Psychology Practicum Extern Training Program

2021-2022

Practicum Extern Training Year

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Psychology Practicum Program

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**INTRODUCTION**

The Lebanon VA Medical Center Pre-doctoral Practicum Program provides qualified doctoral candidates a generalist training with a variety of psychiatric, medical, and geriatric patients in inpatient and outpatient settings. Practicum graduates are prepared for advanced training in VA facilities as well as a wide range of health care settings, including medical centers and non-VA hospitals that primarily serve adults.

**TRAINING SETTING**

The Lebanon VA provides primary and behavioral health care throughout a mainly rural seven-county area of south-central Pennsylvania. Patients are also served at five additional community-based VA clinics at varying distances from the main campus in Lebanon. The majority of training takes place at the main hospital campus in Lebanon. However, there is an outpatient rotation at York community-based VA clinic in York, PA. Practicum students are provided an office in the Behavioral Health building with a dedicated computer and phone.

**PHILOSOPHY OF TRAINING/GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The Lebanon VA Medical Center Pre-doctoral Practicum Program provides doctoral education and training for the practice of professional psychology. Training faculty and supervisors provide an intensive training experience to psychology practicum students within a generalist model and a practitioner-scholar philosophy. The Lebanon VAMC Practicum Program will train practicum students to think critically regarding the integration of scientific knowledge with current practice. We believe this model to be highly effective in preparing practicum students for the successful practice of professional psychology.

**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

After the interview and selection process, the practicum student will be offered a practicum position at a rotation setting that best matches their training needs and interests as well as that of the site. Current Rotation sites include: Outpatient Clinic Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program (BHIP), Outpatient BHIP-SUD (with a focus on Substance Use Disorder treatment), and the Geriatric and Hospice Inpatient setting. In most settings, practicum students will be exposed to Evidence Based Psychotherapies (EBP). Rotations are typically 2 full days per week, approximately 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM.

In their rotations, practicum students will have routine, on-site supervision by a licensed clinical psychologist, 1 hour per week. Additional clinical consultation, as appropriate, will also be available.

**ROTATIONS:**

**Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program (BHIP) (Drs. Deloy, Pillman, and Tosi in Lebanon, Dr. Kricher in York)**

The Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program (BHIP) was created in response to a growing need to treat patients in a more comprehensive, patient-centered interdisciplinary manner. Patients who are part of a BHIP team receive comprehensive care from psychology, psychiatry, social work, and nursing staff in the Specialty Mental Health Outpatient Clinic. Weekly meetings allow for case reviews, consultation with other staff members, and discussion regarding best treatment options available for each patient based on individual needs and goals. These meetings allow for the treatment planning process to begin in a setting where there is shared decision making among providers and collaboration with other areas of the hospital as needed to provide the best quality of services to our Veterans.

In the BHIP rotation, practicum students will work as part of an interdisciplinary team in the specialty Mental Health Outpatient Clinic at Lebanon or at one of our CBOC locations. Patients come to a BHIP clinic through consultation requests from PCMHI and a variety of providers throughout the hospital. The BHIP rotation offers a breadth of training opportunities with a wide variety of treatments used and diagnoses treated. This rotation also offers depth of training as practicum students have the opportunity to follow the same patient throughout their rotation. Practicum students will leave this rotation with a robust generalist training experience. The interdisciplinary nature of the BHIP teams provides a rich experience for practicum students to attend weekly meetings, interact with and consult with team members, and help build interdisciplinary treatment plans for patients. Included in this rotation will be exposure to EBPs.

**Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program (BHIP)-SUD Focus (Dr. Via)**

This rotation is similar the BHIP-General MH rotation above in structure and interdisciplinary team experience. In addition to those opportunities noted above, this rotation is different in that it offers much more experience in group therapy as well as a focus in treating substance use disorders. In addition to working closely with the SUD team psychologist and social worker, you will also work closely with the SUD team nurse and Peer Support Specialist. EBP opportunities include MI and MET.

**Geriatrics and Hospice (Dr. Cyrus)**

The Lebanon VA has 2 long-term care Community Living Center (CLC) units that are part of our Extended Care service. 1-4A unit consists of 15 beds and 1-5B unit has 20 beds. Additionally, we have an Inpatient Hospice unit with 17 beds for those near end of life. Each unit has an interdisciplinary team consisting of: physician, social worker, nursing staff, psychology, pharmacy, chaplain, and various trainees. Practicum students will participate in team rounds and IDM treatment team meetings and receive consultations for individual therapy and testing, behavioral plans, and staff education. This rotation includes working with Veteran patients and their families. EBP opportunities include MI, CBT-D, and Interpersonal psychotherapy for Depression. Additionally, there are group opportunities including Reminiscence therapy group and Grief Support Group for family and friends on the Hospice Unit. Currently, there is also the opportunity to help facilitate a monthly loss support group for those in our Low Vision residential program.

