**QC**

****VA Maryland Health Care System****

****Psychology Externship Program****

****2021-2022 Training Year****





TABLE OF CONTENTS

[**Introduction**](#Introduction)3

[Diversity Statement](#DiversityStatement)3

[Clinical Settings](#ClinicalSettings)3

[**Program Overview**](#ProgramOverview)**4**

[Training Model and Program Philosophy](#TrainingModel)4

[Role of the Staff](#RoleStaff)5

[Role of the Extern](#RoleExtern)5

[Clinical Supervision and Support](#ClinicalSupervisionandSupport)5

[Training Term](#TrainingTerm)5

[COVID-19 Impact on Training](#COVID)6

[**Clinical Placements**](#ClinicalPlacements)**6**

[Neuropsychology - Baltimore](#Neuropsych)7

[Outpatient Mental Health Clinic – Baltimore](#PPMHC)7

[Outpatient Mental Health Clinic – Perry Point](#MHC_PP)9

[Primary Care-Mental Health Integration – Perry Point](#PCMHI)10

[Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation and Treatment Program – Perry Point](#SARRTP)11

[**Didactic Opportunities**](#DidacticOpps)**12**

[Diversity Seminar Series](#DiversitySeminar)12

[Additional Didactic Opportunities](#AdditionalDidactics)12

[**How to Apply**](#HowtoApply)**12**

[Applicant Eligibility](#ApplicantEligibility)12

[Application Procedures](#ApplicationProcedures)13

[Selection Procedures](#Selection)14

[Contact Information](#ContactINFO)14

INTRODUCTION

**Welcome to our Psychology Externship Program Training Brochure. We appreciate your interest and hope this brochure provides you with information that can assist you in making a well-informed decision regarding your future training. Thank you again for your interest!**

**Diversity Statement**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is committed to ensuring equal employment opportunity (EEO), promoting diversity and inclusion, and resolving workplace conflict constructively to maintain a high performing workforce in service to our Nation’s Veterans. To that end, the Department will vigorously enforce all applicable Federal EEO laws, regulations, Executive Orders, and Management Directives to ensure equal opportunity in the workplace for all VA employees. For additional information, please consult the VA EEO Policy at http://www.diversity.va.gov/policy/statement.aspx or contact the VAMHCS EEO office.

**Clinical Settings**

## VA Maryland Health Care System

The Veterans Affairs Maryland Health Care System (VAMHCS) is a dynamic and progressive health care organization dedicated to providing quality, compassionate and accessible care and service to Maryland’s Veterans. The Baltimore and Perry Point VA Medical Centers, in addition to the Loch Raven VA Community Living & Rehabilitation Center and six community based outpatient clinics, all work together to form this comprehensive health care delivery system. Nationally recognized for its outstanding patient safety and state-of-the-art technology, the VAMHCS is proud of its reputation as a leader in Veterans’ health care, research, and education.

Statistics for FY 2014 show that the VAMHCS recorded almost 600,000 separate outpatient encounters, with over 52,000 unique patients. The Baltimore VA Medical Center recorded almost 400,000 separate patient encounters with over 45,000 unique patients, and the Perry Point Medical Center recorded almost 100,000 and over 13,000 unique patients for the same time period. The sheer volume of patients treated across the variety of clinics ensures that externs are exposed to a diversity of patient demographics, encounter a spectrum of degrees of complexity in presenting mental health and medical problems, and experience a variety of patient problems with enough frequency to establish good baseline knowledge of a variety of psychological phenomena.

*Baltimore VA Medical Center:* The Baltimore VA Medical Center is located in a vibrant city neighborhood on the campus of the University of Maryland at Baltimore (UMB) and is within walking distance of Oriole Park at Camden Yards, M&T Bank Stadium, Lexington Market and the Inner Harbor. The Baltimore VA Medical Center is the acute medical and surgical care facility for the VAMHCS and offers a full range of inpatient, outpatient, and primary care services, as well as a number of specialized programs and services, including integrated mental health in primary care programs, a women Veterans evaluation and treatment program, medical psychology and treatment for chronic pain, inpatient and outpatient mental health care services, and an intensive outpatient substance abuse detoxification and treatment program. Three blocks from the medical center, the Baltimore Annex offers outpatient mental health programming in the following specialty areas: trauma recovery, neuropsychology, and psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery.

