

# VA



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

New Mexico VA Health Care System

## **ALBUQUERQUE VA POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP IN CLINICAL NEUROPSYCHOLOGY**

New Mexico Veterans Administration Health Care System  
1501 San Pedro Dr. NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87108

### **ACCREDITATION STATUS**

The Clinical Neuropsychology Postdoctoral Fellowship is accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA) Commission on Accreditation. The next site visit will occur at a date to be determined when the conditions of the pandemic allow.

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

Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation  
American Psychological Association  
750 1<sup>st</sup> Street NE, Washington DC, 20002-4242  
(202) 336-5979  
<https://www.accreditation.apa.org/>

We are also members of the Association of Postdoctoral Programs in Clinical Neuropsychology ([APPCN](#)) and meet its training standards.

### **APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURES**

The Clinical Neuropsychology Postdoctoral Fellowship is a two-year full-time program that starts the third week of August. The current annual salary is \$46,258 for year one and \$48,758 for year two. Fellows are eligible for VA benefits including health insurance, 13 days of paid annual leave, 13 days of paid sick leave, paid time off for all federal holidays, and authorized absence for attendance at professional and scientific meetings. The program funds two Fellows who are selected on alternating years. We are recruiting for one fellow for the 2021 training cycle.

### **ELIGIBILITY**

Applicants must have completed APA or PCSAS accredited graduate programs in clinical or counseling psychology programs, as well as an APA accredited internship prior to beginning the Fellowship. All requirements toward the doctoral degree, including dissertation defense, must be completed before the start-date.

Applicants must also meet the following Federal Government requirements:

Male applicants who were born after 12/31/59 must sign a Pre-appointment Certification Statement for Selective Service Registration before they are employed. Fellows will have to complete a Certification of Citizenship in the United States prior to beginning the fellowship. VA conducts drug screening exams on randomly selected personnel as well as new employees. Fellows are also subject to fingerprinting and background checks. Selection decisions are contingent on passing these screens. See [www.psychologytraining.va.gov/eligibility.asp](http://www.psychologytraining.va.gov/eligibility.asp) for additional details regarding eligibility criteria.

## **APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

The program uses the APPIC Psychology Postdoctoral Application Centralized Application Service (APPA CAS, <https://www.appic.org/About-APPIC/Postdoctoral/APPA-Postdoc-Application-Information>). Each emphasis area is listed separately, so applicants should ensure they have selected the correct emphasis area(s) prior to submitting their application.

Within APPA CAS, applicants are asked to submit the following materials:

1. Curriculum Vitae.
2. Cover letter including a brief statement of your major clinical and research interests.
3. Three letters of recommendation (in the APPA CAS portal they are referred to as "Evaluations") from people who are familiar with your clinical and/or research work. At least one letter should be from an internship supervisor.
4. Letter from your dissertation chair regarding your dissertation status and anticipated defense date. If your dissertation chair is one of your three letters of recommendation, this information can be included in that letter.
5. Graduate Transcripts.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

All application materials must be uploaded into APPA CAS by December 18, 2020. Please contact Joseph Sadek, Ph.D., ABPP, Director of Postdoctoral Training in Clinical Neuropsychology, with questions. Dr. Sadek can be reached by phone at (505) 265-1711 ext. 5390 or by email at [joseph.sadek@va.gov](mailto:joseph.sadek@va.gov).

## **SELECTION PROCEDURES**

Application materials will be initially reviewed for basic eligibility, strength of training and experience, and goodness of fit with our program, from which a pool of applicants will be selected for interviews. Selection criteria are designed to compensate for institutional biases against underserved populations. For the 2021 recruitment year, interviews will be conducted by video or telephone based on the recommendation of APPCN.

We participate in the [APPCN Match](#). Applicants will need to register for the APPCN Resident Matching Program through the [National Matching Services](#). Select the link " Applicants" at the top of the page, then select the option to "Register for the APPCN Match."

## **SELECTION CRITERIA**

Applicants are evaluated across several criteria, including breadth and quality of training, documented experience in clinical neuropsychology, scholarly activity, quality of written application materials, strength of letters of recommendation, interest in issues related to diversity, and goodness of fit with our program's training approach. The Albuquerque VA Clinical Neuropsychology Fellowship program aspires

to recruit and train diverse Fellowship classes. To that end, we follow Federal Equal Opportunity guidelines. However, our continuing commitment to self-examination regarding diversity issues, the diversity of our clinical populations, and the diversity of our faculty have helped us to go beyond guidelines to become a truly welcoming place for persons with varied ethnic, cultural, sexual orientation, or disability backgrounds.

