

Our Goals

The primary goal of the program is to train future independent licensed practitioners whose clinical decisions are informed by the integration of science and professional practice of psychology, in keeping with a Scholar-Practitioner Model. Significant attention is given to encouraging the intern's personal, professional and ethical development, consistent with the developmental needs of becoming a professional psychologist. Attention is also given to intern training needs, long term professional goals, and anticipated public health needs. Our specific goals for interns include:

Growth in Knowledge

We focus our clinical training and didactics on preparing a rich professional practitioner knowledge base. The internship is designed to provide a broad range of training experiences in the contemporary practice of professional psychology with some opportunity for subspecialty training and to satisfy licensure requirements for most states in the U.S.

Sensitivity to Cultural and Individual Diversity

We strive to provide the interns diverse and wide ranging clinical training experiences with an appreciation of multicultural/diversity sensitivity. The program facilitates professional development of interns by increasing their sensitivity to the cultural and individual diversity of the patients we serve and the professionals with whom we work. To enhance the diversity of the training experience, the faculty encourages applications from individuals with a variety of competencies and interests, as well as applicants from diverse backgrounds.

Appreciation of Professional Diversity

The program is designed so that interns have interactions with and supervision by several of the training faculty. This provides for a broad range of experiences with professional psychologists who have diverse racial, gender, academic, theoretical, practice, and specialty backgrounds. Further, many of our training opportunities incorporate an interprofessional approach to treatment, allowing interaction with an interdisciplinary team.

Generalized Competence

The internship program emphasizes and develops a broad range of skills (i.e., personality, cognitive, neuropsychological and psychodiagnostic assessment, psychotherapy, scholarly inquiry, research competence, consultation) with diverse patient populations.

Preparing for Future Professional Roles

The training year provides time to develop professionally and to set the stage for further post-doctoral specialization in the areas of health psychology/behavioral medicine, neuropsychology, geropsychology, and posttraumatic stress disorder. Interns will be prepared to assume clinical and research focused professional health care positions wherein they will provide empirically based interventions and likewise contribute to the professional knowledge base.

Our Model

In keeping with our goals, all internship training is designed to be sequential, cumulative, and graded in complexity as the year progresses to meet both the needs of the interns and community at large.

Rotations

Each intern completes three, four-month rotations of approximately 3 ½ days per week. Currently, no rotations are required, allowing interns to choose the training opportunities that will best help to meet their longer-term professional goals. Split rotations are possible, with the prior approval of the supervisors involved and the Director of Training. Rotation offerings may vary depending on supervisory availability.

Long Term Projects

The long-term project gives each intern the opportunity to design and pursue a specialized training experience in which he or she will participate throughout the entire training year. The long-term project may be clinically oriented, may focus on program development, may involve another facet of service provision (e.g., outreach, prevention, etc.), or may involve research. One half day per week is devoted to the long term project.

Dissertation Support

Although interns will be very busy with their clinical work, the training faculty encourages them to organize their professional activities, whether on-duty or off-duty, so that progress continues on the dissertation. While support in completing the dissertation is available on a limited basis, it is presumed that interns have proposed their projects, collected data, and are in the final stages of analysis and write-up when they begin their internship year. Some dissertation topics, however, require samples that can only be obtained in settings like our health care system. In the past, some interns have utilized our Veteran population to collect dissertation data. This arrangement, though, is not guaranteed to be available and would require extensive preparation in reference to IRB and the GCVHCS Research and Development Office requirements prior to initiation of the internship or very soon after initiation of the internship. We prefer that interns complete their dissertations during the training year, and then focus intensely on licensure and obtaining postdoctoral employment.

Additional Training

Each Thursday is devoted to training seminars, group supervision, or other meetings (monthly staff meeting, CE programs, Grand Rounds presentations, Training Supervisors Meeting). Other training activities include conducting cognitive and personality assessments, serving a term as Chief Intern, and developing and implementing work stress/anger management programs for medical center employees.

Supervision and Evaluation

Supervision is an integral part of the training program and is designed to foster education, professional competence, personal and professional growth, ethical responsibility, and personal integrity. At the beginning of the internship year, the Director of Training reviews the goals of supervision, process of supervision, and characteristics of good supervisors and supervisees. Outlines of this information are provided for each intern to reference during the training year. Supervisors are licensed psychologists who share their knowledge and expertise, model technique and professional behavior, and encourage interns to develop their skills using a variety of assessment/diagnostic, intervention, treatment team consultation, and research methods.

Interns are expected to apply critical thinking and contemporary, empirically-based skills to professional, legal, and ethical issues related to the practice of psychology. Interns receive a minimum 4 hours of supervision per week, at least two of which are individual supervision. The remaining supervision hours occur through extra individual or group supervision, including the weekly Group Supervision meeting with training leadership. Additional supervision may likely occur through other scheduled or unscheduled and formal or informal supervision contacts and sessions.

Specific rotation/activity goals and objectives are communicated to interns in writing at the onset of each rotation/activity. Faculty supervisors meet monthly to discuss the progress of interns toward meeting these goals and objectives. At mid-rotation, supervisors and interns are prompted to exchange feedback on the rotation experience and review goals/objectives. Patient and hospital staff feedback are reviewed and integrated into the evaluation of intern progress. At the end of each rotation, interns and their primary supervisors complete formal, written competency evaluations that are forwarded to the Director of Training. The information in these evaluations is used by the DOT to provide ongoing feedback to interns, supervisors, and academic training directors. Typically, evaluation letters are sent to the interns' academic programs at midyear and at the completion of the internship. Successful completion of relevant rotations, seminars, and general activity objectives constitute exit criteria for completion of the program.

Problem Issues and Due Process Resolution

Normally, problematic behavior or less than satisfactory performance is resolved by the intern and the rotation supervisor. In rare instances, formal remediation is necessary. We have a written due process document which details policies and procedures that are implemented in these cases. These procedures for handling grievances are designed to protect the rights of the student, the supervisor and the training program. You may obtain a copy of this document by sending an e-mail request to Dr. Fussell at shannon.fussell@va.gov.

Required Hours and Holidays

There are 10 Federal Holidays throughout the year and interns accrue 13 days each of Annual Leave and Sick Leave as Federal Employees. In order to certify the 2000 hour per year requirement of most states and account for time off on holidays and use of Leave, interns are required to obtain and document an average of 40-50 hours of work per week.