

# Psychology Internship Program Brochure

## Alaska VA Healthcare System

**2021-2022**



**Application Deadline: November 20, 2020**

Internship Start Date: August 16, 2021

APPIC Program Number: 2067

NMS Match Number: 206711

Dear Applicant,

The Psychology Training Committee at the Alaska VA Healthcare System (AVAHS) greatly appreciates your interest in our doctoral psychology internship program. We recognize goodness of fit is a key factor in selection of an internship site. We hope this brochure provides a picture of the opportunities our site provides that can aid in your decision.

Our training faculty, consisting of psychologists with a variety of training backgrounds and clinical expertise, upholds a strong commitment to promoting a well-rounded generalist training experience that provides an opportunity for interns to tailor their training towards their individualized professional goals. Our program follows a scholar-practitioner model that places emphasis on the practical application of scientific knowledge and the reflective process between science and practice. Our interns complete three primary rotations that provide a versatile training experience along with the option for adjunctive rotations that provide the intern an opportunity to hone more specialized skills. The Alaska VA values the contribution interns make during their training year and several interns have remained on staff following graduation.

Most recently, we have proven ourselves to be flexible amidst the COVID-19 crisis, quickly and proactively ensuring the continued training needs of our interns were addressed as precautions were put in place by the facility. In March 2020, rotations were modified, and the training faculty worked with interns on effectively shifting most clinical care to telehealth. Interns were given the opportunity to telework from home. It is anticipated that future intern cohorts (and the field as a whole) will be using more telehealth and technology-based resources. We believe we are an excellent site for quality telehealth training in addition to traditional face-to-face training.

In addition to the benefits of our training program, living in the Anchorage and Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) area offers the comfort of a metropolis, with the best of outdoor living. Situated at the base of the beautiful Chugach Mountains and bordering the 495,000-acre Chugach State Park, Anchorage residents can partake in a plethora of recreational activities, from downhill skiing at the Alyeska Resort, to salmon fishing near downtown Anchorage in Ship Creek, to hiking on the popular Flattop Mountain. Alaska also has vast entertainment and cultural opportunities, including museums, a performing arts center, and an active brewery community. We truly love working and living in Anchorage.

We are living in a time of uncertainty with the COVID-19 pandemic and it is difficult to specifically predict what 2021-2022 will look like. We can assure you that our commitment to ensuring exceptional training will remain at the forefront of our program. Please let us know if you have any questions as you consider your internship possibilities. Best wishes as you begin your internship journey!

Sincerely,

*Juli Vierthaler, Psy.D.*

Juli Vierthaler, Psy.D.

Director of Training, Psychology Internship Program

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## THE ALASKA VA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM



The Veteran's Health Administration (VHA) is the nation's largest integrated healthcare system, providing care to more than 9 million Veterans and employing more than 300,000 full-time healthcare professionals and support staff. The VHA is organized into 21 regional districts, known as Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs). The Alaska VA Healthcare System (AVAHS) is part of VISN 20 (Northwest Network), which includes the states of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, most of the state of Idaho, and one county in Montana and California. This VISN covers 23% of the land mass of the United States. Within VISN 20, there are six medical centers, one independent outpatient clinic, one rehabilitation center, 20 community-based outpatient clinics, and one mobile clinic. VISN 20 provides care to 1.1 million Veterans who live in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. It also has the highest total Veterans served of any VISN.

The Alaska VA provides care to Alaska's Veterans. AVAHS offers primary, specialty, and mental health outpatient care through its main outpatient clinic, which was newly built in 2011 and offers a beautiful view of the Chugach Mountains from the main lobby. Services are provided through a Joint Venture with the United States Air Force on nearby Elmendorf Air Force Base, as well as through purchased care arrangements with the community hospitals. The facility also features a comprehensive Homeless Veteran Service, that consists of a 50-bed Domiciliary Residential Rehabilitation Program, 22-bed Compensated Work Therapy Transitional Residence Program, HUD/VA Supported Housing, Homeless Veterans Supported Employment Programs, Homeless Veterans Outreach, and Veterans Justice Outreach. In addition to our main facility in Anchorage, the AVAHS includes three Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) in Fairbanks, Kenai, and the Mat-Su, and one VA Outreach Clinic in the state capital of Juneau.

## THE TRAINING PROGRAM

### PSYCHOLOGY SETTING

Psychologists play a valued role in the treatment of Veterans at the Alaska VA. They frequently hold leadership and administrative positions that assist with the overall improvement of healthcare provided at the facility. Alaska VA psychologists provide a broad array of clinical services in various locations throughout Alaska. Clinical services provided include, but are not limited to, outpatient mental health, military sexual trauma, PTSD, addictions, health psychology, primary care mental health integration, behavioral medicine, disability evaluations, and psychosocial rehabilitation. The doctoral internship program has been a respected component of the psychology department since its inception. Many of our interns have stayed at the Alaska VA following completion of their internship, joining the department as permanent staff members.



### ACCREDITATION STATUS

The doctoral internship program in psychology at the Alaska VA is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the American Psychological Association (APA). The next site visit will be during the academic year 2028.

Questions related to the program's accreditation status should be directed to the Commission on Accreditation:

Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation  
 American Psychological Association  
 750 1st Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002  
 Phone: (202) 336-5979 / Email: [apaaccred@apa.org](mailto:apaaccred@apa.org)  
 Web: [www.apa.org/ed/accreditation](http://www.apa.org/ed/accreditation)

### COVID-19 RESPONSE

As information began to unfold related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Alaska VA psychology internship program quickly responded to ensure the safety of both the interns and the Veterans they serve. In March 2020, the training faculty worked to shift rotations as needed, aligned with the direction of leadership at the facility. Interns were offered the opportunity to telework from home if desired. The training faculty worked to stay up to date with statements from all training governing bodies.

The interns were provided immediate training in telehealth services, working with our technology experts, tele-mental health experts in the VISN, and on-site supervisors. In the outpatient settings, all services moved to telehealth. In MH RRTP, distancing precautions were

placed to ensure safety of Veterans and staff in the residential setting. Due to the number of Veterans admitted to the MH RRTP decreasing, the rotation was supplemented with other training opportunities such as working with our Military Sexual Trauma (MST) coordinator on developing expertise in the area of MST. All three interns saw outpatient cases via telehealth to supplement their clinical time. Amidst the moving pieces and increased anxiety related to a pandemic, the interns reported feeling supported throughout the process, noticing the proactive manner the training faculty took to keep their continued training a priority.

Under leadership's direction to decrease physical presence on site and practice increased social distancing, many of our supervisors moved to telework off site. In alignment with guidelines from the training governing bodies, telesupervision became an option. Our supervisors consulted with outside experts in the VISN who had previously provided telesupervision to ensure best practice. As the importance of telesupervision was highlighted, the Alaska VA internship program will be participating in a research pilot program in the 2020-2021 year, "A Multisite Evaluation of Clinical Supervision Delivered via the Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT) Modality." This demonstrates our commitment to continued research in the field.

While there will be ongoing uncertainty related to the training environment for the 2021-2022 training year, be assured our commitment to quality training will persist. Interns will receive telehealth training at the start of the year to ensure readiness if further increased telehealth is needed, as well as address the reality the pandemic highlighted regarding the need for competent and comprehensive mental health telehealth providers. As updates are constantly occurring related to the pandemic, we believe on-going communication is important. If you have any questions regarding updates at our site, please do not hesitate to contact the training director.

## **TRAINING COMMITTEE**

The Psychology Training Committee oversees the running of the program to ensure its continued quality and adherence to APA accreditation standards. The training committee consists of the training director, supervising psychologists, designated education officer, chief of staff, and a specialized program support assistant. The committee meets regularly twice a month to review programmatic concerns and intern development. A chief intern is invited into the administrative portion of the meetings to provide input on the training program. Each intern serves as chief intern during their outpatient primary rotation.

## **AIMS OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM**

Our internship program adheres to a scholar-practitioner model that focuses on training future psychologists in the scientific practice of psychology. We work to train interns to be practitioners and consumers of research. While we emphasize science and empirically validated treatments, we recognize the importance of tailoring treatment to account for individual and cultural differences. The Alaska VA psychology internship program is generalist in nature, ensuring interns obtain a wide range of training experiences that prepare them for working in a variety of culturally diverse urban, rural, and frontier health environments.

Our program works to prepare interns to transition successfully, upon graduation, to advanced postdoctoral training programs or to secure entry level employment in psychology at the GS-11 or equivalent level.

## EXPECTED COMPETENCIES

In accordance with the training program's primary aims, the program measures intern progress over the course of the year against the profession-wide competencies identified by the American Psychological Association's *Standard of Accreditation in Health Service Psychology*. A professional developmental model is used to assist interns in obtaining competency over the course of the year. Competencies are developed through clinical practice, didactic training, mentorship, and other training opportunities.