## **TRAINING SETTING**

The [New Mexico VA Health Care System \(NMVAHCS\)](#) is a Joint Commission accredited, VHA complexity level 1b, tertiary care referral center that also serves as a large teaching hospital affiliated with the University of New Mexico. The NMVAHCS serves all of New Mexico along with parts of southern Colorado, western Texas, and eastern Arizona via 13 Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). Inpatient services include 184 acute hospital beds (including a 26 bed Spinal Cord Injury Center), 90 residential rehabilitation treatment program beds (including a 26 bed Psychosocial Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program [PRRTP], a 24 bed Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program [SARRTP], a 40 bed Domiciliary RRTP), and a 36-bed Palliative Care and Community Living Center Unit. The NMVAHCS has multiple specialized programs including outpatient traumatic brain injury program (polytrauma support clinic), acute psychiatric hospitalization, a sleep medicine center, a psychosocial rehabilitation program, and interdisciplinary pain rehabilitation services.



**New Mexico VA Campus**

## **PSYCHOLOGY TRAINING AT THE NMVAHCS**

The NMVAHCS has 41 full-time psychologists on staff, many of whom play key leadership roles in the Behavioral Health Care Line (BHCL) and in other programs throughout the medical center. The New Mexico VA is also home to the APA-accredited Southwest Consortium Doctoral Psychology Internship and to an APA-accredited clinical psychology Fellowship consisting of 8 Fellows. We are also a practicum site for the University of New Mexico doctoral program in clinical psychology.

## **PROGRAM STRUCTURE**

The Fellowship begins the third week in August and continues through the second week of August of the Fellow's second year. Fellows' schedule is 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Fellows will be located at the main campus of the NMVAHCS in southeast Albuquerque. Fellows will spend approximately 25 hours per week engaged in providing professional neuropsychological services and they will receive at least two hours of individual supervision per week. The remainder of the week is spent on didactic and research activities, and providing clinical supervision to predoctoral interns in a psychological assessment rotation.

## **TRAINING PHILOSOPHY, PROGRAM AIMS, AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

The aim of the fellowship is to produce licensed psychologists who demonstrate advanced competence for independent practice in the field of Clinical Neuropsychology, and who are eligible and prepared for ABPP Board Certification in Clinical Neuropsychology. Fellows who complete this program are expected to demonstrate advanced practice competency for work with adults, ranging in age from young adult to

very advanced age, who present with a broad range of neurologic, medical and psychiatric disorders as well as a broad range of referral issues.

This program follows the 2017 APA Standards of Accreditation for Health Service Psychology and the Houston Conference Guidelines for specialized training in clinical neuropsychology. As with all APA-Accredited postdoctoral fellowships, we will develop competencies in the areas of integration of science and practice, individual and cultural diversity, and ethical/legal practice. All general neuropsychological programmatic guidelines are met by our program, including: (1) the presence of a board certified neuropsychologist on faculty, (2) two years full-time training, (3) provision of training at formally affiliated and proximal training sites with on-site direct clinical supervision, (4) training in allied health specialties (e.g., behavioral neurology, psychiatry), (5) interaction with other residents outside the immediate program, and (6) a program structure that assures that residents spend a significant percentage of time in clinical service, research and educational training proportional to the residents' needs. Furthermore, the program provides training in all specific content areas identified in the Houston Conference Guidelines, including assessment, intervention, consultation, supervision, research, consumer protection, and professional development, with competent and ethical application of these domains across diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic populations.

### **Level 1: Advanced Competency Areas Required of All Programs at the Postdoctoral Level:**

1. Integration of science and practice
2. Individual and cultural diversity
3. Ethical and legal standards

### **Level 2: Program-Specific Competencies**

1. Professional values and attitudes
2. Communication and interpersonal skills
3. Supervision
4. Systems
5. Professional development
6. Leadership

### **Level 3: Specialty Competencies:**

1. Neuropsychological assessment
2. Feedback and intervention as related to the specialty of Clinical Neuropsychology
3. Consultation and interprofessional skills as related to the specialty of Clinical Neuropsychology

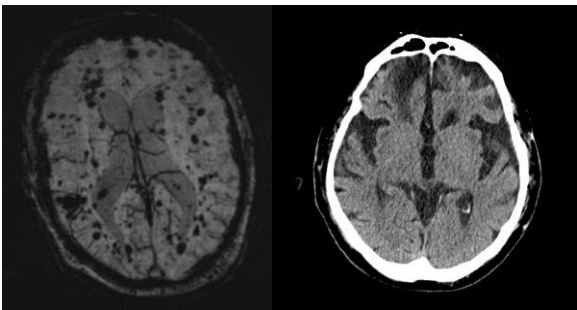
By the end of their second year, fellows should be eligible for state or provincial licensure or certification for the independent practice of psychology and eligible for board certification in clinical neuropsychology by the American Board of Professional Psychology.

