

# VISN 1

## VA Advanced Fellowship Program in Mental Illness Research and Treatment

VA Connecticut  
Healthcare System  
950 Campbell Ave  
West Haven, CT 06516



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### Fellowship Overview

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 2022.

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 work with individual research mentors to develop a training plan that supports the Fellow's professional goals. Fellows work with at least two licensed clinical psychologist supervisors each year to support development of advanced skills in service delivery.

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 may also interact with faculty from other centers at VA Connecticut, including the VA Health Services Research and Development Center of Innovation: Pain Research, Informatics, Multi-morbidities, and Education (PRIME) Center, and the Northeast Program Evaluation Center (NEPEC).

Fellows are nominated for postdoctoral fellowship appointments at Yale School of Medicine.

## **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 at West Haven 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 <https://www.connecticut.va.gov/careers/psychologytraining.asp>

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 develop individualized research plans with an appointed VA/Yale *primary research mentor*. A primary research mentor meets weekly with the fellow to establish and supervise the fellow's 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, and we have recently had several fellows receive one of these highly competitive awards.

Substance use/dual diagnosis *primary research mentor* areas of expertise include medication development and testing for nicotine and cocaine addictions, e-cigarettes, sex differences in tobacco use, and genetics research (Mehmet Sofuoglu, MD, PhD); motivational interviewing and implementation science (Steve Martino, PhD); innovative addictions treatments (Marc Rosen, MD); pharmacotherapy and other treatments for PTSD and SUD (Ismene Petrakis, MD); ecological momentary assessment, chronic pain, opioid use disorder (R. Ross MacLean, PhD); sex differences in intersection of substance use and stress-related disorders (Mackenzie Peltier, PhD); suicidal ideation and behavior and effectiveness and implementation of dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) skills groups (Suzanne Decker, PhD).

PTSD *primary research mentor* areas of expertise at the Clinical Neurosciences Division of NC-PTSD include psychosocial and genetic epidemiology of PTSD and disorders (Robert Pietrzak, PhD); decision making, learning, aging, PTSD, neuroimaging (Ifat Levy, PhD); receptor imaging, PET, fMRI, depression, bipolar disorder, PTSD, cognition (Irina Esterlis, PhD); treatment and neurobiology of stress related disorders (Ilan Harpaz-Rotem, PhD; see [www.ptsdstresslab.org](http://www.ptsdstresslab.org)); genetic of psychiatric illness, including PTSD, anxiety disorders, substance use disorders, with both molecular level studies (genetic polymorphism, sequence variation) and population genetics methods (Joel Gelernter, MD); and pharmacotherapy for PTSD and SUD and other substance use disorder (Ismene Petrakis, MD).

*Collaborating faculty* available to work with fellows on both tracks include the above faculty, plus, faculty with expertise in research on gambling, compulsive sexual, binge-eating, internet-use and impulsive or risk-taking behaviors (Marc Potenza, MD, PhD); ketamine (John Krystal, MD); epidemiological and program evaluation research, system and program performance monitoring and performance metrics, and mental health informatics (Rani Hoff, MPH, PhD); engagement in PTSD treatment, and PTSD and sleep (Jason DeViva, PhD); and PTSD-SUD treatment (Sarah Meshberg-Cohen, PhD).

All faculty have websites with details about their interests at <https://medicine.yale.edu/psychiatry/people/>. We encourage potential applicants to peruse faculty websites to find matches for their specific research interests, and to contact potential mentors directly with any specific questions about potential projects or available datasets. Please contact with Fellowship Director and Director of Training with other specific questions about mentorship.

## **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 Addictions.

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. VA Connecticut has been identified as a leader in LGBTQ Health Equality in the Health Equality Index, a designation by the Human Rights Campaign, since 2014.

**We actively welcome applications from applicants from historically underrepresented backgrounds.** 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 03/15/2021, "VA does not tolerate unlawful discrimination, workplace harassment or retaliation 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.

**Training Components:** An on-site diversity seminar with VACHS psychology faculty focuses on how to understand, recognize, and support Veterans from diverse backgrounds in mental health care. Fellows are required to consider how diversity issues may affect their research as well as their 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 Psychology service, 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.

Psychology Colloquia at VACHS, and Grand Rounds and other discussions at Yale School of Medicine, have included topics such as unconscious bias, 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.

