Orlando VA Medical Center
PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM
(2018-2019)

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
VA Medical Center
13800 Veterans Way
Orlando, FL 32827

PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM
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Thank you for your interest in the Orlando VA Medical Center Clinical Psychology Internship training program. Our APA-Accredited program provides training for six full-time interns each year. The training year starts July 8, 2019 and offers an annual stipend of $24,014. Please take your time looking through our brochure, and feel free to contact Dr. Mary Beth Shea (listed on the front page) for any questions regarding our program.

**Internship Admissions, Support, and Initial Placement Data**

**Program Tables Updated 8-28-18**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internship Program Admissions</th>
<th>Required</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Direct Contact INTERVENTION Hours</td>
<td>Preferred</td>
<td>300 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Direct Contact ASSESSMENT Hours</td>
<td>Preferred</td>
<td>200 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed 3 years of graduate work in APA, CPA, or PCSAS accredited doctoral program</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Citizen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successfully defended the dissertation proposal</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants born after 12/31/59 who were male at age 18 have registered for Selective Service</td>
<td>Yes, if selected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug screening, as per Human Resources requirements</td>
<td>Yes, if selected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The psychology internship at the Orlando VA Medical Center provides generalist training for professional psychologists. Within the generalist training, the internship promotes a scientific attitude and approach to clinical activities through an emphasis on evidence-based practice. This approach follows the scholar practitioner model, which provides interns with opportunities and experiences that promote their development as professional psychologists who integrate science into clinical practice.

Training experiences are available in general mental health outpatient settings (mental health clinic, community based clinics, and telemental health), specialty mental health outpatient settings (psychosocial rehabilitation, residential treatment, substance use treatment, and neuropsychology/traumatic brain injury), and areas of special interest (primary care – mental health integration, pain management, pre-/post-surgical evaluation and biofeedback, and geropsychology).

We welcome all qualified applicants. Well-prepared applicants will be U.S. citizens from APA-accredited graduate programs and will have a solid foundation in both psychotherapy skills (300 intervention hours) and psychological assessment (200 assessment hours). Additionally, comprehensive exams should be complete and the dissertation proposal approved. All application files are reviewed by at least three members of the training committee. Based on this review, qualified applicants will be invited to interview by phone or in person with us. All interviews include a performance-based component. In-person visits are encouraged to help applicants in their selection process, but will not be weighted differently by the selection committee.
If selected, the federal government requires that male applicants to VA positions who were born after 12/31/59 sign a pre-appointment certification statement for Selective Service Registration before they are employed. 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 testing as are all clinical staff.

### Financial and Other Benefit Support for Upcoming Training Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual Stipend/Salary for Full-time Interns</td>
<td>$24,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If access to medical insurance is provided, Trainee contribution to cost required?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coverage of family member(s) available?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coverage of legally married partner available?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coverage of domestic partner available?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of Annual Paid Personal Time Off</td>
<td>13 days vacation + 10 holidays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of Annual Paid Sick Leave</td>
<td>13 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Benefits</td>
<td>Successful interns are eligible for direct appointment (noncompetitive hiring) for federal jobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Florida has no state income tax.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of our graduates have gone on to formal postdoctoral fellowships, most in clinical, non-research settings. Especially during our developmental years, we strongly encouraged interns to complete post-docs, as they were coming from an unaccredited internship. Since we have received APA accreditation, our interns’ choices are more varied, with some completing postdoctoral fellowships and others going straight to permanent employment. Of our 32 total graduates (2012-18), 17 are full-time VA psychologists now and two are VA postdoctoral fellows. For our last 3 reportable cohorts (see Table below), 10 have gone on to formal postdoctoral fellowships, and 6 have gone straight to full-time employment. Of those 16, 9 had their initial post-internship positions with VA. Given our mission of training psychologists to serve America’s Veterans, we are delighted that over half of our graduates have elected to stay with VA.
## Initial Post-Internship Positions

| Total # interns 2014 – 2017 | 16 |
| Total # interns who did not seek employment because they returned to their doctoral program/are completing doctoral degree | 0 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postdoctoral Fellowship</th>
<th>Employed position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VA Medical Center</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic university/department</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent practice setting</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other medical center or hospital</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Application Process and Selection Procedures

Applicants for Internship must have advanced standing in a clinical or counseling psychology doctoral program approved by the American Psychological Association or Canadian Psychological Association. All applicants must receive the written endorsement of their program Training Director as having completed all departmental requirements for Internship eligibility, including all coursework and qualifying examinations and progress toward the dissertation/research project.

Applications are encouraged from all geographical areas. The Orlando VA Medical Center is an Equal Opportunity Employer; we are committed to ensuring a range of diversity among our training classes, and we select candidates representing different kinds of programs and theoretical orientations, geographic areas, ages, racial and ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, disabilities, and life experiences. All things being equal, consideration is given to applicants who identify themselves as military Veterans.

Doctoral students who are interested in applying for an internship position in our program should follow the online Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) application instructions.

Intern applicants must:

1. Have completed at least three years of graduate course work in an APA- or CPA-accredited clinical or counseling psychology training program in good standing. Applicants from programs on probation will not be considered.

2. Have successfully defended the dissertation proposal.

3. Have completed a minimum of 500 hours assessment/intervention supervised clinical practica, with preference given to 300+ hours intervention and 200+ assessment hours. Applicants with fewer than 500 clinical hours at the time of application should indicate a plan to accrue the necessary hours prior to starting internship.

4. Be a citizen of the United States.

The AAPI (APPIC Application for Psychology Internships) online application portal should be used by all interested students to apply to the Orlando VA Medical Center Psychology Internship Program. All applications must be submitted online. News and information about the APPIC Online Application process, along with instructions about how to access the service, can be found at www.appic.org, click on "AAPI ONLINE." There is a training video describing the basic functionality for the Applicant (Student) portal under "TRAINING RESOURCES."

When you enter the general AAPI site, click on Directory Online, and then Search for Internship Programs. Orlando VAMC is listed under Florida. Orlando VA Medical Center Program number is 2221. Most of the information about our internship can be found on our APPIC page. However, if you find that you have more specific questions, you are
encouraged to email the internship program training director directly for clarification. Your graduate program training director should be a useful resource in helping you navigating the AAPI applicant portal. When you enter the general site, scroll down and click on "The Applicant Portal of the 2018-19 AAPI Online is now available."

Your online AAPI application package should also include: a Verification of Internship Eligibility and Readiness, completed by University Director of Training, current official graduate transcript(s), three letters of reference from faculty members or practicum supervisors who know you and your work well, cover letter and curriculum vitae.

Complete application packets must be received by us by 11:59 PM Eastern Time Zone November 18, 2018 for consideration for internship appointment beginning the following July. Individual interviews will be conducted by invitation only, following initial evaluation of application materials. Applicants invited for interviews will be notified by December 19, and an interview date scheduled during early January. Interviews may also be conducted via video tele-conference or by phone.

Policies and procedures regarding internship offers and acceptance recommended by the APPIC and the Council of Directors of Clinical Training Programs will be followed for the appointment of interns. The internship site agrees to abide by the APPIC Policy that no person at this training facility will solicit, accept or use any ranking-related information from any intern applicant prior to Uniform Notification Day.

Selection Process

1. Applications are reviewed for completeness by the Training Director.

2. Completed applications are reviewed by two members of the Training Committee and the Training Director.

3. Each file is rated by the Committee members and the Training Director and an initial rank is generated to make recommendations to invite applicants for interviews.

4. A Training Committee meeting is convened by the Training Director to discuss the resulting recommendations and to discuss any candidate that has been flagged for further discussion.

5. The Training Director finalizes the list of applicants invited for interviews.

6. Letters and/or email are sent to all applicants notifying them of interview selection decisions.

7. Interviews are scheduled by the OVAMC Psychology Section.

8. Each candidate selected for interview is interviewed individually by at least three members of the training committee, in person, or by phone or video-teleconference.
9. Applicants will have the opportunity to meet with, or speak to, the current interns upon request.

10. Once interviews are completed, scores are calculated for each candidate and an overall applicant score is generated for each applicant. This score takes into account the number of reviewers and weights the applicant's file (i.e., APPIC application) heavier than the interview.

11. Based on the applicants' total weighted score, a rank is generated.

12. The Training Committee meets to review ratings and rank applicants.

13. The Training Director submits the final list to APPIC for matching.

14. After the final match list is posted, successfully matched candidates are contacted by the Training Director.

Training Philosophy:
The mission of the Orlando VA Psychology Internship program is to develop ethical and competent psychologists capable of delivering quality care through evidence-based practice for the purpose of improving the quality of life and well-being for America's Veterans.