## **NEUROPSYCHOLOGY TRAINING**

The NMVAHCS Neuropsychology Clinic is the primary training site for the Fellowship, where Fellows spend more than 50% of their time. This clinic receives more than 800 outpatient consultation requests each year, with referral issues including traumatic brain injury, dementia, decisional capacity, developmental disorders, vocational planning, differential diagnosis of psychiatric and neurological contributions, and transplant evaluations. Within the Neuropsychology Clinic, Fellows will be exposed to a wide variety of referral questions and patients with complex neurologic, psychiatric and medical etiologies. Fellows will be also expected to become



proficient in the differential diagnosis of dementia and of TBI in the context of PTSD, each of which constitutes approximately 25% of referrals to the Neuropsychology Consultation Clinic. Fellows will complete adjunctive rotations in the New Mexico VA Memory Disorders Clinic, Movement Disorders clinic, and the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center for Neuropsychological Service, which provide exposure to distinctive populations inherent to those settings, including delirium, epilepsy and developmental disorders. We have also expanded our teleneuropsychology services, such that 25% or more of our evaluations are conducted through the [VA's established telehealth systems](#).



In addition to direct clinical services, Fellows will participate in a variety of required and optional didactics to increase their depth of knowledge in clinical neuropsychology. The weekly Neuropsychology Rounds is the core didactic experience, which consists of case presentation, journal-club, special topics, and ABPP preparation. Fellows can also elect to attend UNM Clinical Neuroscience Rounds, UNM Neuroradiology Rounds, [UNM Psychiatry Rounds](#), and [neuroimaging](#)

[presentations at the Mind Research Network](#).

## ADDITIONAL TRAINING ACTIVITIES

**Supervision:** At the level of fellowship training, supervision takes on a mentorship approach, characterized by a close, collegial relationship with a primary supervisor in the area of the postdoctoral fellow's emphasis training. Supervisors serve several functions, including modeling a scientist-practitioner approach to clinical activities, facilitating increasing autonomy over the course of the fellowship, and providing focused feedback regarding postdoctoral fellows' progress in the competency domains.

**Postdoctoral Seminar:** All fellows participate in the biweekly postdoctoral seminar series. The postdoctoral seminar reflects the more advanced nature of postdoctoral training as compared to internship training, in that the postdoctoral fellows are themselves heavily involved in the creation and evaluation of the seminar series. A prominent focus in the seminar series is on professional development issues and the transition from student to professional. In addition, postdoctoral fellows participate in emphasis area-specific trainings consisting of journal clubs, invited presentations, and case conferences.

**Program Evaluation and Research:** Postdoctoral fellows are allotted up to 20% of their time to engage in scholarly activities. All postdoctoral fellows are expected demonstrate evidence of scholarly activity over the course of the training year by completing either program evaluation and/or research projects, the scope of which will be determined by the postdoctoral fellows' history of research productivity, interests, and overall training plan. The optional Program Evaluation Seminar provides postdoctoral fellows with training in program evaluation design, planning, and implementation with the opportunity for postdoctoral fellows to complete a project over the course of the year. In addition, they may join a faculty researcher in an ongoing project or use research time to write up already-collected data for publication.

**Training in Supervision:** This fellowship has a strong emphasis on training the future clinical supervisors. All postdoctoral fellows are expected to provide supervision to predoctoral interns who participate in a general psychological assessment rotation. Postdoctoral fellows will attend a biweekly Assessment Supervision of Supervision group with neuropsychology faculty and will co-lead the biweekly internship Assessment Group Supervision with faculty members. We have and establish curriculum to which we add the unique expertise of each fellow. In addition, postdoctoral fellows can participate in a weekly supervision of supervision consultation group comprised of postdoctoral fellows from the clinical and neuropsychology programs, directors of training, and other interested faculty. The purpose of the supervision of supervision consultation groups is to aid postdoctoral fellows and faculty to progress as supervisors by providing a forum for receiving and providing feedback regarding one's own behavior as a supervisor.

**Individual and Cultural Diversity:** Our Diversity Committee hosts a biweekly anti-racism conference that involves discussion of existing and newly emerging readings, as well as self-examination, with the goal of combating personal and systemic racism. The neuropsychology case conference and seminar keeps issues of individual diversity as a regular focus of discussion, especially the biases and limitations inherent in our established practices. We frequently refer to the ECLECTIC model [Daryl E. M. Fujii (2018) Developing a cultural context for conducting a neuropsychological evaluation with a culturally diverse client: the ECLECTIC framework, [The Clinical Neuropsychologist, 32:8, 1356-1392](#)] and address issues of bias and racism in individual supervision.

**Administration:** A key component to our preparation of postdoctoral fellows for eventual leadership roles is to facilitate training that goes beyond direct clinical service provision. Therefore, postdoctoral fellows are expected to obtain administrative experience with psychologists actively involved in clinical administration. Postdoctoral fellows will demonstrate their involvement in administration through completion of an administrative duties, usually in the second year of the fellowship, including coordination of the Neuropsychology Rounds, include assisting with consult management, and attendance at the clinic operations meeting.