*Perry Point VA Medical Center:* The Perry Point VA Medical Center is located about 45 minutes north of Baltimore on a beautiful campus of approximately 400 acres on the banks of the Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay. It provides a broad range of inpatient, outpatient, and primary care services and is a leader in providing comprehensive mental health care to Maryland’s Veterans.  The medical center offers long and short-term inpatient and outpatient mental health care, including the following specialized treatment programs:

* Mental Health Intensive Case Management
* Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center
* Health Improvement Program
* Family Intervention Team
* Outpatient Trauma & Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Program
* Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation Treatment
* Domiciliary Residential Rehabilitation Treatment (for Homeless Veterans)

*Loch Raven Community Living & Rehabilitation Center:* The Loch Raven VA Community Living and Rehabilitation Center (CLRC) specializes in providing rehabilitation and post-acute care for patients in the VAMHCS. The center coordinates the delivery of rehabilitation services, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, kinesiotherapy and recreation therapy, to achieve the highest level of recovery and independence for Maryland’s Veterans. The center also provides hospice and nursing home care to Veterans requiring non-acute inpatient care, in addition to offering specialized treatment for patients with Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia. Please be aware there are no current training offerings at the Loch Raven CLRC, and this differs from the Loch Raven VA Outpatient Clinic training opportunity.

*Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs)*: Each of our 6 CBOCs provide primary care and limited specialty medical care services. Every CBOC offers Primary Care-Mental Health Integration (PC-MHI), telemental health services, as well as specialty mental health services. Some of the larger CBOCs provide PTSD and Substance Use Disorder services.

* Cambridge VA Outpatient Clinic
* Fort Meade VA Outpatient Clinic
* Glen Burnie VA Outpatient Clinic
* Loch Raven VA Outpatient Clinic
* Pocomoke City VA Outpatient Clinic

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Training Model and Program Philosophy

The VAMHCS Psychology Externship Program aspires to the scientist-practitioner approach to training. This is considered an aspirational goal given the primary emphasis on clinical training during this externship placement. Although research training is not part of these placements, our Program strives to incorporate evidence-based practice for the psychological treatment of mental illness and other conditions for the effective care of patients. Our externs actively engage in clinical service that supports their ability to, as clinically indicated: 1.) identify and clearly describe the disorders and conditions presented by patients, 2.) select or create reliable and valid outcome measures that are sensitive to changes in patients’ disorders or conditions, and 3.) identify and successfully administer treatments to improve these disorders or conditions.

The Program is particularly interested in applicants from graduate programs that place an equally strong emphasis on scientific study and broad clinical training. It is expected that applicants have solid foundational training and skills across a range of clinical populations, evidence-based practices, and with objective psychological assessments.

While adhering to a scientist-practitioner approach to training that underscores evidence-based practice, the Program aims to train and refine skills in core competency domains with the ultimate goal of facilitating the development of externs by advancing their training and preparing them for internship. As an illustration, specific training in assessment or treatment for a particular presenting problem will be grounded in research, clinical practice guidelines, and expert consensus onthat problem. To round out existing scientific and clinical skills, extensive efforts are made to tailor the externship training experience to each individual extern's needs and allow a reasonable amount of focused specialization in each extern’s area of emphasis.

Role of the Staff

Program staff and supervisors are held to the highest levels of professional and ethical conduct. They are expected to both model these behaviors and promote extern engagement in the following: 1.) ethical and responsible clinical and scientific conduct, 2.) participation in self-regulatory and professional review activities, 3.) commitment to continued professional self-development through participation in training and educational activities, and 4.) activities promoting professional autonomy, such as active involvement with local, state, and national organizations, legislative efforts, and licensure activities.

Role of the Extern

Program externs are expected to assume the role of professional psychologist within their training assignments. This role requires awareness of and adherence to the highest principles of professional ethics, conduct, and competence, as well as a sincere interest in the welfare of clients. Externs have the opportunity to learn new clinical skills and techniques from their supervisors and other staff, as well as the opportunity to improve and modify existing skills. The majority of an extern’s time is focused on development and expansion of clinical competencies. Though externs are expected to conduct themselves professionally, their tasks are primarily learning-oriented. Although there is some variability across training sites, clinical service delivery is considered incidental to the learning process. Externs are not expected to assume the same quantity of duties, workload, or responsibilities normally assigned to the professional psychology staff.

