

Clinical Neuropsychology Postdoctoral Residency Program



VA Connecticut Healthcare System
Psychology Service – 116B
950 Campbell Ave.
West Haven, CT 06516
203-932-5711 x2465



<http://www.connecticut.va.gov/>

Application Review begins: January 1, 2017
We do not participate in the APPCN Matching Program

PROGRAM:

VA Connecticut Healthcare System offers a two-year postdoctoral fellowship in the specialty practice area of clinical neuropsychology. Our fellowship is currently accredited by the American Psychological Association. We have three total fellowship positions and each year we recruit one position for the West Haven Campus. Every other year we offer a fellow position that is split between the Newington and West Haven campuses with a specialization in geriatric health; however, this coming year will be an “off” year with recruitment again anticipated in 2018.

The educational philosophy of the Neuropsychology postdoctoral fellowship follows the Scientist-Practitioner model. The focus of the program is to provide an advanced level of competence in Clinical Neuropsychology through a comprehensive understanding of the process of science and its application to clinical endeavors. Participation in ongoing research, in conjunction with the application of scientific findings to their clinical casework, functions as the backbone of the fellow’s experiential education. Although the fellowship is primarily clinical in nature with approximately 30% of their time being spent in direct service delivery, the fellow is encouraged to see the intrinsic link between participation in and application of research as fundamental to appropriate clinical care. The program aims to educate students in accordance with the 1997 Houston Conference on Specialty Education and Training in Clinical Neuropsychology. The core domains identified by the Houston Conference (assessment, treatment and intervention, consultation, research, and teaching and supervision) are addressed throughout the training program in the specific clinics and through educational opportunities such as seminars and didactics. Residents completing the program will have solid foundational preparation to complete ABPP certification in Clinical Neuropsychology. Further, our program is designed to meet postdoctoral requirements as required by the State of Connecticut.

For the 2017 training year the program will be recruiting for one fellow. The postdoctoral training program is a full-time, two-year program. Building upon the developmental level of the student, the fellow is given opportunities to develop their own “voice” with regard to assessment by using the skills that they have cultivated throughout their previous training. This includes but is not limited to test battery selection beyond a basic core, interview and report style, interaction with affiliate medical staff, and broader autonomy in administration of clinic responsibilities. As the fellow gains experience, they are given increased autonomy within the program. At completion of the fellowship, it is expected that they will feel comfortable in their own ability to manage the responsibilities associated with the practice of Clinical Neuropsychology.

Clinical

Training in clinical care is driven by the concept of empirically based assessment and treatment. Fellows are expected to use the scientific literature to drive assessment approaches, case conceptualization, diagnostic impressions, and treatment recommendations. Critical evaluation of clinical methodologies and skeptical analysis of novel and traditional treatment approaches are strongly encouraged during all aspects of their training. Training is experiential in approach as the fellow will be given ample opportunities to gain experience with a broad range of patient populations including neurodegenerative disorders, traumatic brain injury, stroke, movement disorders such as Parkinson's Disease, substance abuse disorders, brain tumors and other cancers, and other more infrequently encountered disorders. The fellow will gain these experiences through the two outpatient Neuropsychology clinics, the Clinical Neuropsychology Consultation Clinic and the Behavioral Research Assessment Integrative Neuropsychology Clinic (BRAIN) and in the numerous specialty medical clinics within the hospital that potentially include the Movement Disorders Clinic, Stroke Clinic, and the Neurobehavioral Clinic.

The educational experiences across both positions are rounded out by training and didactic experiences throughout allied psychology training programs and clinics that provide a significant breadth of educational opportunities, with approximately 10% of the fellows time allotted to these activities. The development of professional skills associated with the administrative aspects of running a clinic are emphasized throughout the program as the fellow takes an active role in the day-to-day functioning of an active service. Furthermore, professional skills are developed through socialization with other fellows within the Neuropsychology fellowship and other Psychology fellowships at VACHS and interactions with staff on a junior colleague level.

