The VA Office of Academic Affiliations is sponsoring a VA Advanced Fellowship Program in Mental Illness Research and Treatment at the VA Connecticut Healthcare System (VACHS), West Haven campus. The VA Advanced Fellowship Program offers individualized, mentored clinical research and clinical training in two high priority emphasis areas—substance use disorders and dual diagnosis (SUD), and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These emphasis areas are supported through two major VA research infrastructures: the Mental Illness Research Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC) and the National Center for PTSD (NC-PTSD) Clinical Neurosciences Division. Each year, the fellowship recruits two psychologists for a two-year Fellowship, one in SUD/dual diagnosis at the MIRECC and one in PTSD at the NC-PTSD.

The psychology Fellowship is fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the American Psychological Association. The next site visit will be in 2021.

The primary goal of the VA Advanced Fellowship Program is to train psychologists to become exceptional clinical researchers in high priority areas of VA mental health. The Fellowship follows a scientist-practitioner model and is designed to offer clinical research training and advanced clinical training in an interdisciplinary setting.

Fellows are individually mentored in clinical research and clinical service delivery by VA/Yale faculty. Fellows are primarily housed in either the MIRECC or NC-PTSD, but also interact with other researchers and with clinical programs in the Mental Health Service Line such as the Outpatient Addiction Recovery Service, PTSD and Anxiety Disorders Firm, Neuropsychiatry Firm, Psychosocial Rehabilitation, Health Psychology, Inpatient Psychiatric Unit, and Psychiatric Emergency Room. Fellows work with individual research mentors to develop a training plan that supports the Fellow’s professional goals.

**Program Philosophy & Model of Training**

The VA Advanced Fellowship Program follows a scientist-practitioner model and places strong emphasis on state-of-the-art methodological approaches to clinical research and practice. The Fellowship provides advanced clinical research training through individualized mentorship with skilled faculty in addition to traditional clinical training within an interdisciplinary team focused on one of the two emphasis areas (SUD/dual diagnosis or PTSD). Training also offers state-of-the-art seminars and didactics focused on research methods, statistics, epidemiology, mental health systems, education, and service delivery.
Fellows devote 75% of their time to patient oriented research and education, and 25% to direct patient clinical care.

The VA Advanced Fellowship Program is embedded within the VACHS, a designated teaching hospital affiliated with Yale University School of Medicine. VACHS’ mission 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.” Complementary to the VACHS’s mission, are the missions of the VA Advanced Fellowship emphasis areas:

- **SUD/Dual Diagnosis** - To improve health care services for veterans with co-occurring mental illness and addiction problems through research, education, and training in the science, diagnosis, and treatment of dual diagnoses. These Veterans have unique needs for integrated assessment and care. The MIRECC specializes in research and clinical innovation focused on Veterans with SUD/ dual diagnosis and multiple chronic morbidities.

- **PTSD** - To advance the clinical care and social welfare of America’s veterans through research, education, and training in the science, diagnosis, and treatment of PTSD and stress-related disorders. The NC-PTSD specializes in clinical neuroscience PTSD research.

**Program Goals & Objectives**
The goal of the VA Advanced Fellowship Program is to offer training experiences that encourage the acquisition, development, and refinement of professional skills, research proficiencies, and clinical practice competencies for Fellows working with Veteran populations. This interdisciplinary program aims to train psychologists with an interest in clinical research to become outstanding clinical researchers in high priority areas of Veteran mental health.

In order to fulfill the goals of Fellowship training, all Fellows must demonstrate an advanced level of skill and knowledge in the following areas by the completion of the Fellowship program, as measured by supervisors’ evaluations of the specific competencies.

**Competency 1: Assessment, Diagnosis, and Intervention:** Fellows will develop advanced competencies in the use of empirically derived treatments and systemic means of psycho-diagnostic and neuropsychological evaluation of patients.

**Competency 2: Consultation, Supervision, and Teaching:** Fellows will gain advanced skills in delivering consultation to inter-professional teams, develop advanced skills in the supervision of psychology trainees including interns and practicum students, and gain experience providing psycho-education to patients, family members and providers.

**Competency 3: Scholarly Inquiry:** Fellows will acquire competencies in several aspects of clinical research and scholarship. Key competency areas are discussed below.

**a) Integration of Science and Practice:** Fellows will learn to utilize the scientific literature to guide their clinical practice, and will use “lessons learned” from clinical practice to foster and shape their scientific hypotheses. Fellows will learn to use their emerging competencies in clinical science to identify solutions to emerging clinical problems they encounter in practice and will systematically evaluate the effectiveness of their clinical work (e.g., monitoring patient outcomes).