Externs are expected to be involved in their clinical training assignments to the benefit of the VAMHCS health care delivery systems and their own learning experiences. Externs are expected to adhere to the ethical guidelines established for psychologists by the American Psychological Association and to the policies and procedures of their host institution and clinics.

**Clinical Supervision and Support**

Externs receive a minimum of two hours per week of supervision, at least one hour of which is individual, face-to-face supervision with a licensed psychologist. Supervisors are readily available to respond to externs’ questions and provide impromptu guidance. When an extern’s primary supervisor is on leave, back-up coverage is clearly delineated. At the beginning of training, the supervisor and extern jointly assess the extern’s training needs and establish individualized training goals.

Staff psychologists with appropriate clinical privileges provide primary supervision to externs. Credentialed clinicians from allied professions and non-staff psychology consultants provide supplemental training expertise. There are opportunities for additional supervisory consultation with psychologists working outside the extern’s normal assignment area as well. Program faculty use various modes and models of supervision in the training of externs, including co-therapy, analysis of audiotaped or videotaped sessions, supervisor “shadowing,” and “junior colleague.” In all cases, externs work closely with supervisors initially, and then gradually function more independently as their skills develop. Responsibility for ensuring adequacy of supervision rests with the Program Training Committee, under the leadership of the Psychology Training Program Director.

**Training Term**

The externship training year is for a term of 9 to 12-months beginning in early Summer or Fall. Externs typically work two days a week, with most externs working an average of 16 - 20 hours per week. This length is consistent with the majority of other psychology externships in the United States and allows externs to compete competitively for internship placements. However, the exact nature of the training term and requirements will vary based on the placement. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has certainly altered the training landscape and clinical practice within the VAMHCS, to primarily include telehealth and telesupervision activities.

**COVID-19 Impact on Training**

The current 2020-2021 training year has given various insights that can help inform the potential impact of the ongoing pandemic on externship training. Recruitment and interviews will be conducted virtually using video and/or telephone platforms, such as Webex, Microsoft Teams, or Zoom. The exact nature of clinical activities and practice will vary depending on the placement and should be clarified with your potential supervisors upon interviewing with them. Please be aware that changes can occur abruptly at times, and flexibility and ability to adapt to changes are highly valued qualities within our system.

We hope to be able to offer both face-to-face and virtual clinical experiences for this coming training year, but the exact timing and nature of what this may involve is hard to predict at this time. For any face-to-face clinical work conducted during the pandemic, personal protective equipment (PPE) and social distancing procedures will be required when working on-site. Additional clinic-specific safety precautions may also be implemented as needed to ensure the safety of trainees, staff, and our clients. For virtual clinical training experiences, this will be conducted virtually through VA-approved video or telephone platforms (e.g., VA Video Connect). In some instances, externs may be able to utilize equipment on-site at the VA based on the availability and suitability of your placement for on-site work. In all other instances, externs will be required to utilize personal equipment from the extern’s home for these clinical activities such as a desktop or laptop computer, camera, headphones or speakers, microphone and a reliable internet connection. Externs will also be expected to have and maintain a suitable work environment for maintaining confidentiality, professionalism, and collaboration through safe working conditions.

Based on the current training year, externs and their supervisors will also be required to submit a formal training proposal to the VAMHCS Education Department outlining any specific safety precautions, adaptations to training, and the nature of the clinical practice being conducted. These training proposals will be reviewed by our Education Department and approval will be required prior to beginning clinical activities.

There are also various considerations for our training program with respect to vaccinations. First, all staff and trainees will be required to obtain the influenza vaccination (i.e., a flu shot) as a condition of their employment/appointment. Various exemptions exist, such as obtaining medical documentation of a medical exemption or an exemption due to religious reasons. Documentation of the vaccination and/or exemption will be required to maintain employment/appointment. Second, at present, trainees currently in the VAMHCS system are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccination as part of their appointment. Please be aware that this is not required at the present time, and is available on a completely voluntary basis.