The psychology internship at the Orlando VA Medical Center provides generalist training for professional psychologists. Within this generalist training, the internship promotes a scientific attitude and approach to clinical activities through an emphasis on evidence-based practice. This approach follows the scholar practitioner model (Peterson, et al, 1997; Hoshmand & Polkinghorne, 1992), described as the “local clinical scientist doing disciplined inquiry.” The use of this model in our setting provides Interns with opportunities and experiences that promote their development as professional psychologists who integrate science into their clinical practice.

The internship year is viewed as a time for both clinical and professional growth. Although clinical work will be a consistent focus, Interns' overall professional development is also emphasized. In service of this, Interns are an integral component of the mental health care at OVAMC and are encouraged to participate in decisions.
affecting the training program, their interdisciplinary teams, the psychology section, and the mental health service as a whole. Intern input is considered whenever possible when making decisions that affect their training (e.g. changes in requirements, implementing new policies, rotation and supervision assignments). Interns are encouraged to participate in departmental and facility social functions (both formal and informal), as well as community and professional activities. These and other activities reflect a shared interest in building a sense of community and in fostering professional relationships.

Central to our training approach is the value of consistent supervision throughout the training year. Supervision of Interns follows a junior colleague approach, beginning with apprentice-level expectations early on in each rotation, and culminating in the development of Interns as fully functioning, junior colleagues by the end of their training year. Supervision is built on the foundation of ethical, supportive, and competent mentorship. Staff seek to demonstrate and encourage the Interns' participation in all professional roles related to the functions of a psychologist. Interns are afforded varied clinical responsibilities that provide experience with diverse patient populations to enhance their expertise across a wide spectrum of psychopathology. Additionally, Interns are provided didactic training and opportunities for supervising others and/or administrative/management involvement. This model echoes the values and goals of our training program, and reflects our shared commitment to positive, productive, collaborative relations between training faculty and the Interns. The staff responsible for the training program are dedicated to preparing our Interns for the diverse and complex roles of clinical/counseling psychologists. As such, we invest significant efforts in meeting these goals, as well as tailoring training experiences to align with the Interns' individual needs.

The Orlando VAMC Psychology Internship Training Program strives to produce an atmosphere of mutual respect, ethical practice, and professionalism guided by the American Psychological Association's Ethical Principals of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (APA, 2016). While Interns are encouraged to communicate any problems or concerns to the faculty directly with individual supervisors, there are also formal mechanisms for Intern input into the program through participation on the training committee and subcommittees, and regular meetings with the training director.

**Learning Objectives:**

Throughout the program, psychology interns will meet established objectives and benchmarks in the following competencies:

1. Interns will demonstrate the substantially independent ability to critically evaluate and disseminate research or other scholarly activities (e.g., case conference, presentation, publications) at the local, regional, or national level.

2. Interns will respond professionally in increasingly complex situations with a greater degree of independence across levels of training including knowledge and in
accordance with the APA Code and relevant laws, regulations, rules, policies, standards and guidelines.

3. Interns will demonstrate the ability to conduct all professional activities with sensitivity to human diversity, including the ability to deliver high quality services to an increasingly diverse population. They demonstrate knowledge, awareness, sensitivity, and skills when working with diverse individuals and communities who embody a variety of cultural and personal background and characteristics.

Cultural and individual differences and diversity is defined as including, but not limited to, age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, national origin, race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

4. Interns will demonstrate maturing professional identities and senses of themselves as Psychologists and awareness of and receptivity in areas needing further development.

5. Interns will develop effective communication skills and the ability to form and maintain successful professional relationships.

6. Interns will develop competence in evidence-based psychological assessment with a variety of diagnoses, problems, and needs.

7. Interns will demonstrate competence in evidence-based interventions consistent with a variety of diagnoses, problems, and needs and across a range of therapeutic orientations, techniques, and approaches.

8. Interns will demonstrate evidence based knowledge of supervision models and practices and apply this knowledge in direct or simulated practice. Supervision involves the mentoring and monitoring the development of competence and skill in professional practice and the effective evaluation of those skills. Supervisors act as role models and maintain responsibility for the activities they oversee.

9. Consultation and interprofessional/interdisciplinary skills will be reflected in the intentional collaboration of professionals in health service psychology with other individuals or groups to address a problem, seek or share knowledge, or promote effectiveness in professional activities. Trainees apply this knowledge in direct or simulated consultation with individuals and their families, other health care professionals, interprofessional groups, or systems related to health and behavior.

Program Structure:

The OVAMC Psychology Internship Training Program aims to produce competent, professional psychologists who are prepared to enter the workforce upon completion of the internship year. At the end of the internship year, interns will be particularly
equipped for working with Veterans and prepared for entry into the current health care environment, with generalist training and experience in interdisciplinary approaches to patient management.

1. The internship year is divided into three rotations of four months each. As a generalist program, Interns will be expected to participate in an array of rotations that emphasize core psychologist functions, including psychotherapy and assessment. Rotation selection is based on the individual Intern’s preference as well as their identified training needs. Each Intern will be required to complete one rotation in a General Outpatient Mental Health setting and two elective rotations.

2. Prior to the selection of rotations, Interns will develop individualized training goals. As internship is the last step in achieving their doctoral degree, Interns will be strongly encouraged to select training experiences that fill any gaps in their graduate education and experience. To ensure a well-rounded training experience, the training committee may require a specific rotation.

3. Rotations are available in the following areas:

   Outpatient Mental Health settings (must choose at least one)
   Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program
   Sexual Trauma and Eating Disorders Treatment Services
   Trauma Recovery Specialty Team

   Intensive Mental Health rotations (may choose one or two)
   Inpatient Mental Health
   Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (Domiciliary)
   Psychosocial Rehabilitation in Serious Mental Illness (SMI; Center for Recovery Education and Residential Rehabilitation for SMI)
   Substance Use Disorders Treatment Programs

   Medical Psychology rotations (may choose one or two)
   Geropsychology
   Neuropsychology
   Pain Management / Biofeedback
   Primary Care - Mental Health Integration
   Surgical Evaluation / Consultation & Liaison

**Supervision:**

All clinical activities of Interns are supervised by professional clinical staff. At a minimum, each Intern will participate in four hours of face-to-face supervision per week. Two hours are regularly-scheduled individual supervision with their primary clinical supervisor; one hour is group supervision focused on enhancing Interns’ competency in providing supervision to others; and one hour is general group supervision. In addition, Interns on
certain rotations may receive focused consultation regarding specific assessment instruments or treatment interventions with a faculty member who may not be embedded within that particular clinical program.

The rotation supervisor is primarily responsible for providing training in the clinical work of a particular rotation. Supervisors work with Interns to select cases that are graded in complexity and correspond with skill level. The supervisor is responsible for helping each Intern to move from relatively simple to more complex professional activities, and will provide the Intern with feedback throughout the rotation.

It is a goal of the training program to create a supportive and challenging learning environment that enriches each Intern’s professional development while respecting individual differences. We seek to help each Intern develop collegial, professional interpersonal relationships and to that end, supervisors work to help Interns become socialized into the profession and the OVAMC environment. This may include attendance/participation in a variety of service-level meetings, educational presentations/seminars, discussing the many roles of psychologists, discussing how the political environment impacts our practice, discussing policy and procedures memos, and working and training with interdisciplinary members of OVAMC staff.

Supervision is multi-modal in its approach. Interns should expect a variety of supervisory methods across rotations, including live supervision, co-facilitation of clinical activities (e.g., consultation, groups) and use of audio recording.

Supervision provides the opportunity to experience different theoretical perspectives, learn specific skills, gain insight into diverse/different patient groups, understand the varying roles of psychologists, develop confidence, and establish a sense of professional identity.

**Didactic Instruction / Training Seminars / Presentations:**

Didactic instruction is an essential component of the intern’s clinical training experience. These series are intended to supplement and enrich the development of specific clinical skills practiced in the rotations, and increase understanding of pertinent professional and clinical issues.

The Didactic Seminar and Journal Club are a combined activity composed of a weekly didactic training and a related journal article discussion. While designed primarily for the psychology Interns, psychiatric residents, psychology practicum students, psychology fellows, and other allied health trainees also participate regularly.

The *Didactic Seminar* focuses on relevant topics selected to address specific competencies and interests, as well as the multiple roles of the contemporary psychologist. Factors considered in developing the didactic curriculum include intern-identified training needs and interests, faculty areas of specialty, site-specific (VA,
military) cultural competencies, and current political and/or clinical shifts in the larger professional climate (e.g., the recent increased focus on empirically-based treatments for Veterans). Special attention is given to issues related to diverse populations and multicultural factors, including cultural variables not typically considered. Topics related to professional and ethical development also receive particular emphasis. Various teaching methods are employed including didactic instruction, live demonstrations, videotapes, discussions, and recommended readings.