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>

## 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 outdoor dining options featuring many different cuisines. New Haven is a vibrant University city with several neighborhoods featuring walking access to public art, restaurants, theaters, parks, farmers' markets, yoga studios, and more: see <http://visitnewhaven.com/> and [www.downtownnewhaven.com](http://www.downtownnewhaven.com) A free series of outdoor concerts in the summer has featured Parliament Funkadelic, Lisa Lisa, Tiempo Libre, Ronnie Spector and the Ronettes, and more. The city of New Haven and Yale University provide access to many cultural events accessible to Fellows, including live and virtual talks by international artists, scientists, and world leaders, free art museums, symphony performances, and dance lessons. Family friendly options include many city and state parks, a "rail trail", local beaches, orchards, and more.

**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.



"Lighthouse Park on Long Island Sound, New Haven, Connecticut" by US Embassy Canada is marked with CC PDM 1.0



"Pizza in New Haven" by Michael Marsland available to Yale University affiliates



"New Haven" by Michael Marsland is available to Yale University affiliates



"Lunar Festival 2019" by Jack Devlin available to Yale University affiliates

## Requirements

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

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) adheres to all Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action policies. As a Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Health Professions Trainee (HPT), you will receive a Federal appointment, and the following requirements will apply prior to that appointment

1. **U.S. Citizenship.** HPTs who receive a direct stipend (pay) must be U.S. citizens. Trainees who are not VA paid (without compensation-WOC) who are not U.S. citizens may be appointed and must provide current immigrant, non-immigrant or exchange visitor documents.
2. **U.S. Social Security Number.** All VA appointees must have a U.S. social security number (SSN) prior to beginning the pre-employment, on-boarding process at the VA.
3. **Selective Service Registration.** Male applicants born after 12/31/1959 must have registered for the Selective Service by age 26 to be eligible for U.S. government employment, including selection as a paid or WOC VA trainee. For additional information about the Selective Service System, and to register or to check your registration status visit <https://www.sss.gov/>. Anyone who was required to register but did not register before the age of 26 will need to apply for a Status Information Letter (SIL) and request a waiver. Waivers are rare and requests will be reviewed on a case by case basis by the VA Office of Human Resources Management. This process can take up to six months for a verdict.
4. **Fingerprint Screening and Background Investigation.** All HPTs will be fingerprinted and undergo screenings and background investigations. Additional details about the required background checks can be found at the following website: <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/10450.html>.
5. **Drug Testing.** Per Executive Order 12564, the VA strives to be a Drug-Free Workplace. HPTs are not drug-tested prior to appointment, however are subject to random drug testing throughout the entire VA appointment period. VA will initiate termination of VA appointment for (1) any trainee who is found to use illegal drugs on the basis of a verified positive drug test, even if that drug is legal in the state where training occurs, and/or (2) any trainee who refuses to be drug tested. You will be asked to sign an acknowledgement form stating you are aware of this practice. See item 8 below.
6. **Affiliation Agreement.** To ensure shared responsibility between an academic program and the VA there must be a current and fully executed Academic Affiliation Agreement on file with the VHA Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA). The affiliation agreement delineates the duties of VA and the affiliated institution. Most APA-accredited doctoral programs have an agreement on file. More information about this document can be found at <https://www.va.gov/oaa/agreements.asp> (see section on psychology internships). Post-degree programs typically will not have an affiliation agreement, as the HPT is no longer enrolled in an academic program and the program is VA sponsored.
7. **TQCVL.** To streamline on-boarding of HPTs, VHA Office of Academic Affiliations requires completion of a Trainee Qualifications and Credentials Verification Letter (TQCVL). An Educational Official at the Affiliate must complete and sign this letter. For post-graduate programs where an affiliate is not the program sponsor, this process must be completed by the VA Training Director. Your VA appointment cannot happen until the TQCVL is submitted and signed by senior leadership from the VA facility. For more information about this document, please visit <https://www.va.gov/OAA/TQCVL.asp>



a. **Health Requirements.** Among other things, the TQCVL confirms that you, the trainee, are fit to perform the essential functions (physical and mental) of the training program and immunized following current Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines and VHA policy. This protects you, other employees and patients while working in a healthcare facility. Required are annual tuberculosis screening, Hepatitis B vaccine, influenza vaccine, and COVID-19 vaccine. Declinations are EXTREMELY rare. If you decline the flu vaccine you will be required to wear a mask while in patient care areas of the VA. If you decline the COVID-19 vaccine, you will be required to undergo weekly COVID-19 testing, wear a mask, maintain distancing, and be subject to travel restrictions. HPTs are appointed as temporary employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs. As such, HPTs are subject to laws, policies, and guidelines posted for VA staff members. There are infrequent times in which this guidance can change during a training year which may create new requirements or responsibilities for HPTs. If employment requirements change during the course of a training year, HPTs will be notified of the change and impact as soon as possible and options provided. The Fellowship Directors will provide you with the information you need to understand the requirement and reasons for the requirement in timely manner.

