

# **Westchester Institute for Human Development**

*University Center for Excellence  
in  
Developmental Disabilities*



## ***Description of Psychology Externship Opportunities***

## INTRODUCTION TO WIHD

### Overview and Setting

The Westchester Institute for Human Development (WIHD) is one of 60 University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities in the nation, and has served as a unique resource in the areas of disability and human development since it was founded in 1972. The agency provides training, service, technical assistance, research, and dissemination across the lifespan. It is affiliated with the New York Medical College School of Health Sciences & Practice. WIHD serves individuals from infancy to adulthood with a broad range of disabilities, background, and challenges. Located in Valhalla, NY, in Westchester County, about 30 miles north of New York City, it serves a seven county region in New York.

### Agency Mission

WIHD advances policies and practices that foster the healthy development and ensure the safety of all children, strengthen families and communities, and promote health and well-being among people of all ages with disabilities and special health care needs.

## WIHD PSYCHOLOGY EXTERNSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

### Externship Program Overview

WIHD offers part-time (16 hours/wk) Pre-Doctoral Externships from September through June in clinical psychology, providing training in assessment experience of children and families involved with the child welfare system, through *WIHD's Child Welfare Services*. Intervention experience may also be available at times; however the primary focus of the externship is assessment based.

### Training Program Mission

The mission of the Psychology Pre-Doctoral Externship Program at WIHD is to help build foundational training by providing specialized clinical training in meeting the needs of children and those in underserved populations.

### Training Program Model

The model for the program is based on the Scientist Practitioner Model of training. Within this framework, we envision a professional psychologist who is a competent researcher and a knowledgeable practitioner. The program also emphasizes evidence-based practice, which promotes effective practice by applying empirically supported principles of assessment and intervention.

Training Program Goals & Objectives

In keeping with the agency's mission and model, the following goals and objectives have been created to help externs attain specific experience and competence:

*Goals*

- Goal 1: To introduce externs to a child- and family-focused clinical setting.
- Goal 2: To provide externs with a practice-oriented year that will allow them to develop foundational clinical skills.
- Goal 3: To help promote early-career professionals who can deliver services in a flexible, self-aware, ethical, culturally sensitive, and time-effective manner.

*Objectives*

- Objective 1: To prepare externs to perform competent, comprehensive, client-centered clinical and behavioral assessments of children and families with complex developmental needs and multi-systemic challenges.
- Objective 2: To support and develop an extern's skills in conceptualization, treatment planning, psychotherapy and behavioral intervention.
- Objective 3: To help externs consider psychological literature in planning and recommending treatment interventions.
- Objective 4: To help externs enhance their level of self-assessment and sensitivity to individual and cultural differences.
- Objective 5: To prepare externs to practice within ethical and legal guidelines.
- Objective 6: To assist in the nurturing of the ongoing development of professional identity.

Cultural & Individual Differences

The psychology training program is committed to recruiting and training diverse classes of externs who are interested in gaining clinical and

assessment experience in working with underserved children and families. Westchester County is a diverse community so externs have the opportunity to work with a population that is varied in regards to ethnicity, religion, culture, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, medical status, developmental status, and psychiatric needs. Within Child Welfare Services, we primarily serve Latino, African-American, and Caucasian communities. The intersection of culture with practice issues is a clear focus of the training program. Cultural issues are routinely addressed in supervision, as well as in formal didactic seminars.

### **WIHD TRAINING PROGRAM STRUCTURE**

The training year commences early September of each year and typically concludes at the end of June of the following year. Externs are expected to work 16 hours per week.

During their placement, externs will be involved with assessment activities in the *Child Welfare Services program*. *Assessment activities* can include: (a) completing child psychological evaluations of children involved in the child welfare system, (b) intakes of families parents involved with the child welfare system, and (c) screenings for parents receiving Preventive Services. This also provides an opportunity for *Consultation* activities can include working with other members of the treatment team and community partners who are involved in the client's system of care, including the Department of Social Services. There may also be occasional opportunities for providing *individual therapy* to children with a history of mental health needs and/or disability.

#### Supervision

Supervision is a core component of the program and is provided in several forms:

- (1) *Individual Supervision*: Each extern receives a minimum of 1 hour of individual supervision weekly from their primary supervisor (NYS Licensed Psychologist), as well as may receive additional support from interns and/or post-doctoral fellows. Primary supervisors maintain full responsibility for each extern's work.
  
