

2019

INFORMATION
PACKET



PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP

Erie VA Medical Center

The internship program at the Erie VAMC emphasizes fostering effective clinical practice that is built upon the critical application of theoretical and empirical literature. We train interns to implement and promote established, efficacious treatment and encourage the use of theoretical and empirical literature to enhance their professional skills over time.

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Psychology Internship Program

Erie VA Medical Center

135 East 38th Street Boulevard
Erie, PA 16504
814-860-2038 | 800-274-8387
www.erie.va.gov

MATCH Number: 246611
Applications Due: December 16, 2019

Introduction

The Health Service Psychology Internship Program at the Erie VA Medical Center (VAMC) will prepare interns for professional practice in a medical center or health services setting that serves adults. Alumni will be prepared for employment or post-doctoral fellowships within Veterans Affairs, other medical centers, or the military, as well as in academic positions or independent practice. VA training staff will be guided by the VA mission to serve and honor the men and women who are America's Veterans, a mission and value that interns will increasingly grow to appreciate throughout their internship training.

The Internship Program at the Erie VAMC strives to offer a valuable and rewarding training experience in an atmosphere respectful of individual and cultural differences. As such, the EVAMC Psychology Internship Training Committee is represented on the Erie VAMC's Diversity & Inclusion Committee, and together work to:

- Create a diverse, high performing workforce that reflects the communities we serve by identifying and eliminating barriers to equal opportunity.
- Cultivate a supportive, welcoming, inclusive and fair work environment.
- Involve employees as participants and responsible agents of diversity, mutual respect and inclusion.
- Provide diversity education and events for employees to increase awareness and understanding of diversity and inclusion.

Accreditation Status

The Erie VAMC's Psychology Internship Program was granted "accredited, on contingency" status by the Commission on Accreditation (CoA) with an initial date of accreditation of April 7, 2019. "Accreditation, on contingency" is an accredited status and designates that a doctoral, internship, or postdoctoral program is consistent, substantively and procedurally, with the SoA with the exception of the provision of outcome data. Interns who complete a program that is recognized as "accredited, on contingency" will have completed an APA accredited program. The psychology internship program has been a member of the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) since December 2018

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

Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation

American Psychological Association
750 1st Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002

Phone: (202) 336-5979

E-mail: apaaccred@apa.org

Web: www.apa.org/ed/accreditation

All other questions about the internship program may be directed to:

Kelly R. Gerhardstein, PsyD

Training Director

814-860-2318

kelly.gerhardstein@va.gov

Application & Selection Procedures

Basic Application Criteria

Applicants must meet the following prerequisites to be considered for our program:

1. Doctoral student in an APA or CPA Accredited Ph.D. or Psy.D. Clinical or Counseling Psychology program.
2. Approval for internship status from the applicant's graduate school program Training Director with successful completion of qualifying exams.
3. Three years of pre-internship graduate training are required and the individual should be admitted to Doctoral Candidacy.
4. U.S. Citizenship. Health Profession Trainees who receive a direct stipend (pay) must be U.S. citizens. Trainees who are not VA paid (without compensation-WOC) who are not U.S. citizens may be appointed and must provide current immigrant, non-immigrant or exchange visitor documents.
5. U.S. Social Security Number. All VA appointees must have a U.S. social security number (SSN) prior to beginning the pre-employment, on-boarding process at the VA.
6. Selective Service Registration. Federal law requires that most males living in the US between the ages of 18 and 26 register with the Selective Service System. Male, for this purpose, is any individual born male on their birth certificate regardless of current gender. Males required to register, but who failed to do so by their 26th birthday, are barred from any position in any Executive Agency. Visit <https://www.sss.gov> to register, print proof of registration or apply for a Status Information Letter.

Appointment Criteria

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) adheres to all Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action policies. Psychology interns are considered Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Health Professions Trainee (HPT), who will receive a Federal appointment. Therefore, the following requirements will apply prior to that appointment:

1.Fingerprint Screening and Background Investigation. All HPTs will be fingerprinted and undergo screenings and background investigations. Additional details about the required background checks can be found at the following website: <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/10450.html>.

2. Drug Testing. Per Executive Order 12564, the VA strives to be a Drug-Free Workplace. HPTs are not drug-tested prior to appointment, however are subject to random drug testing throughout the entire VA appointment period. You will be asked to sign an acknowledgement form stating you are aware of this practice. See item 5 below.

3. Affiliation Agreement. To ensure shared responsibility between an academic program and the VA there must be a current and fully executed Academic Affiliation Agreement on file with the VHA Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA). The affiliation agreement delineates the duties of VA and the affiliated institution. Most APA-accredited doctoral programs have an agreement on file. More information about this document can be found at <https://www.va.gov/oaa/agreements.asp> (see section on psychology internships).

4. TQCVL. To streamline on-boarding of HPTs, VHA Office of Academic Affiliations requires completion of a Trainee Qualifications and Credentials Verification Letter (TQCVL). An Educational Official at the Affiliate must complete and sign this letter. Your VA appointment cannot happen until the TQCVL is submitted and signed by senior leadership from the VA facility. For more information about this document, please visit <https://www.va.gov/OAA/TQCVL.asp>

a. Health Requirements. Among other things, the TQCVL confirms that you, the trainee, are fit to perform the essential functions (physical and mental) of the training program and immunized following current Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines and VHA policy. This protects you, other employees and patients while working in a healthcare facility. Required are annual tuberculosis screening, Hepatitis B vaccine as well as annual influenza vaccine. Declinations are EXTREMELY rare. If you decline the flu vaccine you will be required to wear a mask while in patient care areas of the VA.

b. Primary source verification of all prior education and training is certified via the TQCVL. Training and Program Directors will be contacting the appropriate institutions to ensure you have the appropriate qualifications and credentials as required by the admission criteria of the training program in which you are enrolled.

5. Additional On-boarding Forms. Additional pre-employment forms include the Application for Health Professions Trainees (VA 10-2850D) and the Declaration for Federal Employment (OF 306). These documents and others are available online for review at <https://www.va.gov/oaa/app-forms.asp>. Falsifying any answer on these required Federal documents will result in the inability to appoint or immediate dismissal from the training program.