Additionally, the fellow will begin to receive the opportunity to develop supervision and mentoring skills through the supervision of practicum students and interns within their respective clinical duties. This supervision again builds upon the fellow's individual skill set, but includes supervision of test administration, report writing and case conceptualization, as the fellow advances. A focus on the development of approaches to supervision is fostered to allow for a broader understanding of potential issues within supervisory relationships.

Research

The program, consistent with its scientist practitioner approach encourages the resident to become an active participant in the scientific process. Each resident is expected as a part of their training to complete at least one research project, either constructed on their own or through participation in ongoing research projects within the Clinical Neuropsychology Consultation Clinic, the Behavioral Research Assessment and Integrative Neuropsychology Clinic (BRAIN), or one of the many ongoing research programs within the VACHS, including the National Center for PTSD, Pain Research, Informatics, Medical comorbidities, and Education (PRIME), Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC), or within individual medical departments. Staff psychologists have active research programs within each of these programs and are able to easily integrate fellows into existing research programs or are able to assist in the development of a feasible project developed by a fellow. The aim of these projects will be for eventual publication in a peer-reviewed journal or presentation at a national scientific conference.

Didactics

Finally, fellows will attend didactics throughout the year including presentations by clinicians and researchers within and outside of the VACHS so that fellows are exposed to ongoing, cutting edge evidence to drive their clinical care in diverse areas such as neuroimaging, culturally sensitive practice, controversies in ethical guidelines, and private practice in psychology to name just a few. Additionally, journal clubs and seminars on the process of science provide additional

development of critical thinking skills. Fellows are also encouraged to attend seminars and brain cuttings at Yale, including routinely offered didactics in neuroanatomy and neuroimaging.

Training Goals and Evaluative Criteria

The Clinical Neuropsychology Service rotation provides training in the assessment and treatment of patients with various psychiatric and neurologic disorders. Residents will conduct neuropsychological evaluations, provide feedback to patients and their families, and consult with multidisciplinary teams. They will also participate in the Neuropsychology Seminar, which incorporates didactics, case conference and journal club activities. Residents may also become involved in cognitive remediation and/or therapy efforts. In terms of research, residents will be expected to either participate in on-going research endeavors and/or work on developing their own research proposal. The training objectives, advanced competencies, and activities available are consistent with the new Standards of Accreditation where passing the fellowship represents readiness at the entry level for advanced specialized practice in all domains:

Objective 1. Integration of Science and Practice

Fellows need to demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate and disseminate research or other scholarly activities (e.g., case conference, presentation, publications, and program evaluation).

Objective 2. Individual and Cultural Diversity

Fellows need to develop and demonstrate the ability to conduct all professional activities with sensitivity to human diversity, including the ability to deliver high quality services to an increasingly diverse population.

Objective 3. Ethical and Legal

Fellows act professionally and ethically. This includes behavior in accordance with the APA Code and relevant laws, regulations, rules, policies, standards and guidelines.

Objective 4. Assessment

Advanced proficiency in the use of clinical interview to obtain significant information, ultimately for assistance in answering the referral question (e.g., differential diagnosis). Proficiency is achieved when the resident displays the ability to 1) discriminate between valid and invalid test results; 2) develop reasonable hypotheses about a patient based on the test data and interview; 3) determine when follow-up is indicated; and 4) integrate objective test data into a comprehensive conceptualization. Assessment skills presume effective communication skills.

Objective 5: Consultation and Intervention

Advanced ability to prepare concise, informative and timely consultation reports based on the interview and/or test findings with clear presentation of case formulations. Advanced ability to effectively communicate findings, recommendations, and interventions to the patient, family, referral source, and potentially to staff from other disciplines.

Objective 7. Professional Values, Attitudes and Behaviors

Demonstrates a developing professional identity as a Clinical Neuropsychologist.

Objective 8 Supervision

Fellows develop competence in providing supervision to interns and more junior trainees.

CORE TRAINING STAFF

There are over 75 professionals comprising the Psychology Service clinical, research, and post-doctoral staff at VA Connecticut. The staff represents a variety of orientations, and residents will have an opportunity to be supervised by different staff members. In addition, some consultation/supervision is available from medical staff and Yale consultants during the years of training.