CLINICAL PLACEMENTS

**Training Placement Overview**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Training Placement** | **Location** | **Spots Available** |
| [Neuropsychology](#Neuropsych) | Baltimore | 4 |
| [Outpatient Mental Health Clinic](#MHC_Balt) | Baltimore | 2 |
| [Outpatient Mental Health Clinic](#MHC_PP) | Perry Point | 2 |
| [Primary Care-Mental Health Integration](#PCMHI) | Perry Point | 1 |
| [Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation and Treatment Program](#SARRTP) | Perry Point | 1 |

Neuropsychology – Baltimore VA Annex

The Neuropsychology Program adheres to training criteria and guidelines developed by Division 40 of the American Psychological Association, the Association of Externship Training in Clinical Neuropsychology, and the Houston Conference on Specialty Education and Training in Clinical Neuropsychology. Veterans with medical, neurological, and psychiatric disorders are referred from various clinics and units throughout the VA Maryland Health Care System for neuropsychological assessment. Diagnoses include neurodegenerative, neuropsychiatric, endocrine, infectious, seizure, and vascular disorders, as well as tumor and head trauma. We also see patients referred for war-related injuries and associated symptoms. Patients include individuals from different racial/ethnic backgrounds, gender identities, and ages: a substantial number of patients are over 50, although there have been increasing referrals of returning Veterans as young as 22. Externs conduct assessments in the general outpatient clinic in the Baltimore Annex and may also have the opportunity to work in the fast-paced interdisciplinary Geriatric Assessment Clinic at the Loch Raven Outpatient Clinic, collaborating with medicine, pharmacy, and social work to diagnose neurocognitive disorders and provide feedback to older Veterans. The Neuropsychology externship is structured for externs who have already completed at least one neuropsychology practicum.

Adaptations for COVID-19: While we anticipate a combination of virtual and face-to-face testing, this domain is difficult to predict for the 2021-22 cycle. All testing and clinical interviews involving externs are currently conducted virtually, i.e., video platform such as VA Video Connect [[https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect](https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fmobile.va.gov%2Fapp%2Fva-video-connect&data=04%7C01%7C%7C480f1164f804444c077408d8916e370c%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637419249833969193%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=OptEH%2B5H84eNyoK%2Bq32sgHMcvHC1bhR2rPi%2Bz4FnJT4%3D&reserved=0)] or WebEx, or by telephone from the extern’s home. Prior experience with tele-assessment (especially tele-neuropsychology) is an asset though not required, and flexibility is highly valued. The VA does NOT provide tele-neuropsychology equipment to externs. Externs must therefore use personal equipment in their home: desktop or laptop, camera, headphones or earbuds, microphone, and reliable internet connection are required. Please note that tele-neuropsychology requires enough screen space to keep stimuli, record forms, and the patient’s image in view simultaneously.

**Dr. Jeremy Carmasin** earned aPh.D. in clinical psychology from the University of Louisville, with research and clinical foci in geropsychology and neuropsychology. He completed his neuropsychology-focused internship at the Western New York VAMC, and his postdoctoral fellowship in clinical neuropsychology at Dartmouth College / Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. His research interests include longitudinal assessment of memory and executive functions (particularly in clinically-normal and mild neurocognitive disorder populations), and subjective measures of cognitive change and successful aging. Along with other Neuropsychology Section staff, Dr. Carmasin supervises externs, interns, and postdoctoral fellows.

[Back to Training Placement Overview](#Trainingplacementoverview)

Outpatient Mental Health Clinic – Baltimore VA Medical Center

The Mental Health Clinic (MHC) is a multidisciplinary program that provides outpatient medical, psychiatric, and social work services. Veterans receive treatment for a variety of conditions including Anxiety Disorders, PTSD, Bipolar Disorder, and Depressive Disorders. Veterans who are eligible to receive psychology services through MHC can receive appropriate psychotherapeutic interventions to improve and maximize their quality of life and recovery process.