6. Proof of Identity per VA. VA on-boarding requires presentation of two source documents (IDs). Documents must be unexpired and names on both documents must match. For more information visit: https://www.oit.va.gov/programs/piv/_media/docs/IDMatrix.pdf

7. Additional information regarding eligibility requirements for appointment as a psychology HPT can be found at the end of this brochure. This information is also available at: <https://www.psychologytraining.va.gov/eligibility.asp>

Other Selection Considerations

Although not required, applicants who have a strong interest or background in rural mental health or in working with Veteran populations will be a particularly good fit for this internship program. The Erie VAMC is well-suited to provide broad generalist training to interns interested in contributing to the expansion of mental health services in rural areas, which are often underserved and under-resourced. Interns will have the opportunity to work creatively with a relatively small staff to meet the varied and critical needs of a Veteran population who often suffer with complex medical and mental health conditions amid a myriad of psychosocial stressors. Common mental health diagnoses among the Veterans served in the Erie

VAMC include PTSD and substance use disorder. The Erie VAMC also serves a large geriatric population via treatment by interdisciplinary healthcare teams.

Diversity & Inclusivity

Erie VAMC encourages all qualified candidates from diverse backgrounds to apply. Applications from people of historically underrepresented groups are strongly encouraged. Our goal is to maximize our reach to potential applicants interested in culturally responsive, evidence-based care. Furthermore, our program appreciates the benefits of recruiting trainees and staff who represent diverse groups in a variety of domains. We value the unique contributions offered by individuals with diverse cultural characteristics and experiences, and understand that these differences improve the climate of the workplace, contribute to more meaningful conversations, and increase the quality of training and the services offered by our trainees and our larger staff. For these reasons we are committed to non-discrimination in employment of our staff on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), national origin, political affiliation, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, genetic information, age, membership in an employee organization, parental status, military service, or other non-merit factor.

The selection of psychology interns must be consistent with the equal opportunity and non-discrimination policies of Erie VAMC as well as the guidelines and policies of APPIC and APA's CoA.

Application Information:

- The deadline for filing applications and required documentation is **December 16**
- The Erie VAMC Psychology Internship is a non-APPIC Member participant in the APPIC Matching Program (2466) and utilizes the "APPIC APPLICATION FOR PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP." This form should be completed online through the APPIC website: <http://www.appic.org/>

Apply to the program by including all the following information in the online APPIC application:

- Completed APPIC online application - APPI; which can be accessed via the APPIC Web Site: <http://www.appic.org/>
- Cover letter included with APPI
- Three (3) letters of recommendation
- Graduate school transcript(s)

Selection & Interviews

Erie VA Medical Center is offering two internship slots for the 2020-2021 internship class. Applications for the Psychology Internship Program at Erie VAMC will be reviewed for completeness and goodness of fit. The internship training faculty will review applications and invitations for interviews will be extended to qualified applicants. Our program seeks intern applicants whose training goals match sufficiently the training that is offered in our geographically rural and Veteran-focused training site. Previous VA experience is a plus, although not necessary. We are seeking candidates who have strong academic backgrounds and are skilled in diagnostic assessment and interventions. Selection of candidates for our psychology internship program will come from different kinds of programs and theoretical orientations, geographic areas, ages, ethnic backgrounds, and life experiences.

Interviews: In an effort to reduce barriers in accessing our program and encourage diversity in applicants, the Erie VAMC offers in-person, tele-video, and phone interviews to qualified applicants. An interview via one of these modalities is required of all applicants who make the final selection round.

Note: After receipt of the initial application package all communication will be accomplished via the e-mail address provided on the APPIC application unless otherwise specified.

Psychology Setting

The Erie VAMC was established in 1951 as WWII was ending, and the country's commitment to serve war Veterans strengthened. Erie VAMC is now recognized as a top-performing medical center in the delivery of high-quality health care to Veterans living in 8 counties in the tri-state area of northwestern Pennsylvania, northeastern Ohio, and western New York. Erie VAMC earned a 5-star rating as one of VA's Highest Performing Hospitals in Healthcare Quality based on the VA Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) Model. Our Behavioral Health Clinic (BHC), ranked #1 in the Nation in 2016 and 2017 based on these analyses, demonstrating a relative strength in composites related to Veteran and employee satisfaction. Indeed, the Behavioral Health service line is a close-knit department that aims to foster a warm, welcoming environment, valuing cultural and individual differences. The staff appreciate living a well-balanced life that effectively integrates friends, family, community and work. The small size of the facility allows for collegial and supportive interprofessional collaboration that promotes high-quality Veteran care and enhances job satisfaction.

The Behavioral Health program consists of specialized interprofessional and interdisciplinary treatment for Veterans with care needs related to PTSD, substance use disorders, Military Sexual Trauma (MST), homelessness, and chronic pain. Intensive recovery-oriented group therapy and psychoeducation is offered in the clinic's Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC). Behavioral Health's services are also integrated into various programs hospital-wide, including Primary Care, Community Living Center/ Short-Term Rehab, and Home-Based Primary Care, where behavioral health providers work as part of the Veteran's interprofessional care team. In addition, in July 2019, the medical center expanded to open a general residential treatment program aimed at psychosocial recovery and rehabilitation for Veterans with an unstable lifestyle or living arrangements, suffering from a range of mental health conditions, including substance use disorder. To provide services to our largely rural population, tele-mental health services are available. In addition, the Behavioral Health service employs providers in the Rural Access Network for Growth Enhancement (RANGE) program and offers Behavioral Health Lab services for Veterans with less intense care needs.

The Psychology Internship program at the Erie VAMC is located within the Behavioral Health service. Training opportunities take place both in the main hospital and in an adjacent building dedicated solely to behavioral health services. Opportunities for training at an off-site Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) may also be available. Psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, nurse practitioners, nurses, peer support specialists, vocational rehabilitation specialists, physician assistants, and master's level mental health professionals work alongside each other in meetings, leading groups, collaborating on the care of individual patients, and in developing treatment offerings. In our service, interns work next to and collaborate with other mental health disciplines on a daily basis. As a result, interns become familiar with regular consultation with other staff and participate in interprofessional teams as a normal part of professional practice.

