Kube, PhD, ABPP

The VISN 19 Clinical Resource Hub provides evidence-based assessment and treatment services to facilities in the VA Rocky Mountain Network (UT, MT, CO & WY) in order to enhance Veteran access to mental health and primary care services. The CRH is comprised of physicians, psychologists, psychiatrists, nurse managers, advanced psychiatric nurse practitioners, and social workers that assist VA facilities across VISN 19 with provision of virtual primary care and mental health services. The CRH geropsychology emphasis will allow fellows to explore the role of geropsychology across multiple clinical settings, via telehealth, and help them develop clinical skills in delivering evidence-based treatment to older adults and their family members. The rotation emphasizes brief geriatric-focused assessment, individual psychotherapy, caregiver education, and, at times, group therapy. Issues include, but are not limited to: evaluating cognitive function and placing appropriate referrals; providing dementia education to caregivers; helping Veterans cope with grief, depression, insomnia, chronic pain, tinnitus, and other psychological issues related to aging and/or disease process; coping with chronic medical illness and/or other life stressors; interventions to increase treatment adherence and adjustment to medical regimes; and becoming active members of multiple interdisciplinary treatment teams across VISN 19. Fellows may have an opportunity to engage in vertical supervision of interns.

Training opportunities for fellows on this rotation include:

- **Dementia Caregiver Education & Support:** Fellows have the opportunity to provide evidence-based caregiver support virtually to caregivers caring for rural Veteran’s with a neurocognitive

disorder. Services include dementia education, behavioral interventions for managing disruptive behaviors associated with dementia and stress management techniques.

- *Telehealth Dementia Care Consult Team:* Fellows also have the opportunity to attend shared medical appointments with an interdisciplinary team (geriatrician, geriatric social worker, pharmacist) that provides comprehensive evaluation of neurocognitive disorders to older rural Veterans. This will allow the opportunity to introduce caregiver support and gain a better understanding of each member's role on the team.
- **Geriatric Outpatient Mental Health:** This Montana-based outpatient mental health team specializes in serving the needs of highly rural older Veterans, many of whom have dementia. Fellows will have an opportunity to participate in a weekly interdisciplinary team case discussion consisting of a geriatric psychiatrist, geriatrician, geropsychologist, two neuropsychologists, and other support staff. They will perform geriatric focused assessments and deliver evidence-based interventions to Veterans as well as their family members.
- **Primary Care Mental Health Integration (PCMHI) – Geropsychology Focus:** Fellows have an opportunity to receive geriatric consults directly from primary care providers (in general PACTs across CO & UT) pertaining to a variety of concerns, including cognitive functioning, chronic disease management, adjustment to medical illness, depression, alcohol use, sleep disturbances, and dementia care management. Fellows can refine their skills in brief assessment, consultation, and care management around normative and non-normative age-related concerns that arise in primary care. They can also learn to deliver geriatric-informed brief psychotherapy and adapt evidence-based interventions to meet the needs of older adults in primary care via telehealth. Fellows may also have an opportunity to provide vertical clinical supervision to a psychology intern while on this rotation.

## Outpatient Geriatric Clinics (Geropsychology)

Supervisor: Bret Hicken, PhD

These weekly primary care clinics serve older Veterans with complex medical issues and are staffed by geriatric fellows geriatricians, clinical pharmacists, and social workers, in addition to the psychology fellow. Veterans in these clinics frequently have co-morbid cognitive and mental-health issues as well as psychosocial challenges that complicate their care. Psychology fellows serve in a consult/liaison role in these clinics, consulting with the team and providing brief psychological and cognitive assessments during the appointment and Fellows may also provide instruction to staff on psychological issues. Time-limited interventions may also be incorporated during clinic or as follow up. Common issues that psychology fellows may address with Veterans include depression, anxiety, grief, pain management, sleep/insomnia, and adjustment to aging and chronic disease.

## Geriatric Assessment Clinic

This weekly primary care clinic is a consult clinic that 1) triages new patients for referral into geriatric clinics or 2) provides feedback to referring providers on a one-time basis. Veterans referred to this clinic typically have questions about cognitive issues that are best addressed through a multidisciplinary evaluation. The clinic is staffed by a geriatrician, a pharmacist, social worker, and psychologist. Each patient is seen by every member of the team for a brief evaluation. The team then meets to review findings and to develop recommendations. The clinic is also heavily focused on training in interdisciplinary care with trainees within each professional discipline rotating through the clinic. Thus, GAC is a rich setting for learning about geriatric syndromes and mental health across different disciplines.

## **Geriatric Medical Psychology (Geri-Med Psych) Clinic (Geropsychology)**

Supervisor: Bret Hicken, PhD

This weekly consultation clinic serves geriatric Veterans with complicated medical and psychiatric needs. Veterans referred to this clinic typically have significant mental health and/or cognitive issues and disruptive behaviors that have become difficult to manage for caregivers and providers. The philosophy of this clinic is “patient-centered” and “whole-person” in that we address the psychosocial, environmental, and medical factors that influence behavior. In addition to the psychology fellow, the clinic includes an attending physician and trainees from many disciplines such as psychiatry, geriatrics, and pharmacy. Psychology fellows function in a variety of capacities in this clinic. They may provide direct patient care in the form of brief psychological and cognitive assessments as part of the patient’s clinic appointment. They may provide brief intervention in clinic or arrange for an appointment at a later date to address clinical concerns that require follow-up. Fellows also function in a consultation capacity by providing the team with observations, impressions, and treatment recommendations about psychological and cognitive issues. The fellow also provides supervision for psychology interns when they are present in clinic. Over time, the fellow becomes a key leader, directing and providing training to housestaff and medical students about psychological issues.

