

Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center

Clinical Psychology Externship

Externship Information (2021-2022)

The Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center (JBVAMC) is located two miles west of the Loop, Chicago's central downtown district. It is part of Chicago's large Illinois Medical District, which also includes Cook County Hospital, Rush University Medical Center and the University of Illinois at Chicago Medical Center. JBVAMC serves the almost one million veterans who reside in its catchment area. Many veterans are eligible for VA health care because they are disabled or economically disadvantaged.

Academic Affiliations

JBVAMC is affiliated with the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine and Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. Over 1800 medical and associated health trainees rotate through the medical center each year, receiving training in medicine, surgery, psychiatry, neurology, dentistry, radiology, orthopedics, psychology, nursing, pharmacy, social work, and audiology, among other disciplines. Moreover, JBVAMC is one of the most competitive psychology practicum sites in the Chicago area, drawing extern applicants from twelve local American Psychological Association (APA)-accredited clinical and counseling psychology programs.

Accreditation Status/Regulation

The JBVAMC Clinical Psychology Externship Program is a self-regulated program that provides a variable number of assessment and psychotherapy practica each year. The program is not a member of ACEPT but attempts to minimize interference with ACEPT's selection and notification policies as much as is practical given the constraints of the program. The externship program works with individual academic programs on issues of competency evaluation and establishing training agreements. Placement in an externship practicum requires coordination between the externship program and the academic program to ensure coverage under the Federal Tort Claims Act.

The JBVAMC Clinical Psychology Internship Program is fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation (CoA) of the American Psychological Association and adheres to the guidelines of the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC). Our last completed accreditation review commenced in 2012, and we obtained full accreditation through 2020, the maximum period that could be granted to an internship setting. We are currently in the process of seeking re-accreditation, the timeline of which has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We expect to have our site visit in 2021 (date to be determined by the CoA). Our program will remain fully accredited and in good standing throughout the delay. Accreditation documentation may

be viewed upon request. APA accreditation has been maintained continuously since our first accreditation in 1979.

The JBVAMC Postdoctoral Fellowship Program in Clinical Psychology is a new program having started during the 2014-2015 year. This program has two tracks: one focusing on clinical training related to comorbid post-traumatic stress disorder, substance use disorders, and pain-related disorders and the other focusing on serious mental illness. The program adheres to the guidelines of APPIC and is currently under review by the APA's CoA for its initial accreditation. More information on accreditation is available from the CoA of the American Psychological Association.

The address is:

Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation
Education Directorate,
American Psychological Association
750 First Street NE
Washington, D.C. 20002-4242
202-336-5979
www.apa.org/ed/accreditation

Nondiscrimination Policy and Diversity Statement

The JBVAMC Psychology Training Programs abide by APPIC's policy on nondiscrimination: "Training agencies have practices which are nondiscriminatory in regard to race/ethnic background, gender, age, sexual orientation, lifestyle, and disabilities." The JBVAMC Psychology Training Programs adhere to Federal Executive Order 13160, "Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Race, Sex, Color, National Origin, Disability, Religion, Age, Sexual Orientation, and Status as a Parent in Federally Conducted Education and Training Programs." In addition to abiding by these non-discrimination policies, the Psychology Training Programs strongly seek and value individuals with diverse experiences and backgrounds as the foundation of a rich training environment. Our program emphasizes respect for trainees, staff members, and patients representing all forms of diversity, and prohibit discrimination based on the aforementioned identities as well as gender identity, marital status, socioeconomic status, Veteran status, indigenous heritage, and political affiliation. All applicants are entitled to equal treatment in the selection process and freedom from discrimination and harassment. The Psychology Training Programs seek to obtain trainees that represent diverse identities, while selecting the most qualified candidates. Individuals with minoritized identities are strongly encouraged to apply. Jesse Brown VA is an Equal Opportunity Employer and our Psychology Training Programs follow all institutional guidelines in this regard.

Chicago Location

Chicago is the third largest metropolitan area in the United States. JBVAMC is convenient to expressways and public transportation, including buses and trains that offer transportation to and from our building within blocks of its entrance. Chicago is a hub of arts in the Midwest, the home of world-famous architecture, and dozens of annual festivals. The music and food scene are especially robust and diverse. Further information about Chicago is available at www.CityofChicago.org.