Program Aim and Philosophy

The primary objective of our training program is to provide broad, general doctoral internship training aimed at developing intermediate to advanced competencies in Professional Psychology, to prepare psychology interns for post-doctoral or entry-level Health Service Psychologist (HSP) positions. Training will build upon the intern's competencies in all areas with science, ethics and diversity at the core. Generalist

skills and competencies will be developed via didactic and supervised experiential training in varied areas of clinical emphasis (i.e., rotations), with interns being granted increasing independence as appropriate. Interns will begin the internship with a clear understanding of the expectations for the training year, with more detailed, rotation-specific guidance offered prior to the start of each rotation by their individual supervisors.

The internship program at the Erie VAMC emphasizes fostering effective clinical practice that is built upon the critical application of theoretical and empirical literature. We train interns to implement and promote established, efficacious treatment and encourage the use of theoretical and empirical literature to enhance their professional skills over time. In addition, we promote the notion that knowledge, skill development, self-reflection, and interdisciplinary collaboration are integral to improving the treatment process.

The internship training program is designed to provide generalist preparation for clinical practice through a range of experiences involving assessment, therapy, and consultation. The training team will work in cooperation with interns to devise a training schedule that builds on the interns' knowledge and experiences, to strengthen areas of growth, and further develop areas of interest. Supervision will be guided by the interns' needs using a developmental model, such that opportunities for increasingly independent practice will be offered as competency is established.

Our training program emphasizes the psychosocial model of recovery and the empowerment of Veterans to recover from mental health difficulties. When indicated, we emphasize the use of empirically supported therapies including Cognitive Processing Therapy, Prolonged Exposure, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Depression, CBT for Insomnia, and Interpersonal Therapy for Depression, to name a few.

Our program incorporates experiential and didactic training to develop the following profession-wide competencies:

1. Research – Interns will be able to integrate current research and literature into their clinical practice and demonstrate critical thinking skills when presenting and discussing relevant research.
2. Ethical and legal standards - Interns will demonstrate knowledge of ethical and legal principles including the APA Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct. They will demonstrate an awareness of ethical dilemmas as they arise and apply ethical principles in decision making processes.
3. Individual and cultural diversity – Interns will demonstrate an awareness of their own personal/cultural background that may affect their case conceptualizations and subsequent treatment planning. They will show an understanding of current theoretical and empirical knowledge related to individual and cultural diversity, and independently apply this knowledge in working effectively with a range of diverse individuals, groups, and communities.
4. Professional values, attitudes, and behaviors - Interns will conduct themselves across settings and contexts in a professional manner with staff and patients, consistent with the values and attitudes of psychology. They will show openness and responsiveness to feedback from supervision. They will demonstrate the ability to manage work load and administrative tasks, as well as complete timely documentation. Interns will demonstrate professional judgment and responsibility with increasing independence and autonomy commensurate with increasing competency development throughout the training year.
5. Communication and interpersonal skills – Interns will communicate effectively verbally, nonverbally, and in writing. They will communicate psychological information to other professionals as well as patients and their families in a manner that is organized, concise, and understandable.
6. Assessment - Interns will be able to assess patients with a broad range of problems using a variety of psychological assessment instruments. They will gain proficiency in selecting assessment measurements, conducting clinical interviews, and integrating information from multiple sources to formulate accurate DSM diagnoses and develop clear case conceptualization that lead to appropriate

treatment plans and recommendations tailored to answer referral questions.

7. Intervention - Interns will be able to establish and maintain therapeutic rapport in the context of individual or group psychotherapy. They will demonstrate the ability to collaborate with patients and interdisciplinary teams in developing appropriate treatment plans and therapeutic goals addressing the patient's presenting problem(s). Interns will utilize evidence-based psychotherapies as appropriate and demonstrate an awareness of process/relationship issues occurring within the therapeutic relationship. Interns will be able to identify and manage crisis needs and/or unexpected or complex situations. They also should be able to effectively coordinate their interventions with other members of the inter-professional and interdisciplinary teams involved with the patient's care.
8. Supervision - Interns will develop knowledge of supervision models and apply this knowledge in direct or simulated practice. Interns will provide effective supervised supervision to trainees (when available) or peers in typical cases appropriate to the service setting.
9. Consultation and inter-professional/interdisciplinary skills – Interns will demonstrate knowledge and respect for the roles of other professions. They will apply knowledge of consultation models and practices to contribute to team planning within interdisciplinary teams and gather appropriate data in order to answer the consultation need. Interns will show an awareness to consult with psychologists and professionals from other disciplines in the care of their patients.

Successful completion of the internship training program requires that interns demonstrate developmentally appropriate competency in all nine profession-wide competency areas through the completion of the training activities and experiences outlined below.

The program will also adhere to the five training requirements described below.

Consistency with the professional value of individual and cultural diversity: Training and attention to diversity will be incorporated into each of the profession-wide competencies. Interns will have the opportunity to provide clinical services to a diverse patient population in a variety of settings and in collaboration with professionals from various disciplines. Supervision will include discussions about the role diversity plays in guiding the dynamic work of a Health Service Psychologist.

Consistency with the existing and evolving body of general knowledge and methods in the science and practice of psychology: Experiential and didactic training will be grounded in existing empirical literature and in a scientific orientation toward psychological knowledge and methods. The program will stress critical review and conscience consumption of traditional empirical literature, as well as information found in the popular press. Empirically-based treatment will be emphasized on all clinical rotations and will be highlighted in didactic training.

Level-appropriate training: The program will offer broad and general preparation in all 9 profession-wide competencies that is concomitant with entry-level independent practice and licensure.

Level-appropriate expectations: Interns will be expected to demonstrate each profession-wide competency with increasing levels of independence and complexity as they progress through the program. Upon completion of the program they will be expected to demonstrate knowledge, skill, and competence on par with entry-level independent practice and licensure.

Evaluation of trainee competence. Interns will be evaluated in each of the 9 profession-wide competencies over the course of the program and during each rotation. The expectations will be made clear at the start of the program, and the evaluation criteria will be referenced frequently and routinely so that interns have the opportunity to address areas of growth.