## Rotation Structure

The following is an example of a possible schedule for a fellow with an emphasis in Health Psychology:

Major Rotations: Health Psychology	Months 1-6	Months 7-12
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PC-MHI w/ Insomnia emphasis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pain Psychology</li> </ul>
Minor Rotations: Geropsychology	Months 1-6	Months 7-12
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Geri-Med Psych Clinic &amp; Outpatient Geriatric Clinics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clinical Resource Hub</li> </ul>

**\*\***You will have the opportunity to meet with the training committee to select rotations. The committee may require certain training experiences if they are deemed necessary to provide you with well-rounded training opportunities.

## Additional Fellowship Experiences

### Required Trainings

#### Mental Health Orientation For New Employees

This is a full-day orientation to mental health services that is mandatory for all disciplines working in Mental Health. Fellows will learn about all of the Mental Health programs and meet many of the staff leadership affiliated with these programs (existing trainees do not have to repeat this orientation). Plan on a full day of training. The agenda typically covers multiple key mental health programs:

- Introduction to MH Leadership
- Access & Crisis Team (ACT)
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Clinical Team (PCT)
- Addiction Treatment Services
- Healthcare for Homeless Veterans (HCHV)
- Mental Health Intensive Case Management (MHICM)
- Primary Care-Mental Health Integration (PC-MHI)
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Suicide Prevention
- Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Care (MIRECC)
- Recovery Coordinator
- Computer Issues
- Social Work
- Psychology
- General Mental Health
- Inpatient Mental Health Consultation & Liaison
- Military Sexual Trauma (MST)
- Patient Safety

#### Prevention And Management Of Disruptive Behavior

This workshop is mandatory for all disciplines working in mental health. The class is designed to teach participants the verbal and physical intervention skills necessary in the prevention and management of disruptive behavior. Participants will return to the work site and use the information to reduce the severity and number of disruptive behavior incidents that occur within the facility. Participants will complete an online module prior to the half-day, hands-on component.

#### Basic Life Support (BLS) For Healthcare Providers

BLS is designed to train healthcare providers and public safety professionals in resuscitation and emergency management skills. Training is a combination of online presentations of “lecture” materials, with interactive scenarios that help improve clinical decision-making skills, and in-person skills sessions. These are completed quarterly throughout the year.

### Didactics And Seminars

Several hours each month are designated for attendance at required didactic activities. Attendance and participation in these activities takes precedence over service delivery activities or other meetings. In addition to the didactics listed below there are many opportunities for participation in grand rounds, intern presentation series, round tables, and education conference calls. Trainees are welcome to participate in these additional training opportunities if it does not interfere with clinical training and responsibilities.

## Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship Seminar Series

The Psychology Postdoctoral Fellow Seminar Series is conducted by psychology staff members, other disciplines from the medical center, University of Utah professionals, and community professionals, with topics varying from year to year depending on programmatic issues and postdoctoral fellow needs/interests. Recent didactics have included the following:

- Adjustment to Chronic Illness/Disability
- Mild TBI
- EPPP & Licensure
- Complicated mTBI, Moderate, & Severe
- Stroke
- Motivational Interviewing
- History and Models of Primary Care
- Federal & State Programs
- Transplant Evaluation
- Conversion Disorder and Disability
- Psychopharmacology
- Geriatric Psychopharmacology
- Sleep Medicine
- End of Life Psychotherapy
- History and Future of VA Psychology
- Private Practice
- Capacity Evaluation

## Geropsychology Collaborative Seminar

Nationally, VA training programs have partnered together to develop a Geriatric Seminar Series. The goal of this series is to increase each site's access to a variety of topics and experts in the field of Geropsychology. Select topics have included:

- Pikes Peak Model
- Multicultural Issues in Aging
- GeriPACT
- Anxiety/Depression in Older Adults
- Sleep/CBT-I in Older Adults
- Pain in Older Adults
- ACT for Older Adults
- Sexuality in Aging
- Elder Abuse
- Hospice/Palliative Care
- Bereavement
- Driver's Evaluation
- Caregiving
- Couples Work with Older Adults
- Advocacy
- Board Certification

## Supervision Seminar Series

This seminar includes readings and discussions highlighting issues in clinical supervision to support the fellow in developing their own identity as a supervisor. Topics include:

- What Makes for Good Supervision?
- Models of Supervision
- Supervisory Self-Assessment
- Ethical Issues
- Working with Difficulties in Supervision
- Addressing Competencies
- Lessons Learned

## Diversity Didactic Series

Recognizing the need for continuing education and training in the area of multiculturalism and diversity for both psychology staff and trainees, VA training programs have partnered together to develop a Diversity VTEL Seminar Series to increase each site's access to a variety of presenters and presentations focused on the development of cultural competence in working with diverse Veteran populations. The VTEL presentations are directed at the postdoctoral training level and are given by a range of practitioners

and researchers employed in a variety of settings throughout the region. Each presentation includes a brief but substantive didactic presentation and embeds opportunities for group discussion among all participating sites throughout the presentation. Topics vary from year to year. Recent topics include:

- Military Culture
- Disability Etiquette
- Microaggressions
- Cultural Factors in Suicide
- Racism/Sexism and How to Intervene with Staff and Veterans
- Ageism/Cultural Views on Aging
- Privilege and Power
- Culturally Competent Supervision
- White Fragility
- Classism
- Unconscious Bias

### **Mental Health Grand Rounds**

MH Grand Rounds are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month at 8:30-10:00 AM. Quarterly one of the grand rounds meetings is a “MH All hand meeting.” The remainder of the meetings consist of presentations from VA and non-VA providers on topics related to mental health.

### **Psychology Intern Presentation Series**

Over the course of the training year, predoctoral interns conduct formal presentations, focused on a clinical topic of interest. Fellows are required to participate in this series as professional colleagues. This series is held monthly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and/or 5<sup>th</sup> Thursdays of the month at 3:00 PM.