**Assessment:** Interns demonstrate knowledge of DSM-5 diagnoses and provide well formulated and coherent conceptualizations of assessment issues. They become skillful in assessing clients who present with multiple complications and appropriately assess clients' strengths and psychopathologies with sensitivity to cultural and individual differences.

*Examples:*

- Interns construct, administer, score, and interpret test batteries for the assessment of a variety of clinical presentations.
- Interns engage in measurement-based care and risk evaluation initiatives (e.g. PHQ-9, C-SSRS, comprehensive suicide risk evaluation).
- Interns can observe and conduct specialized evaluations such as pre-surgical psychological assessment for candidates for spinal cord stimulators, bariatric surgery, and/or solid organ transplant.

**Consultation and Interdisciplinary Skills:** Interns demonstrate knowledge and respect for the roles of various professions. They directly collaborate with those from other disciplines. They become comfortable in their role as professionals in mental health and be able to translate psychological principles across disciplines.

*Examples:*

- Interns provide services in multidisciplinary settings (e.g. nursing, peer support, pharmacy, police, psychiatry, social work).
- Interns regularly engage in staff and treatment team meetings, as well as integrate additional services into treatment planning.
- Interns frequently consult with professionals from other disciplines (e.g. nutrition, psychiatry, neuropsychology, occupational/vocational services).
- Interns can co-facilitate groups with staff from other disciplines.

**Ethical and Legal Standards:** Interns have an advanced awareness of and adherence with the APA Ethical Code of Conduct, state laws, and policies governing health service psychology. They recognize ethical dilemmas as they arise and apply ethical decision-making processes to resolve dilemmas.

*Examples:*

- Interns address informed consent with clients, document informed consent in client records, and obtain signed consent for recording sessions.
- Interns manage ethical dilemmas that evolve in the therapeutic relationship and within a healthcare setting (e.g. working on interdisciplinary teams and/or committees).
- Interns manage complex clinical situations, with increasing degrees of independence.

**Individual and Cultural Diversity:** Interns demonstrate the ability to work effectively with a range of diverse individuals and groups. They critically address sensitive diversity client issues including those related to culture, sex, gender, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability status, and ethnicity. They reflect on their own cultural background and how it impacts their professional relationships.

*Examples:*

- Interns engage in a diversity journal club throughout the training year.
- Interns incorporate cultural diversity into local recovery-based approaches (e.g. Talking Circles group during MH RRTP rotation).
- Interns review and discuss in individual supervision the intersection of historical trauma and PTSD, as it pertains to LGBT Veterans and Alaska Native Veterans.

**Interpersonal and Communication Skills:** Interns communicate in a manner that is organized, informative, well integrated, and effective. They demonstrate a thorough grasp of professional language and concepts. They demonstrate effective interpersonal skills through developing and maintaining successful relationships with a variety of individuals.

*Examples:*

- Interns frequently engage in multidisciplinary staff and treatment team meetings.
- Interns provide psychoeducation to clients in a collaborative manner.
- Interns communicate effectively with the computerized medical record in a timely fashion.

**Intervention:** Interns demonstrate knowledge and skill in implementing intervention, including flexibility, individualizing care, tracking progress, and responding to crises. They effectively implement evidence-based intervention in a variety of settings. They successfully establish and maintain effective therapeutic relationships with their clients. They develop the ability to function as a post-doctoral level psychotherapist.

*Examples:*

- Interns implement and verbalize familiarity with a variety of cognitive behavioral therapy approaches (e.g. CBT for insomnia, chronic pain, substance use, posttraumatic stress disorder).
- Interns gain familiarity with VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guidelines for the management of obesity, as well as the guidelines for treating tobacco use and dependence.
- Interns engage in co-facilitation of group therapies (e.g. mindfulness-based stress reduction, CogSMART, Seeking Safety).

**Professional Values, Attitudes, and Behaviors:** Interns interact in a professional and respectful manner in all interactions. They discuss differences in opinions or theory thoughtfully. Interns' professional identity evolves and matures over the course of the year, building integrity, responsibility, and sound judgment. They self-reflect and identify growth areas.

*Examples:*

- Interns respond professionally within clinical situations, demonstrate self-reflection, engage in activities to maintain and improve performance, remain open and responsive to feedback, and behave in ways that reflect the values and attitudes of psychology.
- Interns document clinical encounters in a timely manner.
- Interns collaborate/consult with a client's treatment team when necessary for the welfare of the client.
- Intern verbalize awareness of rewards and challenges inherent in providing trauma-based care.

**Research:** Interns learn how to apply current literature, research, and theory to their intervention and assessment activities. They demonstrate independent ability to critically evaluate and disseminate research at a local, regional, or national level.

*Examples:*

- Interns are provided with and seek relevant literature to guide treatment planning and critically evaluate clinical care.
- Interns receive exposure to a wide range of evidence-based psychotherapist and VA Clinical Practice Guidelines.
- Interns work with a licensed psychologist with research expertise to formally present research at the local level.

**Supervision:** Interns demonstrate knowledge of supervision models and practices. They apply this knowledge in direct or simulated practice with other psychology interns or health professionals. Providing supervision directly to a trainee is not a requirement for this competence at this internship.

*Examples:*

- Interns utilize individual supervision constructively at least 2 hours per week.
- Interns engage in peer-based interaction/supervision, as well as group supervision throughout the training year.

## DIVERSITY

The Alaska VA psychology internship program gladly embraces the emphasis on individual and cultural diversity that contemporary psychology training requires. Interns are exposed to numerous didactic topics that cover a range of diversity issues, a monthly Cultural Diversity Journal Club, and a two-day immersive workshop at the Alaska Native Heritage Center.

Our dedication to the value of embracing diversity is enhanced by the diversity of Anchorage and Alaska itself. Anchorage is a city of tremendous diversity, including the three most diverse

US Census tracts in the country. The Anchorage School District includes 96 different languages among its student population, including numerous Native Alaskan languages. One of the most surprising aspects about Anchorage to newcomers is the amazing diversity of cultures and cultural influences in this community. This has frequently been noticed by “Lower 48” media as you can see in the below articles.

[Most Diverse Neighborhood in US Welcomes You in Alaska](#)

[Newcomers Center](#)

[Most Diverse Place in America? It's Not Where You Think](#)

## **ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

The internship’s policy and procedure manual is reviewed and updated by the training committee yearly. It outlines all relevant administrative and training domains, providing clear guidance and structure to our interns. Included in the manual is a policy that ensures due process for all interns when needed. Grievances covered by this policy include but are not limited to challenging a performance rating; concerns regarding clinical, teaching supervision, or other professional behavior of faculty members; and challenging a program policy or procedure. This policy does not deny the intern’s right to grieve directly to the Chief of Staff, Equal Employment Opportunity, or the Human Resources Management Service.

## **LIABILITY**

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). Many interns also elect to have their own liability insurance through their school’s available policy.

# **THE TRAINING YEAR**

## **THE TRAINING TERM**

The dates for the 2021-2022 internship training year are August 16, 2021 to August 12, 2022. As an introduction to a sense of work-life balance, we adhere to a Monday through Friday schedule, averaging 40-45 hours per week. There is no on-call duty, nor any scheduled work obligations on weekends. We believe interns should have a training experience that closely parallels that of staff psychologists. We want to enjoy where we live, and so should interns.

## **TRAINING LOCATIONS**

The primary Outpatient Mental Health and Health Psychology rotations take place as the main VA clinic, along with most adjunctive training rotations. The Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (MH RRTP) primary rotation takes place at the MH RRTP

building in Midtown. The internship works to minimize travel between the two locations to better facilitate time spent in clinical training.

## **LEAVE/HOLIDAYS**

Our leave policy is the same that applies to all VA psychology training programs. Interns receive 10 days of paid federal holiday, 13 vacation days, and up to 13 sick days. Limited dissertation release time is available only upon approval of the Training Committee. Leave is accrued by each two-week pay period, with interns earning 4 hours of sick leave and 4 hours of annual leave each pay period.

## **STIPEND**

Interns receive a stipend in 26 biweekly installments. Stipends are adjusted by locality to reflect the relative cost in different geographic areas. Currently, the annual stipend is \$29,232.

## **BENEFITS**

As with all employment within the federal government, interns are eligible for health and life insurance. As trainees, they are not eligible for the Thrift Savings Plan. Please go to the [FEHB Plan Comparison Tool](#) for details on available options.

