



NORTHERN VIRGINIA  
— MENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTE —

**Clinical Psychology Externship Program**  
**at Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute**

**Overview of the Hospital**

Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute (NVMHI) is a 134-bed, accredited, inpatient state psychiatric hospital operated by the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. Our mission is "actively promoting the recovery of individuals with serious mental illness through the use of safe, efficient, and effective services." Located in Falls Church, Virginia, NVMHI provides adult inpatient services most often to the communities of Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William. NVMHI serves voluntary and involuntarily committed civil adults, as well as individuals with a forensic legal status including those adjudicated Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity or are court-ordered for evaluation and/or restoration of competence to stand trial. NVMHI is proud to be a teaching hospital with a culturally diverse staff that infuses the recovery model of care into all aspects of treatment. Clinical departments include psychology, psychiatry, social work, primary care, nursing, dietary services, certified peer specialists, forensic mental health specialists, religious/spiritual programming, educational services, and occupational, expressive, and recreational therapies.

**Overview of the Psychology Department**

The Psychology Department at NVMHI has an active role in meeting the facility's mission, and in doing so provides a full range of assessment, treatment, and consultative services. Psychologists function as core members of interdisciplinary treatment teams, and in addition to managing psychology-related unit responsibilities, also provide individual and group therapies, behavioral consultation, psychological assessment, forensic evaluation, and supervision of psychology externs. The department currently has eleven clinical psychologist positions, a Director of Psychology and Forensic Administration, and two Administrative Assistants. As psychologists, we seek to fulfill our role to the facility and to the profession by promoting quality care by way of evidence-based treatments and best practices, and through providing quality training for future psychologists.

**Overview of the Externship Program**

The externship program at NVMHI provides generalist training in the field of clinical psychology, with exposure to an acute and chronically severe inpatient population of diverse adults. Externs commonly gain experience and exposure to a broad-spectrum of mood and psychotic disorders, personality disorders, and impaired intellectual functioning and who have been charged with or adjudicated on a full-spectrum of criminal offenses. Typically, two or three extern positions are available each training year (the nine month, academic year of September through June). Students are eligible, with approval of both NVMHI and the respective graduate program, to extend the training year to encompass up to 12 months total duration. Externs are required to participate in two 8-hour days per week of on-site training; one of the training days must be Wednesday. Externs work closely with assigned supervisors to identify training goals, develop clinical skills, and further their professional growth. Throughout the year, externs acquire training and exposure to civil and forensic populations/services within the hospital. Externs serve in a training role, alongside supervising psychologists, on various interdisciplinary treatment teams and participate in weekly patient rounds and treatment planning meetings. Externs also maintain a caseload of individual therapy, co-lead psychotherapy groups with a staff psychologist (with the chance to develop and facilitate a group on their own), and complete comprehensive psychological assessments. Specialized training

opportunities (e.g. brief neuropsychological testing; forensic evaluations; observing courtroom testimony) may be available depending on staff availability and student interest. Additional training opportunities are available throughout the year, in the form of grand rounds and clinical case conferences.

### **Supervision**

Supervision is an essential part of the externship training program. NVMHI meets the supervision expectations required of most accredited doctoral programs, which includes at minimum, two hours of weekly supervision, one of which must be conducted in a 1:1 setting with a licensed clinical psychologist. Externs at our site consistently accrue supervision hours far above these minimum requirements, and all supervision is provided by clinical psychologists. Externs will receive clinical supervision for the following areas: individual therapy, group therapy, and psychological assessment. Unit supervision will also be provided by the psychologist with whom the extern is working as part of an interdisciplinary treatment team.

### **Additional Information/Resources**

The externship begins during the week of Labor Day each year. Externs are required to complete hospital and clinical orientations, and various online policy courses at the outset of the training. Externs are excused from training on all State government holidays. Both medical and behavioral emergencies occur at NVMHI; although externs are not expected to respond to such incidents, they are required to participate in basic first-aid/ CPR training and defensive-maneuver training for their own personal safety. There is a shared, locked office space for externs, which can be used to complete work projects and secure personal items. Office equipment includes a computer, a telephone with voicemail, office supplies, and furniture. Each extern will receive a government issued e-mail address, an employee identification badge, and necessary keys. Free onsite parking is offered but is limited, therefore externs may be required to share a parking permit among themselves. Externs are encouraged to take public transit (e.g. WMATA) whenever possible. Paid parking is also available approximately one-block from NVMHI.

### **Applicant Qualifications and Application Process**

The externship program is designed for doctoral students seeking a broad-based, inpatient training experience. Our program is best suited for advanced-level externs with an interest in inpatient/ severe mental illness and/ or forensic settings, who have successfully completed doctoral-level externships in both psychotherapy and psychological assessment. Please note that an active contract must be in place between NVMHI and the university/graduate school in order to be given consideration during the application process. If a contract is not in place and you are interested, please notify the Director of Clinical Training at your respective program, as well as the NVMHI Training Coordinators via the contact information below.

Due to the clinical nature of externship positions, selected applicants will be required to complete routine fingerprinting and drug testing through the Human Resources Department at NVMHI prior to beginning externship. There may be a cost associated with these services, due from the student/school; specific information will be provided to students in the initial letter of selection sent after Uniform Notification Day.

Complete applications are required for consideration and should include the following:

- Cover Letter,
- Curriculum Vitae,
- Letter of Recommendation (preferably from a clinical supervisor), and
- Writing Sample (de-identified psychological evaluation).

Beginning with the 2022-2023 training year, applicants are required to submit a de-identified psychological evaluation (including integrated test results) with their application. If the applicant does not have a sample assessment, another de-identified clinical writing sample is permissible.

**\*\*Applications are due Friday, January 28, 2021.** Interviews will likely be offered between February 14 - 23, 2022. NVMHI participates in Uniform Notification Day, which is Friday, March 11, 2021 this year.

If mailing, please send materials to:

Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute  
Attention: Dr. Ashley Harron  
3302 Gallows Road  
Falls Church, VA 22042-3398

Emailed applications are accepted, but must include scanned signatures:

[Ashley.Harron@dbhds.virginia.gov](mailto:Ashley.Harron@dbhds.virginia.gov)

Please contact the NVMHI Clinical Psychology Externship Training Coordinator(s) with any questions:

Ashley Harron, Psy.D., J.D.  
Email: [Ashley.Harron@dbhds.virginia.gov](mailto:Ashley.Harron@dbhds.virginia.gov)  
Phone: 703-207-7310

Melanie Corum, Psy.D.  
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**\*\*\*COVID-19 UPDATE\*\*\***

Our hospital provides face-to-face inpatient care to a vulnerable population. Given ongoing health concerns, this necessarily means that our staff and students are at an increased risk. As a hospital, we have taken numerous steps to mitigate risk to the extent possible. This has included enforcing social distancing guidelines and transitioning as much of our care and supervision as possible to virtual. This will necessarily change the way the externship interviews are conducted and how the duties of the externship are carried out. Nonetheless, we still do provide in-person care and supervision to the extent possible. Employees and trainees are currently required to be vaccinated against COVID-19 or submit to weekly testing; however, this is subject to change based on recommendations from the health department and/ or Governor's office.