### **Psychology Staff Meeting**

Additionally, all postdoctoral fellows are invited to attend the Psychology Staff Meeting on the first Thursday of the month 3:00-4:00 in Arches Conference Room (currently held virtually).

### **Postdoctoral Tea**

On the third Friday of each month, the time from 3:00pm-4:30pm is reserved for Postdoc Tea. This monthly gathering of postdocs and postdoc co-directors at various eateries around town is an opportunity for the postdoc program to come together in a social setting and process fellows’ experiences from the last month. Postdoc tea has been a beloved activity since the inception of the fellowship program, and is a wonderful opportunity to get to know your fellow postdocs and staff and to experience all things yummy in SLC.

### **Fellowship Project**

Over the course of your training year, fellows will develop or contribute substantially to a yearlong Postdoctoral Fellowship Project. This project should exemplify the use of the Practitioner-Scholar model of psychology and be based on a clinical topic about which you are interested in learning more. Fellows will work with a specific supervisor/mentor for the project and ensure that the project meets the following goals/objectives:

- Based on research
- Increases your knowledge and expertise in a topic of interest
- Contributes to the knowledge-base and/or improves clinical practice in Behavioral Health, Integrated Care, Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Geropsychology, or Rural Health.

- Provides you with a foundation and/or skill set that will increase your opportunities for VA employment.

Fellows should consider topics for the fellowship project early in the training year and have a solid idea of their project within three months of starting the fellowship. Fellows are responsible for delivering a formal presentation of this project to the Psychology Staff, fellows, and psychology interns. Past fellowship projects have included:

- How Values Effect Rural Black Women Veteran's Access to Health: A Qualitative Analysis
- Pursuing Research As Clinician: Balance & Tension (Safety and Tolerability of a Brief CBT-CP Group)
- CBT-Chronic Pain in Geriatric Populations
- A Needs Assessment for the Metabolic Clinic in Primary Care
- ACT for Smoking Cessation in Primary Care
- Pacific Rim Project: US Affiliated Pacific Island and the Philippines Access to Care and Service Needs
- Examining the Functional and Psychological Outcome of Group Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy among Women Veterans with Chronic Pain in a Primary Care Setting
- Chronic Pain Needs Assessment and Education Class in Primary Care
- VA PACT Team Perspectives on Managing Psychiatric and Cognitive Problems in Aging Rural Veterans: A Qualitative Data Analysis
- Life Sustaining Treatments: A Glance into our Patients' Perspectives

## Presentations

Postdoctoral Fellows will have multiple opportunities throughout the year to provide presentations.

### Psychology Intern Didactics

Fellows have the opportunity to develop presentation and teaching skills by preparing and delivering an independent seminar for the Psychology Intern Seminar Series. Fellows can review the topics that have been presented in the past, and try to offer training that will contribute meaningfully to the series.

### Pub Club

Pub Club is meant to be a true exchange between postdoctoral fellows. Fellows will meet collaboratively to determine the expectations of Pub Club and rotate the selection of an article. Our hope is that trainees can critically evaluate meaningful or useful readings from psychological literature.

### Postdoctoral Project Presentation

Over the course of the year, fellows will engage in a yearlong project (see Fellowship Project Section). Fellows are responsible for delivering a formal presentation of this project to the Psychology Staff, fellows, and psychology interns.

# Evaluation

## Psychology Competency Development

The VASLCHCS Psychology Training Programs have recently transitioning from APA Guidelines and Principles to the new Standards of Accreditation. Evaluation is an ongoing, continuous, and reciprocal process. The Postdoctoral Training Committee encourages and supports open and thorough communication between supervisors and fellows regarding training needs, objectives, and competencies. In addition, scheduled, formal evaluation processes occur throughout the postdoctoral year. The VASLCHCS Psychology Fellowship provides training in the following competency domains:

1. Research
  - a. Demonstrates the substantially independent ability to critically evaluate and disseminate research or other scholarly activities (e.g., case conference, intern presentation, publications) at the local or hospital, regional, or national level.
2. Ethical and legal standards
  - a. Is knowledgeable of and acts in accordance with each of the following:
    - i. The current version of the APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct.
    - ii. Relevant professional standards and guidelines.
    - iii. Recognizes ethical dilemmas as they arise and applies ethical decision-making processes in order to resolve the dilemmas.
  - b. Conducts self in an ethical manner in all professional activities
3. Individual and cultural diversity
  - a. Understands how personal/cultural history, attitudes, and biases may affect personal understanding and interaction with people different from oneself.
  - b. Demonstrates knowledge of current theoretical and empirical knowledge base as it relates to addressing diversity in all professional activities including direct service, consultation, training, research, and supervision.
  - c. Demonstrates integration of awareness and knowledge of individual and cultural differences in the conduct of professional roles (e.g., service, research, and other professional activities).
  - d. Demonstrates the ability to independently apply knowledge and skill in working effectively with the range of diverse individuals and groups encountered during training.
4. Professional values, attitudes, and behaviors
  - a. Behaves in ways that reflect the values and attitudes of psychology, including integrity, deportment, professional identity, accountability, lifelong learning, and concern for the welfare of others.
  - b. Engages in self-reflection regarding one's personal and professional functioning; engages in activities to maintain and improve performance, well-being, and professional effectiveness.
  - c. Actively seeks and demonstrate openness and responsiveness to feedback and supervision.
  - d. Responds professionally in increasingly complex situations with a greater degree of independence as s/he progresses across levels of training.
5. Communication and interpersonal skills