b. **Primary source verification of all prior education and training is certified via the TQCVL.** Training and Program Directors will be contacting the appropriate institutions to ensure you have the appropriate qualifications and credentials as required by the admission criteria of the training program in which you are enrolled.

8. **Additional On-boarding Forms.** Additional pre-employment forms include the Application for Health Professions Trainees (VA 10-2850D) and the Declaration for Federal Employment (OF 306). These documents and others are available online for review at <https://www.va.gov/oaa/app-forms.asp>. Falsifying any answer on these required Federal documents will result in the inability to appoint or immediate dismissal from the training program.

9. **Proof of Identity per VA.** VA on-boarding requires presentation of two source documents (IDs). Documents must be unexpired and names on both documents must match. For more information visit: <https://www.oit.va.gov/programs/piv/media/docs/IDMatrix.pdf>

Additional information regarding eligibility requirements for appointment as a psychology HPT can be found at the end of this brochure.

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 2022-23 training year, the stipend for is \$51,233 for year one with a stipend increase to \$54,002 in year two.

Special note for individuals who are completing a VA predoctoral internship: converting from an intern salary to a postdoc salary within a pay period is not permitted. Therefore, individuals who wish to go from a VA internship to a VA postdoc without a break in service (e.g., internship until 6/30, fellowship starting 7/1) must continue on at the intern salary for the duration of the last internship pay period. This would reduce the advertised postdoctoral fellowship salary accordingly for one pay period. The alternative would be to terminate internship at the appointed date, then begin VA postdoctoral fellowship at the start of a new pay period to receive the entire fellowship training year at the full advertised salary.

## **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 Program Admissions**

**Date Program Tables are updated: 9/3/2021**

**Briefly describe in narrative form important information to assist potential applicants in assessing their likely fit with your program. This description must be consistent with the program's policies on intern selection and practicum and academic preparation requirements:**

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 have training goals that are in line with Fellowship goals. Individuals must have graduated from an APA-accredited clinical or counseling psychology program and have completed an APA-accredited internship in clinical or counseling psychology. Further, individuals must be eligible for federal appointment as a Veterans Health Administration Health Professions Trainee (see full eligibility criteria listed above).

**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 in making the decision to invite applicants for interview.

**Financial and Other Benefit Support for Upcoming Training Year\***

Annual Stipend/Salary for Full-time Residents	\$53,538 Year 1 ; \$56,432 Year 2	
Annual Stipend/Salary for Half-time Residents	n/a	
Program provides access to medical insurance for resident?	Yes	
<b>If access to medical insurance is provided:</b>		
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 any sex are not eligible for health benefits.
Hours of Annual Paid Personal Time Off (PTO and/or Vacation)	4 hours accrued per each 2-week full pay period for a total of between 96 and 104 hours of each during the year	
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	
<p>Other Benefits (please describe):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• In addition to the above leave, Fellows receive the 10 annual federal holidays.</li> <li>• Authorized absence (traveling off site for professional activities) may be available for eligible events like academic conferences.</li> <li>• 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).</li> <li>• Fellows are eligible for life insurance.</li> </ul>		

\*Note. Programs are not required by the Commission on Accreditation to provide all benefits listed in this table

### Initial Post-Residency Positions

(Provide an Aggregated Tally for the Preceding 3 Cohorts)

	<b>2017-2019</b>	
Total # of residents who were in the 3 cohorts	6	
Total # of residents who remain in training in the residency program	0	
	<b>PD</b>	<b>EP</b>
Community mental health center		
Federally qualified health center		
Independent primary care facility/clinic		
University counseling center		
Veterans Affairs medical center		4
Military health center		
Academic health center		1
Other medical center or hospital		
Psychiatric hospital		
Academic university/department		
Community college or other teaching setting		
Independent research institution		
Correctional facility		
School district/system		
Independent practice setting		1
Not currently employed		
Changed to another field		
Other		
Unknown		