COVID-19 Related Changes

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to numerous changes since March 2020. While we cannot predict how COVID will continue to shape our work, our environment of care, and our lives, we can say with confidence that the safety of our trainees, staff, and the Veterans we serve, is our top priority. We are consistently working with hospital and national level leadership to follow public health and facility safety and social distancing guidelines, and we are proactively communicating with trainees in real-time as new information and developments become available. Regarding the 2021-2022 training year, we do not anticipate any significant changes to our foundational clinical rotations and training opportunities. We do anticipate that at least some of our clinical services will remain delivered via telehealth, and some of our meetings will likely maintain a virtual attendance option when in-person attendance is not feasible. Additionally, interviews for the 2021-2022 training year will be virtual. We will continue to modify our public materials as new changes become available, and we appreciate your significant patience and flexibility throughout this time.

JBVAMC's Patient Population

A Veteran is defined as anyone who has served in the Armed Forces, whether during wartime or peacetime. Veterans commonly eligible for VA services include older Veterans, combat Veterans, disabled Veterans, any Veteran who has experienced a military sexual trauma, OEF/OIF/OND Veterans, and indigent Veterans with honorable, general, or medical discharges

JBVAMC principally serves the Veteran population of Chicago and a portion of Northwest Indiana. The Veterans at the JBVAMC are from various cultural, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds. We serve predominately Black, African American, older, and male populations, and a growing number of younger Veterans, female Veterans, and sexual and gender minority Veterans are utilizing our facility's medical services, especially since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan began. Many Veterans have multiple medical and psychiatric problems and are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Common psychological problems include combat trauma, sexual trauma, depression, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, psychosis, and substance use disorders.

Training Philosophy

The Department of Veterans Affairs employs more psychologists and trains more psychology trainees than any other American institution. We are proud to be part of the training mission of the VA. The training philosophy of the JBVAMC psychology externship program is as follows:

- **Scientist-Practitioner Model:** We adhere to a scientist-practitioner model of clinical training. In supervision, externs share their decision-making processes, formulate a course of action using their scientific knowledge of psychology, follow through with decisions, and critique the results of interventions. Staff members refer externs to appropriate professional research and writings so that externs become aware of the empirical validity for the treatments that are provided. Some staff members are involved in research or scholarly writing, and a number of our externs have presented at conferences or have published articles during their time with us.
- **Cultural and Systems Competence:** Externs assess the patient's social system, which includes the patient, the family, ethnic and cultural issues, and the community. Also, externs negotiate the patient's treatment system, including the treatment team and other programs at the medical center. Externs are trained to meet the special demands of mental health service delivery to urban, ethnic minority populations.
- **Placing Training Above Service Delivery and Revenue Generation:** The fulfillment of the externs' training needs remains the paramount consideration of the program. At no time will externs' needs for clinical training be subordinated to the agency's need to generate revenue nor will it substitute for the delivery of services by the staff. The externs' service delivery activities are predominantly learning-oriented because they involve opportunities for clinical exposure, experiential learning, discussion and application of clinical intervention, and supervision.

Training Program Overview

Externs are provided various training options; however, despite the fact that externs are interviewed and typically offered externships through a particular track under the assumption that they will be rotating through that track, **no rotations can be absolutely promised to an extern.** Each rotation is supervised by a psychology staff member; in the event that staffing changes occur, the program commits to ensuring that the extern will continue to meet the training expectations outlined in the applicable training agreement, although JBVAMC's program reserves the right to change the rotational assignments to reflect where we are most able to provide the highest quality training experience to the extern.

Structure

Externship tracks typically involve either 1) two six-month rotations (approximately July–December and January–June) or 2) one year-long rotation (approximately July–June). Externs must be willing to dedicate 20 hours per week to their involvement in the psychology externship program. Of the 20 hours, a minimum of 1 hour of supervision, along with 1 hour of mandatory extern didactic seminar participation (currently scheduled on Fridays from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.) is expected, although the exact amount of supervision is frequently increased to meet the expectations of the extern's academic program.

Most rotations involve a combination of assessment, individual psychotherapy, and group therapy and frequently involve interdisciplinary team consultation. All rotations principally occur at the main Chicago facility.