All participants in the Didactic Seminar complete an evaluation form for each didactic. Participant input is a valuable part of continuous quality improvement.

*Journal Club* supplements the Didactic Seminar, and is an opportunity for Interns to critically evaluate recent articles in the scientific literature related to the didactic topic. Interns rotate responsibility for selecting an article of interest related to the scheduled didactic. Interns work with the journal club presenter to select the article, and the Intern leads a critical discussion. The intern presenter should include evaluation of research design and analysis, reliability of findings, implications and limitations of the study, multicultural and ethnic issues related to both the methodology and clinical application of findings, ethical considerations, and considerations for treatment with the identified populations.

A faculty member participates as both an active discussant and to provide supervisory guidance on meeting didactic objectives and inclusion of appropriate journal articles. Evaluations are completed by faculty for each Journal Club, and feedback is provided to the Intern who led the effort.

**Training in Clinical Supervision**

To facilitate the transition from supervisee to potential supervisor in his/her postdoctoral endeavors, Interns attend a weekly didactic seminar on supervision of supervision and, on selected rotations, have direct experience providing “supervision-like” clinical consultation to practicum students while receiving supervision on this “supervision” from a licensed psychologist who has responsibility for the case. The specific involvement of each Intern in consultation/supervision activities varies somewhat according to his/her rotation. The Intern is expected to demonstrate understanding of basic supervision concepts and principles, and the developmental process of clinical supervision, and to begin to develop a philosophy or model for their practice of supervision. The Intern is expected to also demonstrate understanding of the complexity of the supervisor role including ethical, legal, and contextual issues, and to demonstrate an awareness of the current needs of supervised trainees, including how to provide developmentally appropriate feedback to them.

In this vertical model, consistent with the VA Psychology Training Council (VAPTC) recommendations, Interns also participate as “supervisees” of the postdoctoral fellows.
Case Conceptualization Seminar

The *Case Conceptualization/Presentation Seminar* is a weekly seminar that focuses on the formulation and application of case conceptualizations from a primarily cognitive-behavioral perspective. The seminar consists of didactics as well as experiential case presentations. The experiential component includes two distinct elements: 1) weekly case examples where Interns present current assessment and psychotherapy cases to refine their conceptualization skills and 2) mid-year and end-of-year case presentations where Interns present a complete psychological assessment and case conceptualization to members of the training committee. The cases used for the presentation come from the Intern’s current rotation and include rotation-specific assessments and intervention strategies. As such, the nature of the referral question and depth and focus of information gathered varies across rotations.

Participants provide verbal and written feedback on each Intern’s presentation. This feedback is incorporated into each end-of-rotation evaluation.

Professional Presentations

Didactic Seminar, Mental Health Grand Rounds, and regional professional meetings give each intern the opportunity to present an area of expertise to their mental health peers. Each intern is expected to present at least one professional presentation throughout the course of the year.

Program Improvement

Interns are expected to identify one area for possible improvement of each rotation, or the program as a whole, and to design a strategy to address it. This gives the Intern experience with program administration/management, as well as an opportunity to review and evaluate best practices of other programs and consider a program evaluation/performance improvement protocol. As part of the Trainee Evaluation of Supervisor and Rotation completed by Interns, there is a section on how the rotation could be improved, including development of a hypothesis, a proposed method of assessment, and method(s) for determining the outcome of the proposed improvement. The purpose of this exercise is to encourage Interns to think empirically about real-world problems and to design interventions informed by data.

Enriching Activities

Internship Mentor

The training program encourages and values mentorship and pursuit of training opportunities beyond those offered within the clinical rotations. To that end, interns are allowed protected time to meet with a designated mentor throughout the year. Interns may choose a mentor toward the beginning of the training year who will serve as a non-evaluative staff mentor. (The mentor should therefore not be one of the intern’s rotation
The mentor’s primary role is to be a resource to assist the intern’s professional development, both within the internship program and planning their path toward becoming an early-career psychologist.

**OVAMC Grand Rounds**

Interns are strongly encouraged to attend Mental Health Grand Rounds, Interdisciplinary Grand Rounds, Medical Center Grand Rounds, and other educational offerings as able. Topics vary throughout the year and are informed by relevant, peer reviewed research and cultural/patient population considerations.

**VA Local and Regional Evidence-Based Psychotherapy Trainings**

These elective training experiences each involve one 2- or 3-day workshop, followed by six months of weekly post-training consultation or supervision. Workshops may be offered in Cognitive Processing Therapy for PTSD, Prolonged Exposure Therapy for PTSD, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Depression, and/or Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Depression, as available. Attendance on consultation calls typically begin within two weeks following the workshop training. All participants in the training are expected to attend a minimum of 80% of the consultation calls and complete a specified minimum number of cases to fulfill the completion requirement. The identified facility consultant may require participation in more than six months of post-training consultation or supervision, depending on individual training needs.

**TRAINING ENVIRONMENT**

Lake Nona (main) Campus
The Orlando VA Medical Center, one of the Top 100 Companies for Working Families, was officially established as a new VA facility in October of 2006. The Orlando VA includes the nation’s newest VA Medical Center in Lake Nona with 134 inpatient beds (opening in stages), a 120-bed Community Living Center in Lake Nona, a two-site 110-bed Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program at Lake Nona and Lake Baldwin, three very large, comprehensive outpatient clinics in Lake Baldwin (Orlando), Daytona Beach, and Viera (Cocoa Beach area), and four Community-Based Outpatient Clinics in Clermont, Kissimmee, Deltona, and Tavares.

The OVAMC Lake Nona Campus is co-located with the University of Central Florida College of Medicine, the University of Florida Academic and Research Center, the National Simulation, Learning, Education and Research Network (SimLEARN) Center, and Nemours Children’s Hospital in the area known as the "Medical City". Orlando is rapidly becoming a prime destination for healthcare professionals and patients seeking state-of-the-art care.

Orlando VAMC serves a diverse patient population. The Mental Health Clinic population includes 73% Non-Hispanic Caucasian, 12% African-American, 7% Hispanic/Latino, and 2% Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Ninety-one percent of the Veterans seen in the MHC are men.
Orlando is recognized as a family-oriented area, with a warm, sunny climate, beautiful beaches, abundant housing options, no state income tax, and many local entertainment attractions/outdoor activities readily available. The Orlando VA system is affiliated with the University of Central Florida’s new College of Medicine and with numerous other allied health programs in local community colleges. Working for the Department of Veterans Affairs offers a comprehensive benefits package that includes, in part, paid vacation, sick leave, holidays, life insurance, health benefits. For more information please visit http://www4.va.gov/jobs/job_benefits/benefits.asp. The Department of Veterans Affairs is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

**INTERNSHIP GENERAL INFORMATION**

The Internship is a one-year, full-time appointment (constituting 2080 hours) to be completed during the July 9, 2018 to July 5, 2019 calendar year.

Typical duty hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for interns but may vary slightly by rotation and setting.

The current stipend for full-time VA interns is $24,014 paid biweekly throughout the annual appointment period. This stipend is subject to Federal Income Tax withholding but *Florida does not have a state income tax*. Interns are eligible for health insurance and life insurance benefits. However, interns are not eligible for participation in VA retirement programs.

Interns accrue 4 hours of paid sick leave and 4 hours of paid annual leave (vacation) every 2-week pay period. This equates to approximately 13 days of sick leave and 13 days of annual leave over the course of the internship year. In addition, there are 10 federal holidays. With the approval of the current rotation supervisor and the training director, each intern may be additionally allocated up to five days of authorized absence (AA) for professional development activities (e.g. conferences, presentations, interviews, meetings w/academic program advisor/ faculty, etc.).

**Non-Discrimination:**

Federal law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age and disability. The OVAMC Psychology Internship Program extends this definition to mean that no information about the applicant which is not relevant to the applicant’s potential to succeed in the training program is utilized in the selection process.

During the internship year, should there be an instance of discrimination experienced or observed by trainees or staff, there is an obligation to address the problem so as to minimize psychological harm. Interns are encouraged to consult with their clinical supervisor, mentor, training director, or Chief of Psychology for assistance in such matters.
Where this level of resolution is not effective or the instances are systemic, interns have access to formal procedures, as per Medical Center Policy. The local EEO program manager is available for consultation to assist in any employee’s exercise of their rights.

**Diversity**

The Department of Veterans Affairs serves the Veteran population, which is our charge from Congress and thus from the American people. The Veteran population seeking healthcare from VA reflects a diverse society. The OVAMC psychology internship program seeks to have a diverse staff and trainee population along many dimensions, since the need to bring care that represents the dignity and uniqueness of all VA patients is an organizational mandate that reflects VA values.