Training Experiences

Interns matching with the EVAMC Psychology Internship Program will be assigned to the Erie VA Medical Center. The internship will be a 12-month full-time program. Interns will be required to complete a 1-day, yearlong Behavioral Health Clinic rotation, and will select either two 6-month or three 4-month elective rotations. The Behavioral Health Clinic rotation will be designed to give interns the opportunity to provide long-term therapy and to conduct complicated comprehensive full-battery assessments. If the trainee opts to use the Behavioral Health Clinic as an elective rotation, as well, they will have the opportunity to participate in other programs, such as the Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC), the Homeless Care Team, Suicide Prevention Coordination, or Compensation and Pension Examinations. Other elective rotation options include: Geropsychology-Community Living Center, Home-Based Primary Care/Tailored Care, PTSD services, Substance Use Disorders Treatment Team, and Health Behavior. Evidence-based mental and behavioral health care practices are applied by the providers in each of these rotations and will be an integral part of the training experiences offered to the interns. Interns will be encouraged to select rotations that best represent their training needs, career focus, or interests. Modifications to the proposed program structure will be considered, when possible, in order to maximize exposure to desired training experiences or accommodate a trainee's training needs.

Please note that rotation offerings may change from year to year, as a result of staffing changes. Due to being a program based in a largely rural area, there is often only one psychologist in each setting. As such, if there are staffing changes, this may impact rotation offerings. Consequently, our program prides itself on achieving the program aim and intern competencies through the combination of varied clinical experiences and rotations. We advise interns to view their own growth in this broad way, as opposed to being attached to one particular rotation offering to meet their training needs. The following is a list of current rotation offerings. We anticipate offering more training opportunities in the near future as new psychologists join our team.

Rotation Settings

All rotations are available on the main campus of Erie VAMC in Erie, PA. Interns may have the option to complete up to 1 day of the Behavioral Health Clinic and/or the PTSD clinical rotations at the Crawford Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) under Dr. Teri Connelly. Training experiences on the new residential rehabilitation program may also be available. A formal rotation on this unit is being considered, but has not yet been developed.

Behavioral Health Clinic

Supervisors: Edward Dabkowski, PhD, Kevin Tessner, PhD, Teri Connelly, PhD

This rotation is structured such that, regardless of rotation setting, each intern spends one day per week in the Behavioral Health Clinic (BHC) for the entire internship year. This arrangement is intended to provide interns with the opportunity to follow therapy patients on a more long-term basis. Additionally, interns will be expected to conduct comprehensive assessments and provide tele-mental health services with increasing independence, commensurate with their acquired knowledge and skill. Interns may also opt to elect this rotation, such that they would spend 3 additional days a week in the BHC for a rotation period. An elective rotation in BHC would offer a variety of traditional psychotherapy, as well as evidence based individual and group treatment, to include but not limited to, exposure to or participation in the PRRC, the Homeless Care Team, Suicide Prevention Coordination, and Compensation and Pension (Disability) Examinations.

Geropsychology – Community Living Center (CLC)

Supervisor: Nathan Doerr, PsyD

Interns on this rotation will be assigned to the Community Living Center (CLC), which is comprised of multiple admission specialties that include various lengths of stay. Veterans are admitted to the CLC for long-term care, hospice care, rehabilitation services, respite care, short-stay medical management, and acute medical services. On this rotation, interns will gain an understanding of the psychological issues common to this group and learn assessment and treatment strategies that specifically address the needs of the geriatric population. A biopsychosocial approach to treatment is emphasized, wherein the interrelationships between physical and emotional problems are acknowledged and an interdisciplinary team is utilized to provide a more holistic and individualized plan of care. Interns will perform assessments, provide individual psychotherapy, develop behavior management plans, provide staff education, and participate in interdisciplinary treatment team meetings for individuals with a wide range of medical and psychological problems. Inpatient and outpatient evaluations regarding cognition as well as decision-making capacity are conducted as requested by medical staff. Interns will have the opportunity to co-lead reminiscence groups with therapeutic recreation staff on the units as well as outpatient dementia education groups with social work. Interns will have the opportunity to attend multiple interdisciplinary committee meetings including disruptive behavior, dementia, falls, preventative ethics, cultural transformation, and medical ethics.

Home-Based Primary Care/Tailored Care

Supervisors: Lori Lyth-Franz, PhD and Anne Schwabenbauer, PsyD

The Home-Based Primary Care (HBPC)/Tailored Care rotation offers a blend of health and geriatric psychology. Interns participating in this rotation will have the opportunity to become familiar with the psychologist's role on an interdisciplinary team that provides primary care services in the homes of chronically medically ill Veterans. The HBPC team is comprised of two psychologists, registered nurses, nurse practitioners, social workers, dietitians, pharmacists, and an occupational therapist who meet weekly to discuss cases and coordinate care. The psychologist provides mental health consultation, individual therapy, diagnostic assessment, and caregiver support/education, as well as brief cognitive evaluations and financial, healthcare, and independent living capacity evaluations. Interns may also have the opportunity to work with Veterans facing challenges related to the cultural, spiritual, and existential concerns associated with the end-of-life. Interns will co-share their caseload with providers from the other disciplines and receive supplemental cross-supervision from these disciplines when appropriate.

PTSD Services

Supervisors: Teri Connelly, PhD and Kevin Tessner, PhD

The PTSD clinical program at the Erie VAMC provides evaluation and treatment to Veterans presenting with a history of both military and non-military trauma. Interns participating on this rotation will have the opportunity to conduct assessments and triage Veterans to an appropriate level of care. Interns will also receive training in evidenced based treatments for PTSD, including Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) and Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PE), and will be expected to carry an individual caseload and conduct groups. The PTSD Care Team is an interdisciplinary team comprised of psychologists, licensed professional counselors, social workers, nurses, and vocational specialists who provide therapeutic services to individuals diagnosed with PTSD. The team conducts interdisciplinary meetings monthly and offers psychoeducation, group therapy, and support groups for a variety of Veterans from different eras including Vietnam, Korea, Persian Gulf, and the most recent conflicts in the Middle East. Male and female military sexual trauma groups are provided, and Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) is offered in a group format, as well.

