

Organization of the Pre-doctoral Internship Curriculum

The pre-doctoral internship program is designed to be completed within a full-time, 50-week year. Approximately half of the intern's time is spent in direct service provision, 15% in related support or indirect services, and the remaining 35% is committed to didactic learning including seminar attendance and individual and group supervision.

Interns participate in constructing their individualized programs within a broad general framework that provides experience with diverse diagnostic groupings, a full range of treatment interventions and modalities, and a comprehensive understanding of working with children and families within the broader context of their community. Interns gain significant exposure to evidence-based and empirically supported intervention strategies. Throughout the year, the interns' programs are monitored and modified to meet the individual needs of each intern, provide a broad range of clinical experiences, and allow for remediation of any areas of weakness.

In all programs, there are opportunities for experience and didactic training relevant to cultural variables in mental health service delivery as well as family / community organization situations. The community we serve is characterized by rich cultural and socioeconomic heterogeneity, and includes areas of economic deprivation and barrios with multiple problems including high incidence of crime and youth gang activity, physical and emotional abuse and neglect of children, domestic violence, high unemployment, problems relating to undocumented legal status, and so on. The most numerous of the groups currently served by the Center are of Hispanic or Latino cultures.

Because of our large and continually increasing population of Latino families, the internship program is uniquely suited to providing a variety of opportunities for training interns who are fluently bilingual in English and Spanish, including opportunities to provide individual, family and group psychotherapy with bilingual or Spanish-only clients, psychological testing with use of instruments appropriate for bilingual children and adolescents, supervision in Spanish, and so on. The Center has a strong commitment to training both staff and trainees for work with Spanish-speaking families. Issues related to culture are suffused throughout our work, but there is also focused training on increasing the bilingual therapist's skill in service delivery to clients and parents who speak primarily or only English. Particular attention is paid to the problems that can emerge for families when there is an intergenerational difference in the acculturation process.

Interns select a Major Assignment area in which they will spend the majority of their direct service and supervision time (75 to 80%) for the course of the training year. During Orientation, interns also select a Minor Assignment area; these minor assignments are designed to meet the needs of the intern as well as the needs that exist within the agency at the beginning of the training year. The minor assignments are designed to round out the interns' training by providing additional experiences not covered in the Major Assignment activities.

The following sections provide descriptions of the departments in which Major Assignment areas available, and elaborates on the role of the intern within each of these departments.

Van Nuys Site (Specialized Programs for Youth)

As part of the Outpatient and Outreach Services Department, Van Nuys programs provide an array of prevention, early intervention, and treatment programs for youth with emotional and/or behavioral difficulties who are at-risk for, or are involved with, the juvenile justice system, as well as intensive treatment for children and families where there is a high risk of out-of-home placement. The strength-based, family-centered approach provides a continuum of services, which are available at community sites as well as at our Van Nuys offices.

Role of the Intern: In this program, interns have opportunities to provide brief and extended individual, family, and group treatment for adolescents who are at high risk or already involved in the juvenile justice system. Interns may have opportunities to work with adolescents who have co-occurring mental health and substance abuse problems, and with children and families who are at risk for out-of-home placement; in these contexts, interns are exposed to and learn about innovative, multi-systemic and contextual treatment approaches and community-based services as well as more traditional models.

Due to cultural and linguistic factors, interns interested in working in the Van Nuys program must be fluently bilingual in English and Spanish.

Northpoint School

Northpoint is a nonpublic school and intensive outpatient program for students, ages 5 through 18, with severe emotional and/or behavioral problems whose needs cannot be met in regular schools. Northpoint combines academic instruction and individual, group and family therapy with a broad spectrum of specialized services. The focus is on developing each student's unique strengths and abilities, resolving specific difficulties, and re-integrating students into community schools.

Role of the Intern: Northpoint offers interns a variety of exciting opportunities to provide individual and family therapy for seriously emotionally disturbed children and youth, including those who are exhibiting combinations of psychotic symptoms, learning disabilities, mood disorders, and so on; group therapy with these children; participation in milieu team meetings; and consultation to classroom teachers and staff. The Northpoint School program offers interns the opportunity to learn about the unique role of the psychologist in a multidisciplinary therapeutic milieu day school.