The program seeks to teach interns to identify multiple aspects of human diversity (i.e. individual differences) and to bring a heightened awareness of these elements into their conceptualizations and actions. Program staff emphasize the importance of human diversity and individual differences in all aspects of clinical practice. Interns are encouraged to question and explore elements of diversity as they affect human behavior.

**TRAINING STAFF**

The Orlando VAMC Psychology Staff includes over 90 doctoral level clinical and counseling psychologists, plus licensed professional counselors, marriage and family therapists, vocational rehabilitation specialists, practicum students, doctoral interns, and postdoctoral residents.

The Psychology Section is led by Dr. Steve Herman, Chief of Psychology, and is part of the Mental Health Service, led by Dr. Gustavo Rivera-Cruz, Associate Chief of Staff for Mental Health (ACOS) and Dr. Kara Boyer, Deputy ACOS for Mental Health. Staff Psychologists are assigned to a variety of clinics, to include the Behavioral Health Integrated Program (BHIP), Medical Psychology, Primary Care Mental Health, the Substance Use Disorder Treatment Program, the Psychological Treatments for Stress-Related Disorders (PTSD) Team, Intensive Case Management in Mental Health Recovery (ICMHR), the Inpatient Psychiatry (MH CARE) unit, the Center for Recovery Education (CORE), the Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Programs (RRTP), and the Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). Our staff are diverse not only with regards to areas of clinical expertise, but in terms of theoretical orientations, training experiences, research interests, and cultural backgrounds. Staff psychologists participate in a number of profession-specific and system-wide committees that address issues relating to quality of patient care, efficient delivery of services, and development of new programs. In addition, the staff is highly committed to the training of new professionals and is actively involved in the internship training program. Psychology
staff who contribute to our training program are listed below along with brief biographies.

**Training Director**

*Mary Beth Shea, Ph.D.*, earned her doctorate in Clinical and Community Psychology from the University of South Carolina in 1990. She completed her doctoral internship at Bay Pines VAMC in St. Petersburg, FL and has been with VA throughout her career. She has worked at WJB Dorn VAMC in Columbia, SC as a medical and geriatric psychologist, Columbia SC Vet Center as the MST Coordinator, and Orlando VA as the Local Recovery Coordinator in psychosocial rehabilitation. She now serves as the Training Director for the psychology programs. Until coming to Orlando, Dr. Shea also maintained a private practice in adolescent, adult, and geriatric psychology. She is a Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) trainer and Prolonged Exposure (PE) therapy Supervisor and served as chair of the Orlando VA IRB for 7 years. She is a member of the National Emergency Medical Response Team and the American Red Cross Disaster Mental Health team. She is the current President of the Association of VA Psychology Leaders and the past-president of the Florida Chapter of the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association. She recently completed training as an APA site reviewer for psychology internships. Her clinical and research interests are primarily in the area of sexual coercion, sexual assault, and PTSD.

**Supervisory Staff**

*Ashley Arens, Ph.D, ABPP, Sexual Trauma and Eating Disorders, Lake Baldwin.* Dr. Arens is a clinical psychologist in the Military Sexual Trauma and Eating Disorders program. She is the Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Coordinator for the Orlando VAMC. As a psychologist in the outpatient mental health setting, she conducts diagnostic assessments and provides evidence-based interventions, including cognitive-behavioral therapy, prolonged exposure therapy, cognitive processing therapy, and dialectical behavior therapy skills group. As MST Coordinator, she conducts training and provides outreach related to MST screening, documentation, and treatment. Dr. Arens received her Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the University of South Dakota in 2012. She completed her doctoral internship at Alexian Brothers Behavioral Health Hospital (self-injury and eating disorders track) in Hoffman Estates, Illinois. She completed postdoctoral training within the University of Central Florida’s Department of Defense-funded clinical research program “Trauma Management Therapy for OIF/OEF Veterans with PTSD.” Prior to joining the Orlando VAMC, she spent time as a Clinical Assistant Professor at UCF. Her primary clinical and research interests focus on trauma (including childhood, sexual, and combat trauma), PTSD, emotional dysregulation, and risky/maladaptive behaviors (including non-suicidal self-injury, substance use, and eating disorders). Dr. Arens has published research in peer-reviewed journals and presented at national conferences. She is licensed in Florida.

*Daniel Baughn, Ph.D., Presurgical/Consultation and Liaison, Lake Nona.* Dr. Baughn is a Clinical Health Psychologist in the Surgical Consultation and Rehabilitation service
within the Medical Psychology Program at Orlando VA Medical Center. He obtained his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology and Behavioral Medicine from Virginia Commonwealth University (2012). He completed his internship at VA Palo Alto/Stanford University in the Behavioral Medicine track (2011) and completed his fellowship at San Francisco VA/UCSF in Primary Care Psychology (2013). Dr. Baughn is a Florida native and completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Florida; Go Gators! Prior to his current role, Dr. Baughn worked in Primary Care-Mental Health Integration at the James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital in Tampa, FL and spearheaded the development of a fellowship program with an emphasis in Clinical Health Psychology. He is licensed in Florida. Current professional interests include LGBT issues, Health Psychology, physician-patient communication, organ donation/transplantation, bariatric surgery/weight loss interventions, spinal cord stimulators, plastic surgery, gender confirmation surgery, and professional training in psychology. On a personal note, Dr. Baughn is a single father to a wonderful toddler, spends an obscene amount of time reading children’s books (Rosie Revere anyone?), loves to kayak, and spends his remaining time as an advocate for LGBT families.

Christopher Blagg, Ph.D., Primary Care Mental Health Integration, Lake Nona. Dr. Blagg earned his doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Florida State University in 2012, where his research focused on measuring motivation to change, the relationship between smoking and anxiety, and the effectiveness of placebos in alcohol experiments. He completed his doctoral internship at the Federal Correctional Institution in Tallahassee, FL and his postdoctoral training at Southwestern State Hospital in Thomasville, Georgia. Dr. Blagg currently works at the Orlando VAMC in Primary Care-Mental Health Integration, as part of a multi-disciplinary primary care team providing collaborative care. This includes conducting initial brief functional assessments, providing time-limited therapy, completing cognitive screenings, and facilitating shared medical appointments.

Pamela C. Brown, Ph.D., Substance Use Disorder Treatment Program, Lake Baldwin. Dr. Brown earned her doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the University of Central Florida in 2010. She completed her doctoral internship at the VA Connecticut Healthcare System, West Haven campus and a 2-year NIDA T32 fellowship in Addictions at the Center for Addictions Research, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. She is licensed in Arkansas. She is the Program Manager for Substance Use Disorders Treatment at all sites of care for OVAMC. She received the Outstanding Clinician award from APA Division 18, VA Section in 2017. Her primary clinical interests are treatment of substance use disorders, co-occurring disorders, PTSD, and the recovery approach. Dr. Brown provides and supervises diagnostic assessment and empirically-supported interventions for Veterans with Substance Use Disorders and various other mental health issues (i.e., Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Major Depressive Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, etc.). Her research interests include treatment outcome research and the use of technology for the prevention and treatment of substance use disorders.
Teri Carper, Ph.D., *Outpatient Mental Health/Telehealth*. Dr. Carper is a Staff Psychologist at the Orlando VAMC, delivering 100% of her clinical services via Telehealth, primarily serving Veterans in the CBOCs, other outlying areas of the community, and those that are home-bound. She completed her undergraduate work at Boston University and earned her Ph.D. in 2010 from the University of Central Florida (UCF). Dr. Carper completed her doctoral internship at Boston Consortium for Clinical Psychology and her postdoctoral fellowship at the National Center for PTSD at Boston VA, where she also held the positions of Clinical Fellow in Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and Teaching Fellow in Psychiatry at Boston University School of Medicine. Dr. Carper currently serves as the VISN 8 Telemental Health Lead and is the co-chair of the OVAMC Virtual Care Committee. Dr. Carper's clinical and research interests center around trauma trajectories and resiliency factors, and she is currently a PI on a MUSC grant examining adjunctive intervention to augment exposure therapy in PTSD. Dr. Carper's personal interests include animal rescue, distance running, skiing, crafting, and most importantly, spending time with her husband and twin daughter and son.