Track Options. ***Please note that the following track options are subject to change pending staff supervision availability.***

- **Addictions:** This track may include work focused in the Addictions Treatment Program or the Drug Dependence Treatment Center at the main hospital in Chicago. The optimal candidate will have (a) a background in addictions in clinical experience/coursework or, in its absence, a strong motivation to learn about addictions; (b) a background in dual diagnosis and relevant Evidence Based Practices (e.g., Motivation Enhancement, CBT) in clinical experience/coursework or, in its absence, a strong motivation to learn these areas; and (c) a strong clinical foundation, both academically and in patient work, in diagnostic interviewing, individual therapy and group therapy. Opportunities may include psychological testing as well as intermediate and advanced psychotherapy. Advanced practicum students may be given preferential consideration.
- **Day Hospital Program:** This year-long track is in an intensive outpatient partial hospitalization program. It is an intermediate or advanced psychotherapy training rotation, with opportunities centered on time-limited therapy and the acute management of crises or transitions, though still with considerable psychoeducation

regarding more chronic conditions. The client population is diverse in every way, and typically includes many young warzone veterans. As a member of an authentically interdisciplinary team, the extern typically serves as the primary therapist and case manager for two patients at a time, with regular options to obtain supervised training in Prolonged Exposure therapy for PTSD as well as other approaches to therapy. The extern co-leads between 7-8 therapy groups each week, including one of the three intensive therapy groups that meets three times weekly. Externs participate in milieu therapy and case discussions/presentations. Ideally, a prospective extern has some prior individual psychotherapy experience, including with veterans, can commit to a morning-heavy schedule, and is motivated to explore a range of approaches to the therapeutic process, including management of high-risk clinical situations and psychosocial stressors in the “real world.”

- **Health Psychology:** This track offers both broad and in-depth experiences in health psychology, typically across four different rotations with four different supervisors. Likely rotations include Pain Management, Health Psychology, Weight Management, and Health Promotion Disease Prevention. Trainees typically can spend six months on each rotation (two rotations between July and December, and two rotations between January and June). For several years, JBVAMC and Northwestern University also have jointly hosted a Health Psychology Seminar, and Jesse Brown health psychology externs have been able to attend the seminar, with topics including Reproductive Medicine, Sleep Medicine, and Organ Transplants, among others. The ideal candidate will have a strong interest in health psychology, and the externship has historically placed trainees in a competitive position for an internship in health psychology.

- **Inpatient Psychology:** This track offers a breadth of treatment experiences (e.g., individual and group psychotherapy) along with some diagnostic assessment experiences (e.g., objective personality assessment, malingering testing) in an inpatient psychiatric setting. Externs work closely with the supervisor in a locked unit to provide services for veterans who experience a variety of acute psychiatric and medical conditions, including mood disorders, psychotic spectrum disorders, and substance use disorders. The division of time spent on these activities will vary among externs based on training needs and interests; for example, some externs will seek training and experience with implementing evidenced-based psychotherapy in group formats (e.g., SST, IMR, WRAP), whereas others will be interested in implementing evidenced-based interventions for veterans with psychotic symptoms (e.g., CBT-p). Special emphasis will be focused on the assessment and treatment of veterans who pose a high risk for self- or other-directed harm. In addition, externs will have an opportunity to provide staff trainings and consult with interdisciplinary team members with a focus on the Recovery Model, a framework that emphasizes a person’s healing by instilling hope, respecting preferences, and identifying strengths. The ideal extern has prior individual psychotherapy experience (i.e., extern will start at the intermediate or advanced level) and is motivated to work in a fast-pace, self-directed environment.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): The PTSD Clinical Team (PCT) is a specialty outpatient treatment program that provides state-of-the-art treatment for Veterans who have experienced trauma. The PCT serves Veterans of all eras and addresses a variety of military and non-military related traumatic experiences, including combat, sexual assault, accidents, and more. The population served by the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center's PCT has complex needs that often include daily stressors in addition to PTSD. Comorbidity is common, and substance use, mood, anxiety, and other disorders are often diagnosed in addition to PTSD. Rates of poverty, unemployment, and homelessness are high among the client population. This track focuses on the assessment of current posttraumatic stress and providing individual trauma-focused psychotherapy. A strong candidate would have (a) experience in general assessment and individual psychotherapy, (b) interest and motivation to learn about posttraumatic stress, and (c) openness to various theoretical orientations. Training opportunities will include assessment of posttraumatic stress, developing a strong foundation in individual trauma-focused psychotherapy, and interdisciplinary consultation. Externs may also have the opportunity to co-facilitate group therapy, depending on their schedule and group offerings during the training year.

Transition Care Management Psychology: This one-year track offers opportunities to work specifically with veterans who served in Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and New Dawn (i.e., recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan). Experiences may include co-facilitating at least two groups (namely, mind-body interventions and a process/psychoeducational group), conducting thorough PTSD evaluations with CAPS-5 and other measures, carrying 10-12 individual patients at any given time, participating in conjoint couples counseling, and learning brief psychotherapy interventions (i.e., six sessions or less). The optimal candidate will be self-motivated, will be open to clinical orientations beyond CBT, and will have strong writing skills.