- a. Develops and maintains effective relationships with a wide range of individuals, including colleagues, clients, organizations, supervisors, peers, and supervisees.
  - b. Produces and comprehends oral, nonverbal, and written communications that are informative and well-integrated; demonstrates a thorough grasp of professional language and concepts
  - c. Demonstrates effective interpersonal skills and the ability to manage difficult communication well.
6. Assessment
- a. Selects and applies assessment methods that draw from the best available empirical literature and that reflect the science of measurement and psychometrics.
  - b. Collects relevant data using multiple sources and methods appropriate to the identified goals and questions of the assessment as well as relevant diversity characteristics of the service recipient.
  - c. Interprets assessment results, following current research and professional standards and guidelines, to inform case conceptualization, classification, and recommendations, while guarding against decision-making biases, distinguishing the aspects of assessment that are subjective from those that are objective.
  - d. Communicates orally and in written documents the findings and implications of the assessment in an accurate and effective manner sensitive to a range of audiences.
7. Intervention
- a. Establishes and maintains effective relationships with the recipients of psychological services.
  - b. Develops evidence-based intervention plans specific to the service delivery goals.
  - c. Implements interventions informed by the current scientific literature, assessment findings, diversity characteristics, and contextual variables.
  - d. Demonstrates the ability to apply the relevant research literature to clinical decision making.
  - e. Modifies and adapts evidence-based approaches effectively when a clear evidence-base is lacking.
  - f. Evaluates intervention effectiveness and adapts intervention goals and methods consistent with ongoing evaluation.
8. Supervision
- a. Applies the knowledge of supervision models and practices in direct or simulated practice with supervisors, psychology trainees, or other health professionals.
9. Consultation and interprofessional/interdisciplinary skills
- a. Demonstrates knowledge and communicates respect for other disciplines' roles and perspectives
  - b. Applies knowledge and skills of consultation practices in direct or simulated consultation with individuals and their families, other health care professionals, interprofessional groups, or systems related to health and behavior.

Fellows are formally evaluated in writing at the end of each rotation. Supervisors vary significantly based on their style, focus, methods, how focused they are on either process or content, and expectations. However, what is constant is our expectation that there should not be an element of surprise on a formal evaluation; a fellow should be very aware of how he or she is doing on that rotation, prior to rotation's

end. To facilitate ongoing evaluation and meet the training needs of the fellow, the fellow's performance is regularly discussed among the training supervisors at training committee meetings.

Fellows receive formal, written evaluations from their supervisors on the extent to which they are meeting fellowship requirements and performance expectations. The feedback addresses the fellow's performance and progress in terms of professional conduct and psychological knowledge, skills, and awareness in the competencies for psychology. Additionally, fellows meet individually with the Postdoctoral Fellowship Training Director quarterly for informal check-ins.

Fellows are evaluated on each competency using the following key:

1. Trainee does not demonstrate basic competency and is in need of **remedial training**.
2. Trainee demonstrates **basic competency**. Close and frequent supervision is required, and further growth is necessary for level of professional development.
3. Trainee demonstrates an **intermediate level of competency**, typical for interns during the training year. Performance is acceptable, but regular supervision is required and further growth is desirable.
4. Trainee demonstrates a **full level of competency**, typical of interns at the end of the training year and postdoctoral fellows at the beginning of the training year. The trainee can independently function in a broad range of clinical and professional activities, generalized skills and knowledge to new situations, and to self-assess when to seek additional training, supervision, or consultation. Trainee is considered competent for entry-level practice and licensure. This is the level required for successful completion of the internship program.
5. Trainee demonstrates an **advanced level of competency**, beyond that which is expected for interns at the end of the training year and typical of a post-doctoral resident well into the training year. Trainee is capable of functioning independently, beyond an intern rated "full level of competency" without supervision.
6. Trainee demonstrates an **superior level of competency** typical of an advanced Postdoctoral Fellow near the end of a training year. Trainee is independent in all aspects of the clinical activity. Trainee does not require supervision and can function autonomously as an independent practitioner. Consultation is self-guided and directed toward life-long learning and ongoing advanced practice development. Sound critical thinking/judgment is evidenced in advanced or specialized area.
7. Trainee demonstrates a **distinguished level of competency**, beyond what is typically observed by post-doctoral residents who have completed their training year. The trainee can serve as a consultant to other licensed psychologists in a particular areas.

## Exit Criteria

Essentially, when we say a fellow has completed a VASLCHCS fellowship, we are saying that they can function independently within their scope of competence and level of development for an entry-level psychologist in a healthcare setting.

Exit criteria is our minimum level of achievement and is as follows:

1. Completion of 2000 hours.
2. Must pass all rotations.

3. Must have Steering Committee and Postdoctoral Training Committee consensus that fellow is at proficiency level of “Entry level psychologist” upon fellowship completion.

## Postdoctoral Fellowship Project Evaluation

Psychology staff, fellows, and interns will complete written evaluations via the Presentation Evaluation Form for your Postdoctoral Fellowship Project, delivered during the Intern Presentation Series.

Professional Competencies assessed include the following, and are rated on a Likert response scale:

1. The presenter used effective teaching skills to meet learning objectives and engage others.
2. The presenter demonstrated knowledge of the presentation topic.
3. The presenter balanced presenting information with facilitating interaction.
4. The presentation was clear and coherent (e.g., clear topic focus, logical transitions, easy to follow line of thinking).
5. How well did the presenter articulate potential ethical concerns relating to their topic.
6. How well did the presenter include relevant aspects of diversity in their presentation.
7. How much did you learn from this presentation.
8. The intern accomplished the goals and objectives of the fellowship presentation.