Louis Damis, Ph.D., ABPP, *Pain/Biofeedback, Lake Nona*. Dr. Damis is a Clinical Health Psychologist presently providing Biofeedback, Neurofeedback, and Pain Management services at the Orlando VAMC. He obtained his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Washington State University with a subspecialty in medical psychology. He completed his internship at the Salt Lake City VAMC and a postdoctoral residency in clinical and forensic psychology at Utah State Prison. Dr. Damis is a Diplomate with the American Board of Professional Psychology, a Fellow of both the American Academy of Clinical Health Psychology & the Biofeedback Certification International Alliance, an Associate Professor at the University of Florida College of Medicine, and holds ASCH Certification in Clinical Hypnosis with Consultant Status. Dr. Damis teaches regularly for the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis, is the President of the Florida Society of Clinical Hypnosis, a board member for the Biofeedback Society of Florida, and was the National Subject Matter Expert for the VA National Pain Mini-Residency Program. He has conducted research and written on the topics of trauma, persistent pain, neuropsychological functioning in medically ill individuals, aging, and psychotherapy process. Current professional interests include the influence of trauma on persistent pain/health and integrative psychological interventions. Personal interests include music, meditation, nutrition, and exercise.

Helmer Figueiredo, Psy.D., Ph.D., *Inpatient, Lake Nona*. Dr. Figueiredo received his doctorate degree in Psychology from Xavier University (Cincinnati, Ohio) with dissertation work on Mindfulness and Stress. His training in clinical psychology was intensely focused on therapy (CBT, DBT, Behavioral, psychodynamics, interpersonal, family, and marriage therapies) and assessment (including forensics assessment) of adults with severe mental illness. Prior to becoming a clinical psychologist, I attended medical school at the Universidade Federal de Sergipe (Sergipe, Brazil). After medical school, he obtained his Ph.D. in Toxicology/Neuroscience at the University of Kentucky (Lexington, Kentucky) and used molecular genetics to determine the role of the nerve growth factor on neurodevelopment. He completed post-doctoral work at the University
of Cincinnati (Cincinnati, Ohio) and used molecular biology techniques to determine the role of the prefrontal cortex, estrogen, and progesterone on the stress/HPA axis. He was also a research assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Cincinnati. He is especially proud of this training and experience, which allows him to bridge biological findings and clinical psychology data, and frequently include socio-historical/diversity factors into his clinical conceptualizations. Dr. Figueiredo completed his Psychology Internship here at OVAMC and has since been a full-time staff member, where he helped to open the 2WMH unit at Lake Nona.

**Virginia Gründler, Psy.D., Pain Management, Lake Baldwin.** Dr. Gründler completed her bachelor’s degrees in Business Administration from the Inter-American University from Puerto Rico and in Psychology from the Florida International University (FIU). She received her doctorate in Clinical Psychology from The Chicago School, formerly known as The Chicago School of Professional Psychology. Dr. Gründler completed her residency at Nova Southeastern University and her Post-Doctoral Training at Maryville Academy- City of Youth, Chicago IL. Her population expertise includes children, adolescents, and adults of varying ages and settings. Her clinical and consulting experience are varied and include medical settings (with an emergency room specialty); residential treatment facilities for children and adolescents; government/ federal programs including VA, Head Start, the Department of Corrections, women’s psychiatric prison facilities; and community mental health centers in both Puerto Rico and Chicago, IL. Her treatment approach is interdisciplinary and includes evidence-based practices, Ericksonian Self Hypnosis, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Family Systems and Psychodynamic approaches. Dr Gründler was a collaborating partner in the success of four CARF accreditations with the Caribbean Health Care System. She is also fully bilingual (English and Spanish) and bi-cultural, and enjoys outdoor activities, and values friendships and commitments.

**Dustin Hamilton, Psy.D. Outpatient MH (BHIP), Crossroads Annex.** Dr. Hamilton is a licensed clinical psychologist who graduated from the Wright State University School of Professional Psychology in 2013. He completed his doctoral and postdoctoral training at West Virginia University and Oberlin College, respectively. Dr. Hamilton joined the Orlando VAMC in 2014. He completed VA training programs for Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Depression (IPT-D) and Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) and serves as an IPT trainer/consultant. Dr. Hamilton primarily conducts outpatient psychotherapy and provides psychological assessment of personality and adult ADHD/LD. He volunteers weekly at the Orlando Vet Center, where he teaches Veterans to play guitar. Dr. Hamilton’s research interests include psychological assessment, the Transtheoretical Model, business psychology, Appalachian psychology, and Identity development. His dissertation dealt with analyzing the content of suicide notes.

**Janice Herron, Ph.D., Neuropsychology, Crossroads Annex.** Dr. Herron is a Clinical Neuropsychologist at the Orlando VAMC. She earned her Ph.D. in the APA-accredited Human Services Psychology Program at the University of Maryland Baltimore County in 1999, completing both Clinical Psychology and Behavioral Medicine tracks. Doctoral psychology internship training was completed in the Neuropsychology track of the
Medical University of South Carolina/Charleston VA Consortium, followed by completion of a National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) Research Fellowship at MUSC. She has earned VA certification in Prolonged Exposure therapy for PTSD and maintains interest in clinical care of Veterans with mild TBI and PTSD. Prior to joining the Orlando VAMC in 2012, Dr. Herron worked as a Clinical Neuropsychologist at the Martinsburg VAMC, in private practice, and has been involved in teaching undergraduate and graduate interns. Dr. Herron is actively involved with the Psychology Internship training committee with a focus on assessment activities. Other professional interests involve neuropsychological variables impacting coping and recovery following neurological events.

Deborah Kessel-Tallungan, Ph.D., Primary Care Mental Health Integration, Lake Baldwin. Dr. Tallungan is a licensed Clinical Psychologist with specialization in Health Psychology. She completed her undergraduate work at St. Olaf College and earned her doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Fuller Graduate School of Psychology. She completed her pre-doctoral internship and post-doctoral fellowship at the Loma Linda VA Medical Center. Dr. Tallungan joined the Orlando VAMC as the Health Behavior Coordinator in 2011 and worked in this role until 2015. She currently works as a Psychologist in Primary Care Mental Health. She continues to facilitate local trainings in Motivational Interviewing. Personal interests include reading (Harry Potter series at least once a year!), biking with her husband and two daughters, serving at the Coalition for the Homeless, and playing the piano & hand bells.

Justin C. Koenitzer, Psy.D., Neuropsychology, Crossroads Annex. Dr. Koenitzer earned his undergraduate degree in Psychology from Rutgers University. He earned both his Master’s and Doctoral (2008) degrees in Clinical Psychology from Florida Institute of Technology, within the specialty track of Behavioral Medicine and Neuropsychology. He completed his Fellowship at Eastern Virginia Medical School in Norfolk VA, followed by his Postdoctoral Residency in Neuropsychology through the private practice of Dr. Patrick Gorman in Winter Park, Florida. He has been licensed in the State of Florida since 2012. Dr. Koenitzer has taught at the undergraduate and graduate levels and supervised graduate students, doctoral Fellows, and Postdoctoral Fellows. Broadly, his primary clinical and research areas of interest are in Health Psychology and neurocognitive disorders to include TBI and dementia. He has been involved in research related to various aspects of human olfaction and the relationship between olfaction and neurocognitive disorders. In addition to his clinical experience in neuropsychological assessment, Dr. Koenitzer focuses on cognitive remediation interventions for individuals with neurocognitive disorders, addressing the management of a broad array of medical conditions with and without psychopathological overlay. When he is not working, he enjoys distance running, playing the piano, and making “drip castles” and playing with his seven-year-old and seven-month-old daughters.

Briget Lanktree, Psy.D, Domiciliary, Lake Nona. Dr. Lanktree earned her doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Xavier University in 2005. She completed her doctoral internship at the Colorado Mental Health Institute at Fort Logan. Until 2015, Dr. Lanktree worked for the Illinois Department of Corrections in various capacities,
focusing on treating individuals with substance use disorders and serious mental illness. Most recently, she served as the Psychologist Administrator for one of the most infamous maximum security prisons in the country. She is also a Certified PREA Auditor for the US Department of Justice. During graduate school, Dr. Lanktree completed a year of practicum at the Cincinnati VA. She returned to work with Veterans at the Orlando VA in 2015, serving as the SUD Specialist/ Psychologist at the DRRTP (DOM) at Lake Nona. She truly enjoys working in residential and inpatient settings and providing a variety of services to her Veterans. Dr. Lanktree grew up in Northern New Jersey, resulting in her love of New York sports teams like the Rangers, Giants, and Yankees. She is also a faithful supporter of the basketball teams of her alma maters, Dayton and Xavier. Her favorite teams, however, are those on which her children plays, and she has embraced her role as “soccer mom.”

Manjot Dhooper Leafgreen, Ph.D., Domiciliary, Lake Nona. Dr. Leafgreen completed her doctoral training at the University of South Dakota and internship at Park Center, Inc., a Community Mental Health Center in Ft. Wayne, IN. She has worked as a Clinical Psychologist & Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) Coordinator at the VA Daytona Beach Outpatient Clinic, a Senior Mental Health Clinician at Florida State Prison, Senior Psychologist at Union Correctional Institution (FL State Prison), Clinical Psychologist at SD Human Services Center/ George S. Mickelson Center for the Neurosciences (State Psychiatric Hospital), Vertical Clinical Team Instructor at University of South Dakota and Psychology Associate at SD State Penitentiary. She currently works as a Staff Psychologist, Lake Nona Domiciliary. She is licensed in South Dakota & Florida. Dr. Leafgreen’s areas of interest include severe and persistent mental illness, personality disorders, substance use disorders, forensics, animal-assisted therapy, inpatient and residential levels of care.