Supervision is primarily provided by the Co-Directors of the program. Supervision will cover clinical cases, research progress and other professional issues as they arrive. Consistent with accreditation guidelines the fellow will receive at a minimum two (2) hours of individual supervision per week. Fellows will also participate in one hour of group supervision per week with other trainees. The primary supervisors are available for ad hoc supervision whenever necessary. Further, the fellow will have opportunities for additional consultation and supervision with additional supervisors as available or within the specialty clinics. On-site supervision and intervention is available for at all times for emergencies.

Primary Supervisors:

John Beauvais, Ph.D., Co-Director, is actively researching the neuropsychological aspects of Multiple Sclerosis and cognition, Emotional Intelligence, and innovative approaches to assessment (e.g., the Tactile Wisconsin Card Sorting Test).

Annie C. Chang, Ph.D., is the core supervisor for the Geriatric Health emphasis at the Newington Campus. She is an expert in geriatric assessment, completing a specialty in this area during her years of training with continued interests in this field. Her current research interests also include cross-cultural neuropsychology, traumatic brain injury, and post-traumatic stress disorder and its associated resilience factors.

Joseph F. Kulas, Ph.D., ABPP-Cn, Co-Director, is a board certified clinical neuropsychologist whose clinical interests encompass broad areas including traumatic brain injury, dementia, and epilepsy. Research interests include the cognitive impact of chronic epilepsy, neural network models of traumatic brain injury, psychometric properties of neuropsychological measures, anxiety, and increasing the role of science in medicine.

Valerie Weisser, Ph.D., currently provides individual and group supervision for neuropsychology trainees as well as supervision of interns in the interdisciplinary stroke clinic. She also conducts neuropsychological and mental health evaluations within the compensation and pension department. She is currently researching the effect of context on cognitive symptom validity performance in Veterans with PTSD. Past research areas include cognitive and functional performance in Multiple Sclerosis.

Contributing Supervisors (provide individual and group supervision in addition to supervision in the settings below)

Beth Beenken, Ph.D., Primary employment setting: Eastern Blind Rehabilitation Center. Dr. Beenken specializes in clinical neuropsychology, providing evaluation for various populations including those with sensory impairments or alterations. In addition, she has interests in brief and eclectic psychotherapeutic interventions with a cognitive behavioral focus. Current research interests include developing a cognitive measure to assess spatial functioning in people with vision impairment.

Kim Corey, Ph.D., currently supervises the geropsychology services at the Newington campus. Through this service, trainees interact with a diverse staff and provide clinical services, which include psychological evaluations, therapy, and consultations. Opportunities for providing in-home services also exist. Dr. Corey has special interests in geropsychology, behavioral medicine, dementia and caregiver burden, and end of life care.

Margaret Rathier, M.D., is a geriatrician and the director the GEMS program at Newington. She has 29 years of experience in geriatric health and treatment management. Dr. Rathier also has extensive publications and presentations on geriatric medicine, and diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer's disease management.

SALARY AND BENEFITS:

The salary for the postdoctoral residency program is consistent with national VA standards and locality pay differentials. Currently, the salary for our residents is \$46,694 for the first year and \$49,218 for the second year plus benefits including health insurance, federal holidays and other leave (sick leave and annual "vacation" leave), in accordance with national VA guidelines.

Administrative Policies and Procedures

Authorized Leave Policy: In addition to OAA regulations for Annual and Sick leave, residents may request leave for academic/research purposes (e.g., attendance at professional and/or scientific meetings). Such academic leave can be approved as "authorized absence" and is considered part of the training experience. Exactly when leave may be taken is to be worked out with the relevant supervisory psychologists and should be discussed well in advance. For authorized absence, paperwork will need to be filled out and approved at least two weeks prior to traveling.