Substance Use Disorders (SUD) Treatment

Supervisor: Kevin Tessner, PhD

The Erie VAMC substance use disorder treatment services include detox, medication management, and outpatient individual, couples, and group therapy. On this rotation, interns will learn the role of the psychologist on the SUD Treatment Team and will have the opportunity to provide services as a member of this team. The SUD Treatment team is an interdisciplinary team comprised of psychologists, psychiatrists, licensed professional counselors, nurses, an addiction counselor, and support staff who provide Veterans with daily addiction groups, including relapse prevention, dual diagnosis, and tobacco cessation. An Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) is also offered. Interns completing this rotation will have the opportunity for training and participation in a number of evidence-based treatment protocols, including, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Substance Use Disorders (CBT-SUD), Behavioral Couples Therapy for Substance Use Disorders (BCT-SUD), and a six-month evidence-based treatment for PTSD and substance abuse based on "Seeking Safety" by Dr. Lisa Najavits. Interns will also be expected to provide inpatient substance abuse consultation for the Erie VAMC

Health Behavior

Supervisors: Nathan Doerr, PsyD & Jenna Copeland, LPC

The health behavior rotation emphasizes use of the biopsychosocial perspective in the prevention and treatment of health-related conditions. Rotation goals include maximizing the physical and psychological functioning of individuals through health promotion programs, individual goal-oriented treatment, and group psychoeducational programs. The health behavior rotation will comprise experiences in three main areas. Interns participation in each of the main areas will depend on interests and availability of clinical experiences.

Community Living Center (CLC): Interns on the health behavior rotation will have the opportunity to utilize a biopsychosocial perspective regarding the assessment of health-related conditions in Veterans in the CLC. Interns will be expected to assess readiness for change as well as provide treatment regarding weight management, sleep disorders, diabetes education, and tobacco cessation interventions. Interns will collaborate with staff from dietary, pharmacy, nursing, and social work regarding referrals to appropriate health promotion programs. Interns will also be expected to complete tobacco cessation consults on the CLC and the acute care unit.

Specialty Evaluations: Interns will have the opportunity to conduct transplant and bariatric evaluations. These evaluations require that the intern incorporate information about the Veteran from several disciplines and consult frequently.

Primary Care Mental Health Integration (PCMHI): Interns participating in this aspect of the health behavior rotation will have the opportunity to function as one of the PCMHI clinicians and will serve as a first point of contact for Veterans newly expressing mental health concerns and/or seeking mental health services. PCMHI clinicians conduct brief functional assessments, and routinely provide same day, "warm hand off" services for patients in primary care. PCMHI clinicians provide brief evidence-based, co-located collaborative care (CCC) interventions (e.g., behavioral activation, care management, problem solving training, CBT-I, grief counseling, etc.) for patients not in need of specialty behavioral health clinic care. Veterans receiving PCMHI services are often older and suffering from acute and/or mild conditions. Common diagnoses include depression, anxiety, bereavement, suicidal ideation, adjustment disorders, and health behavior concerns. Interns will receive training on the use of video technology to reach Veterans being seen in rural areas served by the CBOCs. Interdisciplinary collaboration is essential on this rotation and occurs between physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, dietitians, social workers, and clinical pharmacists.

Seminars

In addition to the clinical rotations, interns are required to participate in a one-hour weekly “Lunch & Learn” didactic seminar as well as a one hour “Journal Club” didactic each week. The didactic seminars are conducted by Training Committee members and guest presenters. Interns are also each required to do one presentation during the training year. Topics generally fall under one of four training areas: assessment, ethics & diversity, intervention, and professional issues & supervision. During the “Journal Club” didactic interns and Psychologist Training Committee members take turns presenting journal articles often related to the seminar topic that week. Other facility trainees and staff are invited to all didactic training to increase attendance, discussion and introduction of diverse viewpoints.

Training Structure

The internship program will include one compulsory rotation in the behavioral health outpatient clinic, and will allow interns to select from 6 primary elective rotations. Each intern will choose either two, 6-month or three, 4-month primary rotations for the internship year. Interns will spend the equivalent of 3 days each week working in their primary rotation. Interns will spend the equivalent of one day a week in the behavioral health rotation, but may choose to participate in the behavioral health rotation as a primary elective rotation, in which case they would spend 4 days a week in the behavioral health clinic during that rotation. Alternative structures will be considered to accommodate training needs and professional interests, but cannot be guaranteed. The equivalent of one day each week will be reserved for didactic training seminars, group supervision, and professional development. Interns will receive their individual supervision on their primary rotation. An example of how a week is structured can be found below (This is only a sample. Actual schedules will vary).

Monday: BHC Rotation Day

Tuesday: Training Day (group supervision, didactic seminar, team meeting)

Wednesday: Elective Rotation Day

Thursday: Elective Rotation Day & Journal Club

Friday: Elective Rotation Day

The Training Committee at Erie VAMC understands that the primary focus of the internship year is for training. However, because the training is experiential, there is an expectation that interns will provide direct care to Veterans which on average begin at 10 hours per week at the start of the training year and build up to at least 20 hours of direct face-to-face client care by the end of the year. A minimum requirement of direct contact hours is not formally identified as each rotation will have a different degree of client contact varying based on the design of the rotation and the training needs of the intern. Although it is understood that it may take some time to build up a case load, toward the end of the training year, interns are expected to be proficient in organizing and managing their schedule to meet or exceed these requirements. In addition, approximately 20-25% of time will be spent in clinical supervision, didactic training, and professional development activities.

Supervision

The supervision arrangement described in this section is designed to assure a minimum of four hours of structured supervision weekly to interns.

One-to-One Supervision

Each intern will receive a minimum of **two hours** of required, direct, individual supervision per week. An hour of individual supervision is scheduled with both the supervisor of the elective rotation and the supervisor of the required (BHC) rotation. Activities such as case discussion, supervisory observation, critique of assessment or consultation/psychological report writing, discussion of professional/ethical issues,

and progress in clinical skill development satisfy the two-hour individual supervision requirement. Interns' supervisors will monitor their work through several methods, including case discussions, review of clinical documentation, live observation, and co-therapy. At the beginning of each supervisory relationship, interns and supervisors will discuss goals, training activities, and expectations for the supervisory experience. Interns and supervisors will also discuss the process by which emergency supervision can be obtained when needed.

