



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health  
Administration

Southern Arizona VA Health Care System (SAVAHCS)

## Pharmacy Residency Program (PGY2) – Psychiatry

Pending accreditation pre-candidate status with ASHP

# Welcome to the VA Tucson-Southern AZ VA Health Care System!



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## PGY2 Program Purpose

PGY2 residency programs build upon Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) education and PGY1 pharmacy residency training to develop pharmacist practitioners with knowledge, skills, and abilities as defined in the educational competency areas, goals, and objectives for advanced practice areas. Residents who successfully complete PGY2 residency programs are prepared for advanced patient care or other specialized positions, and board certification in the advanced practice area, if available.

## Residency Goals and Objectives

The goals of the VA Tucson-Southern AZ VA Health Care System PGY2 Psychiatric Pharmacy residency program are to provide specialty training for pharmacists to develop the skills necessary to ensure optimal drug therapy for patients with psychiatric and neuropsychiatric disorders, to analyze and disseminate drug information to other health care professionals and patients, to investigate and solve complex therapeutic problems in a scientific manner, and to further enhance the verbal and written communication skills of the resident. The resident is expected to manage patients with psychiatric disorders in a wide variety of ambulatory and acute care settings. Graduates of this 52-week training program should be able to provide a high level of direct patient care, ultimately leading to competence commensurate with Board Certification in Psychiatric Pharmacy by the Board of Pharmaceutical Specialties and obtain employment as a Clinical Pharmacy Specialist in Psychiatry.

## Residency Preceptors

Seven Mental Health Clinical Pharmacist Practitioners provide comprehensive medication management services in the acute care, ambulatory care, and residential treatment settings at the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System. They serve as some of the core preceptors for this second-year specialty residency program. The resident will also spend time in other areas of the health care system with additional preceptors, primarily during elective rotations, administrative projects, and teaching settings. Learn about the preceptors by reading the [Residency Precepting Team](#) autobiographies. Preceptors place a high value on the residents and are always accessible.



## Brief Description of 4-Week Core Experiences

- **Orientation:** During this first rotational experience, the resident will be oriented to the residency program, including introductions to the health care system and to the pharmacy department systems and processes. The primary goal of orientation is for the resident to understand the basics of workflow and patient care for psychiatric pharmacy, establish teaching and project expectations, and understand the requirements of residency.
- **Primary Care-Mental Health Integration (PC-MHI):** During the PC-MHI learning experience, the resident will ensure patients are receiving appropriate drug therapy for conditions such as depression, anxiety, insomnia, post-traumatic stress disorder, and alcohol use disorder by reviewing computerized medical records, completing patient interviews, and prescribing medications under a scope of practice. Clinical pharmacist practitioners make up the majority of the prescribers in the PC-MHI program at SAVHCS and are heavily relied upon to manage patients during scheduled and Same Day Access clinic appointments. This rotation is repeated once in the second half of the residency.

- Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program (BHIP): In the BHIP clinic, the resident will have the opportunity to manage patients with severe depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia. The resident participates in the management of patients on clozapine therapy for treatment-resistant conditions. Other Psychiatry providers seek pharmacotherapeutic recommendations from Pharmacy via e-consult for complex cases, and the resident would be able to answer these drug information questions for the BHIP patient population.
- Acute Care - Psychiatry: This acute care learning experience involves close collaboration with other disciplines to manage patients who are admitted to the acute psychiatric unit. The resident would participate in interdisciplinary treatment team rounds and communicate with patients during medication reconciliation and counseling. By training under a scope of practice, the resident will facilitate effective transitions of care upon admission to and discharge from the unit. This rotation is repeated once in the second half of the residency.
- Acute Care – Substance Use Disorders: During this learning experience, the resident will primarily gain experience in treating patients with opioid and alcohol use disorders. They will work with other members of the healthcare team to manage psychoactive substance detoxification and medication-assisted treatment for substance use disorders. The resident will train under a scope of practice and facilitate effective transitions of care upon admission to and discharge from the unit.
- Geriatric Psychiatry/Memory Care: The Memory Care Unit provides care to patients diagnosed with major neurocognitive disorders, including those with associated neuropsychiatric and behavioral disturbances. The resident will have the opportunity to conduct monthly medication reviews for these patients and develop skills in the judicious use of psychotropics for a geriatric population and the utilization of gradual dose reductions as appropriate. Using the VIONE medication management methodology, the resident will also work with other members of the healthcare team to identify and address potentially inappropriate medications that contribute to polypharmacy in this population.
- Substance Use Disorder Clinic: SAVAHCS is a national leader in substance use disorder (SUD) treatment, particularly for the management of opioid use disorder. During the second half of the residency, the resident will be able to train for 4 weeks under the Substance Use Disorder Treatment Program Medical Director and work closely with Addiction Medicine fellows and Psychiatry residents while seeing patients with SUD in an ambulatory care setting.

## Extended Experiences (at least 8 weeks long)

- Medication Use Evaluation (MUE)
- Formulary Management Project
- Provider Newsletter
- Management Conference
- Journal Club

## Longitudinal Experiences (at least 32 weeks long)

- Primary Care-Mental Health Integration Clinic (one half day per week)
- Residency Project
- Continuing Education (CE) Presentation
- Patient Safety Experience

## Educational Experience Activities

The pharmacy resident delivers multiple educational presentations during the residency program. Examples of required presentations include:

- Disease state and/or medication management topic presentations (2 presentations)
- Journal clubs (4 presentations)
- ACPE-accredited continuing education presentation (1-hour ACPE presentation)

The PGY2 resident has the opportunity to attend University of Arizona Psychiatry Grand Rounds for additional didactic learning.