**b) Conducting Clinically Informed Research:** Fellows will gain advanced skills in conducting clinically focused research pertinent to the mental health needs of today’s veterans.
Competency 4: **Organization, Management, Administration, and Program Evaluation:** Fellows will gain experience in organizational management and administration pertinent to the career development of clinical Psychologists and scientists. Fellows may choose additional training experiences that facilitate the development of advanced competencies in program evaluation.

Competency 5: **Professional, Ethical, and Legal Issues:** Fellows will become competent (as appropriate for an entry level professional) in professional and collegial conduct, knowledge of the ethical guidelines of clinical psychology, and those ethical guidelines that govern the appropriate conduct of human subjects research. They will also become appropriately familiar with the wide array of legal issues relevant to the proper conduct of clinical psychology and human subjects related research.

Competency 6: **Cultural and Individual Diversity Issues:** Fellows will further develop their awareness and appreciation of cultural and individual differences and will attain cultural competence regarding the delivery of mental health services to a diverse population of Veterans.

Competency 7: **Confidence and Professional Identity:** Fellows will develop a strong professional identity, confidence, and professional demeanor commensurate with their status in the profession.

**Fellow Performance Evaluation, Feedback, Retention, and Termination Decisions**

Fellows conduct self-assessment of competencies and training needs at fellowship start. Formal evaluations of the competencies listed above are conducted twice each year and written feedback is provided to each Fellow. The Training Committee discusses Fellows' progress routinely and gives informal feedback throughout the training year.

A formal system of evaluation is used for Fellows to provide feedback on their mentorship, supervision, and overall fellowship program experience. Every 6 months and at the end of the training program, Fellows complete formal rating forms of their experience in clinical rotations, research mentorship, and in the overall Fellowship Training Program.

Fellows are given a copy of our Grievance procedures/ policy at the start of Fellowship training. This document provides guidelines to assist Fellows who wish to file complaints against staff members. Fellowship Training Directors are also available to consult to Fellows about any conflict with faculty.

At the beginning of Fellowship training, Fellows are given a copy of our Due Process policy. This document provides a definition of inadequate performance, problematic behavior, and serious conflicts, a listing of possible sanctions and an explicit discussion of the due process procedures. To summarize, whenever a supervisor/mentor becomes aware of a Fellow's inadequate performance, a serious conflict, serious problem area, or serious deficiency that seems not to be resolvable by the usual supervisory support and intervention, it is called to the attention of the Co-Directors of Training. The Co-Directors of Training will gather information regarding this problem including, if appropriate, an initial discussion with the Fellow. The Co-Directors of Training will then present the situation in a meeting with the Fellowship Training Committee. A thorough review of the Fellow's work and performance will be conducted, and one or more meetings with the Fellow will be scheduled to hear his/her point of view. If a determination of inadequate performance/serious conflict is made, then a further decision is made by majority vote of the Fellowship Training Committee to either (1) construct a remediation plan which, if not successfully completed, would be grounds for termination; or (2) initiate the termination procedure. However, most cases of inadequate performance/serious conflict are resolved through a remediation plan.
Program Structure
Fellows devote 75% of their time to research, educational, and supervision activities and 25% to direct patient care of Veterans. Each Fellow writes an individualized training plan at the start of their fellowship in collaboration with a research mentor.

In collaboration with their mentors, Fellows will develop and implement a research project, publish and present findings, participate in grant writing, and participate in educational activities and clinical service delivery. Over the course of the two-year program, Fellows will be trained in clinical research skills and advanced clinical service delivery with evidence-based treatments among veteran populations within an interdisciplinary setting.

In addition to the Advanced Fellowship, several other psychology, psychiatry, and allied health Fellowships exist at VACHS, allowing Fellows to be part of a community of other advanced trainees. Information on other psychology Fellowship options can be found at http://www.psychologytraining.va.gov/westhaven/.

The Advanced Fellowship maintains records on supervised training experiences, evaluations, complaints, and grievances for review by the Commission on Accreditation and for the purposes of future licensing and credentialing.

Research Mentors and Collaborating Faculty
VA and Yale provide a collaborative research environment. Fellows are matched to a primary research mentor who meets weekly with the Fellow and helps the Fellow create an individualized training plan. In addition to the primary research mentor, Fellows also work with any number of other collaborating faculty. Typically Fellows write manuscripts with their primary research mentor and with collaborating faculty, and develop their own research project with input from the primary research mentor. Many Fellows write a VA career development award or NIH K award.