- (2) *Formal Professional Didactic Seminar*: Externs would participate in the *Psychology Seminar* which runs year long weekly and is 1 hour long (on Wednesdays). The seminar is led by Psychology Supervisors. Topics include strength-based writing, assessment, understanding early childhood development across language and play domains, understanding trauma and the child welfare system, and behavioral needs/interventions related to children with disabilities. As the year

progresses, topics include the various roles that psychologists can take on, as well as professional development issues.

- (3) *Additional Training:* Externs are also encouraged to attend training presentations, guest lectures, conferences, & Grand Rounds offered by WIHD, New York Medical College, and Westchester Medical Center.
- (4) *Informal Support:* Both Psychology and Social Worker Supervisors are available throughout the week to provide informal supervision on an as needed basis.

## **TRAINING RESOURCES**

### **Training Supervisors**

Psychology training supervisors at WIHD offer expertise in an array of diagnostic and therapeutic interventions, and come from a range of backgrounds, including clinical, developmental, and school programs. All are licensed in the state of NY and several supervisors are themselves graduates of the WIHD training program. Many are also adjunct faculty members in the School of Health Sciences and Practice at New York Medical College. All supervisors work closely to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate the progress of externs in attaining required competencies and in the continuous quality improvement of the training program. Externs also have many opportunities to collaborate with highly skilled agency-wide professionals from other disciplines, including social work, speech/language pathology, and psychiatry.

### **Physical Resources**

Externs have their own desk space, with computer and phone, in the trainee office. Therapy and assessment sessions are conducted in a number of playrooms that are available. A number of testing materials are available to externs, as well as computer scoring systems.

## **EVALUATION OF EXTERNS**

### **Feedback to Externs**

Primary supervisors, with feedback from additional supervisors, complete mid-year and end-of-year evaluations of an extern's strengths and areas for future growth. When there are areas of concern regarding an extern's performance, the supervisor will indicate these concerns, first verbally and then in writing if necessary. Evaluations and feedback are shared with an extern's home university.

### **Requirements for Completion of Externship**

The following requirements must be met to the satisfaction of the Director of Training:

- Satisfactory completion of all training activities.
- Completion of all assigned clinical documentation & record keeping.
- Regular attendance at the following weekly meetings (as permitted by schedule): (a) CW Staff Meeting (b) Psychology Seminar.
- Attainment of knowledge and skills at a level commensurate with that of a pre-doctoral student, as based on evaluation forms.

## **APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

### **Eligibility for Application**

One psychology applicant will be offered a position at WIHD for the '24-'25 training year. To be considered for the training program, applicants must:

- Be in a professional psychology doctoral program (clinical, clinical child, pediatric, applied developmental, or school psychology) that is an APA, CPA, or regionally accredited institution.
- Had coursework and practica in child assessment and intervention.
- Experience and/or interest in child development and, preferably, developmental disabilities.

### **Application Process**

WIHD follows the guidelines set forth by the PSYDNYS-NYNJADOT. As such, applications will be accepted within the timeframe offered through the guidelines (typically, mid January through mid February).

- 1) Interested applicants should submit their application through the APA Externship portal ([www.nynjadot.aga.org](http://www.nynjadot.aga.org)). Applications should include:
  - a. CV
  - b. Cover Letter
  - c. Eligibility Letter
  - d. 2 Letters of Recommendations
- 2) Upon review of a completed application packet, face-to-face interviews may then be offered. Candidates invited for an interview will be contacted via email with some possible interview slots. The interview process typically lasts a ½ hour to an hour and provides an opportunity to meet with the Director of Psychology Training.

- 3) Externship offers will be made in accordance with the PSYDNYS-NYNJADOT Externship guidelines and timelines.

The most successful applicants are those who are felt to demonstrate a strong “fit” between the candidates’ stated training goals and WIHD training activities, and who exhibit an ability to manage multiple activities.

**For Further Information, Please Contact:**

Trupti Rao, Psy.D., Director of Psychology Training  
Voice mail: 914-493-8141                      Email: [trao@wihd.org](mailto:trao@wihd.org)