Michael Lind, Ph.D., Center for Recovery Education (CORE), Lake Baldwin. Dr. Lind earned his doctorate in Counseling Psychology from the University of Kansas in 2000. He was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship, which he fulfilled at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. He completed his doctoral internship at the Salt Lake City VAMC and has been licensed in Utah since 2001. Over the past 25 years, he has worked with Veterans, teens, adults and the geriatric population providing assessment, individual psychotherapy, and group therapy. He has been involved in VA program development and implementation in a variety of settings, including the Domiciliary, Compensation & Pension, and Primary Care Mental Health Integration. He is currently a staff psychologist in the Orlando VA Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC) working with Veterans who have been diagnosed with serious mental illness. He grew up in South Jersey, right across the Delaware River from Philadelphia, and is a rabid fan of all Philadelphia sports teams. Additionally, he is a life-long distance runner and enjoys rock-n’-roll music and travel.

Diana M. Mendez, Ph.D., Outpatient Mental Health (BHMP), Lake Nona. Dr. Mendez earned her doctorate in Clinical Psychology in 2012 from the University of Detroit Mercy. She then completed a postdoctoral fellowship in Clinical Health Psychology through the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. Upon completion of her training, Dr. Mendez worked as an Attending Psychologist at University of Miami Miller
School of Medicine/Jackson Memorial Medical Center, providing clinical care and supervising postdoctoral fellows, interns, and practicum students. Most of Dr. Mendez' clinical experiences have been with diverse inner-city populations, with individuals exposed to various types of traumas. In addition, she has served as an investigator on studies looking at cultural factors that impact clinical presentation, manifestation of psychopathology (e.g., depression, PTSD), and delivery of effective treatments to ethnic minority populations. Her primary clinical and research interests focus on trauma, resiliency, minority mental health, and health psychology. She joined the Orlando VAMC in 2014, were she provides outpatient evidence-based treatments to Veterans presenting with various combat and non-combat related conditions, and currently serves as the EBP Coordinator. She is licensed in the state of Florida. Personal interests include traveling, basketball, and spending time with family and friends.

John Merladet, Ph.D., ABPP, Geropsychology. Dr. Merladet holds a doctorate in Counseling Psychology from the University of Minnesota, Department of Educational Psychology: Counseling, Student, and Personnel Psychology Program. He completed his internship at Mt. Sinai Elmhurst Hospital Center, in Queens, New York. His postdoctoral training was in the neuropsychological assessment of Alzheimer’s and dementia from New York’s Mt. Sinai’s Clinical Neuroscience Program. He is licensed in Minnesota, Florida, and New York. Dr. Merladet is a board certified specialist and aspires to the Pikes Peak Model of geropsychology practice. He works in the Home-Based Primary Care program, serving primarily frail elderly Veterans with multiple medical, cognitive, and MH conditions. He has been with VA for seven years. Before that, he has worked in rehabilitation psychology, as a psychologist for a jail’s medical unit, as a nursing home psychologist, as a grief counselor for visiting nurses, on an elderly suicide crisis line, as a therapist for a retirement community, and as a community based senior church-based outreach program. Dr. Merladet has also been a trainer and adjunct professor. He taught at Argosy University, St. Mary’s University of Minnesota, and in New York City, Queens College. His scholarly interests are in assessment and testing of cognitive disorders, Hispanic elderly and caregivers, human-animal bond in caring for impaired elderly, cognitive enhancement groups for elderly, demystifying capacity evaluations, caregiver burden in the Latino community, and interplay between medical disorders and cognitive status. Dr. Merladet has trained in CPT, ACT, MI, DBT, CBT-Sleep, CBT-Smoking, Pain Management, Biofeedback, Problem Solving, and EMDR. He is bilingual and can do assessment, testing, and therapy in English and Spanish along with understanding/appreciating the research and clinical implications in working across languages and cultures. His theoretical orientation is cognitive-behavioral/multimodal.

Laura Meyers, PhD, ABPP, Program Manager of the Trauma Recovery Specialty Team (TRuST – PTSD treatment team)/ Psychology Supervisor, Lake Nona. Dr. Meyers earned her PhD in Clinical-Community Psychology at the University of South Carolina in 2006, completed internship at the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System, completed a postdoctoral fellowship in Health Psychology and Serious Mental Illness at the Minneapolis VA Healthcare System, and completed her ABPP certification in Clinical Psychology. She worked on the new Primary Care Mental Health Integration
Team at the Minneapolis VA for 5 years, co-directed the DBT program, and was the Evidence-based Psychotherapy Coordinator. She then worked as the Program Coordinator for the PTSD treatment team at the Minneapolis VA for 5 years and developed and ran the Journeys Program, a national 12-week intensive outpatient program that provided DBT and PE. She then moved to the Orlando VA in 2017 to help develop the PTSD program and because Minneapolis is chilly. She is certified in Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) and Prolonged Exposure (PE) and is a national trainer and consultant for PE. She is also nationally certified in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) by the DBT-Linehan Board of Certification. She loves to supervise all levels of trainees in evidence-based approaches for trauma and/or Borderline Personality Disorder, specifically PE, CPT, DBT, ACT, and IBCT. She supervises trainees through TRuST, as well as in PE and DBT. Personally, she is a recovering perfectionist and is working on taking life less seriously. She loves spending time with her family and fostering dogs, who are the perfect examples of inconsistently applied behavioral principles (both her kids and the dogs).

Gabriela F. Ott, Psy.D., Outpatient Mental Health (BHIP), Crossroads Annex. Dr. Ott earned her bachelor’s degree in Psychology from Loyola University, New Orleans, and Doctorate degree in Clinical Psychology from the Georgia School of Professional Psychology in Atlanta, Georgia in 2004. As a commissioned officer in the United States Navy, she completed her pre-doctoral internship at the Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, Virginia. She completed her post-doctoral residency on active duty at the Naval Hospital Pensacola, Florida. After four years conducting Compensation and Pension Examinations, Dr. Ott joined the Orlando VAMC MH staff as a fulltime employee in 2013. For four years, as Orlando VAMC’s MH Champion for Telehealth, she developed and grew the facility’s Tele Mental Health service, providing 100% of her clinical services via Clinical Video Technology to four area CBOCs and patients in outlying areas, and participated in VISN-wide work groups for the advancement of Tele Mental Health services. As a female Veteran with an interest in promoting gender-specific care in our growing female population, Dr. Ott became involved with the Women’s MH Initiative and attended the first mini-residency that took place in 2016, becoming the Orlando VAMC’s Women’s MH Champion. After two years as the Program Manager for the MH Outpatient Specialty Team, Dr. Ott has now joined one of the BHIP teams in the Mental Health Clinic. Dr. Ott is trained in and delivers several evidenced-based psychotherapies, including Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) for PTSD; Prolonged Exposure (PE), Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Chronic Pain (CBT-CP), Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-i), and Skills Training in Affective and Interpersonal Regulation (STAIR). As part of the Orlando VAMC faculty, Dr. Ott supervises the Outpatient BHIP rotation, leads didactics, has served as an intern mentor, and regularly participates in intern selection. Dr. Ott's extracurricular interests include endurance running, cooking, singing in her church choir, and volunteering at her children’s school.

Jose Portocarrero, Psy.D., Outpatient Mental Health (BHIP), Lake Nona. Dr. Portocarrero earned his doctorate degree from SUNY Binghamton in 2009. He completed his doctoral internship at the Hudson River Regional Psychology Internship in Poughkeepsie, NY. After that, he worked and held faculty appointments at New York-
Presbyterian Hospital and Columbia University Medical Center in New York City, while also holding a private practice. Dr. Portocarrero joined the Orlando VAMC in 2016 and is currently part of BHIP where he provides psychotherapy for Veterans presenting with various conditions, including chronic pain. He provides treatment in both English and Spanish. His psychotherapeutic approach is primarily CBT. He is licensed in NY and FL. Personal interests include distance running, swimming, and traveling.