## **FACILITY AND TRAINING RESOURCES**

Each intern has a dedicated office with computers and phones in their corresponding location (main VA or MH RRTP). Digital recording equipment will be available to support clinical supervision and training activities. In addition to the support from the training faculty and clinical staff, interns have administrative and program support for training and consultation on electronic medical record management, telehealth, and other clinical applications. They also receive support on with data management related to clinical workload, and program and facility performance improvement programs. Video-teleconferencing is available to support didactics, clinical case conferences, and other trainings. It is also utilized for telesupervision. The Alaska VA Healthcare System has made a considerable investment in telehealth technology which assists with effective provision of tele-mental health services. Interns also have accounts on the VA Talent Management System (TMS) that provides required and optional online training opportunities.

The Alaska VA Healthcare System Medical Library offers access to all major psychology, medicine, and public health journals. Database searches of the card catalog, Medline, ERIC, CINAHL, HEALTH, New England Journal of Medicine, PsychInfo (Psychological Abstracts), and many others are available on-site and remotely. There is an excellent electronic inter-library loan system for periodicals that is available through the library. The Alaska VA also has a dedicated librarian who is available to assist as needed.

## SUPERVISION

Formal supervision is provided for at least four hours per week in individual and/or group formats. At least two hours are in the form of individual supervision with the intern's primary supervisor(s). Informal supervision is provided throughout the internship leading to the reality that interns frequently receive more than four hours of supervision per week. Supervisors uphold a standard of being readily available to interns to address needs as they arise.

At the beginning of each rotation, a supervision contract is negotiated that defines goals, competencies, and expectations of the rotation.

*Covid-19 Response:* In March 2020, many supervisors shifted to telework off site to decrease physical presence on site in congruence with leadership's response to the pandemic. Training governing bodies allowed for supervision to be provided virtually at that time. Prior to this, the VA did not allow telesupervision of interns. Interns continued to receive their full number of supervision hours via telesupervision.

*Telesupervision:* During the 2020-2021 internship year, the Alaska VA internship program will be participating in a research pilot program entitled, "A Multisite Evaluation of Clinical Supervision Delivered via the Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT) Modality." As part of this research, interns will receive approximately 50% of their supervision via telesupervision. It is the internship program's hope to positively contribute to the field of psychology by participating in this research. It is unclear if the program will still be participating in the study during the 2021-2022 internship year.

## EVALUATION

At the beginning of the internship year, interns complete a self-study which is provided to their supervisor(s). This self-study allows the intern to communicate their perception of their competencies and outline their training goals. The self-study is the basis of the beginning of the supervisory relationship.

Interns are formally evaluated twice during each rotational block (4-month timeframe). They are evaluated at the midway and end points. Evaluations are completed by both primary and adjunctive supervisors. They are shared with the training committee who provides input and monitors intern development over the course of the year.

Interns also evaluate their supervisor's performance at the end of each rotation. There is also an end of the year overall evaluation of the program, as well as an evaluation of the training director.

## **SERVICE REQUIREMENTS**

Interns are given opportunities to aid in the development of the training program and the Alaska VA Healthcare System. These opportunities include, but are not limited to, service on the Training Committee during one rotation, participation in internship interviews and open house, and development of orientation and training materials for future interns. Interns have also worked with supervisors to sit in on VA committees, such as the Medical Record Review Committee and the Disruptive Behavior Committee.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPLETION OF INTERNSHIP**

It is expected that each intern attends all scheduled didactic presentations and actively engage in the training rotations for the full duration of the internship unless there is prior approval for absence.

Program completion requires 2080 hours (minus leave taken) of internship training activities under clinical supervision.

For Interns to maintain good standing in the training program, they must:

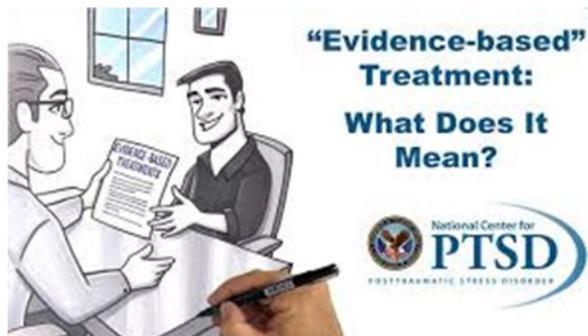
- Obtain ratings of at least a “3” (Able to perform with moderate supervision for clinical and administrative functions) on all competency items on internship evaluation forms by the end of the first rotation.
- Obtain ratings of at least a “4” (Able to function with minimal supervision for clinical and administrative functions) on all competency items on internship evaluation forms by the end of the second rotation.
- Not be found to have engaged in any significant unethical, illegal, or inappropriate behavior.

For Interns to successfully complete the program, they must meet the following minimum levels of achievement:

- Obtain ratings of at least a “5” (Able to enter the field as a postdoctoral fellow or early career psychologist) on all competency items on internship evaluation forms.
- Not be found to have engaged in any significant unethical, illegal, or inappropriate behavior.

## TRAINING EXPERIENCES

The Alaska VA is a generalist internship site, aimed at training well-rounded and skilled clinicians with some opportunities to gain specialty experience in various areas. The VA works from a recovery-oriented model that often uses evidence-based treatments (EBTs) and measurement based care. Aligned with this, the internship places emphasis on these throughout training experiences. Our program recognizes clinical work is informed by well-designed research. As part of a commitment to this model, training in EBTs is a strong focus on our program. Our training faculty has training in a variety of EBTs, and most are certified through the VA. The interns receive both didactic training and in vivo experience providing these therapies as they move through their rotations.



### LONG-TERM PSYCHOTHERAPY CASES

Each intern carries a caseload of approximately 2-3 general individual psychotherapy cases outside of primary and adjunct rotations that are assigned by the Training Director. These cases are seen via VA Video Connect (VVC). Telehealth has become an essential part of healthcare at the VA and in other settings. This requirement provides the intern an opportunity to hone both telehealth and long-term therapy skills. The nature of the intern's caseload varies depending on the identified training needs of the intern in balance with demands of the clinic.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING CASES

Interns complete at least three general psychological testing batteries over the course of the year. Three or more testing instruments are utilized to be considered a battery. An increased number of batteries can be obtained within rotations. Testing cases come from referrals throughout different clinics resulting in a wide range of cognitive and personality evaluation possibilities. To meet the requirement, assessments are assigned during specific rotations or separately by the Training Director.

### ROTATIONS

The internship year is divided into three four-month rotation blocks. Primary rotations are the same for all interns. Optional adjunctive experiences are available to interns to provide more specialized training in a variety of areas. Adjunctive experiences typically range between 4-8 hours per week. At the beginning of the internship year, interns work with the Training Director to rank their choices among offerings. The intern's schedule is established collaboratively based on training needs, intern preference, and supervisor availability.

Please note that adjunctive rotation offerings may change from year to year, as a result of staffing changes. Due to the program being a rural-based program, sometimes there is only one psychologist in each setting.

## ***Primary Rotations***

### *Health Psychology*

Supervisor: Dr. Jill Duke

#### Description:

The Health Behavior/Behavioral Medicine Clinic is located within Primary Care at the main VA clinic in Anchorage. Within this rotation, interns receive assessment and intervention experience with adult Veterans referred from primary care, specialty mental health, and the Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (MH RRTP). The rotation provides opportunities for individual assessment and therapy, as well as a variety of group therapies. Interns conduct and interpret pre-surgical psychological assessments (e.g., for candidates for bariatric surgery, for patients with chronic pain being considered for invasive surgical techniques such as spinal cord stimulator procedures, and for solid organ transplant candidates). Interns provide individual services as well (e.g., brief therapy for common behavioral medicine concerns including insomnia, tobacco use, weight management, chronic pain, health anxiety, chronic disease management). Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is the primary treatment modality, but there are opportunities for training in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). Interns also learn to incorporate motivational interviewing (MI) strategies and gain experience in utilizing Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Chronic Pain (CBT-CP). Interns provide weight management services over telecommunications (MOVE! Telephone Coaching). Interns provide a range of group interventions (e.g., chronic pain management, tobacco cessation, and MOVE! Weight Management.) Interns travel to the MH RRTP weekly to assist with a tobacco cessation group. Interns frequently co-facilitate groups with other psychology staff, clinical pharmacists, and dietitians.

Rotation Goals/Expectations: Specific training goals include increased familiarity with health psychology/behavioral medicine, incorporation of the biopsychosocial model of health and wellness into the practice of health promotion and disease prevention, and utilization of evidence-based practices such as cognitive behavioral therapy and motivational interviewing.

*COVID-19 Response:* In response to COVID-19 in March of 2020, all services provided during the health psychology rotation were moved to telehealth. Individual services were conducted via phone or Virtual Video Connect (VVC). Groups that continued included MOVE! Weight Management and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Managing Chronic Pain.