The main training goal of the MHC externship is to prepare externs to learn appropriate interventions in order to treat individuals with the broad range of psychological disorders typically encountered in a multi-disciplinary outpatient mental health clinic. MHC externs will have the opportunity to provide individual therapy using Cognitive Behavioral, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Interpersonal Therapy, and other evidence-based treatments. There is also an opportunity for group therapy depending on space and availability. Externs also have the opportunity to develop their knowledge and application of several evidence-based psychotherapies, including Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and Interpersonal Therapy (IPT). Measurement-based treatment is emphasized, and externs are encouraged to incorporate assessment measures – such as the Beck Depression Inventory – II (BDI-II), Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), and PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5) –to evaluate treatment progress. The externship is a 10-16 hour a week position. **Due to space constraints, externs must be available on Fridays. The additional day is negotiable.**

**Dr. Joseph De Marco** is a staff psychologist in the Mental Health Clinic. Heearned his Psy.D. at Loyola University Maryland. He completed his pre-doctoral internship at the Coatesville VA Medical Center in Coatesville, PA and his fellowship at the Trauma Services Program at the Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital in Hines, IL. Dr. De Marco provides both individual and group psychotherapy primarily utilizing Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). He has received extensive training in evidence-based practices (EBPs) for PTSD including Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) for PTSD and Prolonged Exposure (PE) for PTSD. He is also trained inImagery Rehearsal Therapy (IRT) for nightmares and Motivational Interviewing (MI). Dr. De Marco’s clinical interests include trauma, exposure therapy, health psychology, mindfulness, diversity/multiculturalism, and supervision. He enjoys providing clinical supervision to externs and is excited to be part of VAMHCS psychology training program.

**Dr. Candice Wanhatalo** is a staff psychologist and BHIP team lead in the Mental Health Clinic. Prior to joining VAMHCS in April of 2018, she was a staff psychologist in the Mental Health Clinic at the Washington DCVAMC for ten years. During her ten years in DC, Dr. Wanhatalo was an active member of the training committee, served as supervisor to externs, interns and postdoctoral fellows. Her clinical interests include depressive disorders, Whole Health, mindfulness, and anger management. She has completed additional training in evidence-based approaches such as CBT for Depression, CBT for Psychosis, and Interpersonal Therapy for Depression. She received her B.A. from the Pennsylvania State University (We Are!) and received her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from George Mason University. She completed her internship in community mental health at the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board in Fairfax County, Virginia, where she served as mental health therapist for two years. Dr. Wanhatalo greatly enjoys working with externs, and has been thrilled to see how her former trainees have progressed in their careers over time.

[Back to Training Placement Overview](#Trainingplacementoverview)

Outpatient Mental Health Clinic – Perry Point VA Medical Center

Patient Population

The mental health clinic serves approximately 4,000 Veterans in a given year, the majority of whom receive medication management. The average age of Veterans treated is in the early 40’s. Veterans receive treatment for a variety of mental health conditions including major depression, anxiety disorders (i.e., PTSD), interpersonal relationship difficulties, bipolar disorder and dual diagnosis. A portion of these Veterans may also present with characterological issues.

Assessment, Treatment and Supervision

Training in this rotation will focus on competency as a generalist in an outpatient practice. Core skills will include assessment utilizing structured diagnostic interviews, bio-data, and objective psychological tests, individual psychotherapy and group psychotherapy using Cognitive-Behavioral, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, and Existential formulations, as well as group psychoeducation. Externs will have the opportunity to conduct brief psychosocial assessments in the Mental Health Assessment and Referral Clinic (MHARC), allowing the opportunity to integrate data from an unstructured interview, chart review, and brief symptom assessment measures to assist in initial case formulation for treatment and consultation to other mental health disciplines. In addition, the extern will complete at least two comprehensive integrated psychological assessments. Primary psychological instruments used will include brief structured interviews (such as the SCID, MINI, and CAPS) and objective psychometric measures (the PAI, MMPI-2, NEO-PI-3, and MCMI-III). There is also the opportunity to obtain experience using symptom validity measures. Assessment referral questions typically address differential diagnosis for treatment planning.