**Teaching:** Postdoctoral fellows participate in the teaching of interns, postdoctoral fellows, and staff psychologists. Examples of teaching opportunities include presentations in the Neuropsychology Rounds, presentations in the assessment group supervision hour (biweekly), intern seminar, and presentations to psychology faculty.

**Leadership:** A key component to our preparation of fellows for eventual leadership roles is to facilitate training that goes beyond direct clinical service provision. Therefore, fellows can attend leadership seminars as part of the general postdoctoral seminar on leadership models. In tandem with the leadership seminar, fellows are can complete several experiential activities to facilitate leadership development, including self-assessments, shadowing facility leaders, and leading meetings. The timing and specifics of these activities will be developed in conjunction with area of emphasis supervisors.

**Teaching and Psychology Grand Rounds:** Fellows will be expected to provide a formal presentation to psychology grand rounds held at the NMVAHCS for continuing education credit. The content of the presentation should focus on a clinical situation that synthesizes the scientific literature related to the situation in question.

**Professional Meetings, Independent Workshops and Intensive Trainings:** Fellows are encouraged to network at professional meetings relevant to their areas of interest. Fellows will be provided the time to attend appropriate workshops and professional meetings, including meetings conducted virtually. Absences for professional meetings should be negotiated with supervisors and appropriate requests for leave time must be made as far in advance as possible. An upper limit of 5 days of authorized absence per year is granted to fellows for professional leave (which may include job talks). The VA also provides internal trainings which the fellow may attend without using authorized absence.

**Licensure and Board Certification Preparation:** Fellows are expected to obtain licensure prior to the end of the training program. The program provides for support from licensure by regularly checking on progress within the fellow seminar and providing time for EPPP preparation with sufficient advanced notice. Clinical neuropsychology fellows are required to submit the early credentialing to the [American Board of Clinical Neuropsychology](#).

## COVID-19 IMPACT ON TRAINING

The pandemic has created many personal and professional challenges for everyone. A major challenge impacting our training program is the substantial uncertainty about how COVID-19 will impact healthcare for the foreseeable future. We strive to be transparent with potential applicants to our program with regard

to how training opportunities may be affected. Unfortunately, this means that we cannot definitively predict how training experiences may change for the 2021-2022 training year, although each training experience has continued to this point with appropriate modifications. We can state with confidence that the NMVAHCS will continue to provide high-quality patient care to those it is charged to serve. In addition, we expect the telehealth modalities will continue to be highly utilized. Finally, we will be conducting a 100% virtual interview process. We remain committed to our mission of excellence in psychology training and take pride in the adaptations we have made to our training and patient care modalities as the situation requires. We will update our materials as we learn more about changes for the coming year. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

## LOCATION INFORMATION



New Mexico and the [Albuquerque metropolitan area](#) offer a unique ethnic and cultural mix of persons with Hispanic, Anglo, and Native American heritage, among others, which is reflected in the traditional folk arts of the region, other visual arts, dance, and theater. The state boasts a highly concentrated intellectual and scientific climate, with national laboratories (Los Alamos National Laboratories, Sandia National Laboratories), the University of New Mexico, CASAA (Center on Alcoholism, Substance

Abuse, and Addictions; a center for Motivational Interviewing research and training) and the Mind Research Network, one of the nation's leading neuroimaging facilities. Many consider New Mexico's unique high desert and mountain landscape to be unsurpassed in terms of sheer natural beauty, and the climate in Albuquerque's "mile-high" metropolitan area is moderate. New Mexico offers great opportunities for hiking, climbing and skiing, and a number of natural hot springs, ruins, and other destinations lie within an hour or two of Albuquerque. The calendar year features an incredible mix of activities, ranging from devotional events ([public feast days and dances at many of the pueblos](#), Good Friday pilgrimage to Chimayo), arts festivals ([Spanish](#) and [Indian](#) Markets on the Plaza in Santa Fe, the [International Flamenco Dance festival](#) in Albuquerque), and athletic teams and competitions throughout the state. Albuquerque has attracted national attention, having been rated as #1 for its size in appeal to the "Creative Class" by sociologist Richard Florida, and Men's Health Magazine rated Albuquerque #1 as the "Most Fit City," due to the array of bike paths, trails, gyms, and other amenities that are available in this vibrant city. The New Mexico VA has its own free employee gym with 24-hour access.



**POST-DOCTORAL RESIDENCY PROGRAM TABLES**  
Date program tables were updated: August 30, 2020

**Postdoctoral Program Admissions**

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

We review each application holistically and we look for applicants who are good fit with our programs, such as a strong interest and experience with diversity and individual differences, good experience with evidence-based practice, and/or career goals that are closely aligned with our program aims.