Additional Required Supervision

In addition to the two hours of weekly required individual supervision described above, each intern must receive a minimum of **two hours** of supervision per week with a licensed psychologist or qualified mental health professional present in any combination of learning activities such as individual or group co-therapy, group therapy debriefing, individual supervision, group supervision, or case conferences or discussions involving cases in which the intern is actively involved. Supplemental required supervision is not satisfied by intern attendance at didactic seminars, workshops, presentations, etc. Informal supervision is available as needed by the intern. Discussion sessions and coffee break discussions are readily available with most staff members.

At no time will the interns bear sole responsibility for the maintenance of interprofessional relationships or patient care. The proposed program is built into currently provided clinical services at the EVAMC, and each rotation is maintained even when an intern is not present, allowing the program to preserve its emphasis on training. Supervisors of every rotation will carry a panel of their own patients and will continue to serve as part of their assigned interprofessional team, modeling the role of an independently practicing psychologist. A psychologist supervisor will be available to address interns' questions or concerns at all times during regularly scheduled business hours and while interns are providing clinical care.

Administrative Policies and Procedures

Hours

The Internship year will begin August 16, 2020 and end August 15, 2021. Selected interns will report to duty on August 17, 2020. Internship appointments are for 2080 hours, which is full-time (40 hours per week) for a one-year period. Some interns may elect to work more than 40 hours; however, if the intern's supervisor is not on site, the intern may not engage in any clinical activities. The intern may, instead, write reports, do professional readings, and/or work on their dissertations while at the medical center. Unfortunately, because of VA policy, interns may not earn compensatory time or overtime for working more than 40 hours in a given work week.

Stipend

For the 2019-2020 internship year, interns received a stipend of \$26,166, paid in 26 biweekly installments. Federal income tax and FICA (Social Security) are withheld from interns' checks.

Benefits

VA interns are eligible for health insurance (for self, spouse, and legal dependents) and for life insurance, just as are regular employees. With the recent Supreme Court decision, health benefits are now available to legally married same-sex partners. However, unmarried partners of either sex are not eligible for health benefits.

The VA website has additional information regarding stipend and benefits:

<http://www.psychologytraining.va.gov/benefits.asp>

Holidays and Leave

Interns receive the 10 annual federal holidays (listed below). In addition, interns accrue four (4) hours of sick leave and four (4) hours of annual leave for each full two week pay period as an intern, for a total of between 96 and 104 hours of each during the year.

- Labor Day First Monday in September
- Columbus Day Second Monday in October
- Veterans Day November 11
- Thanksgiving Fourth Thursday in November
- Christmas Day December 25
- New Year's Day January 1
- Martin Luther King Day Third Monday in January
- Presidents' Day Third Monday in February
- Memorial Day Last Monday in May
- Independence Day July 4

Authorized Absence: Interns are also allotted up to 5 days per year for administrative absence, available for use for professional development needs such as conference participation, post-doc interviews, dissertation defense, etc.

Liability Protection for Trainees

When providing professional services at a VA healthcare facility, VA sponsored trainees acting within the scope of their educational programs are protected from personal liability under the Federal Employees Liability Reform and Tort Compensation Act 28, U.S.C.2679 (b)-(d).

Due Process

All Interns are afforded the right to due process in matters of problem behavior and grievances. A training manual detailing all due process, grievance, and remediation policies is distributed to and reviewed with all interns during their first week of orientation. Human Resources (HR) policies and procedures may apply in different circumstances.

Privacy policy

We collect no personal information from potential applicants who visit our website.

Self-Disclosure

Consistent with the Ethical Code of the American Psychological Association, psychology trainees in the Erie VAMC Internship Program are not required to self-disclose sensitive topics (e.g., sexual history, history of abuse and neglect, psychological treatment or conditions, or relationships with parents/family members, peers, and spouses or significant others) during application to the program or during the course of training. The only exception is in situations in which a trainee's personal problems or condition could reasonably be judged to put patient care, the trainee, or clinical and educational operations at risk. This policy is designed to balance the importance of trust and personal privacy in the supervisory relationship with the supervisor's responsibility for care of the patient and for the safety of all staff members and trainees. In cases when self-disclosure of personal information is necessary, the required disclosure is limited to circumscribed information related to managing the specific clinical, safety, or patient care concern. It should also be noted that disclosure might be included as an optional exercise in a learning experience

Training Staff

Teri Madura Connelly, PhD is a Staff Psychologist at the Erie VAMC. She earned a PhD from the University of Akron and completed a Post-Doctoral Fellowship in PTSD at the Tennessee Valley Healthcare System VA, Nashville, TN. She has substantial work experience in the treatment of PTSD, suicide prevention, and mindfulness-based care. She has worked for VHA for 8 years. Dr. Connelly has been extensively trained and certified in the delivery of Evidenced-Based Practices for PTSD, including Prolonged Exposure, Cognitive Processing Therapy and Skills Training in Affective and Interpersonal Regulation. She is also a national consultant for Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Depression. She currently functions as the PTSD Lead Clinician at the Erie VAMC and heads our local PTSD clinical team. She also provides a full range of psychological services to Veterans living in rural areas through our Crawford County Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC).

Edward Dabkowski, PhD is a Clinical Psychologist at the Erie VAMC. He earned a PhD from the University of Southern Mississippi. He has extensive work experience in the areas of medical psychology, clinical supervision, psychological assessment, and mental health program coordination. He has worked for VHA for 15 years. He currently functions as a Clinical Psychologist in the Behavioral Health Clinic at the Erie VAMC, providing individual and group therapy services. Dr. Dabkowski has met the VA training requirements to provide the following EBPs: Prolonged Exposure (PE), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Depression (ACT-D), and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Chronic Pain (CBT-CP). Dr. Dabkowski has provided pre-licensure supervision to newly hired Psychologists at the Erie VAMC and at other facilities. He serves as the MH liaison to the Erie VAMC Pain Committee and has functioned as a disability examiner for MH evaluations in the Compensation and Pension Program.

Nathan Doerr, PsyD earned his Bachelor's and Master's degree from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Dr. Doerr earned his doctoral degree from Spalding University in Louisville, Kentucky in 2008. Dr. Doerr completed his pre-doctoral internship at the Western New York VA Healthcare System and postdoctoral fellowship in Geropsychology at the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center. Dr. Doerr has been the Community Living Center psychologist at the Erie VA Medical Center since 2009. He is also the Dementia Committee chair. Dr. Doerr has experience providing postdoctoral clinical supervision for a trainee pursuing licensure. He will be the primary supervisor for the Geropsychology and Health Behavior rotations.