Interns also carried extra outpatient cases conducted via telehealth to supplement their time when health psychology cases initially decreased. However, health psychology referrals continued to be placed by various providers, leading to the supplementation with outpatient cases being unnecessary for future interns.

## *Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program*

Supervisor(s): Drs. Cale Palmer and Kun-Yueh (Jayson) Hsieh

### Description:

The Alaska VA Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (MH RRTP) consists of a 50-bed facility coupled with several transitional residences that incorporate efforts to address housing, employment, and healthcare for Veterans within a recovery-based model. The Alaska VA MH RRTP contains two treatment tracks, which are the Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (SARRTP) and Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans (DCHV). Clients within the SARRTP engage in a residential level of care to address substance use disorders, while those in the DCHV program focus on establishing housing and community reintegration to a relatively greater extent. Veterans may transfer between these two residential program tracks during their stay, often initially entering SARRTP and later transitioning into the DCHV program prior to community reintegration, based on the degree of their substance use difficulty and housing status. Veterans typically reside within the Alaska VA MH RRTP for several months and work toward addressing unemployment, homelessness, and mental health problems such as substance use, depression, and trauma. Accordingly, an emphasis in this rotation is for interns to expand their clinical skills to effectively deliver empirically based interventions for Veterans' mental health needs. Opportunities exist for individual assessment and therapy, a variety of group therapies, and participation in multidisciplinary treatment teams. Assessments include psychological intake evaluations and diagnostic interviewing, brief self-report ratings (e.g., PHQ-9), cognitive screening (e.g., SLUMS/MOCA), risk evaluation (e.g., PHQ-9, C-SSRS, VA's Comprehensive Suicide Risk Evaluation), and follow-up testing as indicated (e.g., RBANS, CAPS/PCL-5, personality testing). Interventions are typically cognitive behavioral in nature, as well as including elements of motivational interviewing, mindfulness-based stress reduction, and integrated efforts to address comorbid conditions. Interns co-facilitate several groups with psychology staff, including Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, Talking Circles, CogSMART, and Seeking Safety. Depending on training needs and interest, there is also the opportunity to engage in local program development, assist with community outreach activities, observe justice outreach activities such as Veterans Court, and develop and implement short-term groups during the rotation.

Rotation Goals/Expectations: Specific training goals include increased familiarity within residential care, ability to provide psychological services within a residential treatment setting, and utilization of empirically based practices such as MI/CBT to address substance use.

*COVID-19 Response:* In response to COVID-19 in March 2020, individual treatment services began being conducted via phone or Virtual Video Connect (VVC) for Veterans in the MH RRTP program, including Veterans who reside in Transitional Residence (TR). Group psychotherapy continued to be provided in-person utilizing social distancing precautions (sitting at least six feet apart and wearing masks). Veterans and the intern also had the option of attending the groups via phone. MH RRTP treatment team meetings were a mix of in-person and phone, with staff preference being considered. Due to Veteran census at the MH RRTP decreasing, the intern's experience was supplemented with additional outpatient therapy cases.

The intern also started working with the local Military Sexual Trauma (MST) coordinator to gain specialty skills in the area of MST.

### *Outpatient Mental Health – PTSD Specialization*

Supervisor: Dr. Ann Hutcheson

#### Description:

The outpatient clinic (specialty mental health), located at the main Alaska VA clinic in Anchorage, serves Veterans with a wide range of psychiatric disorders. The most common diagnoses include Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Major Depressive Disorder, and Anxiety Disorders. Additional mental health disorders referred to the outpatient mental health clinic include Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective Disorder, and Comorbid Disorders such as PTSD and Alcohol Use Disorder. The outpatient clinic is comprised of four Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program (BHIP) teams, one of which is a telehealth BHIP team. Although the outpatient mental health clinic receives referrals from all eras of Veterans, the primary population seen on this rotation are Veterans with combat trauma from serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), and Operation New Dawn (OND). Given the complexities of living and traveling (e.g., planes, boats, snow machines) in Alaska, interns can provide mental health services through telemental health. Interns provide both individual and group therapy during this rotation. Interventions for PTSD include Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) and Prolonged Exposure (PE). Interventions for depression commonly used are Interpersonal Therapy for Depression (IPT-D), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Depression (CBT-D), and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Depression (ACT-D). Group therapy experiences may include an orientation session for Veterans and their families to learn more about PTSD and treatment options, PTSD symptom management which is a CBT based group for skill development, and Problem-Solving Training which is a brief group to help Veterans develop strategies for problem solving. Depending on training needs and interest, there is also the opportunity for the intern to attend the Disruptive Behavioral Committee meetings, learn about violence risk assessments, and gain experience writing violence risk assessment intended to be used by the VA, and provide the report to the committee.

Rotation Goals/Expectations: Specific training goals include developing competencies in time-limited therapies which includes gaining experience with at least two EBTS. Interns achieve a solid understanding of completing biopsychosocial evaluations in the outpatient setting. Focus is also placed on learning and implementing aspects of the shared decision-making model to help Veterans with treatment planning.

*COVID-19 Response:* In response to COVID-19 in March 2020, all services moved to telehealth. Individual therapy was conducted via phone or Virtual Video Connect (VVC). Some groups continued via phone and VVC as well. The intern's individual therapy caseload increased due to group availability decreasing. The intern also conducted couples therapy using the telehealth modalities.

## *Adjunctive Experiences*

### *Chronic Mental Illness*

The specialty mental health clinic provides a variety of services to Veterans experiencing chronic mental illness. Clinical opportunities include individual and group therapy, as well as psychological testing, with a focus on a psychosocial recovery model of health for individuals with chronic psychotic, mood, and anxiety disorders in the outpatient setting. Group therapy opportunities include Social Skills Training and Bipolar Support Group.

### *Couples/Family Therapy*

Couples and family therapy are provided through the specialty mental health clinic. Training in couples' therapy is focused on the use of Emotion-Focused Therapy and Integrated Behavioral Couples Therapy. The Alaska VA also provides treatment through multi-family group therapy using the Reaching out to Education and Assist Caring, Healthy Families (REACH) program. The REACH program provides group therapy for couples in which one member suffers from a chronic mental illness.

### *Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Services*

Interns work closely with the MST coordinator in completing administrative and clinical responsibilities, with an emphasis on the unique needs and challenges MST survivors face interpersonally and systemically. Experiential learning opportunities include outreach at a facility and community level, and consultation with staff through a multidisciplinary approach. In provided consultation to MST survivors, we aspire to engage Veterans in MST-related care, connect them with appropriate resources, and facilitate care within the VA and community.

### *Psychological Testing*

For additional training in the area of psychological testing, interns can be part of a testing clinic in the specialty mental health clinic. Testing referrals come from a variety of sources. Referral questions vary but frequently have a focus on diagnostic clarification to assist with treatment planning. The Alaska VA has a wide variety of personality and cognitive testing materials available to the interns.



### *Telehealth*

Due to the large number of rural Veterans served by our facility, many of our services are available via telehealth. While interns will routinely receive some telehealth training through their long-term psychotherapy cases, further telehealth training can be obtained. Services are offered via

phone and video sessions depending on the needs of the Veteran.

## **FORMAL PRESENTATIONS**

### ***Case Presentation***

Case presentations demonstrate an intern's ability to integrate the multiple foundational competencies of being a psychologist. They demonstrate an intern's ability to be professional, engage in self-reflection, utilize scientific knowledge, and highlight their awareness of diversity issues. They also provide the intern an opportunity to exhibit their knowledge of assessment and intervention along with use of consultation and supervision.

Interns are required to present one psychotherapy/counseling case or one assessment/diagnostic case to the Psychology Training Committee and fellow interns (additional staff welcome by invitation as relevant) in order to demonstrate clinical competencies and promote professional development. Interns present the case for 45 minutes, followed by up to 15 minutes of questions by the Training Committee and other attendees. As part of each case presentation, the intern should review and discuss research literature relevant to that case, as well as relevant individual difference and diversity issues. Interns should also outline treatment approaches used or the assessment battery utilized, based on the intern's case conceptualization.

After the presentation and questions, the intern, fellow interns, and non-Training Committee staff will be dismissed while the Training Committee discusses the intern's performance and formulates feedback for the intern. The intern will then meet with the Training Committee for direct feedback about their areas of strength, their growth areas and their scores on the evaluation form per domain as it applies to the profession-wide competencies. If staff are not unanimous in their scores, they will discuss scoring until consensus on scores is reached. A total of 90 minutes will be blocked for the intern and staff members to allow time for the presentation, questions, Training Committee discussion and intern feedback.

A member of the training faculty will provide mentorship and preparation support both in group and individual formats, as needed and requested. The expectation is that on top of the formal case presentation, informal case presentations will occur often and frequently in both individual and group supervision.