The extern will carry a clinical caseload of 5-7 Veterans for individual psychotherapy. Ideally this will include following several cases from intake to resolution, including assessment, case formulation and a course of time-limited evidence-based psychotherapy. Psychotherapy training will emphasize evidence-based cognitive and behavioral techniques that have broad application across a number of diagnoses, including depression, anxiety, and emotion dysregulation. Treatment modalities include Cognitive-Behavioral therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Existential-Humanistic Therapy and Skills Training Affective and Interpersonal Regulation (STAIR).  Externs interested in obtaining more experience with Veterans with PTSD may (depending on availability) have the opportunity to provide individual assessment and therapy to Veterans with symptoms of PTSD, including evidence-based trauma therapies, such as Prolonged Exposure (PE), Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), and Exposure Relaxation and Re-scripting Treatment (ERRT) for nightmares. Externs will also be involved in co-leading or leading at least two psychotherapy or psychoeducation groups through the Perry Point campus-wide Recovery Center (see description below) and/or general Mental Health Clinic.

Externs will have two individual, hour-long supervision sessions per week to discuss assessment cases, case conceptualizations, documentation, and individual psychotherapy cases. Additionally, externs will have the opportunity to discuss treatment modalities and to ask questions about professional development during supervision. Supervisors will also provide “on the spot” feedback during groups that the extern co-leads with the supervisor. The extern is always welcome to pop in with questions and/or concerns between supervision sessions. The general approach to supervision is collaborative, with the goal of supervision to ensure that the extern is getting the training experience that he/she desires.

Please be aware that one position will be available through each of the supervisors below.

Dr. Ashley Greer completed his Ph.D. at Fielding University and his pre-doctoral internship at the Devereux Foundation in Pennsylvania. He is a staff psychologist in the Perry Point Outpatient Mental Health Clinic and provides both individual and group therapy from an existential-humanistic perspective for a wide range of psychiatric disorders. He also utilizes evidence based practices including  Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) for PTSD, Prolonged Exposure (PE) for PTSD, Motivational Interviewing (MI), and Exposure Relaxation and Re-scripting Treatment (ERRT) for nightmares. In addition, he leads weekly groups in Motivational Enhancement Therapy for Substance Use disorders and Conflict Resolution, provides counseling to employees through the Employee Assistance Program and has specialty experience in Suboxone treatment for Opiate Use Disorders.

Dr. Michael Poet earned his Psy.D. at La Salle University in Philadelphia, PA. He completed his pre-doctoral training at St. Elizabeth’s Hospital in Washington, DC. Dr. Poet practices from a Cognitive-Behavioral orientation and he has received VA training in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) for Depression and Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PE) for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Currently, Dr. Poet is the Mental Health Assessment and Referral Clinic (MHARC) Coordinator whose responsibilities include the coordination of intakes for Veterans interested in receiving outpatient Mental Health services at Perry Point. He is also a staff Psychologist in the Perry Point Mental Health Clinic, where he conducts psychodiagnostic evaluations and evidence-based individual psychotherapy with Veterans who present for a wide range of Mental Health issues.

[Back to Training Placement Overview](#Trainingplacementoverview)

Primary Care-Mental Health Integration – Perry Point VA Medical Center

An externship within Primary Care-Mental Health Integration at Perry Point VAMC allows externs to obtain clinical experiences in collocated collaborative care within a primary care setting. Externs will have the opportunity to develop skills in brief functional assessments, brief psychotherapy and making appropriate referrals to specialty mental health care. The majority of referrals are same-day “warm handoffs” from a primary care provider or member of the primary care team. Common referrals are depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties/insomnia, smoking cessation, chronic pain, stress management and coping with chronic illness. Externs will learn how to complete a functional assessment within 30 minutes and conduct brief, time-limited psychotherapy with the patient for 4-6 sessions, if the patient is an appropriate candidate for PC-MHI treatment. Motivational interviewing, cognitive behavioral therapy and mindfulness based approaches are utilized. Externs MAY also have the opportunity to co-lead a CBT for chronic pain group (Thursdays) as well as participate in mental health pre-transplant evaluations.

There is one slot available for this externship placement. This externship placement is for 8-16 hours per week for 9-12 months. Days are flexible; however, Thursdays are a preferred day.