Note: “PD” = Post-doctoral residency position; “EP” = Employed Position. Each individual represented in this table should be counted only one time. For former trainees working in more than one setting, select the setting that represents their primary position. Most 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 2017-2019, 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 Director of SUD or PTSD **via email by December 1:**

Document	Required Document Title
CV	Lastname_CV
Cover letter specifying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Fellowship track(s) to which you are applying</li> <li>○ a research area(s) of interest (within SUD/dual diagnosis or PTSD)</li> <li>○ specific VA MIRECC or NC-PTSD faculty of interest as potential <i>research mentor(s)</i></li> <li>○ specific faculty members as potential <i>collaborating faculty</i></li> <li>○ research goals for fellowship</li> <li>○ clinical goals for fellowship</li> </ul>	Lastname_Cover letter
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	Lastname_LOR_research_Letter writer's name or Lastname_LOR_clinical_Letter writer's name
Graduate school transcripts (unofficial transcripts are acceptable for application but official ones will be required if applicant is selected)	Lastname_transcript

Videoconference / telephone interviews for this fellowship will occur in late December or early-mid January. An in person interview is not required. Fellowship start dates are set between July 1 and September 1 for a two-year period of fellowship training.

Please contact the Fellowship Director of the track you seek admission to via email or telephone with any questions.

Fellowship Director (PTSD)	Fellowship Director (SA/DD)
Ilan Harpaz-Rotem, Ph.D.  VA Connecticut Healthcare 950 Campbell Avenue (116B) West Haven, CT 06516 203-937-4760 <a href="mailto:ilan.harpaz-rotem@va.gov">ilan.harpaz-rotem@va.gov</a>	Suzanne Decker, Ph.D.  VA Connecticut Healthcare 950 Campbell Avenue (116B) West Haven, CT 06516 203-932-5711 x7425 <a href="mailto:suzanne.decker@va.gov">suzanne.decker@va.gov</a>

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 1<sup>st</sup> Street, NE

Washington, DC 20002  
Phone: 202-336-5979  
Email: [apaaccred@apa.org](mailto:apaaccred@apa.org)  
Website: [www.apa.org/ed/accreditation](http://www.apa.org/ed/accreditation)

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### **Additional information regarding eligibility requirements (with hyperlinks):**

- Trainees receive term employee appointments and must meet eligibility requirements for appointment as outlined in VA Handbook 5005 Staffing, Part II, Section B. Appointment Requirements and Determinations.  
[https://www.va.gov/vapubs/viewPublication.asp?Pub\\_ID=646&FType=2](https://www.va.gov/vapubs/viewPublication.asp?Pub_ID=646&FType=2)
- Selective Service website where the requirements, benefits and penalties of registering vs. not registering are outlined: <https://www.sss.gov/Registration/Why-Register/Benefits-and-Penalties>

Additional specific suitability information from Title 5 (referenced in VHA Handbook 5005 – hyperlinks included):

Specific factors. In determining whether a person is suitable for Federal employment, only the following factors will be considered a basis for finding a person unsuitable and taking a suitability action:

- (1) Misconduct or negligence in employment;
- (2) Criminal or dishonest conduct;
- (3) Material, intentional false statement, or deception or fraud in examination or appointment;
- (4) Refusal to furnish testimony as required by § 5.4 of this chapter;
- (5) Alcohol abuse, without evidence of substantial rehabilitation, of a nature and duration that suggests that the applicant or appointee would be prevented from performing the duties of the position in question, or would constitute a direct threat to the property or safety of the applicant or appointee or others;
- (6) Illegal use of narcotics, drugs, or other controlled substances without evidence of substantial rehabilitation;

- (7) Knowing and willful engagement in acts or activities designed to overthrow the U.S. Government by force; and
- (8) Any statutory or regulatory bar which prevents the lawful employment of the person involved in the position in question.

**(c) Additional considerations. OPM and agencies must consider any of the following additional considerations to the extent OPM or the relevant agency, in its sole discretion, deems any of them pertinent to the individual case:**

- (1) The nature of the position for which the person is applying or in which the person is employed;
- (2) The nature and seriousness of the conduct;
- (3) The circumstances surrounding the conduct;
- (4) The recency of the conduct;
- (5) The age of the person involved at the time of the conduct;
- (6) Contributing societal conditions; and
- (7) The absence or presence of rehabilitation or efforts toward rehabilitation.