Kelly R. Gerhardstein, PsyD is the Training Director for the EVAMC Psychology Internship Program. Dr. Gerhardstein is a graduate of Indiana State University. She completed her internship and postdoctoral training at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center. She is the Program Manager of the Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Treatment Program (PRRTP). Dr. Gerhardstein has worked with VHA since 2012, and has primarily served as a Home Based Primary Care Psychologist. She has additional VHA experience in PCMHI, consult-liaison services, and Behavioral Health Compensation and Pension evaluations. She is a certified interventionist in empirically based treatments, including Problem-Solving Training in Home-Based Primary Care (PST-HBPC) and Resources for Enhancing all Caregiver's Health in VA (REACH VA). Dr. Gerhardstein also serves in the US Army Reserves.

Jenna Copeland, LPC, NCC earned her undergraduate degree in Psychology from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. She has a Master's degree in Clinical Mental Health from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. Ms. Copeland is a co-located Primary Care Integration Clinician, and the designated PCMHI Lead at the Facility. She has been working in PCMHI since 2018. She also conducts Combat Stress Assessments for recently separated Veterans. Prior to this appointment she was a general therapist here at the Erie VAMC Behavioral Health Clinic since 2011. Ms. Copeland's supervisory experience includes supervision of graduate level students (one of whom was hired here at Erie in the Behavioral Health Clinic) and supervision of clinicians working towards LPC licensure.

Lori Lyth-Frantz, PhD earned her doctoral degree from State University of New York at Buffalo after an internship at the Buffalo VAMC. She has been employed by the VA as a Home-Based Primary Care (HBPC) Psychologist since 2015, following 20+ years as a psychologist with the Seneca Nation of Indians in New York. While serving as the Director of the Behavioral Health Unit, she also provided psychological testing, therapy and clinical supervision for the purpose of credentialing for social workers, mental health counselors and substance abuse counselors. At the VA she has been certified in Problem Solving Therapy for HBPC as well as the REACH VA program, an educational and supportive program for caregivers.

Anthony Mancini, PhD is the Lead Psychologist at the Erie VAMC. He earned a PhD from Virginia Commonwealth University and completed a Post-Doctoral Fellowship in Neuropsychology at Sheltering Arms Hospital, Richmond, VA. He has extensive work experience in the areas of rehabilitation psychology, neuropsychology, and medical psychology. He has worked for VHA for 18 years. He currently functions as the Local Evidence-Based Psychotherapy Coordinator, as well as the primary Behavioral Health Compensation and Pension (Disability) evaluator at the Erie VAMC. Dr. Mancini has provided pre-licensure supervision to newly hired psychologists at the Erie VAMC, and he provides clinical supervision to the counseling staff at the Erie VET Center.

Debra Semanscin-Doerr, PsyD is the Lead SUD Psychologist at the Erie VAMC. She earned her Bachelor's degree in psychology from the State University of New York at Buffalo. Dr. Semanscin-Doerr earned her masters and doctoral degrees in clinical psychology from Spalding University in Louisville, KY. She completed her pre-doctoral internship at the Western New York VA Healthcare System and her postdoctoral fellowship at the Cleveland Clinic, specializing in health psychology. She has worked for the VA for 11 years. She is the Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) Manager for treatment of substance use disorders. She is certified in Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Substance Use Disorders (CBT-SUD) and has been trained in, and implements, Contingency Management (CM). Dr. Semanscin-Doerr will offer didactic presentations and shadowing opportunities in substance use disorder treatment.

Anne Schwabenbauer, PsyD is a psychologist in the Home-Based Primary Care program. She earned her doctorate in Clinical Psychology from William James College in Boston, Massachusetts. She completed her doctoral internship in Health Psychology at the Central Arkansas VA and a postdoctoral residency in Geropsychology at the Puget Sound VA, American Lake Division. Dr. Schwabenbauer joined the Erie VA in 2018 from VA Boston, where she was also practicing as a Home-Based Primary Care Psychologist. She is certified in REACH VA, an educational and supportive program for caregivers. Her clinical interests include psychotherapy with older adults, provision of integrated mental health services with the goal of improving overall quality of life and health outcomes in elderly, functionally disabled, and chronically ill populations, dementia care, and capacity evaluation.

Kevin Tessner, PhD is the PTSD/SUD Psychologist at the Erie VAMC. He earned a PhD in clinical psychology from Emory University. His research focused on the effects of stress on psychological functioning. Post-doctoral research at the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic at the University of Pittsburgh investigated the role of genetic markers, biological indicators, and social and psychiatric factors in the development of substance use disorders. Dr. Tessner has extensive experience in the areas of neuropsychology and addiction medicine. He is trained and certified to deliver Prolonged Exposure Therapy for PTSD, and he is part of the PTSD and Substance Abuse Care Teams at the Erie VAMC. He has worked for VHA for 7 years. Dr. Tessner also assists former prisoners of war (POW) as the POW Coordinator at the Erie VAMC.

Living in Erie, PA

Erie is one of the largest cities in Pennsylvania, and the Commonwealth's only Great Lakes Port. On the southeast shore of Lake Erie, with a population of 99,475, Erie is located between Cleveland, OH and Buffalo, NY (about 100 miles from each) with Pittsburgh, PA about 130 miles to the south. Despite its relative size and proximity to larger metropolitan areas, the counties surrounding Erie are considered rural. The city boasts affordable housing and short commutes (average of 16 minutes).

The lake is a popular destination for fishing and boating, and Presque Isle State Park, Pennsylvania's largest state park, offers water recreation, trails for biking, rollerblading, and hiking, as well as excellent beaches. Nearby, Waldameer Park & Water World has roller coasters and waterslides. During the cold winter months, Presque Isle advertises several outdoor activities, including cross country skiing, ice fishing, wind skating, ice boating, and ice skating. Splash Lagoon, an indoor waterpark, is also a popular attraction during the winter months. The Erie Zoo offers season passes, and regularly hosts special events. Erie also has several minor league sports teams. The AA baseball team, the Erie Seawolves and the Champion Ontario Hockey League Team, the Otters, both call downtown home.