The Seminar Series. Externs attend a one-hour mandatory weekly seminar, historically occurring almost every Friday afternoon. Topics are chosen for their clinical and professional development relevance, focusing strongly on aspects of treatment approaches and interventions, psychological assessment, case conceptualization, issues of diversity, and professional development. There will be ample time allotted to address questions and resources for externs applying to internship during this training year.

The Psychology Supervisors

There are over 40 doctoral-level clinical psychologists at the JBVAMC, as well as administrative support personnel. Several of the psychology supervisors have faculty appointments in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine or at Northwestern University's medical school, and an increasing number of psychologists have obtained or are pursuing board certification.

Supervision and Evaluation

The majority of supervision provided at the JBVAMC is individual supervision. Each trainee is assigned supervisors for each rotation. Hours of formal one-to-one supervision usually range from 1–2 per week. The supervisors are the psychologists who work in those program areas. The externs may evaluate their supervisors and present these evaluations in written form. Also, the supervisors provide externs an assessment of their current state of professional development in a written evaluation. Scheduled evaluations occur at the end of each major rotation. The trainees' academic directors of training are provided with written progress summaries, upon request, at the completion of each rotation and throughout the training year as needed.

The training staff are aware that local academic programs maintain individual standards for their students' externship programs. The JBVAMC externship program does its best to meet these standards and to accommodate reasonable requests for the purpose of meeting academic programs' local policies (e.g., by using specific evaluations of student progress, as well as at times other than those described above, by providing audiotapes of students' sessions with patients, by agreeing to certain conditions of documentation). Please understand that the JBVAMC ultimately must adhere to VA regulations and relevant statutes in the training of its externs; thus, please provide expectations of participation as early as possible so that these can be reviewed in advance. Designated officials at the academic programs' institutions of higher education are also required to sign an affiliation agreement with the JBVAMC before their students can begin participating in our externship program.

Library Resources

Our externs may use our VA's Medical Library. Also, the University of Illinois at Chicago's Library of the Health Sciences is just two blocks away. Our Medical Library supports our efforts in patient care, patient education, teaching, and research. Many online resources are available via the intranet, including OVID and Medline.

Training Year Dates

- Anticipated Start Date: Tuesday, July 6, 2021
- Anticipated End Date: Friday, June 17, 2022
- Holidays: All federal holidays are scheduled days off. An additional day after the Thanksgiving holiday and several days around Christmas Day and New Year's Day are frequently given as scheduled days off and announced at the beginning of the training year.
- Leave: A limited number of hours of leave are provided to be used throughout the year, shared between personal and sick time. Externs applying for internship are granted extra leave hours for the purpose of attending interviews.
- Schedules: Specific schedules are determined at the beginning of each rotation with the applicable supervisors.

Required Minimum Criteria Used to Screen Applicants

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. 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 as well as annual influenza vaccine. *Declinations are EXTREMELY rare.* If you decline the flu vaccine, you will need to provide written justification for medical or religious reasons.
- 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.

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

(b) 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.

Application

Checklist of Materials

To apply, please forward the following to the Director of Training at the email address below:

- A current letter of interest, naming the desired rotation track(s), and tailored to the rotation(s) of interest
- A current curriculum vitae
- Graduate transcripts from the most recently completed academic period
- A letter of readiness from the applicant's academic director of training
- Two letters of recommendation

Specific Procedures

- Candidates must submit all of their materials (except letters of recommendation/readiness) to the Director of Training in a single email using the subject title "Externship Application for [Candidate's First and Last Name]." Letters of recommendation/readiness may be included by the applicant in his or her email or in a separate letter from the letter writer. In the latter case, please have the writer email to the same address using the subject title "Externship Letter for [Candidate's First and Last Name]."
- Any document submitted must be in .doc, .docx, or .pdf format.

Failure to follow these procedures exactly as written may lead to delays in consideration or rejection of the application.

We will begin accepting applications on January 4, 2021. While we encourage applicants to submit their applications as early in this application cycle as is feasible, the final deadline for submitting applications is 12:00 p.m. Central time on January 29, 2021. Applications not fully completed by that deadline may not be considered.

Contact for Submissions/Application Inquiries:

Jamie Mathews, PsyD
Director of Training, Psychology Section
Mental Health Service Line (116)
Email: vhachspychologytraining@va.gov

Last Updated: 10/24/2020