SUD/Dual Diagnosis faculty research mentors include Mehmet Sofuoglu, MD, Steve Martino, PhD, Marc Rosen, MD, Suzanne Decker, PhD, and Ismene Petrakis, MD. Collaborating faculty include Kathleen Carroll, PhD, Jack Tsai, PhD, Robert Rosenheck, MD, Marc Potenza, MD, Sarah Meshberg-Cohen, PhD, Robert MacLean, PhD, Rani Hoff, PhD, members of the PTSD faculty, and other VACHS or Yale faculty of interest.

PTSD faculty research mentors include Ilan Harpaz-Rotem, PhD, Steve Southwick, MD, Ifat Levy, PhD, Chadi Abdallah, MD, and Ismene Petrakis, MD. Collaborating faculty include Robert Pietrzak, PhD, Jason DeViva, PhD, Joel Gelernter, MD, Yale psychiatry department chair John Krystal, MD, members of the SUD/Dual Diagnosis faculty, and other VACHS or Yale faculty of interest.

All of these faculty have websites with details about their interests at https://medicine.yale.edu/psychiatry/people Potential applicants can peruse faculty websites to find matches for their specific research interests, or contact the Fellowship Director and Director of Training with any specific questions.

Seminars & Didactics
Advanced educational experiences include a twice-monthly video conferencing seminar in which leading experts in the field presents to all VA Advanced Fellows nationally using videoconferencing. The didactic seminars focus on two main areas: 1) presentations on the most recent advances in clinical research in mental health and 2) presentation on all aspects of career development from grant and manuscript
preparation to the role of mentorship. Recent seminar topics have included VA career development, funding and resources, behavioral genetics, health informatics, designing clinical trials for behavioral therapies, funding mechanisms, and career development awards. Ongoing multi-site workshops on manuscript and grant preparation are also provided to the Fellows in addition to ongoing biostatistics seminars.

On-site training for all Fellows includes diversity and professional development seminars provided by VACHS psychology faculty. Fellows may also attend optional seminars at Yale University School of Medicine and VACHS.

On-site seminars for SUD/dual diagnosis Fellows include didactics on SUD treatment and research provided through Yale Department of Psychiatry’s Division of Substance Abuse.

On-site seminars for PTSD Fellows include meetings of the NC-PTSD and a seminar that links the various National Centers for PTSD using video conferencing.

Clinical Skill Development
Fellows provide 10 hours of face-to-face clinical interventions with Veterans per week. Each Fellow is assigned two clinical supervisors from the VACHS psychology service faculty. In accordance with the Fellow’s focus, one of the Fellow’s two supervisors is housed in the Outpatient Addiction Recovery Service (SUD/dual diagnosis) or the PTSD Clinic (PTSD). The other clinical supervisor may work with the Fellow on clinical cases reflecting more specific interests such as depression, anxiety, Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Group, or psychodynamic approaches to treatment. PTSD Fellows also receive specific training in PTSD assessment and conduct routine assessment as part of the NC-PTSD’s research assessment battery.

In this two-year fellowship, Fellows have the opportunity to gain exposure to a wide variety of supervision, assessment, and clinical service delivery experiences. Typically, in the second year of Fellowship, Fellows conduct ‘supervised supervision’ of a more junior trainee. These clinical experiences prepare Fellows for licensure application in the state of Connecticut. Licensure requirements for other states can typically be met if desired by the Fellow and discussed with the Training Director.

Commitment to Diversity
VACHS is proud to serve Veterans from all backgrounds and all walks of life. VACHS serves a growing proportion of women veterans, and has an active Women’s Clinic, Women Veterans Program Manager, and LGBT Veterans Coordinator. An on-site seminar with VACHS psychology faculty focuses on diversity. Fellows are required to consider how diversity issues may affect their research and clinical work.

Psychology trainees are invited to sit on the Psychology Diversity Committee, which meets monthly. The role of this committee is to identify and address needs of the overall psychology service pertaining to the inclusive environment at VACHS, disseminate information on diversity related resources and educational opportunities that might be of interest to the service line, and identify strategies to address gaps in recruitment and retention of diverse trainees and staff. Trainee input is important to this process, and we value the knowledge and skills that many of our trainees bring to this program.