**Describe any other required minimum criteria used to screen applicants:**

Applicants must have completed their dissertations before beginning the postdoctoral fellowship; as such, we prefer that applicants be making good progress with their dissertations and at least have their proposals complete at the time of application. Applicants must have completed APA/CPA/PCSAS-accredited graduate programs in clinical or counseling psychology programs, as well as an APA/CPA-accredited internship prior to beginning the fellowship. All requirements toward the doctoral degree, including dissertation defense, must be completed before the September start-date.

Applicants must also meet the following Federal Government requirements:

Male applicants who were born after 12/31/59 must sign a Pre-appointment Certification Statement for Selective Service Registration before they are employed. Fellows will have to complete a Certification of Citizenship in the United States prior to beginning the fellowship. VA conducts drug screening exams on randomly selected personnel as well as new employees. Fellows are also subject to fingerprinting and background checks. Selection decisions are contingent on passing these screens.



<b>Financial and Other Benefit Support for the Upcoming Training Year:</b>	
<b>Annual Stipend/Salary For Full-Time Postdoctoral Fellows</b>	\$46,258
<b>Annual Stipend/Salary For Half-Time Postdoctoral Fellows</b>	N/A
<b>Insurance:</b>	
<b>Program provides access to medical insurance for fellows?</b>	Yes
<b>Trainee contribution to cost required?</b>	Yes
<b>Coverage of family member(s) available?</b>	Yes
<b>Coverage of legally married partner available?</b>	Yes
<b>Coverage of domestic partner available?</b>	No
<b>Time Off:</b>	
<b>Hours of Annual Paid Personal Time Off (PTO and/or Vacation)</b>	104 hours
<b>Hours of Annual Paid Sick Leave</b>	104 hours
<b>In the event of medical conditions and/or family needs that require extended leave, does the program allow reasonable unpaid leave to fellows in excess of personal time off and sick leave?</b>	Yes, negotiated on a case by case basis
<b>Other Benefits</b>	5 days of professional leave

<b>Initial Post-Residency Positions</b>		
	<b>2010-2020</b>	
<b>Total number of postdocs who were in the 10 cohorts</b>	12	
<b>Total number of residents who remain in the residency program</b>	2	
<b>Initial Positions</b>	<b>Postdoctoral Position</b>	<b>Employment Position</b>
<b>Community mental health center</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Federally qualified health center</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>University counseling center</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Veterans Affairs medical center</b>	N/A	3
<b>Military health center</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Academic health center</b>	N/A	3
<b>Other medical center or hospital</b>	N/A	2
<b>Psychiatric hospital</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Academic university/department</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Community college or other teaching setting</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Independent research institution</b>	N/A	2
<b>Correctional facility</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>School district/system</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Independent practice setting</b>	N/A	2
<b>Not currently employed</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Changed to another field</b>	N/A	N/A

<b>Other</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Unknown</b>	N/A	N/A

## CORE TRAINING FACULTY

### **Joseph Sadek, Ph.D., ABPP- Clinical Neuropsychology**

Dr. Sadek (University of Florida - 2000; postdoctoral fellow, Medical College of Wisconsin 2002) is an Associate Professor in the UNM Department of Psychiatry and a staff neuropsychologist at the New Mexico VA Health Care System. He provides individual supervision for neuropsychological evaluation with an emphasis on the integration of information from interview, medical records and test scores. His case conceptualization and diagnostic approach emphasize integration of psychosocial needs and base rates of specific disorders as well as neuroimaging. Dr. Sadek's research experience includes evaluation of the effectiveness of neuropsychological assessments in the VA health care system, performance-based functional assessment in dementia and distinguishing dementia subtypes with functional and structural neuroimaging. He has collaborated on research projects related to PTSD, unilateral stroke and schizophrenia. He also has research experience in the neuropsychology of HIV. He is a member of the Albuquerque VA Research and Development Committee and the UNM Psychiatry Research Committee and served as Acting Chief of Research at the Albuquerque VA. He has served on the editorial board of the Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society.

**Shelly Leiphart, Psy.D.:** Dr. Leiphart (Wright State University, 2008) is a staff neuropsychologist on the Zia Spinal Cord Injury/Disease Center. She completed her internship with Wright State University and the Dayton VA Medical Center, and completed a 2-year neuropsychology post-doctoral fellowship at NMVAHCS. Dr. Leiphart's primary inpatient and outpatient clinical activities include psychological assessment and intake exams, individual and family psychotherapy, neuropsychological assessment, decisional capacity assessment, and participates with interdisciplinary team functioning, consultation, and patient care. In her free time, Dr. Leiphart is an avid rock climber, hiker, and mountain biker.