### ***Research Presentation***

Interns develop and present a research presentation that promotes interns demonstrating their understanding of how science informs clinical practice. This presentation allows interns to practice being a critical consumer of research, as well as practicing formulating future research questions based on the current state of the literature. Finally, this presentation helps further develop the intern's presenting skills.

Interns should select a research topic of interest to present to the Training Committee, fellow interns and other appropriate staff. The topic should be approved by the Training Director and Research Mentor. The intern will then complete a 45-minute presentation, followed up 15 minutes of questions. As part of this research presentation, interns should summarize literature

on their current topic, facilitate a discussion of how this literature could inform clinical practice in a number of domains (supervision, intervention, assessment, research, etc.) and end with future areas of research and/or future application of this material to clinical or community settings. Interns must cite relevant and current literature as it applies to their topic and provide a complete reference list.

After the presentation and questions, the intern, fellow interns and non-Training Committee staff will be dismissed while the Training Committee discusses the intern's performance and formulates feedback for the intern. The intern will then meet with the Training Committee for direct feedback about their areas of strength, their growth areas and their scores on the evaluation form per domain as it applies to the profession-wide competencies. If staff are not unanimous in their scores, they will discuss scoring until consensus on scores is reached. A total of 90 minutes will be blocked for the intern and staff members to allow time for the presentation, questions, Training Committee discussion and intern feedback.

A member of the training faculty will be available for individual and group mentorships and preparation support.

## SEMINARS

### *Didactics*

At the beginning of the year our academic mentor surveys the interns to obtain input regarding their interests. The didactic schedule is created based on supervisor feedback regarding the most pertinent topics needed to provide a well-rounded training experience, combined with intern interest areas. Didactics occur on a weekly basis. While our training faculty presents many of the didactics in areas of their expertise, the program invites other staff (both psychology and other disciplines) to present.

Here is a sample of topics presented in recent years.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ❖ Ethical Considerations and Challenges When Practicing Telemental Health | ❖ Telehealth Safety Planning and Emergency Management      |
| ❖ Power, Privilege, and the Supervisory Relationship                      | ❖ Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Substance Use Disorders |
| ❖ Compensation and Pension Examinations                                   | ❖ Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia                |
| ❖ Prolonged Exposure Therapy  | ❖ Military Sexual Trauma                                   |
| ❖ Intimate Partner Violence   | ❖ Evidence Based Psychotherapies                           |
| ❖ Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction                                      | ❖ Assessment of Adult ADHD                                 |

- ❖ Military Culture's Effect on the Family: Implications for Family and Couples Therapy
- ❖ Stigma about Mental Health Challenges among Mental Health Providers
- ❖ Psychotherapy with Alaska Natives
- ❖ LGBT Veterans
- ❖ Kanaka Maoli: Culture and Clinical Considerations
- ❖ The Psychological Care at the End of Life
- ❖ Moral Reconciliation Therapy
- ❖ EPPP
- ❖ Driving Capacity: Fitness to Drive in Older Adults
- ❖ Geriatric Psychiatry
- ❖ Professionalism in Social Media
- ❖ Professional Boundaries

### ***Cultural Diversity Journal Club***

Interns participate in the Cultural Diversity Journal Club which meets monthly. Interns are expected to host one Journal Club meeting, where they select the article and facilitate a discussion among the group members.

### ***Off-site Training Opportunities***

Interns take advantage of various off-site training opportunities. Each year interns participate in a two-day cultural training at the Alaska Native Cultural Heritage Center, which has been a favorite training of previous interns. Previous interns have attended the Alaska LGBT Pride Day with members from the Transgender Support Group. Interns have also observed Veterans Court proceedings at part of the MH RRTP rotation. Previous interns have presented poster presentations at conferences, such as the American Psychological Association. There are also many local behavioral health conferences and trainings available for interns (some free and others for a specific training cost).

## **PSYCHOLOGY TRAINING FACULTY**

*(Listed in Alphabetical Order)*

### **Jill M. Duke, Ph.D.**

Degree: Clinical Psychology, 2012

School: Washington State University

Internship: VA San Diego Healthcare System for Pain Medicine (Spinal Cord Service), University of San Diego Health System

Postdoctoral Fellowship: VA San Diego Healthcare System, UCSD Clinical Psychology (Home Based Primary Care/Geropsychology, Primary Care Mental Health Integration)

Primary Clinical and Research Interests and Expertise: Behavioral Medicine, Geropsychology, Motivational Interviewing, Home-based Primary Care, Psycho-oncology, Chronic Pain, Rehabilitation psychology, Self-regulation Model of Illness.

Position/Roles: Staff Psychologist, Health Behavior Coordinator, Health Promotion Disease Prevention  
Personal Interests: Mountain Biking, Snowboarding, Cross-Country Skiing, Hiking, Traveling, Brewing, Attending Concerts, Mycology

### **LT Kun-Yueh (Jayson) Hsieh, Ph.D., ABPP**

Degree: Clinical Psychology, 2014

School: Palo Alto University

Internship: Alaska Psychology Internship Consortium-Norton Sound Health Corporation

Postdoctoral Fellowship: North Slope Borough-Child and Youth Service

Adjunct Professor: Alaska Pacific University

Primary Clinical and Research Interests and Expertise: Rural mental healthcare service delivery in Bush Alaska, PTSD and severe mental illness, EMDR for individuals with trauma histories, Mindfulness-based intervention as applied to a broad range of psychopathology, Board certified in group psychotherapy

Position/Roles: Staff Psychologist in the Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (MH RRTP)

Personal Interests: Biking, Cooking, Meditation

### **Ann G. Hutcheson, Psy.D., CADCI**

Degree: Clinical Psychology, 2011

School: Pacific University

Internship: Alaska VA Healthcare System

Primary Clinical and Research Interests and Expertise: Evidence-Based Psychotherapies, PTSD/SUD treatment, Complex trauma, VA certified in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, VA certified in Cognitive Processing Therapy

Position/Roles: Staff Psychologist in Specialty Mental Health, PTSD-SUD Psychologist, Evidence Based Psychotherapy Coordinator

Personal Interests: Spending Time with Family, Hiking, Fishing, Boating, Hunting

### **Lahela A. R. Jorgenson, Psy.D.**

Degree: Clinical Psychology, 2018

School: University of Denver

Internship: Alaska VA Healthcare System

Primary Clinical and Research Interests and Expertise: Cultural Diversity, Military Sexual Trauma, Psychological Assessment, Program Development, Consultation, Crisis Intervention, Severe Mental Illness, CPT, ACT, CBT (depression, insomnia, chronic pain), and Families/Couples (EFT).

Position/Roles: Staff Psychologist in Specialty Mental Health, Military Sexual Trauma Coordinator

Personal Interests: Water Sports, Snowboarding, Community Service, Cultural Activities, Family Time, Dogs

### **Cale Palmer, Ph.D.**

Degree: Clinical Psychology, 2009

School: University of Hawaii at Manoa

Internship: VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

Postdoctoral Fellowship: University of Virginia Health System, Department of Psychiatry and Neurobehavioral Sciences – Behavioral Medicine

Primary Clinical and Research Interests and Expertise: Motivational Interviewing and Cognitive Behavioral Therapies, Evidence-based Practices, Military Psychology, Health Psychology, Cognitive Functioning, and the Development and Utilization of Technology within Psychology

Position/Roles: Staff Psychologist in the Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (MH RRTP)

**Kelley A. Russell, Ph.D.**

Degree: Clinical-Community Psychology (rural, indigenous emphasis), 2019

School: University of Alaska, Anchorage

Internship: Alaska VA Healthcare System

Primary Clinical and Research Interests and Expertise: Behavioral Medicine; Motivational Interviewing; Psychotherapy Process and Outcome Research; Prevention; Program Development, Cross Cultural and Rural Psychology.

Position/Roles: Staff Psychologist in Primary Care Mental Health Integration, Health Promotion Disease Prevention

Personal Interests: Triathlons/Running, Hiking, Photography, Travel, Spending Time with My Family, Reading, Watching Musicals, Art/Graphic Design

**Juli M. Vierthaler, Psy.D.**

Degree: Clinical Psychology, 2010

School: Chicago School of Professional Psychology

Internship: Denver Health Medical Center

Postdoctoral Fellowship: University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Oklahoma City VAMC, Chronic Mental Illness Specialization

Primary Clinical and Research Interests and Expertise: Chronic Mental Illness, Psychosocial Rehabilitation Recovery Model, Interpersonal Trauma, Women's Issues, Psychology Training and Education, Program Development, VA certified in Social Skills Training, DOD certified in Cognitive Processing Therapy

Position/Roles: Staff Psychologist in Specialty Mental Health, Training Director

Personal Interests: Running, Hiking, Skiing, Scuba Diving, Travel, Spending Time with My Animals, Cooking

## ALUMNI

As seen below, our interns come from all over the country. We tend to attract candidates who have variable levels of experience with Alaska, from being lifelong Alaskans to those who have never been here. Although we do not have a post-doctoral fellowship in our training program, since 2008 we have directly hired 8 interns from internship as permanent staff where they continue to work with our licensed psychologists toward licensure after graduation (N=30 total interns thus far). We feel this is a good indicator of the overall quality of our training experience.