Due Process/Grievance Procedure Policies: At the beginning of the training year, residents are given a copy of our Due Process policy. This document provides a definition of problematic behavior and impairment, a listing of possible sanctions and an explicit discussion of the due process procedures. Also included are important considerations in the remediation of problems or impairment. Also at the beginning of the training year, residents are given a copy of our grievance procedures policy. This document provides guidelines to assist residents who wish to file complaints against staff members. It also explains the process if a supervisor has a concern regarding a student that does not fall under the inadequate performance (i.e., Due Process). These policies are available, in advance, by request.

SETTING:

The mission of VACHS is "to provide high quality health care that meets the needs of the Veteran patients, to promote health through prevention and to maintain excellence in teaching and research." VACHS is a division of the VA New England Healthcare System that serves Veterans in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut. As one of the more complex VA facilities in the nation, VACHS boasts an integrated system of healthcare delivery that encompasses a full range of ambulatory services as well as a tertiary care inpatient facility at its West Haven campus, an ambulatory care Center for Excellence at its Newington campus, six Community Based Outpatient Clinics, and a recovery-oriented Community Care Center. VACHS has over 200 operating beds supporting acute medical-surgical care, mental health care, and geriatrics and extended care services. In FY12, approximately 58,000 Veterans received care at VACHS, accounting for over 700,000 outpatient visits. VACHS is also home to a variety of special, regional treatment centers, including a Blind Rehabilitation Service, National

Center for PTSD, Comprehensive Cancer Center, Rehabilitation Center of Excellence, and vibrant CT Surgery and PTCA programs. Even though the majority of Veterans served throughout VACHS are male, female Veterans are regularly served and have access to a specialized women clinic.

In addition to providing excellent patient care, VACHS also provides a highly fertile environment for education and scientific investigations across many fields. While the neuropsychology fellowship falls solely under the auspices of VA Connecticut, our healthcare system is strongly affiliated with the Yale University School of Medicine and the School of Medicine at the University of Connecticut. These cooperative affiliations have helped make the VACHS a leader in research. Our facility has one of the VA's most extensive research programs, with an annual research budget of approximately \$28 million. Important research foci include aging, Alzheimer's Disease, cardiovascular disease, cancer, spinal cord regeneration, substance abuse, and schizophrenia. In addition, VACHS is also the home of a vibrant Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC) that spearheads several studies on Veterans with co-morbid psychiatric and substance use concerns.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA (all are required prior to starting the fellowship):

Applicants for our Clinical Neuropsychology Postdoctoral Residency Program must meet the following minimum requirements in addition to the general eligibility requirements of the VA (found at: <http://www.psychologytraining.va.gov/eligibility.asp>).

1. U.S. citizenship. VA is unable to consider applications from anyone who is not currently a U.S. citizen. Verification of citizenship is required following selection.
2. A male applicant born after 12/31/1959 must have registered for the draft by age 26 to be eligible for any US government employment, including selection as a paid VA trainee.
3. Fellows are subject to fingerprinting and background checks. Match result and selection decisions are contingent on passing these screens.
4. Have received a doctorate from an APA or CPA accredited graduate program in Clinical, Counseling, or Combined Psychology or PCSAS accredited Clinical Science program. Persons with a doctorate in another area of psychology who meet the APA or CPA criteria for respecialization training in Clinical, Counseling, or Combined Psychology are also eligible.
5. Have completed an internship program accredited by APA or CPA or have completed a VA-sponsored internship.

Applicants who meet these eligibility criteria are invited to apply for a position in the Clinical Neuropsychology Postdoctoral Residency Program with the Psychology Service, Department of Veterans Affairs, VACHS.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

Application review will begin in January. While interviews are not expected nor offered we are more than willing to speak with any potential applicant. The opportunity to speak with current and former trainees is also available.

1. We utilize APPIC's online application portal, APPA CAS. Materials should be uploaded to the site (APPA CAS <https://portal.appicpostdoc.org>) by January 1, 2017. It should include:

- A. A letter of interest describing career goals and how the features of the program as described will facilitate the realization of these goals
- B. Your curriculum vita
- C. Three letters of recommendation
- D. A copy of your graduate transcript

Any questions can be addressed to:

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