**Bernice Vazquez-Garay, Psy.D.** *Substance Use Disorder Treatment Program, Lake Baldwin.* Dr. Vazquez-Garay was born and raised in Puerto Rico. She earned a Master’s Degree in Industrial Organizational Psychology from the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras before relocating in 2004 to the states with her husband, who was a JAG Officer for the Army at the time. As a military spouse, Dr. Vazquez-Garay had the opportunity to travel around the country, spend time with many military families, and immerse herself into the military culture. In 2007, she was accepted by the Professional Psychology Program of the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences at George Washington University in Washington, DC. Dr. Vazquez-Garay earned her Doctor of Psychology degree in 2010 and completed her doctoral internship at the Jefferson County Internship Consortium in Louisville, KY; part of the umbrella of the Seven Counties Services where she was hired in 2011 as a Staff Psychologist. Dr. Vazquez-Garay worked in this position for four years, attending the mental health needs of the underserved Hispanic population in Kentucky before relocating to Orlando, FL in 2015. She currently holds licenses to practice psychology in Puerto Rico, Kentucky, and Florida. In 2016, Dr. Vazquez-Garay joined the IOP/SUD Program at the OVAMC at Lake Baldwin. Dr. Vazquez-Garay’s personal interests include practicing yoga, in which she holds an instructor certification by the Yoga Alliance, playing the piano, and spending time with her husband and two children.

**Margarita Velez, Ph.D.** *Geropsychology.* Dr. Velez earned her doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Fordham University in New York in 2006. She completed her doctoral internship at the Mount Sinai Hospital, specializing in brain and spinal cord injury. She completed postdoctoral training in multicultural neuropsychology research at Columbia University, Cognitive Neuroscience Division. She also worked at Columbia University and the New York State Psychiatric Institute for over ten years in various clinical research positions studying mild neurocognitive disorder and investigating precursors for Alzheimer’s disease during her undergraduate and graduate studies. Her dissertation was on treatment of depression and mild cognitive impairment in the elderly. Following completion of her doctorate and postdoctoral work she accepted a position at Jamaica Hospital in the acute traumatic brain injury unit. She has also worked at numerous sub-acute rehabilitation centers in the New York metropolitan area as a consultant. She joined the Orlando VA Medical Psychology Division in 2013. Her current duties include assessment and treatment of a variety of neurocognitive disorders, with a specialty in geriatrics.
Didactic Instructors, Available Mentors, and other Internship Training Staff

Margaret Arnott, Ph.D., earned her degree in Psychology in 2000 from The Ohio State University. She is currently the Primary Care Mental Health Integration Program Manager and Psychology Supervisor (for staff in this program) at the Orlando VAMC. She completed her internship at the Dayton VAMC and was hired as part of the newly formed PTSD Clinical Team. While in Dayton she was the co-director of training and supervised interns on the PTSD rotation. She transferred to the Columbus VA, where she led the PTSD team and was selected as the Evidence-Based Psychotherapy Coordinator and the Practicum Intern Training Coordinator. She also served as the VISN 10 PTSD co-mentor and was selected as the Psychology Supervisor. She is certified through the VA EBP rollouts in Prolonged Exposure (PE) and Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), and is certified in EMDR I. Her clinical and outcome research interests include PTSD treatment, hope instillation for treatment engagement and self-efficacy.

Bryan Batien, Ph.D., ABPP received his Ph.D. from the University of South Dakota and completed his internship at the Cincinnati VA Medical Center. He has been involved in a number of roles at OVAMC including the Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL) program coordinator and the Therapeutic and Supportive Employment Service program manager. He is board certified in Behavioral and Cognitive Psychology and is an active member in the Association of VA Psychologist Leaders (AVAPL) – Early Career Psychologist group. His professional interests include readjustment challenges of OEF/OIF Veterans, PTSD, and anxiety disorders. He routinely provides presentations on Veterans’ mental health challenges and readjustment to a number of organizations including NASA, local universities and colleges, and law enforcement agencies. Dr. Batien is a Veteran of the U.S. Army, which included a 14-month deployment to Iraq in 2003-2004.

Luis E. Bedregal, Ph.D., earned his doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Nova Southeastern University in 2002. He completed his doctoral internship and postdoctoral training at Yale University. He is licensed in Connecticut. His primary clinical interests are substance abuse, chronic mental illness, Latino mental health, and the recovery approach. As the psychologist assigned to the Mental Health Intensive Case Management (MHICM) Program, Dr. Bedregal provides psychological and case management services to Veterans with diagnoses that include Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders, PTSD, and Major Depressive Disorder. His research interests include psychometrics and program evaluations.

Kara Boyer, Ph.D., Deputy ACOS Mental Health. Dr. Boyer earned her doctorate at The University of South Dakota and completed her internship at Gulfcoast Veterans Health Care System. Dr. Boyer has served as the Team Leader of the PTSD Intensive Outpatient Program in the past. She has also worked as the Assistant Clinical Coordinator and Program Manager of the Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program at the Gulfcoast VHCS. While at Gulfcoast VHCS, she served as the Assistant Director of Training of the Psychology Postdoctoral Program. She came to the OVAMC as the Program Manager of the Domiciliary Residential Rehabilitation
Treatment Program at the Lake Nona and Lake Baldwin Campuses, serving both facilities well; she was promoted to Deputy ACOS for Mental Health earlier this year. She holds a Mississippi license. Dr. Boyer's interests include working to maximize patient flow within the larger VA system. She is also interested in program development.

Milagros Evardone, Ph.D., Medical Psychology, Lake Nona. Dr. Evardone earned her doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Texas A&M University in 2009. She completed her doctoral internship at the Medical College of Georgia/Charlie Norwood VAMC Consortium in Augusta, Georgia, with a specialty in the Psychology of Women. She then completed a postdoctoral fellowship in Rehabilitation Psychology at the James A. Haley VA Hospital in Tampa, Florida. Dr. Evardone served as a staff psychologist in the Spinal Cord Injury Unit at the Tampa VA for 3 years prior to transferring to the Orlando VA in January 2014. She is an active member of APA, Division 22, and has served on various committees of the Academy of Spinal Cord Injury Professionals, including the Early Career and Trainee Committee. She has also completed VA training in Motivational Interviewing and Cognitive Processing Therapy. Her clinical and research interests include adjustment to disability, rehabilitation, and women's issues.

Valerie Masten Hoese, Ph.D., Program Manager, Medical Psychology Team. Dr. Hoese received her degree in Human Services Psychology from the University of Maryland Baltimore County in 1990, having completed tracks in Behavioral Medicine and Clinical Psychology. She completed her internship at the Springfield Hospital Center in Sykesville, MD. She is a Clinical Neuropsychologist and has worked in a variety of settings, including a Level I trauma center, neurology practice, nursing homes, psychiatric hospital, jail, community medical centers, and continues in independent practice providing medicolegal assessment. She has published and presented in neurotoxic exposure, cognitive rehabilitation, professional practice issues, and cultural and diversity variables in neuropsychological assessment. She is an Associate Professor at the University of Florida College of Medicine, and teaches a section on Neuropsychological Assessment. She teaches at the University of Central Florida as an Associate Professor in the Neurosciences doctoral program. She is licensed in Florida (active) and Maryland (inactive). She serves on several committees for APA and the National Academy of Neuropsychology. She is the former training director of the Orlando VA and current Medical Psychology supervisor. Her clinical interests are in the areas of assessment of performance validity, cross cultural neuropsychological assessment, and professional ethics.

Nkaku Kisaalita, Ph.D., Medical Psychology, Lake Nona. Dr. Kisaalita is a Psychologist at the Orlando VAMC with a background in Clinical Health Psychology and pain management. He completed his undergraduate work at UNC at Chapel Hill and earned his doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the University of Florida Department of Clinical & Health Psychology in 2014. He completed his doctoral internship in Medical Psychology at the Medical College of Georgia/Charlie Norwood VAMC Psychology Consortium in Augusta GA. He then completed a Pain Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship at the James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital in Tampa FL. Dr. Kisaalita joined the Orlando VAMC Medical Psychology staff as an outpatient Pain Psychologist in 2015. In addition to his clinical interests in behavioral pain management, Dr. Kisaalita
has published several peer-reviewed empirical studies on chronic pain and placebo analgesia, and has presented his research at national and international scientific meetings. Other professional interests include cultural diversity, positive psychology, and strength-based approaches. Personal interests include fitness/health, soccer, traveling, and cooking. Additionally, Dr. Kisaalita is self-described obsessive UNC basketball fan.

Larisa Lasko, Psy.D. Psychologist, Women’s Mental Health Clinic. Dr. Lasko completed her doctorate at the American School of Professional Psychology at Argosy University, Washington, D.C., and internship at Battle Creek VA Medical Center. Prior to joining the Orlando VAMC, Dr. Lasko completed her postdoctoral fellowship in primary care mental health integration at the Miami VA Healthcare System. She is currently a psychologist in the Orlando VAMC’s Primary Care-Mental Health Integration program. She holds a Florida license. Her clinical and research interests are in disordered eating, treatment of obesity, diabetes, tobacco use disorders, pain management, adjustment to medical illnesses, and stress management.