## Fellow Evaluations of VASLCHCS Postdoctoral Fellowship Program

### Supervisor And Rotation Evaluation

Postdoctoral fellows are encouraged to provide feedback to their supervisors, the Postdoctoral Program Director, or the Training Director about whether their training objectives are being met by the program and/or the supervisory process. Fellows complete a Fellow Evaluation of Training Supervisors and forward it to the Postdoctoral Program Director. If there are issues associated with the supervisor that you do not feel comfortable talking directly to your supervisor about, you may bring your concerns directly to the Postdoctoral Program Director, Dr. Jordan, or the Training Director, Dr. Sweeney. Fellows can meet with Drs. Sweeney or Jordan at any time to discuss the training program and receive feedback.

# Application Process

## Eligibility Requirements

Applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements for the postdoctoral training program:

1. Completion of doctoral degree, including defense of dissertation, from an APA, CPA, or PC-SAS-accredited Clinical or Counseling, or Combined Psychology programs before the fellowship start date.\*
2. Completion of an APA-accredited psychology internship program before the fellowship start date or another Veterans Affairs Internship that is in process of APA accreditation.\*
3. Applicants must be U.S. citizens. please see eligibility qualifications for psychology training within the Department of Veterans Affairs, which are described at: [Resources for Health Professions Trainees Coming to VA | Eligibility and Forms - Office of Academic Affiliations](#) Also see checklist at: [Am I Eligible? Checklist for VA HPTs](#)
4. Applicants must meet the State of Utah requirements for licensure as a Certified Psychology Resident. For more information please access the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing: <https://dopl.utah.gov/psych/>
5. The Federal Government requires that male applicants to VA positions who were 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 training experience and fit the above criteria, you will have to sign it.
6. As an equal opportunity training program, the fellowship welcomes and strongly encourage applications from all qualified candidates, regardless of gender, age, racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, disability or other minority status.

- \* If you have not completed your internship and degree by the time of the application, the Training Directors of both your doctoral programs and internship must verify that you are expected to complete these requirements prior to the start of the postdoctoral fellowship. Applicants must provide verification of a degree prior to an agreed upon postdoctoral training start date.

Those not meeting the eligibility requirements will be notified as soon as possible. Failure to meet the above qualifications prior to the fellowship start date could nullify an offer to a candidate.

Acceptance of trainees is contingent upon the result of a federal background check and health status verification. Failure to meet these qualifications, or failure to pass a federally mandated background check for employment could nullify an offer to an applicant.

The VA conducts drug-screening exams randomly on selected personnel as well as new employees. Trainees are not required to be tested prior to beginning work, but once on site they are subject to random selection in the same manner as other staff. Please see drug testing policies described at: [VA Drug-Free Workplace Program Guide for Veterans Health Administration Health Professions Trainees](#)

## Application Procedures

Submit the APPIC APPA CAS Online application **no later than 11:59 PM (MST) on December 8, 2024**. Please use the following web address to access the application website:

<https://appicpostdoc.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login>

- In the cover letter describe your training goals, how our postdoctoral fellowship program will help you achieve those goals, and how your previous training and experiences qualify you for this fellowship training. Further, please discuss your general career goals. **Please specify the Health Psychology track;**
- Include a curriculum vitae;
- Include 3 letters of recommendation from faculty members or clinical supervisors who are familiar with your professional development and training. Please include at least one letter from an internship supervisor.
- Include a letter of certification from your Internship Training Director that you are:
  1. in good standing
  2. expected to matriculate on time
  3. indicate the last day of internship
- Include a brief statement regarding the status of your dissertation or research project and expected graduation date from your graduate school program;
- Include graduate transcripts.

## Dates to Remember

Application Deadline:	December 8, 2024
Interviews:	January 2024
Offers Extended:	Per Common Hold Date (CHD) recommendations, offers to the top candidates will be extended in mid-January, the CHD is February 24, 2025 (In coordination with APPIC notification guidelines).
Projected Fellowship Start and End Dates:	August 11, 2025 – Aug 7, 2026

Applicants with questions about the health psychology tracks of the postdoctoral fellowship or about the Salt Lake City VA please contact:

Karen Jordan, Ph.D.  
 Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship Program Co-Director  
 Primary Care Behavioral Health Service (111BH)  
 VA Salt Lake City Health Care System  
 500 Foothill Blvd.  
 Salt Lake City, UT 84148  
 Phone: (801) 582-1565 (Ext. 3385)  
 e-mail: [Karen.Jordan2@va.gov](mailto:Karen.Jordan2@va.gov)

## Application Evaluation

Each set of application materials received by the due date will be reviewed by members of the selection committee. Independent ratings are based on professional training and experiences thus far, writing, and professional letters of recommendation. The selection criteria focus on all aspects of the application materials, with emphasis placed on background training, experience, and an applicant's clear articulation of training goals and professional aspirations, and overall fit.

After an average score is calculated, the selection committee addresses significant discrepancies in scores, and determines the cut-off score to participate in the interview process.

Interviews are typically planned for mid January, but this can vary based on the schedules of applicants. In addition to being interviewed by two members of the Selection Committee, applicants will have the opportunity to meet current interns, fellows, and staff members. **All interviews will be offered virtually this year.**

Following all interviews, the Selection Committee will meet to identify the top candidates and alternates for positions. These selections are based on an integration of file and interview ratings, with the entire list of interviewees being reviewed to ensure that all candidates have received fair and equal consideration.

The Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Program at VA Salt Lake City Health Care System is a member of the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) and will abide by all APPIC guidelines regarding fellowship recruitment and notification procedures.