**We are in the process of recruiting another full-time faculty member.**

## POLICIES

### Fellow Grievance Policy

We believe that most problems that postdoctoral fellows may have during the fellowship year are best addressed through face-to-face interaction between the postdoctoral fellow and the supervisor or other staff who are directly involved in the problematic situation. This approach is also consistent with APA ethical guidelines, which specify that psychologists always discuss problematic issues involving another psychologist with that person before taking any other steps. Postdoctoral fellows are therefore encouraged first to discuss the problem with their direct supervisor, who can provide the postdoctoral fellow with guidance on how to approach the individual(s) involved in the concern (if unrelated to the direct supervisor) or attempt to directly resolve the concern (if related to the direct supervisor). Supervisors are expected to be receptive to postdoctoral fellow concerns, attempt to solve the concern in collaboration with the postdoctoral fellow, and seek consultation of other training faculty as appropriate. If satisfactory resolution is not achieved by direct interaction between the postdoctoral fellow, the supervisor, and/or other involved staff, the following additional steps are available to the postdoctoral fellow.

- I. **Informal Mediation:** Either party may request that the Director of Neuropsychology Fellowship Training serve as a mediator, or assist in selecting an appropriate mediator from among active NMVAHCS clinical supervisors, for assistance in problem resolution. Informal mediation may result in satisfactory resolution with no changes to the postdoctoral fellow's training plan or, in some instances, may result in recommendations for alterations of the postdoctoral fellow's training plan, including changes to either supervisors or rotations. Any recommended changes to rotation assignments must be approved by the Training Committee.
  
- II. **Formal Grievance:** If informal resolution does not result in satisfactory resolution, or if there is a serious grievance (i.e., legal/ethical allegations) the postdoctoral fellow may initiate a formal grievance by sending a written request to the Director of Neuropsychology Fellowship Training detailing the nature of the grievance, the postdoctoral fellow's desired outcome, and any attempts at resolution already taken .
  1. The Director of Neuropsychology Fellowship Training will ask the DOT to convene a meeting of the Training Committee as soon as possible, not to exceed one month, to gather relevant facts, establish the specific nature of the grievance, and explore options for change which will adequately resolve the grievance. The postdoctoral fellow and supervisor/other involved parties will be invited to attend the meeting to provide the Training Committee with information relevant to the grievance. The ex-officio members of the Training Committee will not attend this meeting in order to allow themselves to be available as impartial agents for future appeals, if necessary (see b. below).
  2. Within 2 weeks of the Training Committee meeting, the committee creates a written set of recommended actions to be taken, to include modifications in training procedures, which will be provided to the postdoctoral fellow and other involved parties. If the postdoctoral fellow accepts the recommendations, the recommendations will be implemented and the Director of Neuropsychology Fellowship Training will meet with the postdoctoral fellow within two weeks post-implementation to ensure appropriate adherence to the recommendations. If the postdoctoral fellow disputes the recommendations, he or she may appeal to the ex-officio members of the Training Committee, the Chief of Staff for Education and the Chief of Psychology Service. These two individuals will obtain information as needed, and render the

final appeal decision in consultation with the appropriate legal resources, and communicate the decision to the intern, Director of Neuropsychology Fellowship Training, Director of Training, and Training Committee.

3. The implementation of the suggested actions will be reviewed by the Director of Neuropsychology Fellowship Training within two weeks after the written recommendations are in place. If any party to a grievance fails to make recommended changes, further recommendations will be made by the Training Committee, to include termination of the rotation or other training experience for that postdoctoral fellow. If the rotation is terminated, the postdoctoral fellow is reassigned to a rotation which is appropriate for her/his training needs.
4. If the grievance involves a member of the Training Committee, that member will excuse him or herself from any Training Committee meetings pertaining to the intern grievance. If the grievance involves the Director of neuropsychology fellowship Training, the postdoctoral fellow may submit the grievance to the Director of Psychology Training (DOT), who will serve in place of the Director of Neuropsychology Fellowship Training for the formal grievance process and will chair Training Committee meetings pertaining to the postdoctoral fellow grievance.

Postdoctoral fellows are to be informed of these grievance procedures during their orientation. Written copies will be provided to each intern via distribution of the Training Manual.

### **Fellow Remediation Policy**

This policy provides postdoctoral fellows and training faculty a definition of problematic performance, a listing of sanctions and an explicit discussion of due process.

**Definition of Problematic Performance:** Problematic performance is said to be present when supervisors perceive that a fellow's competence, behavior, professional values, professional relationships, or other characteristics significantly disrupt the quality of his or her clinical services; his or her relationship with peers, supervisors, or other staff; or his or her ability to comply with appropriate standards of professional behavior. It is a matter of professional judgment as to when such behaviors are serious enough to constitute "problematic performance."