The resident will also co-precept and teach pharmacy students as well as PGY1 residents during select rotations.

## Elective Opportunities

The resident may choose **two electives** during the residency year. This elective time is used to either tailor additional specific interests of the resident or to further improve upon an already completed rotation. Potential electives available include Pain (Ambulatory Care), Pain (Population Health), Academic Detailing, and Serious Mental Illness Patient Aligned Care Team. Electives can also be designed based on the resident's interest, and the resident may repeat a previous experience.

## Residency Project

A completed residency project is required during the residency program. The resident presents their project at a regional or national meeting and submits a written finalized manuscript before the conclusion of the residency program in a format suitable for publication. There are four weeks scheduled within the program to focus on writing the protocol, data collection, and analysis.



## Benefits

The resident receives an estimated stipend of \$52,384 per annum. The PGY2 resident meets the eligibility requirements for the Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) and Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI). Link to Federal employee benefits Residents can enroll in FEHB their first days at the VA. Residents do not meet the eligibility of requirements for the following: Family, Medical Leave, including paid parental leave and Flex Spending Accounts (FSAFEDS). Residents accrue 4 hours per pay period (13 days) of annual leave (vacation) and 4 hours per pay period (13 days) of sick leave during the residency program. Additional benefits include: 11 paid Federal holidays and free parking on the SAVAHCS campus and urban Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs).

### Professional Meetings

- Authorized Absence (leave with pay) to attend selected meetings
- Financial support for the registration fees for meetings related to the residency program is possible (e.g., ASHP, AAPP)
- Funds may be available to offset some of the travel expenses for these meetings

## Commonly Asked Questions

Q: What is pre-candidate status?

A: The Office of Academic Affiliations awarded SAVAHCS funding to establish a PGY2 Psychiatric Pharmacy residency program that would train its first resident starting June 2025. New residency programs who have not yet recruited their first resident can apply for pre-candidate status with ASHP. Once their first resident has started, the program can apply for accreditation and is redesignated as being in candidate status.

Q: If the program is still in candidate status when I graduate, does that affect my job prospects or my ability to obtain Board Certification in Psychiatric Pharmacy?

A: The SAVAHCS PGY1 Pharmacy Practice residency program has been accredited for 40 years, and the PGY2 Oncology Pharmacy program has been accredited for 14 years. This robust track record is expected to carry over to

the PGY2 Psychiatric Pharmacy program when it undergoes its first accreditation survey in 2026, and accreditation will retroactively apply to residents who have graduated from the program. Being one of the first residents of a new program is an exciting opportunity to see what goes into the process and to help shape the program for future residents. Regardless of the accreditation status, our dedicated preceptors will help you develop the advanced skills required to become a clinical pharmacist practitioner who provides exceptional care to patients with psychiatric disorders. The Board of Pharmacy Specialties specifies that graduates of either an accredited PGY2 Psychiatric Pharmacy program or a program in candidate status are eligible to sit for the BCPP examination.

Q: Do I need to be licensed in Arizona for the SAVAHCS residency?

A: For VA residencies, including SAVAHCS, you may obtain pharmacist licensure in any of the United States. It is not a requirement for you to be licensed specifically in Arizona for the SAVAHCS residency.

Q: I do not have US citizenship but have a green card. Am I eligible for the residency program?

A: Unfortunately, as a Federal Employer, we only accept residents with US citizenship. We are unable to accept potential residents with a green card.

Q: What are the staffing requirements for this program?

A: There are no specific staffing requirements for this program. The resident spends time in the Outpatient and Inpatient Pharmacies during the Orientation learning experience to familiarize themselves with the general operational workflow and gains experience with prescription order verification (including verification of long-acting injectable clinic orders) throughout other learning experiences.

Q: May I do an elective experience that is not listed?

A: Elective experiences may be created on site if there is a qualified residency preceptor for that experience. Electives may potentially be arranged by the resident and RPD in advance (a minimum of six months in advance) for unestablished off-site electives. There are several factors involved for creating an elective off-site with a qualified residency preceptor (e.g., resident licensure, ability for SAVAHCS to contract with the off-site location).

Q: Does the PGY2 program participate in early commitment?

A: SAVAHCS PGY2 program participates in early commitment, including the VA National Early Commitment program. Please contact the residency program director to confirm if early commitment has been met this year.

Q: Does the SAVAHCS PGY2 residency program involve teaching or offer a teaching certificate?

A: The PGY2 Psychiatric Pharmacy residency program does not offer a teaching certificate. PGY2 residents have the opportunity to co-precept pharmacy students during their APPE rotations and/or PGY1 residents during various learning experiences.

Q: Do you participate in CareerPharm's Personnel Placement Service (PPS) at the ASHP Clinical Midyear meeting?

A: We do not participate in PPS.

We hope you will join us at the VA Tucson-Southern AZ VA Health Care System for your specialized residency training. We look forward to receiving your application! Please contact the director of the PGY2 residency program for additional information.

## Contact

### **Stephanie Lee, PharmD, BCPP, BCPS**

Mental Health Clinical Pharmacy Practitioner  
PGY-2 Psychiatric Pharmacy Residency Program Director

[Stephanie.Lee5@va.gov](mailto:Stephanie.Lee5@va.gov)

(520) 792-1450 extension 15493  
Pharmacy Service (1-119)  
3601 S. 6th Ave  
Tucson, AZ 85723

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