## Stipend and Benefits

Fellows for the 2025-2026 receive a stipend of \$52,806. Stipends are paid in equal installments over 26 bi-weekly pay periods. Fellows are not covered by civil service retirement but are eligible for federal employee group life insurance and health benefits. Over the year, fellows earn approximately 13 vacation days and 13 sick days, in addition to 11 federal holidays. Fellows who work 40 hours per week can fulfill their commitment and still have time for vacations and sick leave. The VA Salt Lake City Health Care System's policy on Authorized Leave is consistent with the national standard. Postdoctoral fellows at the VASLCHCS are provided with all rights, benefits, and responsibilities associated with "Employee" status. As such, they are expected to comply with all medical center policies pertaining to employee behavior, including leave. Fellows may also apply for limited hourly credit for attendance at national and regional professional meetings and workshops through their primary supervisor and Postdoctoral Training Committee.

## Medical/Family Leave

The fellowship program understands that interns may need to request extended leave for certain life events that occur during training; therefore, our program allows for parental leave and/or extended leave in the event of a serious illness. Leave can be granted for the birth of a child and care of a newborn, placement of a child with oneself for adoption or foster care, a serious health condition of a spouse, child, or parent/caregiver, or one's own serious illness. Any approved extended leave will result in an extension of the training contract to ensure that the intern completes the required full 2080-hours of fellowship training. Interns are encouraged to address any requests for leave with the Director of Training as early as possible.

## Administrative Policies and Procedures

Psychology interns are Health Professions Trainees (HPTs) in the VA system and 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 Psychology Training Director will provide you with the information you need to understand the requirement and reasons for the requirement in timely manner.

## Commitment to Diversity

### Commitment to Enhancing Trainee and Organization Multicultural Competency

#### Equal Opportunity Employer

The VASLCHCS is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The Psychology Service actively supports and is in full compliance with the spirit and principle of Affirmative Action in the recruitment and selection of staff and trainees. We provide equal opportunities in employment and training for all qualified persons and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disabilities, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. In accordance with federal government employment regulations, only citizens of the United States are eligible for training positions funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Our internship program will provide reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with disabilities when such an adjustment or change is requested and needed at work for a reason related to a medical condition or other extenuating life circumstances. Requests for accommodation do not need to be made during the application process. However, if accommodations are needed, requests should be submitted as soon as possible after selection to enable the program to make necessary arrangements.

#### Diversity Representation: Veteran and Active-Duty Population

The VASLCHCS is part of VA Network (VISN) 19, which encompasses the largest geographic area in the 48 contiguous states. We serve an area covering the entire state of Utah, the majority of Montana, Wyoming and Colorado, and portions of Idaho, Kansas, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, and Oklahoma. We have eleven Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) and two Outreach Clinics in remote areas of Utah, Idaho and Nevada.

In terms of demographics, 86% of the veterans served by VASLCHCS identify as male; 14% identify as female. Eighty-seven percent identify as Euro-American, 6.5% as Latino/Latina, 5% as African American, 1% as Native American, and 0.5% as Asian American. The socioeconomic status of our veterans varies widely. A vibrant LGBTQ community is served by our VA. We would like to respectfully acknowledge that the VASLCHCS sits on lands that have always been indigenous lands, and that Utah is currently home to five Native American tribes: the Ute, Shoshone, Paiute, Navajo, and Goshute.

#### Seminars

Throughout the training year, the training program provides various learning activities and trainings that build upon the multicultural competency from graduate training. For example, the training program schedules several seminars directly dealing with a variety of diversity topics. We have speakers discuss issues of multicultural competency, religion/spirituality, gender, sexual orientation, culture, and age. The topics vary year to year, in large part due to the requests of the individual training cohort and their needs as determined by the training director. Examples of some topics have included ethical and diversity considerations when utilizing telehealth in psychological practice, exploring white fragility in clinical practice, military culture, LGBTQ allyship and skills for addressing anti-LGBTQ attitudes and behaviors in clinical practice, clinical practice considerations when creating VA programming for Veterans who

identify as transgender, cultural considerations for working with members of the Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints, responding to sexism in the workplace in clinical practice, working with politically changed Veterans in clinical practice, building cultural fortitude, providing culturally sensitive supervision as a psychologist, skills for talking about race in clinical practice, women in psychology discussion panel, minority stress and PTSD, practice cultural competence in clinical psychological assessments, diversity in supervision, health status discrimination, and spirituality research and practice.

### **National Psychology Diversity VTEL Seminar Series**

The SLCVAHCS Psychology Training Program provides a forum for psychology postdoctoral fellows and psychology faculty to enhance their knowledge about issues related to diversity and multiculturalism via the monthly National Psychology Diversity VTEL seminar series. This series was originated from a partnership between the Biloxi and Houston VA training programs and has evolved over time into its current format. The seminar is currently a consortium of 11 VA postdoctoral training sites, and the academic year syllabus is decided by site coordinators based on recent feedback and current needs across sites. The seminars are scheduled on the 2nd Wednesday of every month from 11-12pm MST. Seminars are designed to be less didactic in nature and instead intended to facilitate higher level dialogue regarding diversity topics among local site participants and across VA training sites. All postdoctoral fellows are expected to attend all seminars.

### **Multicultural, Diversity, & Inclusion Committee**

The Multicultural, Diversity, & Inclusion (MDI) Committee was developed during the 2019-2020 trainee year to provide structure, support, and actions designed to improve the quality and frequency of diversity training, including training to improve clinical practice, supervision, and personal growth and awareness of multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion. The MDI Committee works to organize efforts to assess the climate of the psychology service and training in psychology and to create structures efforts to address behaviors and systems that may disrupt inclusion as well as increase efforts to honor and value the voices and experiences of all staff, particularly for those from groups that have been traditionally marginalized and oppressed. With such, the MDI Committee works to identify and implement active methods to increase diversity among our staff and trainees, retain diverse individuals, as well as coordinate and assist other similar efforts here at the VA and in the local community.