**Procedures for Responding to Problematic Performance:** When it is identified that a fellow's skills, professionalism, or personal functioning are problematic, supervisors are expected to notify the fellow immediately of these concerns. Supervisors should present these concerns to the fellow using the Fellow Evaluation Form, even if the problematic performance occurs outside of a formal evaluation period. Supervisors are also expected to immediately notify the Director of Neuropsychology Fellowship Training of the problematic fellow performance who will then forward the concerns to the Training Committee. The Training Committee, with input from other relevant supervisory staff, then initiates the following procedures:

1. The negative evaluation(s) will be reviewed with discussion from the Training Committee and other supervisors and a determination made as to what action needs to be taken to address the problems identified.
2. After reviewing all available information, the Training Committee may adopt one or more of the following steps, or take other appropriate action:
  - a. The Training Committee may elect to take no further action.
  - b. The Training Committee may direct the supervisor(s) to provide additional constructive feedback and methods for addressing the identified problem areas. If such efforts are not successful, the issue will be revisited by the Training Committee.
3. Where the Training Committee deems that *remedial* action is required, the identified problematic performance of behavior must be systematically addressed. Possible remedial steps include (but are not limited to) the following:
  - a. Increased supervision, either with the same or other supervisors.
  - b. Change in the format, emphasis, and/or focus of supervision.
  - c. Change in rotation or other training experiences.
  - d. Recommendations of a leave of absence.
4. Alternatively, depending upon the seriousness of the problematic performance, the Training Committee may place the fellow on *probation* and issue a formal Remediation Plan which specifies that the committee, through the supervisors and Training Director, will actively and systematically monitor for a specific length of time, the degree to which the fellow addresses, changes, and/or otherwise improves the problem performance or behaviors. The Remediation Plan is a written statement to the fellow that includes the following items:
  - a. A description of the problematic performance behavior.
  - b. Specific recommendations for rectifying the problems.
  - c. Time-frames for periodic review of the problematic performance behavior(s).
  - d. Competency domains in which the fellow's performance is satisfactory. Areas of satisfactory performance must be maintained while the fellow works to correct the identified problematic performance behavior(s).
  - e. Procedures to assess at each review period whether the problem has been appropriately rectified.

The NMVAHCS Chief of Psychology, NMVAHCS Associate Chief of Staff for Education, the VA Office of Academic Affiliations, and VA Regional Counsel will be alerted that a formal remediation plan has been issued.

5. Following the delivery of a formal Remediation Plan, the Director of Neuropsychology Fellowship Training and the DOT will meet with the fellow to review the required remedial steps. The fellow may elect to accept the conditions or initiate a grievance regarding the Training Committee's decision following the fellow grievance policy. Once the Training Committee has issued an acknowledgement notice of the Remediation Plan, the fellow's status will be reviewed using the timelines listed on the Remediation Plan.

**Failure to Correct Problematic Performance:** When the defined remediation recommendations do not rectify the problematic performance within the defined time frame, or when the fellow seems unable or unwilling to alter his or her behavior, the Training Committee may need to take further formal action. If a fellow on probation has not improved sufficiently to rectify the problems under the conditions stipulated by the Remediation Plan, the Training Committee will conduct a formal review and then inform the fellow in writing that the conditions for removing the fellow from probation have not been met. The Committee may then elect to take any of the following steps, or other appropriate action:

1. Continue the Remediation Plan for a specified period of time.
2. Inform the fellow that he or she will not successfully complete the fellowship if his/her problematic performance does not change.

If by the end of the fellowship, the fellow has not successfully completed the training requirements, the Training Committee may recommend that the fellow not be graduated. The NMVAHCS Chief of Psychology, NMVAHCS Associate Chief of Staff for Education, the VA Office of Academic Affiliations, and VA Regional Counsel will be informed of the Training Committee recommendation that the fellow not be graduated. The fellow will be then be informed that he/she has not successfully completed the program.

3. Inform the fellow that the Training Committee is recommending that he or she be terminated immediately from the fellowship program. The NMVAHCS Chief of Psychology, NMVAHCS Associate Chief of Staff for Education, the VA Office of Academic Affiliations, and VA Regional Counsel will be informed of the Training Committee recommendation that the fellow be terminated immediately.
4. When the Training Committee determines that the fellow is not suited for a career in professional psychology, the committee may recommend a career shift for the fellow, and withhold endorsement for professional practice should the fellow later seek licensing in any jurisdiction.

**Appeal Process:** A fellow may appeal the decision of the Training Committee by submitting a detailed response to the recommendations of the Training Committee. A review panel, comprising five VA psychology faculty members, will be appointed by the Director of Neuropsychology Fellowship Training with the restriction that no one involved in the original action shall be on the panel. This panel will convene within 2 weeks of receipt of the fellow's written response document. Legal representation from VA Regional Counsel shall be available to the panel concerning due process issues and the NMVAHCS Chief of Psychology, NMVAHCS Associate Chief of Staff for Education, and the VA Office of Academic Affiliations will also be informed and available for consultation. The Director of Neuropsychology Fellowship Training shall present the position of the Training Committee and the fellow, together with any counsel he or she may choose, shall present the appeal. The Training Committee shall abide by the panel's judgment if it

recommends a change to the fellow's remediation plan or continuation of training (in the event that the Training Committee has recommended that fellow be removed from the program).