We actively welcome applications from applicants from historically underrepresented backgrounds, and we work to attract a diverse cohort of Fellows each year. Our fellowship abides by federal equal opportunity employment laws and policies. As stated by VA Secretary 11/17/2016, “VA does not tolerate unlawful discrimination, including workplace harassment, based on race, color, religion, national origin,
sex (including gender identity, transgender status, sexual orientation, and pregnancy), age (40 or older), disability, genetic information, marital status, parental status, political affiliation, or retaliation for opposing discriminatory practices or participating in the discrimination-complaint process. This applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including recruitment, hiring, promotions, transfers, reassignments, training, career development, benefits, and separation. “We are proud to have worked with Fellows at different life stages, including Fellows starting families or with young children. A lactation room is available for Fellows.

The surrounding areas of West Haven and New Haven are home to a diverse population. The greater New Haven area represents a moderately sized city with many cultural opportunities including various restaurants, theaters, local social and advocacy groups, and museums. Our affiliate, Yale University, hosts several affinity groups supporting education, advocacy, community building, and more. These groups are typically open to Fellows [https://your.yale.edu/community/diversity-inclusion/affinity-groups](https://your.yale.edu/community/diversity-inclusion/affinity-groups). Grand Rounds and other discussions at Yale School of Medicine have included topics such as understanding the health needs of sexual and gender minority individuals, dealing with patients who voice racist views, and translating minority stress research into LGB-affirmative interventions.

**West Haven, New Haven, and Surrounding Areas**

West Haven, next-door New Haven, and surrounding areas are located on Connecticut’s shoreline, with easy access to Long Island Sound beaches, hiking in nearby state and local parks, and a wide variety of dining options, theaters, concert options, and museums. New Haven is a vibrant University city with several neighborhoods featuring walking access to restaurants, theaters, parks, farmers’ markets, yoga studios, and more: see [http://visitnewhaven.com/](http://visitnewhaven.com/) Yale University provides access to many cultural events accessible to Fellows, including talks by international artists, scientists, and world leaders, free art museums, symphony performances, and dance lessons. The annual New Haven International Arts and Ideas Festival and summer concert series feature free concerts on the historic New Haven Green. Family friendly options include a local Children’s Museum, many city and state parks, a nearby “rail trail” for family bike trips, and a free outdoor summer movie series.

**Travel to the area:** West Haven and New Haven are located on the MetroNorth train line, with train access to New York’s Grand Central Station within 90 minutes, and access to Boston via car or train in about 2.5 hours. Both cities are on the 95 corridor, providing easy highway access to other East Coast cities for bus or car trips. Fellows have taken weekend trips to Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Boston, Baltimore, and Maine.

**Requirements**

In addition to the Eligibility Requirements listed on the VA psychology training homepage ([http://www.psychologytraining.va.gov/eligibility.asp](http://www.psychologytraining.va.gov/eligibility.asp)) and copied below, applicants for this Fellowship program must meet additional requirements, copied below.

**Eligibility Requirements for all VA Trainees:**

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. All interns and fellows must complete a Certification of Citizenship in the United States prior to beginning VA training.
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. Male applicants must sign a pre-appointment Certification Statement for Selective Service Registration before they can be processed into a training program. Exceptions can be granted only by the US Office of Personnel Management; exceptions are very rarely granted.
3. Interns and Fellows are subject to fingerprinting and background checks. Match result and selection decisions are contingent on passing these screens.
4. VA conducts drug screening exams on randomly selected personnel as well as new employees. Interns and Fellows are not required to be tested prior to beginning work, but once on staff they are subject to random selection for testing as are other employees.

Specific Fellowship Eligibility requirements:

1. Graduated from an American Psychological Association (APA) accredited doctoral program in clinical or counseling psychology.
2. Completion of an APA accredited internship in clinical or counseling psychology.

A stipend is provided both for the first year and second year of the program with a stipend increase in the second year. These stipends are reviewed biannually and are adjusted according to rates paid by comparable non-VA postdoctoral fellowship programs. For the 2017-18 training year, the stipend for is $46,694 for year one with a stipend increase to $49,218 in year two.

Expected Outcomes of Fellowship
It is expected that Fellows completing this program will be prepared to obtain psychologist licensure and prepared to obtain employment in research or clinical areas.