### **Foundational Values**

**Culture of Inclusion:** The MDI Committee is striving to shift the hiring and retention culture from a “culture fit” model to a “culture add” model when evaluating potential staff and trainee applicants, so that rather than bringing in new people that are perceived to be consistent with the existing visible culture, we can broaden and expand the diversity of our staff and trainees. Further, the MDI Committee is working to support and develop personal and organizational responsibility toward improving the visibility of diversity and the values and practice of inclusion. Every voice matters, and the MDI Committee is working to include people in creating the change they want to see cultivating a climate where all feel valued, that they have a voice, and that they belong.

**Sustainable Change Management:** The MDI Committee seeks to make smaller, sustainable changes that can be integrated into the routine practices of the psychology service and training program leading to consistent and sustainable positive changes. work to influence and support networks within our reach.

**Advocacy and Allyship:** The MDI Committee works to provide a consistent call to action facilitating speaking up against injustice, engaging in difficult dialogues with each other, promoting visibility, and amplify the voices of those that have been oppressed. While deeper social and institutional changes are needed to change the larger systems of oppression, we seek to create an organization that is inclusive and anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-xenophobic, anti-homophobic, and actively opposed to other forms of oppression. We seek to invite and encourage personal and professional exploration, growth, and increased awareness to promote equity, justice, and compassion.

## **MDI Program Organizational Structure**

**MDI Committee:** The MDI Committee is the central group working to facilitate effective communication developing and implementing the MDI program including overall strategic planning and related goals. Membership is open to psychology staff and trainees that are interested in participating. The MDI Committee meets monthly to coordinate efforts, review progress, as well as provide support and accountability. The Committee will serve as a forum, support, and idea incubator for initiatives relating to MDI and implementing the foundational values of the MDI program.

**MDI Workgroups:** Workgroups are groups formed with MDI Committee members as leaders to accomplish a specific goal. The workgroup leader coordinates with the overall MDI program during monthly MDI Committee meetings. The Psychology Training Program also works to develop resources and initiatives in addition to the workgroups based on the unique needs of the training program. Listed below are the current workgroups that may be ongoing, as well as those formed to accomplish specific goals for the current training year.

- Hiring and Recruitment of Diverse Staff Workgroup
- Staff Inclusion and Climate Workgroup
- Staff Diversity Training Workgroup
- Recruitment and Retention of Diverse Trainees Workgroup
- Trainee Diversity Didactic Curriculum Workgroup
- Trainee Inclusion and Climate Workgroup

## **Equal Opportunity Employer**

The VASLCHCS is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The Psychology Service actively supports and is in full compliance with the spirit and principle of Affirmative Action in the recruitment and selection of staff and fellows. We provide equal opportunities in employment and training for all qualified persons and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disabilities, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. In accordance with federal government employment regulations, only citizens of the United States are eligible for training positions funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Our training program will provide reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with disabilities when such an adjustment or change is requested and needed at work for a reason related to a medical condition or other extenuating life circumstances. Requests for accommodation do not need to be made during the application process. However, if accommodations are needed, requests should be submitted as soon as possible after selection to enable the program to make necessary arrangements.

## Fellowship Training Supervisors

In order to provide a sense of our staff, a brief biography for each of our supervisory psychologists is included below:



### Cassie Dance, Ph.D. (she/her)

**Training background:** Utah State University, Combined Clinical and Counseling Psychology

**Predoctoral Internship:** VA Salt Lake City HCS

**Postdoctoral Fellowship:** VA Salt Lake HCS, Health Psychology

**Current Position:** PC-MHI Psychologist, Pain Psychology

**Areas of interest/expertise:** Health behavior change, pain management, tobacco cessation, brief intervention, insomnia, binge eating.

**Fun Facts:** I enjoy hiking, yoga, traveling, trying out restaurants, farmer's markets, and spending time with family and friends. I'm a fan of Minnesota football and hockey, the Boston Red Sox, chocolate, Diet Coke, and reality tv.

**Email:** [Cassie.Dance@va.gov](mailto:Cassie.Dance@va.gov)



### Bret Hicken, Ph.D. (he/him)

**Training Background:** University of Alabama at Birmingham, Clinical Psychology

**Predoctoral Internship:** VA Salt Lake City HCS

**Postdoctoral Fellowship:** VA Salt Lake City Health Care System, Geriatrics Research, Education, and Clinical Center

**Current Position:** Psychologist/Geriatric Team Lead – Veterans Rural Health Resource Center-SLC

**Areas of Interest/Expertise:** Geropsychology, capacity evaluation, dementia assessment & treatment, rural health, caregiver support, program development/evaluation.

**Fun Facts:** My hobbies include gardening, cycling, urban chicken husbandry, reading prescription inserts, and coming up with interesting things to say for my Fun Facts. I own a white dog. Once I rode a camel.

**Email:** [Bret.Hicken@va.gov](mailto:Bret.Hicken@va.gov)



### **Karen Jordan, Ph.D. (she/her)**

**Training background:** University of Arizona, Clinical Psychology

**Predoctoral Internship:** VA Maryland HCS

**Postdoctoral Fellowship:** VA Maryland HCS, Primary Care - Mental Health Integration

**Current Position:** PC-MHI Psychologist, Rehab Psychology, Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship Co-Director

**Areas of interest/expertise:** brief intervention, Acceptance & Commitment Therapy, rehabilitation psychology, CBT-Insonmia

**Fun Facts:** I enjoy baking, subjecting colleagues to said baking, my two sons (Nate & Ben), unintentionally growing monstrous hybrids of the squash variety in my garden, and reading the comment section on just about anything. I was once given the nickname “the Velvet Hammer” by a patient (this is also my secret superhero alter ego).