The area's 80+ inches of annual snow is the most in the state and rivals most cities in the country. The cool lake breezes, which may reach several miles inland, temper summer heat waves, and days with temperatures above 90 degrees are infrequent, making for gorgeous summers. Erie's autumn days are characterized by long dry periods and abundant sunshine.

Consistent with its history in heavy industry, Erie's manufacturing sector remains prominent in the local economy. Indeed 22% of all jobs are still in the manufacturing sector, which is double the national rate. However, with five colleges and universities located in the region, higher education is emerging as one of the greater economic drivers, along with healthcare and tourism.

Erie is known as the "Flagship City" because of Oliver Hazard Perry's flagship Niagara, one of the remaining ships from the War of 1812, which floats just offshore. Other cultural assets within the city include the Erie Land Light, the historic Warner Theatre, its several Philharmonic orchestras, the Bicentennial Tower and the Blasco Library. In addition, the Erie Maritime Museum, traces the history of Lake Erie, and the Erie Art Museum's art collection features 20th-century works.

Relevant Websites

- VA Medical Center, Erie, Pennsylvania
www.erie.va.gov
- National Center for PTSD
<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/>
- Erie, PA
<http://www.erie.pa.us/>
- Local Attractions and Events:
<http://www.presqueisle.org/>
<http://waldameer.com/>
<http://www.splashlagoon.com/>
- Local News
<http://www.yourerie.com/news>
<http://www.goerie.com/news>

Internship Admissions, Support, & Initial Placement Data

Date Program Tables are updated: 9/5/2019

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM ADMISSIONS

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

Applicants who have a strong interest or background in rural mental health or in working with Veteran populations will be a particularly good fit for this internship program. The Erie VAMC is well-suited to provide broad generalist training to interns interested in contributing to the expansion of mental health services in rural areas, which are often underserved and under-resourced.

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

Total Direct Contact Intervention Hours	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	Amount: 300
Total Direct Contact Assessment Hours	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	Amount: 50

Describe any other required minimum criteria used to screen applicants:

Eligible applicants are U.S. citizens from an APA or CPA accredited Ph.D. or Psy.D. clinical or counseling programs and are in good standing. Applicants must have competed at least 3 years of academic study and have completed their comprehensive or qualifying exams

FINANCIAL & OTHER BENEFIT SUPPORT FOR UPCOMING TRAINING YEAR

Annual Stipend/Salary for Full-Time Interns	\$26,166	
Annual Stipend/Salary for Half-Time Interns	N/A	
Program provides access to medical insurance for intern?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Trainee contribution to cost required	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Coverage of family member(s) available?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Coverage of legally married partner available?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Coverage of domestic partner available?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
Hours of Annual Paid Personal Time Off	104	
Hours of Annual Paid Sick Leave	104	
In the event of medical conditions and/or family needs that require extended leave, does the program allow reasonable unpaid leave to interns/residents in excess of personal time off and sick leave?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Other Benefits (please describe):		
Federal Holidays (10) Professional Development Time		

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

INITIAL POST-INTERNSHIP POSITIONS

(Aggregated Tally for the Preceding 3 Cohorts)

2018-2021

Total # of interns who were in 3 cohorts	4	
Total # of interns who did not seek employment because they returned to their doctoral program/are completing doctoral degree	1	
	PD	EP
Community Mental Health Center	0	0
Federally Qualified Health Center	0	0
Independent Primary Care Facility/Clinic	0	0
University Counseling Center	0	0
Veterans Affairs Medical Center	0	0
Military Health Center	0	0
Academic Health Center	0	0
Other Medical Center or Hospital	1	0
Psychiatric Hospital	0	0
Academic University/Department	0	0
Community College or Other Teaching Setting	0	0
Independent Research Institution	0	0
Correctional Facility	0	0
School District/System	0	0
Independent Practice Setting	0	0
Not Currently Employed	0	0
Changed to Another Field	0	0
Other	0	0
Unknown	0	0

Note: "PD" = Post-doctoral residency position; "EP" = Employed Position. Each individual represented in this table should be counted only one time. For former trainees working in more than one setting, select the setting that represents their primary position.

Additional Information

Regarding Eligibility Requirements

- Trainees receive term employee appointments and must meet eligibility requirements for appointment as outlined in VA Handbook 5005 Staffing, Part II, Section B. Appointment Requirements and Determinations. https://www.va.gov/vapubs/viewPublication.asp?Pub_ID=646&FType=2
- Selective Service website where the requirements, benefits and penalties of registering vs. not registering are outlined: <https://www.sss.gov/Registration/Why-Register/Benefits-and-Penalties>

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

- Specific factors. In determining whether a person is suitable for Federal employment, only the following factors will be considered a basis for finding a person unsuitable and taking a suitability action:
 - Misconduct or negligence in employment;
 - Criminal or dishonest conduct;
 - Material, intentional false statement, or deception or fraud in examination or appointment;
 - Refusal to furnish testimony as required by § 5.4 of this chapter;
 - Alcohol abuse, without evidence of substantial rehabilitation, of a nature and duration that suggests that the applicant or appointee would be prevented from performing the duties of the position in question, or would constitute a direct threat to the property or safety of the applicant or appointee or others;
 - Illegal use of narcotics, drugs, or other controlled substances without evidence of substantial rehabilitation;
 - Knowing and willful engagement in acts or activities designed to overthrow the U.S. Government by force; and
 - Any statutory or regulatory bar which prevents the lawful employment of the person involved in the position in question.
- Additional considerations. OPM and agencies must consider any of the following additional considerations to the extent OPM or the relevant agency, in its sole discretion, deems any of them pertinent to the individual case:
 - The nature of the position for which the person is applying or in which the person is employed;
 - The nature and seriousness of the conduct;
 - The circumstances surrounding the conduct;
 - The recency of the conduct;
 - The age of the person involved at the time of the conduct;
 - Contributing societal conditions; and
 - The absence or presence of rehabilitation or efforts toward rehabilitation.

Our Mission

Our Veterans have sacrificed to keep our country—and everything it represents—safe. We honor and serve those men and women by fulfilling President Lincoln's promise "to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan."

We strive to provide Veterans with exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Erie VA Medical Center 814-868-2038

www.erie.va.gov 800-274-8387

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Erie VA Medical Center