**Melisa Schneider, Psy.D.** Dr. Schneider earned her doctorate in clinical psychology from La Salle University with a health psychology concentration. She completed her internship at the Miami VA Medical Center, with training in the psychological assessment and treatment of various geriatric and medical patient populations, including cancer, medical inpatient consultation and liaison, hospice/palliative care, chronic pain, and transplant. She then completed a one-year postdoctoral fellowship at Salem VA Medical Center, with a focus on primary care-mental health integration and behavioral medicine. Dr. Schneider is the PC-MHI coordiator with VAMHCS as well as a fellowship coordinator for the Clinical Psychology Fellowship in PC-MHI. Dr. Schneider’s career experiences have focused on collocated collaborative care, chronic disease management, coping with chronic illness, health behavior changes, and chronic pain management.

[Back to Training Placement Overview](#Trainingplacementoverview)

Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation and Treatment Program (SARRTP) – Perry Point VAMC

The SARRTP is residential treatment program for Veterans working on recovery from substance use disorders and co-occurring mental health issues. Residents commonly face psychosocial stressors such as homelessness, unemployment and legal issues.

The SARRTP is a 62-bed unit (currently capped at 35 residents). Length of stay ranges from 30 to 90 days, based on need and treatment goals. During the first 30 days of programming, residents attend psychoeducational programming 5 hours per day Monday through Friday. Programming draws from traditional and third wave CBT and the 12-Step model and covers a variety of topics including: substance abuse, managing difficult emotions (including anger management and stress management), health, coping skills, and values and goals clarification. Following completion of the SARRTP Intensive Outpatient Programming (as the first 30 days of programming are called), residents attend additional groups focused on substance abuse and mental health recovery at the Recovery Center, and/or work with Vocational Rehabilitation to prepare to re-enter the work force. Additionally, residents attend 12-step meetings daily and Recreation and Occupational Therapy regularly. Residents are treated by our interdisciplinary treatment team, which includes Rehab Technicians, Social Workers, Psychologists, Nurses, Physician Assistants, a Psychiatrist, Occupational Therapist, Recreational Therapist, and Chaplain.

Externs on the SARRTP will have the opportunity to: provide individual therapy to veterans from the perspective of CBT, ACT or DBT; co-facilitate process groups (Monday and Wednesday); facilitate psychoeducational groups (currently DBT Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday; subject to change); attend consultation team meetings; and work as part of an interdisciplinary treatment team.

Building 22, which houses the SARRTP, was recently renovated and features water views.

**Bo Mullins, Ph.D.** earned his doctorate at Purdue University. Before coming to the VA, he worked as a Psychologist at the University at Buffalo, University of Maryland, Baltimore, and University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He has experience working with a diverse population of clients experiencing issues related to substance use, trauma, anxiety, depression, and multicultural issues. He currently serves as a Staff Psychologist in the Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (SARRTP) where he provides individual CBT, ACT, IPT, and motivational interviewing to veterans with substance use and co-occurring disorders.

[Back to Training Placement Overview](#Trainingplacementoverview)

Didactic Opportunities

Diversity Seminar Series

The Mental Health Clinical Center offers a monthly diversity seminar, which is focused on topics that enhance extern’s understanding of cultural competence within clinical and research applications. Topics are a blend of didactic material and experiential exercises, designed to enhance intra/interpersonal awareness, knowledge, and practical skills. Topics typically include military culture, disabilities, LGBTQI, race and privilege, spirituality, and microaggressions.

The objectives for the diversity seminar are to:

* provide an atmosphere in which externs and supervisors can explore themselves, their worldviews, and the worldviews of others, and how these beliefs might impact clinical work, scientific research, or professional development
* increase externs’ awareness and understanding of cultural factors in diagnostic and therapeutic processes, and the research environment
* broaden externs’ effectiveness in counseling and researching persons with diverse characteristics

Additional Didactic Opportunities

There may be a number of intensive trainings and consultation groups in evidenced-based treatments that are offered to program externs. These include, but are not limited to: Social Skills Training, Cognitive Processing Therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, and Motivational Interviewing. Most trainings involve a formal workshop that is facilitated by a regional or national trainer which may be followed by a consultation group to assist in implementation of the treatment modality.