**Residential Recovery Center (RRC) (Dr. Colon Rivera)**

The RRC provides state-of-the-art, high-quality residential rehabilitation and treatment services for Veterans with addiction, multiple mental illness, and/or psychosocial deficits. The RRC identifies and addresses goals of rehabilitation, recovery, health maintenance, improved quality of life, and community integration along with specific treatment of addictive disorders, mental illnesses, and homelessness.

Each Veteran works with his/her interprofessional team to create an individualized treatment plan which includes specific goals, measurable objectives, and targeted dates for completion. This team is made up of psychologists, clinical social workers, psychiatric nurses, psychiatry, physician assistant, vocational rehabilitation specialists, chaplain, rehabilitation technicians, recreation therapist, health technicians, and peer support specialists.  When helpful, other ancillary disciplines such as Probation Officers or outpatient therapists/case workers are invited to team meetings to support the goals of recovery.

Treatment is recovery and strength-based focused; an essential emphasis is having the Veteran as a full partner in the process of their recovery.  In addition to the RRC’s stated recovery goals to address addiction, mental health, and psychosocial issues for those who need a residential level of care, the program also helps Veterans stabilize, find employment, earn money, and gain independent housing. Interns will be providing initial assessments, individual, family, and group therapy, psychoeducation, addictions work, and some case management. Additionally, there will be opportunities for brief assessments.

**Didactics/Seminars:**

Practicum students will be invited to some of our weekly Intern Didactic Seminars. Instruction in a wide range of clinical and professional issues takes place in the weekly 3-hour sequential Didactics Seminar on Thursday afternoons. Topics typically covered in the seminar include psychopathology, treatment-specific interventions, and areas of professional development. Other topics include specialized didactic offerings such as professional development, therapeutic intervention/ assessment, diversity and multicultural issues, ethics, supervision and consultation. In addition to didactic instructors from the psychology faculty, instructors representing various other professional disciplines such as pharmacy, chaplaincy, psychiatry, social work and nursing may be represented. In addition to the didactic seminars, practicum students will be invited to attend Behavioral Health Grand Rounds and Psychology Discipline meeting every other month.

**\*COVID-19 Impact on Lebanon Psychology Training Program and Emergency Procedures:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has created numerous personal and professional challenges for us all. One of these challenges is the uncertainty that we face about the future.

The Lebanon VA Psychology training program has prided itself on its transparency and communication with its trainees and prospective applicants. During this time of COVID, we cannot definitively predict how rotations or other training opportunities may be adjusted or evolve for the 2021/2022 training year.

With pride and confidence, we can tell you how things have been running since April 2, 2020. After careful consideration and a great deal of effort and planning, all 3 psychology interns and some externs shifted to providing clinical services remotely via telework. It should be noted that despite our physical distance, our connection and dedication to high-quality clinical care and psychology training has never been stronger. Trainees are continuing to see Veterans via telehealth for individual therapy and assessment, couple therapy, group therapy, and intakes. Trainees are also attending and participating in didactic seminars, individual and group supervision via virtual media technologies. Further, trainees have the unique opportunity to benefit from live, direct observation of clinical care by supervising psychologists joining them virtually in VVC sessions.

During the 2020-2021 training year, interns and externs both are currently working hybrid schedules, with some on-site experiences as well as some virtual care and supervision. In terms of what might be different in the future training year, there are still a lot of unknowns. Likely, there will be more utilization of telehealth and technology-based delivery platforms. We do not expect any significant changes to the base clinical services of populations served through rotations or other experiences described in our materials. The health and safety of our Psychology Trainees, along with the competent care of our Nation’s Veterans, is of utmost importance to us. We will continue to provide high quality training in professional psychology while simultaneously keeping our trainee’s health and wellness at the forefront.

All employees and patients must go through a daily screening of questions and temperature check before entering the building. Further, employees are provided with needed PPE, including masks, shields, and/or goggles. Face coverings are required at this time and social distancing is highly encouraged.

**ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:**

Start date for the practicum is **Monday June 7th, 2021**

Prior to start date, practicum students will be contacted by HR and/or the Education Department regarding the onboarding process, fingerprinting, badges, background checks, etc. Students will be provided with information for calling out if they are sick or otherwise unable to come to work for the day.