<p><b>2018-2019 Graduates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Wright Institute, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.</li> <li>• Our Lady of the Lake University, Counseling Psychology, Psy.D.</li> <li>• Wheaton College, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2017-2018 Graduates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University of Denver, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.</li> <li>• Florida Institute of Technology, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.</li> <li>• New Mexico State University, Counseling Psychology, Ph.D.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2016-2017 Graduates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Florida Institute of Technology, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.</li> <li>• Fielding Graduate University, Clinical Psychology, Ph.D. (respecialization)</li> <li>• University of Alaska Fairbanks, Clinical-Community Psychology, Ph.D.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2015-2016 Graduates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.</li> <li>• The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.</li> <li>• Alder University, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2014-2015 Graduates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alliant International University, Clinical Psychology, Ph.D.</li> <li>• Central Michigan University, Clinical Psychology, Ph.D.</li> <li>• Pacific University, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2013-2014 Graduates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ponce Health Sciences University, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.</li> <li>• Pacific University, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.</li> <li>• Florida State University, Counseling Psychology, Ph.D.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2012-2013 Graduates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• George Fox University, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.</li> <li>• Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Psy.D.</li> <li>• Alliant International University, Clinical Psychology, Ph.D.</li> </ul>

## APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURES

Our internship seeks applicants who are graduate students in good standing in a clinical or counseling psychology program approved by APA (Ph.D. or Psy.D.). We are seeking applicants who are interested in obtaining a generalist training with an emphasis on cultural diversity and service delivery in urban, rural, and frontier healthcare environments. As an equal opportunity training program, the internship welcomes and strongly encourages applications from all qualified candidates, regardless of gender, gender identity, age, religion, racial, ethnic, cultural, nationality, socioeconomic, sexual orientation, disability, or other minority status.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- U.S. citizenship. VA is unable to consider applications from anyone who is not currently a U.S. citizen. Verification of citizenship is required following selection. All interns and fellows must complete a Certification of Citizenship in the United States prior to beginning VA training
- A male applicant born after 12/31/1959 must have registered for the draft by age 26 to be eligible for any US 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 be granted only by the US Office of Personnel Management; exceptions are very rarely granted.
- Interns are subject to fingerprinting and background checks. Match result and selection decisions are contingent on passing these screens. Matched interns are also required to have proof of up-to-date vaccinations, including screening for tuberculosis and hepatitis B vaccination (or have signed declination waivers).
- VA conducts drug screening exams on randomly selected personnel as well as new employees. Interns are not required to be tested prior to beginning work, but once on staff they are subject to random selection for testing as are other employees. In accord with the Federal Drug-Free Workplace Program, interns that are selected may be asked to submit a urine specimen at the beginning of the training year, and other branches of the federal government (Office of Personnel Management) may conduct routine background checks at their discretion. If you have more specific questions regarding eligibility requirements, including drug testing and background checks, please refer to the OPM website (<https://www.opm.gov/>).

Internship applicants also must meet these criteria to be considered for any VA Psychology Internship Program:

- Doctoral student in good standing at an APA-accredited or CPA-accredited graduate program in Clinical or Counseling psychology. Persons with a doctorate in another area of psychology who meet the APA or CPA criteria for respecialization training in Clinical or Counseling Psychology are also eligible.
- Approved for internship status by graduate program training director

## APPLICATION

***To apply, submit the following materials electronically through the on-line APPIC Application for Psychology Internships:***

- APPIC Application for Psychology Internships (APPI), which includes a detailed vita describing background training, experience, and scholarly activity and research, three letters of recommendation, and official transcripts of your graduate work sent directly by your university.

**APPIC Program Number:** 2067  
**NMS Match Number:** 206711

## DEADLINES

Deadline for completed applications is November 20, 2020 for the fall of 2020.

Applicants will be notified of invitation for interviews December 14, 2020.

## INTERVIEW PROCESS

A selection committee comprised of training faculty reviews applications, with focus on goodness of fit of applicant with facility training opportunities. A subset of applicants is offered interviews. All applicants will be notified via email of invitation for interviews by December 14, 2020.

Historically, our internship has conducted interviews solely via phone due to the significant time and money needed for applicants to travel to Alaska. We then provided an opportunity for an in person open house for those able to attend.

For the 2021-2022 cohort, all interview and recruitment activities will be conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is in accordance with APPIC recommendations. We are excited for all recruitment activities to be more readily available to our applicants. Interview and open house activities will be combined into interview days allowing all applicants to receive the same information.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Alaska VA internship program adheres to all guidelines established by APPIC and follows match policies. Our internship site agrees to abide by the APPIC policy that no person at our training facility will solicit, accept, or use any ranking-related information from any intern application. Applicants must obtain an Applicant Agreement Package from NMS and register for the Match in order to be eligible to match to our internship program.

The Alaska VA Match Number is 2067.
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Note: A certification of registration status, certification of U.S. Citizenship, and drug screening are required to become a VA intern. The Federal Government requires that male applicants to VA positions who were born after 12/31/59 must sign a pre-appointment certification statement for selective service registration before they are employed. It is not necessary to submit this form with the application but if you are selected for this internship and fit the above criteria, you will have to sign it. All interns will have to complete a certification of citizenship in the United States prior to beginning the internship. We will not consider applications from anyone who is not currently a U.S. citizen. The VA conducts drug screening exams on randomly selected personnel as well as new employees. Interns are not required to be tested prior to beginning work but once on staff they are subject to random selection as are other staff.

## INTERNSHIP ADMISSIONS, SUPPORT AND INITIAL PLACEMENT DATA

### INTERNSHIP PROGRAM TABLES

Date Program Tables are updated: August 2020

### INTERNSHIP PROGRAM ADMISSIONS

The below narrative describes important information to assist potential applicants in assessing their likely fit with our program. This description is consistent with the program's policies on intern selection and practicum and academic preparation requirements.

Our internship program adheres to a scholar-practitioner model that focuses on training future psychologists in the scientific practice of psychology. Our program focuses on goodness of fit between intern goals and our training opportunities. The Alaska VA psychology internship program is generalist in nature, ensuring interns obtain a wide range of training experiences that prepare them for working in a variety of culturally diverse urban, rural, and frontier health environments. The program focuses on a breadth of clinical skills in three primary areas (outpatient mental health, health psychology, and residential treatment) with opportunities for other specialized experiences based on the training needs of the intern. We also emphasize sensitivity to individual differences and diversity, and value attracting a diverse group of interns. All things being equal, consideration is given to applicants representing elements of diversity, including, but not limited to, age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, national origin, race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, social economic status, and military service (please also refer to Application Procedures above).

Does the program require that applicants have received a minimum number of hours of the following at time of application? If Yes, indicate how many:

Total Direct Contact Intervention Hours	<u>No</u>	Yes
Total Direct Contact Assessment Hours	<u>No</u>	Yes

Describe any other required minimum criteria used to screen applicants:

- ✓ Doctoral student in an American Psychological Association (APA) or Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) accredited Clinical or Counseling Psychology program, or in an APA or CPA approved re-specialization training program in Clinical or Counseling Psychology
- ✓ Approval for internship status by graduate program training director
- ✓ U.S. citizenship
- ✓ Male applicants born after 12/31/1959 must have registered for the draft by age 26
- ✓ Matched interns are subject to fingerprinting and background checks. Match result and selection decision are contingent upon passing these screens
- ✓ As are other employees, matched interns are subject to random selection for drug screening exams once on staff

- ✓ Matched interns will be required to provide proof of up-to-date vaccinations, including screening for tuberculosis and hepatitis B vaccination (or have signed declination waivers)

## FINANCIAL AND OTHER BENEFIT SUPPORT FOR UPCOMING TRAINING YEAR

Financial and Other Benefit Support for Upcoming Training Year*		
Annual Stipend/Salary for Full-time Interns	\$29,232	
Annual Stipend/Salary for Half-time Interns	N/A	
Program provides access to medical insurance for intern?	<u>Yes</u>	No
If access to medical insurance is provided...		
Trainee contribution to cost required?	<u>Yes</u>	No
Coverage of family member(ss) available?	<u>Yes</u>	No
Coverage of legally married partner available?	<u>Yes</u>	No
Coverage of domestic partner available?	Yes	<u>No</u>
Hours of Annual Paid Personal Time Off (PTO and/or Vacation)	104	
Hour of Annual Paid Sick Leave	104	
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?	<u>Yes</u>	No

Other Benefits (please describe)
Interns are eligible to receive health, dental and life insurance coverage. Interns may also be eligible for the Child Care Subsidy Program, and are able to utilize the facility's gym on campus when open/available. ). Additional leave for sickness associated with COVID or pandemic related quarantine may also be authorized in certain cases.