The VA Talent Management System offers many other educational opportunities that may be accessed at the VA or at home. Examples include the Advanced Family Topics Seminar, multi-module training for the Clinician Administered Scale for PTSD and Cognitive Processing Therapy, Women’s Mental Health, Geriatrics and Extended Care, Military Sexual Trauma webinars.

HOW TO APPLY

**Applicant Eligibility**

1. Applicants must be trainees in good standing in an APA-accredited doctoral program in clinical, counseling, or school psychology and approved for externship by their graduate program Training Director.
2. Externs must be citizens of the United States and must present documentation of U.S. Citizenship prior to beginning the externship. The VA is unable to consider applications from anyone who is not currently a U.S. citizen. Verification of citizenship is required following selection. All externs must complete a Certification of Citizenship in the United States prior to beginning VA training. Male applicants must have registered for the draft by age 26 to be eligible for any U.S. 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 only be granted by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management.
3. Externs are subject to fingerprinting, employee health physical screening, and background checks. Selection decisions are contingent on passing these screens.
4. The VA conducts drug screening on randomly selected personnel. Externs are not required to be tested prior to beginning work, but after beginning a placement, are subject to random selection.
5. Additional requirements for all VA trainees are included at the following link: <https://www.psychologytraining.va.gov/eligibility.asp>. This information will need to be verified by completing a Trainee Qualifications and Credentials Verification Letter (TQCVL) with your Graduate Program Director of Clinical Training at the time of selection.
6. Please review the specific requirements associated with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic ([COVID-19 Impact on Training](#COVID)) on page 6, which outlines requirements for personal equipment and suitable work environment for virtual clinical work, approval of a training proposal, and documentation of influenza vaccination or exemption.

**Application Procedures**

1. All applications materials must be submitted electronically to the Psychology Externship Program Coordinator, Dr. Arthur Sandt, at [Arthur.Sandt@va.gov](mailto:Arthur.Sandt@va.gov). When naming files, please use the following convention: YOUR LAST NAME\_NAME OF FILE (e.g., SANDT\_VAMHCS Cover Letter). Application materials should include the following:
   1. A cover letter, **which clearly indicates** the placements which you would like to be considered. Please detail your specific reasons for choosing the supervisor and/or practicum placement in which you are interested. This is your opportunity to help present yourself favorably to your prospective supervisors and will help them determine whether to offer you an interview. Applicants may copy and paste the checklist provided below in their cover letter and rank order the practicum opportunities listed (i.e., 1, 2, and 3). Please do not rank more than three practicum opportunities and you are not required to rank three placements.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Rank | Name of Placement |
| 1 |  |
| 2 |  |
| 3 |  |

* 1. An updated curriculum vita.

1. A letter of readiness sent directly from the applicant's Director of Clinical Training.
2. Complete applications will be forwarded to respective Externship Clinical Supervisors for review.
3. Applicants invited for an interview will be contacted directly by the respective Externship Clinical Supervisors.
4. Externship Clinical Supervisors may make an informal offer to applicants. The Externship Coordinator will contact the applicant to make the formal offer.
5. **The deadline for submission of applications is Monday, February 1, 2021. Please note that applications received after the deadline are not be guaranteed to be reviewed. However, individual supervisors may continue to review applications received after the deadline for any unfilled positions, at their discretion.**

**Selection Procedures**

A separate committee of externship training staff from each track reviews and evaluates each application on the domains of clinical and assessment experience, quality of graduate program, coursework and grades, life experiences, and goodness of fit with the training program. Each program decides which applicants will be invited for interviews in late February and early March. Decisions regarding interviews are communicated via email.

**Contact Information**

Please visit our Training Program website at: <http://www.maryland.va.gov/services/mentalhealth/TrainingProgram.asp>.

Requests for additional information about the VAMHCS Psychology Externship Program may be obtained via email (preferred) or telephone from the following individuals:

Primary Contact:  
Arthur Sandt, Ph.D.

Psychology Externship Coordinator

410-605-7369

[Arthur.Sandt@va.gov](mailto:Arthur.Sandt@va.gov)

Secondary Contact:   
Moira Dux, Ph.D.  
Acting Psychology Training Program Director

410-637-1383  
[Moira.Dux@va.gov](mailto:Moira.Dux@va.gov)