**Applications should be emailed to Dr. Cyrus at** [**Melissa.cyrus@va.gov**](mailto:Melissa.cyrus@va.gov) **with the email subject title: “Practicum Application” and your last name.**

**Application includes:**

1)      Cover letter about your **interest and which settings and psychologists** you are most interested in working with.

2)      Your current CV.

3)      Brief letter from your DCT stating why this would be a good fit for your training needs.

**Deadline for Application: Tuesday 1/19/2021**

**Interviews likely: 1/25-1/29 2021 Virtually**

**Notification Day: Likely March 1, 2021 to match up with the Pendeldot date.**

**\*Although we are NOT participating in Pendeldot, we are trying to follow the same timeline to make things easier on trainees. We ask that upon receiving an offer from our program, you respond quickly, but no later than 12 noon.**

**Requests for further information should be directed to:**

Melissa S. Cyrus, Ph.D.

Director of Clinical Training

Lebanon VA Medical Center (Mail Code #630)

1700 South Lincoln Avenue

Lebanon, PA 17042

*E-mail:* [*Melissa.cyrus@va.gov*](mailto:Melissa.cyrus@va.gov)

**PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICUM TRAINING FACULTY**

**Yesenia Colon Rivera, Psy.D.,** Ponce Health Sciences University, Puerto Rico (2014) – *Staff Psychologist, Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (MHRRTP) RRC*

**Melissa S. Cyrus, Ph.D.,** University of Alabama (2008)-Geriatric and Hospice Rotation (CBT-Depression, MI, IPT, Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy)

– *Psychologist, Community Living Center (CLC)/Hospice*

*– Psychology Discipline Lead, Director of Clinical Training*

**Joel Deloy, Ph.D.,** University of North Dakota (2006)-BHIP Rotation (Prolonged Exposure)

*-Psychologist Lebanon VAMC Outpatient Behavioral Health Clinic*

**Holly R. Kricher, Psy.D.,** Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (2005)-BHIP Rotation (CBT-Insomnia, Prolonged Exposure, Group Therapy experiences as well)

*– Psychologist, York Community Based Outpatient Clinic*

**Brad M. Pillman, Ph.D.,** California School of Professional Psychology (2000)

– *Staff Psychologist, Lebanon VAMC Outpatient Behavioral Health Clinic (BHIP)*

**Kristen Tosi, Ph.D.,** New School (2014) -BHIP Rotation (IBCT Couple Therapy, Psychodynamic)

*-Staff Psychologist, Lebanon VAMC Outpatient Behavioral Health Clinic (BHIP)*

**Jamie Via, Psy.D.,** Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (2012) -BHIP Rotation Substance Use Disorder Focus (MI/MET, CBT)

*– Staff Psychologist; Team Lead of Outpatient Substance Use Disorder Program (BHIP)*

**Lebanon Veterans Affairs Medical Center**



The Lebanon VA is located in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, nestled in Pennsylvania Dutch Country. The city of Lebanon has a diverse population of over 24,000 residents and is surrounded by quaint small towns and rural agricultural areas. Lebanon is centrally located being equidistant from Harrisburg, Lancaster and Reading, Pennsylvania. The city is also 1.5 hours from Philadelphia and Baltimore, and 3 hours from Washington, DC and New York City.

The Lebanon Valley is an area rich in culture and home to many famous attractions. The city of Harrisburg, the state capital, is home of the Harrisburg Senators baseball team and the Pennsylvania Farm Show. Hershey, “Chocolatetown USA”, is the home of Hershey’s chocolate as well as Hershey Park and Zoo America. Lebanon is also close to Lititz, PA, recently voted the “coolest small town in America”. Lititz is home to the Wilbur candy factory, Sturgis pretzels, Rock Lititz practice concert hall, and many independent restaurants and boutiques.

Lebanon is also close to many state parks and the Appalachian Trail. The Poconos are a short drive away and offer many recreational opportunities including skiing, whitewater rafting, paintball and mountain biking, just to name a few. Lancaster is home to the Amish and their culture as well as outlet and antique shopping.

Local Attractions:

<http://gettysburgmuseum.com/>

<http://www.hersheypa.com/>

<http://www.crystalcavepa.com/>

<http://www.hersheyharrisburgwinecountry.com/>

<http://www.poconomountains.com/>

<http://www.parenfaire.com/>

<https://www.sight-sound.com/WebSite/home.do>

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