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

## INITIAL POST-INTERNSHIP POSITIONS

(Provide an Aggregated Tally for the Preceding 3 Cohorts)	2016-2019
Total # of interns who were in the 3 cohorts	9
Total # of interns who did not seek employment because they returned to their doctoral program/are completing their doctoral degree	0

	<b>PD</b>	<b>EP</b>
Community mental health center	0	2
Federally qualified health center	0	0
Independent Primary care facility/clinic	0	0
University counseling center	0	0
Veterans Affairs medical center	3	3
Military health center	0	0
Academic health center	0	0
Other medical center or hospital	0	0
Psychiatric hospital	0	0
Academic university department	0	1
Community college or other teaching setting	0	0
Independent research institution	0	0
Correctional facility	0	0
School district/system	0	0
Independent practice setting	0	0
Not currently employed	0	0
Changed to another field	0	0
Other	0	0
Unknown	0	0

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.

## ALASKAN LIVING

The Alaska VA Healthcare System is in Anchorage, Alaska, a city of nearly 300,000 people, or roughly the population of Cincinnati, Ohio or Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Due to the large land area of Anchorage, the city is not densely populated, with only 171 people per square mile. When considering the outlining Matanuska-Susitna Borough, the population of the total Anchorage metropolitan area is over 400,000 people. This one area is the population center of the state and includes slightly over half of the Alaskan population. Anchorage is located on the Kenai Peninsula in south-central Alaska, bordered by the Knik Arm of the Cook Inlet to the north, and the inlet’s Turnagain Arm to the South. To the east, the city is flanked by the Chugach mountains and the 495,000-acre Chugach State Park. The city has various economic sectors, including resource development, tourism, education, government, and transportation. Anchorage is also home to the state’s largest public university, the University of Alaska Anchorage which has a student population of 18,000. The city has a large military presence with the Joint United States Army and Air Force Base Elmendorf-Richardson.



One of the most surprising aspects about Anchorage to newcomers is the amazing diversity of its population and cultural influences in the community. In terms of ethnic diversity, the U.S. Census estimates the most common racial groups in Anchorage include Caucasian (65%), Asian (9.6%), multiracial (8.2%), Alaska Native/American Indian (8.7%), Black/African American (6.1%), and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (2.5%). Anchorage is a city of tremendous diversity, including the three most diverse U.S. Census tracts in the country. The Anchorage School District includes 96 different languages among its student population, including numerous Native Alaskan languages. Anchorage also has an active LGBT community, led by the Identity Alaska organization.



The beauty of Anchorage is unquestionable. In addition to the perks of city living, Anchorage residents also have access to the magnificence of Alaskan wildlife. While many types of wildlife are readily seen within the city, residents can also travel to the various state parks and areas outside of the Municipality to see wildlife in its most natural habitat. Anchorage has received numerous

acknowledgments of its status as a great city to live in. Anchorage has won the National Civic Leagues' All-American City four times (1956, 1965, 1984, and 2002). To learn and see more of what Anchorage has to offer, visit the below hyperlinks.

[Anchorage Economic Development Corporation promo](#)

[10 Best Cities for New College Grads](#)

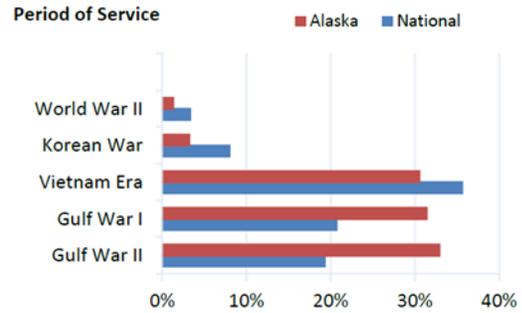
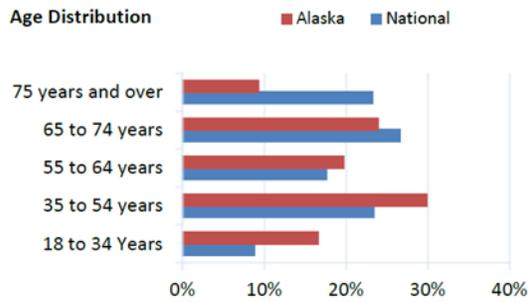
[Why Anchorage, AK, is one of the Top 100 Best Places to Live](#)

## **VETERAN POPULATION**

Alaska is more densely packed with Veterans compared to the national average. In fact, at one time, Alaska was the state with the highest percentage of Veterans per capita. Veterans are often drawn to the active lifestyle Alaska provides. Many were also based in Alaska while active duty military. The diversity of Alaskan Veterans allows interns at the Alaska VA Healthcare System to gain solid skills in multicultural competence. Alaska has the third highest percentage of female Veterans in the nation. While Veterans of all ages live in Alaska, this internship offers opportunities to work with a higher number of younger Veterans than many VA systems. Alaskan Veterans come from all service eras, with the most coming from the Gulf War Era, followed by the Vietnam Era. Interns also get unique opportunities to learn about Alaska Native cultures. Further, the Alaska VA has a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) care coordinator to help promote client-centered healthcare for Alaskan LGBT Veterans.

The National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics published the below data on Alaska Veterans. This data includes projected demographics.

Veteran Population (as of 9/30/2017)	Alaska	National
Number of Veterans	68,719	19,998,799
Percent of Adult Population that are Veterans	13.12%	6.60%
Number of Women Veterans	9,465	1,882,848
Percent of Women Veterans	13.77%	9.41%
Number of Military Retirees	10,908	2,156,647
Percent of Veterans that are Military Retirees	15.87%	10.78%
Number of Veterans Age 65 and Over	20,421	9,410,179
Percent of Veterans Age 65 and Over	29.72%	47.05%



Alaska		9/30/2015	9/30/2020	9/30/2025	9/30/2030	9/30/2035	9/30/2040	9/30/2045
Age	Less than 40	15,438	19,149	20,344	20,715	21,027	21,201	21,255
	40-64	32,325	28,975	28,023	28,787	30,275	32,064	33,310
	65+	20,245	20,760	20,567	19,293	17,337	15,215	13,993

Alaska		9/30/2015	9/30/2020	9/30/2025	9/30/2030	9/30/2035	9/30/2040	9/30/2045
Gender	Male	58,978	58,937	58,187	57,327	56,554	55,907	55,597
	Female	9,030	9,946	10,747	11,468	12,085	12,572	12,961

Alaska		9/30/2015	9/30/2020	9/30/2025	9/30/2030	9/30/2035	9/30/2040	9/30/2045
Period of Service	WWII	582	162	29	3	0	0	0
	Korea	2,479	1,276	494	129	22	2	0
	Vietnam	20,922	16,414	12,320	8,495	5,144	2,583	1,006
	Gulf War	33,771	42,179	46,454	45,775	43,372	39,930	35,082

Note: The total for Period of Service does not equal the total Veteran Population because peace time veterans were excluded

Alaska		9/30/2015	9/30/2020	9/30/2025	9/30/2030	9/30/2035	9/30/2040	9/30/2045
Race	White, Not Hispanic	50,862	50,087	49,475	49,394	49,840	50,794	52,172
	Minority	17,146	18,796	19,459	19,400	18,799	17,686	16,387

Note: Minorities are all races/ethnicities except non-Hispanic White Veterans

## CLIMATE

Newcomers to Alaska are often concerned about the possibility of frigid temperature and icy/snowy roads. January tends to be the coldest month of the year in Anchorage, with average lows of 11 degrees Fahrenheit and average highs in the low 20s. Many Alaskans aim to take vacations during this December to February timeframe to get a brief reprieve from the cold temperatures. Many people utilize auto-starts to warm up their cars and heated blankets to provide extra warmth. In contrast, the summer months in Anchorage have average temperatures of low 50s to mid-60s. In terms of precipitation, Anchorage averages from a high of 3.27 average inches of precipitation in August to a low of 0.47 average inches of precipitation in April. December tends to be the month with the largest average snowfall, with an average of 17 inches of snowfall.



