

## Clinical Neuropsychology Postdoctoral Residency Program



**VA Connecticut Healthcare System**  
Psychology Service – 116B  
950 Campbell Ave.  
West Haven, CT 06516  
203-932-5711 x 2465



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

**Application Review begins: January 1, 2016**

***This year, we are not participating 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 focused in West Haven is currently accredited by the American Psychological Association. This year, we will be offering a second position that is split between the Newington and West Haven campus. We are currently discussing with The Commission on Accreditation if this split position will be eligible to fall under our accredited fellowship.

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 2015 training year the program will be recruiting for two (2) fellows, one of which is a new position which will be housed primarily in the Newington Campus and will have an emphasis on Geriatric Health. 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 regards 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.

For fellows with particular interest in geriatric populations, the newly funded position with an emphasis Geriatric Health specialization will have core rotations on the Newington Campus and additional training experiences within the West Haven Campus. This position will offer multi-disciplinary opportunities with the fellow working alongside neuropsychologists, geriatric psychologists, and geriatricians. This core rotation offers a comprehensive approach to geriatric health that begins with screening within primary care for cognitive impairments, comprehensive neuropsychological assessment to further characterize those deficits, and psychoeducational interventions to assist in the case of the Veteran.

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, competencies, and activities available on this rotation are described below.

### **Objective 1. Demonstration of advanced level of psychological and neuropsychological assessment skills**

1. The resident should develop 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 can reliably develop case formulations based on the interview alone.
2. Display proficiency in the use of objective neuropsychological tests. 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.

### **Objective 2. Demonstration of advanced level of feedback and consultation skills**

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

### **Objective 3. Demonstration of intermediate to advanced level skill in treating individuals with cultural and individual differences and from diverse backgrounds.**

1. Display proficiency in integrating demographic, social and physiological variables relevant to patients' treatment and interpretation of neuropsychological tests.

### **Objective 4. Demonstration of ethical and professional behavior**

1. Display ethical and professional behavior as defined by the APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (2002).

### **Objective 5. Demonstration of advanced research skills**

1. The resident should develop proficiency in the development and initiation of a research project that utilizes either archival or newly collected data. Proficiency is established when the resident is able to develop the plan successfully and implement the developed project successfully.

## **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 often 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).

*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.

*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.

### **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. Research and publications have been focused on cognition, structural neuroimaging, sensory and electrophysiological functioning in schizophrenia.

*Kristen Wrocklage, Ph.D.*, currently supervises clinical neuropsychology fellows in the multi-disciplinary Parkinson's Disease Consortium and Neurobehavioral Clinics. She additionally conducts research in the area of executive dysfunction and risk-taking in post-traumatic stress disorder.

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 \$46,553 for the first year and \$49,070 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 which serves

veterans in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut. As one of the most complex VA facilities in the nation, VACHS provides high quality, compassionate healthcare to a large service area containing more than 395,000 veterans across an integrated system of healthcare delivery encompassing 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 three Veterans Outreach Centers. VACHS has 200 operating beds supporting acute medical–surgical care, mental health care, and geriatrics and extended care services. In FY 06, approximately 55,195 veterans received care at VACHS, accounting for 556,603 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. Successful completion of all requirements towards earning a doctoral degree from an APA-Accredited Clinical or Counseling Psychology (including dissertation defense).
2. Successful completion of an APA-Accredited Psychology Predoctoral Internship Program.
3. U.S. Citizenship
4. Successfully meet mandatory requirements for appointment as a Federal Employee, including, but not limited to: willingness to participate in the government's drug testing procedures, selective service registration for males, and consent to participate in a background check to verify your application information and/or criminal history. Applicants who do not successfully pass this background check and/or drug test are ineligible for our program.

**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. Applicants who are thought to match well with our program will be offered to participate in video and/or phone based interviews. In-vivo interviews will be available at the applicants request. Interviews will continue until the position is filled. The opportunity to speak with current and former trainees is available by request.

There are two options to apply:

*1. We do utilize APPIC's online application portal, APPA CAS. Materials should be uploaded to the site (APPA CAS <https://portal.appicpostdoc.org>) by January 1, 2016.*

*2. Send the following by email or postmarked by January 1, 2016:*

- 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. 2 copies of your vita
- C. 3 letters of recommendation
- D. A copy of your graduate transcript

*Application materials should ideally be sent in one package/attachment to the attention of the Co-Director of Training for the Clinical Neuropsychology Postdoctoral Residency Program:*

John Beauvais, Ph. D.  
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