All of the above steps will be appropriately documented and implemented in ways that are consistent with due process, including opportunities for fellows to initiate grievance proceedings to challenge Training Committee decisions.

### **Fellow Illegal or Unethical Behavior Policy**

1. Infractions by a postdoctoral fellow of a very minor nature may be dealt with among the Director of Neuropsychology Fellowship Training, DOT, supervisor, and the postdoctoral fellow. A report of these dealings will become a part of the postdoctoral fellow's file and will be reported to the Training Committee. Supervisors must report all ethical or legal infractions immediately to the Director of Neuropsychology Fellowship Training and the DOT.
2. A significant infraction or repeated minor infractions by a postdoctoral fellow must be reviewed by the Training Committee and the Chief of Psychology after a written statement of findings is submitted to the Training Committee by the Director of Neuropsychology Fellowship Training. The Training Committee will review the case as soon as possible following the receipt of the written statement. After review of the case, the Training Committee will recommend either probation or dismissal of the postdoctoral fellow. Recommendations of a probationary period must include use of the Remediation Plan, including a time frame and periodic reporting to the Training Committee. The Chief of Psychology and Chief of Staff for Education will be informed of such recommendations. A violation of the probationary contract will necessitate the termination of the postdoctoral fellow's appointment.
3. The postdoctoral fellow can appeal any ruling of the Training Committee by submitting a written request for appeal to the Director of Neuropsychology Fellowship Training and/or any member of the Training Committee. In such cases, a committee of psychologists not on the Training Committee will be convened by the Chief of Psychology and the Director of Neuropsychology Fellowship Training, and such a committee (the "appeal committee") will review the case, including the Director of Neuropsychology Fellowship Training's written findings and the postdoctoral fellow's written rebuttal. This review and recommendations coming from this review will occur as soon as possible, but certainly within 2 weeks of receipt of the request for appeal. The Chief of Psychology and Chief of Staff for Education will be informed of such recommendations. The recommendations of this committee can include continuation of the original set of recommendations made by the Training Committee or a creation of a new set of recommendations. The recommendations of the appeal committee are considered final.

### **Fellow Leave Policy**

1. Fellows will abide by the same leave policy as VA employees. This means that they will earn leave at a rate of 4 hours of Annual Leave and 4 hours of Sick Leave per pay period. Within the training year, this provides approximately 2 weeks (80 hours) of annual leave and approximately 2 weeks (80



hours) of sick leave. Sick leave can be taken to care for sick family members. Leave can only be taken once it is accrued.

2. If there is a pressing need to take leave prior to its accrual, fellows can petition the Training Committee to earn compensatory time prior to the requested leave, which could then be taken without a deduction in pay.
3. If it is not possible for fellows to arrange the earning of compensatory time prior to leave when there is insufficient accrued leave, fellows can take leave without pay, upon approval of the Training Committee. Fellows will not be financially compensated for this leave.
4. In the unusual event that a fellow requires extended leave (for example, pregnancy or lengthy illness), the fellow will be required to go on Leave without Pay (LWOP) status after their accrued sick and annual leave is used. The fellow will resume paid status after their return to duty and the training year will be extended to ensure that the annual 2080 hour training commitment is satisfied.
5. In the event that a fellow begins the fellowship with leave accrued from prior federal service, that leave is available for the fellow to use. However, any leave taken in excess of the two weeks of annual and sick leave that would be accrued over the course of the year will require an extension of the fellow's training program to ensure that the 4160 hour training commitment is met. Fellows may be required to enter a without compensation status to complete the extension of the training year.
6. Fellows can petition the Training Committee for Authorized Absence when the activity a fellow is engaged in is judged to be of sufficient instructional quality to be equivalent to hours spent in the fellowship. Examples of experiences that may qualify for Authorized Absence are: presenting a poster or paper at a scientific conference, appropriate workshops, job talks, or interviews. Fellows will typically be granted up to 40 hours to use during the course of the training year. In rare cases, in which the extracurricular activity is determined to provide sufficient benefit to the fellow's training and/or professional development, Authorized Absence beyond 40 hours may be granted.
7. To request accrued annual or sick leave, all fellows should first email their request (hours and days requested) to the psychology DOT and their direct supervisors, preferably at least 30 days in advance of taking leave. Once the leave is approved at this level, fellows should use the VATAS system to request leave and should also email the timekeepers and any schedulers who schedule regular appointments for them.
8. To request Authorized Absence, fellows must petition the Training Committee by emailing the psychology DOT with their request, including what they will be doing and the days/times they will be on leave. Interns must then complete a VA form 71—Request for Leave or Authorized Absence, and have it signed by the Director of BHCL. All fellows must clear AA with their direct supervisors as well.