Living in Alaska offers a unique experience in the seasonal daylight fluctuations of arctic living. On the Winter Solstice in December (the shortest day of the year), Anchorage will see around 5.5 hours of sunlight, with the sun rising slightly after 10:00 am and setting between 3:30 and 4:00 pm. Many Alaskans look forward to the Summer Solstice in June, where they bask in over 19 hours of sunlight, with the sun only briefly dipping behind the horizon below midnight until it rises again just after 4:00 am. When you consider civil twilight, the phase of twilight in which the sun is just below the horizon and there is still visible natural light, there are 24 hours of combined daylight and civil twilight in Anchorage for most of the month of June and early July. Alaskans take advantage of these extra hours of sunlight to enjoy the national beauty of Alaska.

## RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The opportunity for recreational activities in Anchorage is abundant and tends to vary by season. Local retail shops provide gear rentals so interns can try new outdoor activities without having to purchase gear.

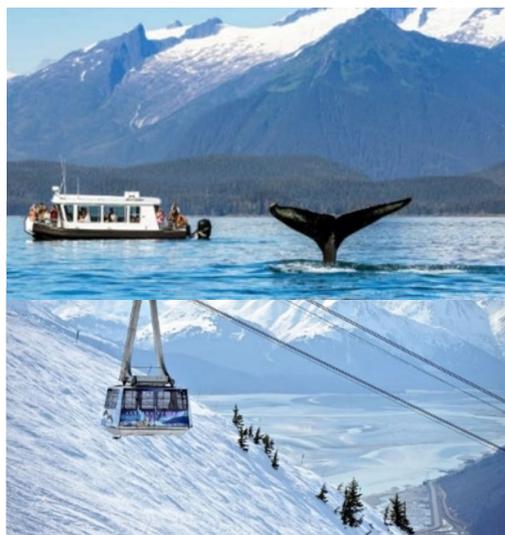


In the winter months, many Alaskans enjoy activities that range from downhill skiing at the Alyeska Ski Resort or Hatcher's Pass to backcountry or cross-country skiing on many groomed and ungroomed trails both inside and outside of the Municipality of Anchorage. The 1,400-acre Kincaid Park, nestled up against the Turnagain Arm, is a popular spot. Ice skating is another popular pastime, with residents skating or playing hockey on Westchester Lagoon or local lakes such as Eklutna Lake. Other winter recreational activities include taking a dog sled tour ride, snow machining, or snow shoeing.

More adventurous residents also do ice climbing. The winter is also the perfect time to camp out to see the awe-inspiring starlight sky and legendary Northern Lights, which are occasionally visible from in the city, although views are almost always more impressive in the backcountry and further north.

In the summer, Alaskans have access to the wonder of the Alaskan frontier. Within the city, Anchorage residents enjoy the local Coastal and Campbell Creek trail systems, which sprawl from one side of the city to the other. They roller blade, bike, run, and walk their pets. Residents can also fish in numerous municipal lakes, or Ship Creek, which is only a few minutes' walk from downtown Anchorage. People can also travel only a few hours outside the city to various fishing towns on the Kenai Peninsula including Seward, Whittier, and Homer. Many people take fishing charters or wildlife tours of the Prince William Sound of Kenai Fjords National Park from these towns, witnessing the splendor of Alaskan sea life, including beluga whales, puffins, sea otters, and sea lions.

Many wildlife tours also show local glaciers, such as the Portage glacier. For people willing to travel a few hours outside of Anchorage, the Denali National Park, with the United States' tallest mountain, Denali is available for exploration. Alaskans take advantage of seemingly endless sunlight to hike, camp, and backpack. A favorite introductory hike is Flattop Mountain, located in the Chugach range and offering breathtaking views of the city and inlet. There are many public use cabins that are available for rent. Other popular outdoor recreational activities include kayaking (lake or open water), canoeing, or rock climbing. It is also common to see people berry picking both in the Chugach Mountains and further outside the city. Anchorage also has a beautiful 100-acre Botanical Garden.



Alaskans are very active and there are numerous sporting events available. In the summer, running races are abounding. Local favorites include the Mayors Midnight Sun Marathon (5K, half-marathon, marathon, and marathon relay) near the summer solstice and the Anchorage RunFest (5K, half-marathon, marathon, and 49K ultra race). During the July 4th holiday, individuals can sign up for the Mount Marathon race, a competitive 5K race up and down the rocky 2,974-foot Mount Marathon in Seward, Alaska. Many Alaskans choose to witness this event while enjoying the local food festival. There are also several popular bike races, winter ski races, and winter snow machine races.

## ENTERTAINMENT, CULTURE AND THE ARTS

While Anchorage does provide great recreation options for active people, it also has several opportunities for rich entertainment and cultural pursuits. There are many festivals that are popular for Alaskans. In February people can attend the Fur Rendezvous (Fur Rondy) festival, which showcases a snow sculpture competition, carnival, Beard Contest, Running of the Reindeer event, Fur Auction, and Miner's and Trapper's Charity Ball. This festival coincides with the annual Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, an 1,100 race from Willow to Nome (ceremonial start in Anchorage). Other popular festivals include the Bear Paw Festival and the Girdwood Forest Fair.



Individuals who love history can enjoy various venues; including the Anchorage Museum and the Alaska Native Heritage Center. The Museum has selected Sundays where admission is free. At the Alaska Native Heritage Center, people can explore replicas of traditional dwellings of Alaska Native peoples (Athabascan, Inupiaq, Yupik, Aleut, Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, etc.) across the state, as well as watch Alaska Native dance and drumming performances, watch cultural films, and purchase Alaska Native art and jewelry. History lovers can also take a step back in time with gold panning pursuits, available in Crow Creek and Indian Valley, just outside of Anchorage. Another incredible cultural activity is the Native Youth Olympics. This annual event showcases Alaskan middle and high schoolers competing in 10 traditional Alaskan events that were tests of hunting and survival skills and used to practice and refine agility balance and strength.

For the artistic types, Anchorage has The Performing Arts Center which showcases many types of performances including Broadway musicals, dance numbers, opera, and symphony performances. Past musicals include Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella*, the *Lion King*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, and *My Fair Lady*.

There are also many local theatre companies. Many musical performances come to both the Alaska Airlines Performing Center or the Alaska State Fair. Past musical performances at these venues include the Zac Brown Band, the Goo-Goo Dolls, Third Eye Blind, The Band Perry, Old Dominion, Norah Jones, and Alaska's own Portugal the Man. Anchorage also hosts a First Friday Art Walk in Downtown Anchorage where people can tour downtown art galleries.



Anchorage also has a booming brewery industry. Alaska is the sixth highest per capita of craft breweries in the country. It culminates in the annual Great Alaska Beer and Barleywine Festival every January.

## HOUSING

According to Zillow, as of January 2018, the median cost in Anchorage for a one-bedroom rental was \$855/month, \$1200 for a two-bedroom rental, and \$1700/month for a three-bedroom rental.

## TRANSPORTATION

Many Alaska VA employees either live in Anchorage or the Eagle-River/Mat-Su Valley area. Within Anchorage, commute times at the most will be 25-30 minutes, if the employee lives on the other side of town. Commute for individuals working within the Eagle-River/Mat-Su Valley is approximately 15-20 minutes. Free parking is provided. The local bus system, the People Mover, provides transportation within Anchorage, with a bus stop right outside the main VA clinic. However, some areas of town do not have frequent bus travel, making this form of public transportation not always practical for VA employees. The Municipality of Anchorage also provides a Ride-Share program that helps coordinate local carpooling and provides vanpool group subsidies. There is a free shuttle that runs between the main Alaska VA clinic and the VA MH RRTP, about 8 miles away, which both Veterans and employees utilize. Anchorage also has Uber and Lyft services. While there are public transportation options, many interns have found it useful to have their own car.

For travel within and outside of the state, Alaskans can utilize the road system, train, and airplanes. While there are many rural villages in Alaska that are outside of the road system (and require a bush plane flight, snow machine, or dog sled to get to), Alaskans can travel the 358-mile Parks Highway from Anchorage to Fairbanks, passing through the beautiful Denali National Park, home of the tallest mountain in the United States, Denali. Alaskans also frequently travel on the scenic Seward Highway from Anchorage to the fishing village of Seward, a favorite spot for fishing charters and scenic tours of Kenai Fjords National Park. People who are driving from the Lower 48 to Alaska often travel through Canada along the Alaska-Canadian Highway (ALCAN). Those with an interest in history can travel the 470-mile Alaska Railroad, stretching from Seward to Fairbanks. For airplane travel, the Ted Stevens International Airport, about 13 miles away from the Alaska VA, provides international travel on many major commercial airlines (Alaska Airlines, United Airlines, Delta, American Airlines) on frequent daily schedules.