**Email:** [Karen.Jordan2@va.gov](mailto:Karen.Jordan2@va.gov)



### **Erin Kube, Ph.D., ABPP (she/her)**

**Training Background:** Arizona State University, Counseling Psychology

**Predoctoral Internship:** VA Southern Arizona HCS

**Postdoctoral Fellowship:** VA Salt Lake City HCS – Geropsychology Track

**Current Position:** Tele-Primary Care Mental Health Integration & Health Psychology at the VISN19 Clinical Resource Hub; Co-Chair VISN 19 Dementia Steering Committee

**Areas of Interest/Expertise:** Geriatric primary care, Geropsychology assessment, capacity, caregiver stress, chronic pain, grief, management of dementia-related behaviors, end-of-life issues.

**Fun Facts:** I am a remote provider living in Chicago, IL. I enjoy running, exploring the city, cooking, reading psychological thrillers, and attempting to grow vegetables on my patio. Past accomplishments include safety patrol captain (5<sup>th</sup> grade), winning the DARE bear essay contest (6<sup>th</sup> grade), and performing in an improv comedy troupe (2015-2017).

**Email:** [Erin.Kube@va.gov](mailto:Erin.Kube@va.gov)



### **Amber Martinson, Ph.D. (she/her)**

**Training Background:** University of Maine, Clinical Psychology

**Predoctoral Internship:** VA Salt Lake City HCS, General Track

**Postdoctoral Fellowship:** VA Salt Lake City HCS, Integrated Primary Care Health Psychology

**Current Position:** Primary Care Pain Psychology, Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Coordinator.

**Areas of Interest/Expertise:** Biological correlates of trauma/stress, chronic pain, coping with life-limiting illness, and the intersection of sexual trauma and pain.

**Fun Facts:** I enjoy skiing, hiking, running, visiting my home state of Maine, and spending time with my family. Perhaps most enjoyable, is watching my young daughter learn to do these same things. Guilty pleasures include watching the red carpet, eating chocolate, and avoiding vegetables.

Email: [Amber.Martinson@va.gov](mailto:Amber.Martinson@va.gov)



### **Renn Sweeney, Ph.D. (she/her)**

**Training Background:** University of Utah, Clinical Psychology

**Predoctoral Internship:** VA Salt Lake City

**Postdoctoral Fellowship:** Memphis VA HCS, emphasis in Medical Psychology

**Current Position:** Health Behavior Coordinator; Psychology Training Director

**Areas of Interest/Expertise:** Integrative Healthcare, Health and Behavior Change, Brief Treatment, Stress and Coping with Chronic Illness, Tobacco Cessation, and Insomnia.

**Fun Facts:** I have a son and a daughter, so my husband and I spend most of our time trying to keep up with them. We find that our “free time” centers around soccer games, gymnastics, teaching our kids to ski (so that we can ski again). I relish the outdoors and the recreation that the area has to offer. I enjoy family camping trips in our pop-up trailer. I love to cook, run, and am an avid gardener.

Email: [Caroline.Sweeney@va.gov](mailto:Caroline.Sweeney@va.gov)

## About Salt Lake City and Utah



In addition to the benefits of the training program, living in Salt Lake City comes with many perks. The close proximity of Salt Lake City to several major mountain ranges offers all the benefits of city living with easily accessible outdoor recreation. We hope that you enjoy the area as much as we do.

According to the 2019 census, Salt Lake City has a population of 200,567. The surrounding metropolitan area has close to 2 million people. Individuals unfamiliar with Salt Lake City and the state of Utah are often quite surprised at the wealth and variety of things to do and see. Salt Lake City is a montage of modern high-rises, commercial centers, unique sightseeing attractions, classic buildings, historic sites, excellent restaurants, and beautiful shopping malls. The city is also home to acclaimed ballet dance companies, the Utah Opera Company, many fine art galleries, and historical and art museums. Nearby Park City is home to the Sundance Film Festival. Professional sports fans enjoy cheering for the Utah Jazz, Utah Grizzlies and Utah Royals. During the summer, baseball fans flock to Franklin Covey Field to watch the Salt Lake Bees, the Triple-A affiliate of the Anaheim Angels. Finally, fans of college sports find one of the NCAA's most entertaining and bitter rivalries between the Brigham Young University Cougars and the University of Utah Utes, both of whom are nationally ranked in football.

For the outdoor recreational enthusiast, Utah is truly a paradise. During the winter months, Utah has "The Greatest Snow on Earth." Eleven resorts are within an hour drive of Salt Lake City. During the summer months, Utahans take advantage of over 1,000 lakes, rivers and streams. Sailing, wind surfing, kayaking, rock climbing and mountain biking are extremely popular during the warmer months as well. Utah has five national parks: Arches National Park, Bryce Canyon National Park, Canyonlands National Park, Capitol Reef National Park, and Zion National Park. We're a short drive to Yellowstone and Teton National Park as well.

## Life After Fellowship

Typically, our fellows receive multiple interviews offers and get their top choices for staff positions after fellowship. However, the path you take following fellowship is defined by you and is a balance of your own professional and personal goals. Whether it is pursuing a full-time career, working part-time to be home with children, or taking time off, we will support you in getting wherever you want to go. Below are some examples of where past fellows have secured positions following fellowship:

- Intermountain Healthcare (IHC)
- Private Practice
- University of Utah Neuropsychiatric Institute (UNI)
- University of Utah Pain Management Center
- University of Utah Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
- University of Utah, Bariatric Surgery Clinic
- VA Salt Lake City Healthcare System
- VA Popular Bluff Healthcare System
- VA Iowa City Healthcare System
- VA South Texas Healthcare System
- University of Montana Family Practice
- VA El Paso Healthcare System
- VA Colorado Springs Healthcare System, HBPC Clinic
- Augsburg University, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Grand Junction VA Medical Center