Postdoctoral Residency Program Tables
Date updated: 8/24/2017

Postdoctoral Program Admissions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Briefly describe in narrative form important information to assist potential applicants in assessing their likely fit with your program.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals with a strong interest in one of the two emphasis areas (substance use disorder/dual diagnosis or PTSD) and research interests that align with one or more faculty mentors are likely to be strong candidates for this fellowship. Individuals should demonstrate a history of scientific publication and presentation, have strong letters of recommendation from research and clinical mentors, and training goals that are in line with Fellowship goals.</td>
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Describe any other required minimum criteria used to screen applicants:

| Applications are reviewed by committee and the top half of application pool is typically invited to interview. The committee considers number and type of publications and presentations, fit with program objectives, and fit with likely faculty mentors. |

Financial and Other Benefit Support for Upcoming Training Year

| Annual Stipend/Salary for Full-Time Residents | $46,694 |
| Annual Stipend/Salary for Half-Time Residents | n/a |
| Program provides access to medical insurance for resident? | Yes |
| If access to medical insurance is provided, Trainee contribution to cost required? | Yes |
| Coverage of family member(s) available? | Yes |
| Coverage of legally married partner available? | Yes |
| Coverage of domestic partner available? | No. Health benefits are available to legally married partners regardless of partner sex. Unmarried partners of either sex are not eligible for health benefits. |
| Hours of Annual Paid Sick Leave | 4 hours accrued per each 2-week full pay period for a total of between 96 and 104 hours of each during the year |
| In the event of medical conditions and/or family needs that require extended leave, does the program allow reasonable unpaid leave to interns/residents in excess of personal time off and sick leave? | Yes |
| Other Benefits | • Fellows accrue 4 hours of sick leave and 4 hours of annual leave (vacation) for each full two week pay period, for a total of between 96 and 104 hours of each during the year.  
• In addition to the above leave, Fellows receive the 10 annual federal holidays.  
• Authorized absence (traveling off site for professional activities) may be available for eligible events like academic conferences.  
• Liability protection for trainees: When providing professional services at a VA healthcare facility, VA sponsored trainees acting within the scope of their educational programs are protected from personal liability under the Federal Employees Liability Reform and Tort Compensation Act 28, U.S.C.2679 (b)-(d).  
• Fellows are eligible for life insurance. |

### Initial Post-Residency Positions

| Total # of residents who were in the 3 cohorts | 7 |
| Total # of residents who remain in training at the residency program | 0 |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PD</th>
<th>EP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community mental health center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federally qualified health center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent primary care facility/clinic</td>
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<tr>
<td>University counseling center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veterans Affairs medical center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Military health center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic health center</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Other medical center or hospital
Psychiatric hospital
Academic university/department
Community college or other teaching setting
Independent research institution 1
Correctional facility
School district/system
Independent practice setting
Not currently employed
Changed to another field
Other
Unknown

Note. “PD” = Post-doctoral residency position; “EP” = Employed Position. Many former Fellows who are working in VA medical centers also have academic affiliations that are not represented in this table, as this table reflects only the primary position. In 2013-2016, several Fellows obtained jobs that started before the end of their Fellowship, in addition to Fellows completing the Fellowship.

Applications & Fellowship Site Contact Information
Interested psychologists who meet the eligibility requirements should send the following materials to the Fellowship Director and Director of Training for Psychology via email by December 5:

• CV
• Cover letter identifying:
  o a research area of interest (within SUD/dual diagnosis or PTSD)
  o specific VA MIRECC or NC-PTSD faculty of interest as potential research mentor(s)
  o research goals for fellowship
  o clinical goals for fellowship
• Three letters of recommendation from supervisors familiar with your work: include at least one letter from a research mentor and at least one letter from a clinical supervisor
• Graduate school transcripts (unofficial transcripts are acceptable for application but official ones will be required if applicant is selected)

Interviews for this fellowship will occur in January. Fellowship start dates are set between July 1 and September 1 for a two-year period of fellowship training.

Please contact the Fellowship Director and Director of Training via email or telephone with any questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fellowship Director</th>
<th>Director of Training for Psychology</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ilan Harpaz-Rotem, Ph.D.</td>
<td>Suzanne Decker, Ph.D.</td>
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<tr>
<td>VA Connecticut Healthcare</td>
<td>VA Connecticut Healthcare</td>
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<tr>
<td>950 Campbell Avenue (116B)</td>
<td>950 Campbell Avenue (116B)</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Haven, CT 06516</td>
<td>West Haven, CT 06516</td>
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<tr>
<td>203-937-4760</td>
<td>203-932-5711 x7425</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:ilan.harpaz-rotem@va.gov">ilan.harpaz-rotem@va.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:suzanne.decker@va.gov">suzanne.decker@va.gov</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The VA Connecticut Healthcare System Advanced Fellowship is accredited by the American Psychological Association. For information regarding APA accreditation of this fellowship or other accredited fellowships, please write or call:

Office of Program Consultation & Accreditation
American Psychological Association
750 1st Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002
Phone: 202-336-5979
Email: apaaccred@apa.org
Website: www.apa.org/ed/accreditation