North Hills Site (Child Abuse Prevention, Trauma, and Early Intervention Services)

The North Hills site offers psychotherapeutic services for families with children and adolescents, from birth through age 18. Along with helping families cope with unique stresses and pressures associated with rearing young children, The staff at North Hills provide extensive services to families in which physical and/or sexual abuse has occurred or where the child has been traumatized by domestic or community violence. Dedicated to breaking the cycles of child abuse and family violence, the overall goal of these programs is to bring hope and healing through support, understanding and education.

Role of the Intern: At the North Hills site, interns provide extended individual, family, and group treatment for children and adolescents who are at high risk or who have already been traumatized by physical or sexual abuse, neglect, domestic violence or other trauma. Group opportunities include working with children's groups or parent/caregiver groups. In addition, Interns have the opportunity to participate along with post-doctoral residents in specialized training in conducting sexual abuse evaluations.

Due to the cultural and linguistic needs of the population served at the Family Stress Center, only applicants who are fluently bilingual in English and Spanish will be considered for this placement.

Psychodiagnostic Assessment

All interns participate in providing psychological testing services for clients of the Center. Interns are typically expected to complete five to seven comprehensive diagnostic assessment batteries over the course of the year. The Psychodiagnostic Assessment Seminar supplements weekly individual supervision sessions in providing interns with opportunities to expand their skills in this area. Care is taken in the assignment of testing cases to ensure that each intern's testing experience is characterized by a wide range of ages, diagnostic categories, and referral questions. All testing currently provided by interns is with cases that are already in treatment at the Center.

DIDACTIC COMPONENT

This component has two clusters of programming which are operationalized as follows:

1. Major learning is accomplished through individual and small group supervision which is designed for intensive, individualized instruction in the assessment or intervention strategies for given clients and their families.

2. Attendance at the following seminars is designed to enable interns to develop a knowledge base required of those who pursue the profession of child mental health in community-based treatment networks:

- a. Clinical Issues Seminar

This seminar, which meets for 1 ½ hours each week throughout the course of the training year, is designed to cover topics related to child psychotherapy, child development, and cultural competence. Using both lecture and group discussion, a variety of areas are addressed, including both brief and long-term intensive psychotherapy with children and adolescents; integration of developmental theory and clinical approaches; the impact of life events on the development of the child (e.g., child maltreatment, parental separation and divorce, domestic violence, death, and parental psychopathology); metaphoric techniques (e.g., play therapy); and sensitivity to the implications of ethnic and cultural group membership for development and treatment.

- b. Psychodiagnostic Assessment Seminar

The assessment seminar offers interns graduate level instruction and practice in administering a broad range of tests and other procedures for gathering data; organizing the resulting observations and data into relevant, useful inferences or impressions; and writing concise client-focused reports. A basic understanding of the principles and theories underlying psychodiagnostic assessment is assumed. Emphasis is placed on acquisition of practical skills permitting interns to function as increasingly independent consultants to colleagues and parents. Course content balances the pragmatics of mastering test selection, administration, and interpretation of assessment batteries for a range of childhood problems with exploration of the assumptions and limits (i.e., implicit personality theories, related philosophical beliefs, and empirical restraints) challenging current practice. Seminar topics focus on the construction of dynamic formulations and common differential diagnoses. Given the high proportion of Latino clients, issues relevant to assessment of Latino children are addressed throughout the seminar and more explicitly through topics such as assessing monolingual/bilingual children and acculturation.

- c. Professional Development Seminar

This seminar, which meets two to three times each month beginning in October, has two basic purposes. One is to provide a forum for addressing issues related to the APA ethics code and the internship program's expectations regarding development of professional identity. The other purpose is addressing issues related to life after internship. Typical topics

covered include making decisions about the post-doc year (e.g., choosing between academic or clinical positions, deciding between entry-level jobs or formal post-doc training, etc.). Included in this seminar is a multi-week module on preparation for providing clinical supervision. While the focus of this seminar is on important post-doc decisions, time is also made available for research presentations or discussions of other issues of interest to the interns.

d. Continuing Educational Experiences

There are continuing educational experiences for senior staff, which are available to trainees as well. Regularly scheduled interdisciplinary services provide an opportunity for staff and trainees to hear presentations and discuss various topics, including perspectives on treatment, ethical and legal issues, child and adolescent psychopharmacology, and new developments in treatment approaches and mental health service delivery. The Center is an approved provider of continuing education as mandated by law for licensed psychologists, LCSWs and MFTs. In this capacity, the Center also offers periodic seminars and workshops, which are available to other mental health professionals in the community.