Judith F. Legault, Ph.D., Ed.D., Practicum Supervisor and Licensed Psychologist at the Clermont Community Based Outpatient Clinic. Dr. Legault earned her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at Fielding Graduate University and completed her doctoral internship at the WJB Dorn VA in Columbia, SC. She also holds an Educational Doctoral Degree with an Emphasis on the Integration of Technology in Education and Training from Nova Southeastern University. Her areas of interest are positive psychology and integrative wellness. Currently, Dr. Legault facilitates a Behavioral Activation Group for Depression and Anxiety, Mindfulness for Stress Reduction group, Seeking Safety Group and a Women’s group. Frequently used modalities of therapy include CPT for PTSD, values based behavioral activation, cognitive behavioral interventions for depression, chronic pain, insomnia and anxiety, and mindfulness practices. Personal interests include tennis, reading, and traveling.

Silvana Montautti, MD Psychiatry Section Chief. Dr. Montautti completed medical school at the University of Montemorelos, in Nuevo Leon, Mexico. She completed her residency at Vanderbilt University in Adult Psychiatry and a fellowship in psychopharmacology. Dr. Montautti has been with the OVAMC since 2000, starting as a staff psychiatrist. Her duties also included being the consulting psychiatrist for the Community Living Center and running a Dementia Clinic, as her interest is in psychotic disorders and dementia. In 2003, she became the team leader for the MH Clinic, and in 2006, was appointed the Acting Chief of Mental Health until 2009 when she was selected as the Chief of Psychology. She continues to have clinical duties, but the majority of her time is doing administrative work in the MH Service. She is licensed in Florida. Her area of interest is dementia and psychotic disorders. Personal interests are reading murder mysteries and coming up with the perfect murder, tending to her garden when it’s not too hot, and baking pastries.

Nikki Panasci, Ph.D., Program Manager, Therapeutic and Supported Employment Services (TSES). Dr. Panasci earned her doctorate in Clinical Psychology, with a dual-specialty in Severe Mental Illness (SMI)/Psychosocial Rehabilitation (PSR), from the
University of Hawai‘i in 2009. She completed a pre-doctoral psychology internship at the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System and a post-doctoral residency in PSR and Recovery-Oriented Services for Veterans with SMI at the VA San Diego Healthcare System. Subsequently, Dr. Panasci joined the VA Desert Pacific MIRECC in Los Angeles, CA, where she conducted mental health services research focused on improving quality of healthcare for Veterans with SMI. Prior to joining the Orlando VAMC staff in January 2015, Dr. Panasci has held clinical staff appointments at Schofield Barracks Army Health Clinic in Hawai‘i and at San Francisco VA Healthcare System. Dr. Panasci is an affiliate Assistant Professor with the UCF College of Medicine and has been the Manager of the Therapeutic and Supported Employment Services (TSES) Program at the Orlando VA since May 2018. Prior to her TSES role, she served as the first psychologist and Program Coordinator for the Orlando VAMC’s acute inpatient psychiatric units. Dr. Panasci is licensed in both California and Hawai‘i. Her primary clinical and research interests are in the development, implementation, delivery, and evaluation of recovery-oriented, psychosocial interventions for adults with psychotic disorders.

Frederick Petty Ph.D., MD Supervisory Psychiatrist for the Community-Based Outpatient Clinics. Dr. Petty obtained the PhD in physical chemistry from the Georgia Institute of Technology, and was a postdoctoral fellow at Rice University and at the University of Tennessee Brain Research Institute. He then obtained the MD from University of Tennessee, and was a resident in psychiatry at Washington University in St. Louis and the University of Iowa. Dr. Petty has been a staff psychiatrist in the VA since completing residency training, and has also been on the faculty of the University of Iowa, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, and Creighton University, and is now Professor of Psychiatry at University of Central Florida. Dr. Petty has published over 200 peer reviewed articles in both basic science (behavioral psychopharmacology) and clinical research (PTSD, depression, alcoholism). He has received grant funding from the VA Medical Research Service, the National Institute of Mental Health, and the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Addiction, as well as several pharmaceutical companies. Dr. Petty has always maintained a clinical practice in the VA, and is presently Supervisory Psychiatrist for the Community Based Outpatient Clinics of the Orlando VA Medical Center. Dr. Petty has also been active in teaching trainees in psychiatry and psychology, and has received the Golden Apple Award.

Robin A. Reed, Ph.D. Licensed Psychologist, Deltona Community-Based Outpatient Clinic. Dr. Reed earned her doctorate in Counseling Psychology from The Ohio State University in 1986. She completed her clinical internship at Naval Hospital Bethesda. She served as an active duty Naval officer, clinical psychologist from 1985 to 1991 where she worked with military personnel and their families during both peace and war time. After her military service, she completed postdoctoral studies in Pastoral Counseling at Loyola College. She served as the chief consultant to the School of Theology at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee for 8 years. Concurrently, she reconnected with her military heritage and was a “plank owner” at the McMinnville, Tennessee CBOC for five years. In 2015, she relocated to Central Florida
where she serves as Staff Psychologist at the Orange City CBOC, working with Veterans and their families. Her primary clinical interests are recovery issues to include trauma, MST, PTSD, and substance abuse. She grew up in Upstate New York near the Canadian border and is a keen sports fan, especially of the football teams in cities she has lived—Washington, DC, San Diego, and Buffalo. She enjoys keeping fit, listening to all types of music, and working to keep balance in her life with body, mind, and spirit.

William E. Riebsame, PhD, ABPP Outpatient Mental Health, Viera Outpatient Clinic. Dr. Riebsame earned his doctorate in Counseling Psychology from Virginia Commonwealth University in 1987. He then completed his internship at the University of South Florida. He was initially employed at the University of Maryland-College Park but returned to Florida in 1989 and was then licensed to practice as a psychologist. Dr. Riebsame maintained an independent practice treating adult, adolescents, and families for over 20 years. His practice evolved and became more forensic in nature leading to his board certification in Forensic Psychology in 2006. Dr. Riebsame came to VA in 2013 and now carries out disability evaluations and sees Veterans in individual and group psychotherapy at the Outpatient Clinic in Viera, FL. This work is full circle for Dr. Riebsame who was born in Ft. Bragg, NC and comes from a military family. His son is now an officer in the USMC. Dr. Riebsame enjoys all the aspects of the Florida lifestyle and is happy to introduce others to the “local scene”!

Steven Shea, Ph.D., Local Recovery Coordinator, OVAMC. Dr. Shea served as the Chief of Psychology here at the Orlando VAMC for several years and is an Assistant Professor of Medical Education, University of Central Florida School of Medicine. He received his Doctorate in Clinical and Community Psychology from the University of South Carolina and did his undergraduate education at Rutgers University. Dr. Shea has been working in the behavioral health field since 1979. Areas of professional interest include psychosocial rehabilitation of persons with serious mental illnesses, education of trainees in all mental health professions, mental health administration, criminal forensic psychology and educating the legal system about mental health issues. He is married to an OVAMC psychologist and the Shea’s have a daughter and 2 granddaughters (photos available upon request). Outside interests include outdoor activities (hiking, travel, boating, & fishing), motorcycles (photos available upon request), old cars and photography.

Maria Monserate Vazquez, Ph.D., RxP Dr. Vazquez obtained her doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the University of Rhode Island, and the Master of Science in Psychopharmacology at the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology. She completed her internship at the Center for Multicultural Training in Psychology Boston University/Boston Medical Center. She started her health career as a licensed practical nurse working primarily in nursing homes. Once achieving her doctorate, she practiced as a psychologist in community Mental Health settings working primarily with Hispanic communities, child abuse prevention programs, worked with the chronically mentally ill, and in nursing homes doing psychopharmacological consultations. She works in the OVAMC CLC and is licensed in MA. Her clinical interests are in Medical/Psychiatric, Geriatric, and Multicultural Psychology.
David Yutrzenka, Psy.D., Psychology Program Manager, BHIP. Dr. Yutrzenka earned his doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio in 2013. He completed his doctoral internship at the Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System in Montgomery/Tuskegee, AL and was hired on as an outpatient staff psychologist by the Orlando VAMC shortly after. While he provides outpatient Mental Health service and supervision as a member of the Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program (BHIP) teams, he has increased his focus of providing care for Veterans struggling to cope with and manage chronic pain. He has been certified in therapy for chronic pain management and was selected to become a national consultant for Cognitive Behavioral Therapy –Chronic Pain training. He grew up in South Dakota and Minnesota, but traded in the cold for year-round summer.

Again, we thank you for your interest in our program. We look forward to reviewing your application to join us.