

# **Westchester Institute for Human Development**

*University Center for Excellence  
in  
Developmental Disabilities*



## ***Description of Psychology Post-doctoral Fellowships***

## 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. It is affiliated with the New York Medical College School of Health Sciences & Practice, and as such provides fellows with extensive academic resources and supports. 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.

### **Description of Services**

WIHD consists of a number of programs and services:

- *Behavioral Psychology Program:* Provides behavioral therapy to individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities who display challenging behaviors. Also provides consultation to parents, teachers, and residential facilities.
- *Community Support Network:* The Hudson Valley's Resource Center for current information, referral assistance, and training on services available throughout the lifespan for individuals with special needs and their families.
- *Early Childhood Services:* Diagnostic evaluation services are provided for children with developmental concerns, neurodevelopmental disabilities, and intellectual disabilities.
- *Family Connection Service Coordination:* Parents of children with special needs provide service coordination for families of infants/toddlers with disabilities.

- *Child Welfare Services*: Comprehensive evaluation and treatment services are provided to children and families involved with Social Services.
- *Children's Advocacy Center*: Provides forensic medical and psychosocial assessments of children who may have experienced physical abuse and/or sexual exploitation.
- *Adult Health Services*: Primary health care and behavioral consultation is provided to individuals with severe disabilities or multiple complex health problems.
- *Dental Services*: Comprehensive general dental services are provided for children and adults with disabilities in the facility-based dental clinic and on a mobile dental van.
- *Speech and Hearing Center*: Evaluation and treatment of speech-language, voice, feeding, swallowing and hearing disorders.
- *Assistive Technology Services*: Works to identify devices or adaptations to improve mobility and communication. Has a demonstration center and offers a loan program of equipment.
- *LEND*: Intensive leadership training for those serving children with special healthcare needs and their families.

## **WIHD PSYCHOLOGY TRAINING PROGRAM**

### Training Program Overview

WIHD is currently offering one full-time, 12-month post-doctoral Fellowships in clinical psychology/developmental disabilities.

Psychology fellows develop specialized skills that are essential for post-licensure professional functioning, including interdisciplinary evaluation and intervention, consultation to education, health, and social service agencies, forming partnerships with families, and team leadership, in a multi-disciplinary, culturally diverse setting.

### Training Program Mission

The mission of the Psychology Post-Doctoral Training Program at WIHD is to build upon foundational training by providing specialized clinical training, along with research experience, toward the purpose of preparing post-doctoral fellows to be ethical and competent licensed psychologists and

leaders, who have a particular understanding of how to meet the needs of children and families with disabilities 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 fellows attain specific experience and competence:

#### *Goals*

- Goal 1: To provide post-doctoral fellows with an intensive, practice-oriented year that will further prepare them to function effectively and increasingly independently post-licensure.
- Goal 2: To introduce fellows to a wide variety of settings in which psychologists may practice.
- Goal 3: To help promote early-career professionals who are critical thinkers, with a quality improvement mindset, who can deliver psychological services in a flexible, self-aware, ethical, culturally sensitive, and time-effective manner.

#### *Objectives*

- Objective 1: To prepare fellows 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 further support and strengthen a fellow's skills in conceptualization, treatment planning, psychotherapy and behavioral intervention
- Objective 3: To help fellows consider local community services and psychological literature in planning and recommending treatment interventions.

- Objective 4: To help fellows further enhance the process of self-assessment and sensitivity to individual and cultural differences.
- Objective 5: To prepare fellows to function as leaders within their professional settings, and 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 fellows who would be prepared to provide assessment/intervention services, conduct research, and seek out leadership and advocacy opportunities to improve the needs of children and families who are underserved and/or with disabilities. Westchester County is a diverse community so fellows 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, but are seeing an increase in the Asian community as well. The communities served in the Behavioral Psychology Program and Early Childhood Services are representative of the diversity of Westchester County and include middle class to upper middle class families, as well as range of ethnicities. 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 August of the following year. As full time professional employees, fellows are expected to work a minimum of 35 hours per week. In actuality, fellows typically spend between 40-45 hours per week on training related activities. The training program is designed to allow fellows to function with increasing independence as the training year progresses, as most fellows will seek licensure following completion of the fellowship, while providing supervision throughout.

#### Clinical & Professional Activities

There are two tracks within the fellowship: 1) Child Welfare and 2) Behavioral Psychology:

(1) *Child Welfare Service/Children's Services Activities:* Fellows who have a year-long rotation in the CWS program will participate in a variety of assessment and intervention activities, which support gaining increased experience in various clinical skills and learning to negotiate the complex system of child welfare and social services.

- *Assessment* activities can include: (a) completing child psychological evaluations of children involved with the Department of Social Services (DSS), and (b) screenings for parents involved with DSS
- *Intervention* activities can include: (a) providing individual, therapy to children with histories of trauma and/or abuse (b) providing individual therapy to children with a variety of presenting needs (c) providing group therapy to children around social skills

(2) *Behavioral Psychology Activities:* Fellows based on background may participate in this program as part of a major, year-long rotation or as a minor rotation. The Behavioral Psychology program provides a fellow the opportunity to participate in a variety of treatment services to clients across the lifespan. Activities involve providing evidence-based behavioral treatments (Applied Behavior Analysis, CBT, Behavior Therapy, DBT techniques) to adults and children with autism and developmental disabilities, with challenging behavior and/or mental health needs on an outpatient basis. Opportunities may also arise to provide services to group homes and collaborate on behavior plans.

In addition to the above major rotation, fellows will participate in:

*Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental & Related Disabilities (LEND) Training:* Thursdays from September to May, fellows participate in this Institute-wide leadership education program, with other advanced fellows from a range of disciplines, which places professional activities within the larger context of health care systems and public policy. An interdisciplinary training perspective provides a systematic background in developmental disabilities, emphasizing family partnerships, cultural and linguistic competence, and populations with limited access to health care. Activities include weekly leadership seminars and ongoing participation in an evidence-based treatment project. Fellows are encouraged to take on leadership and mentoring roles within LEND, as they typically present with higher levels of experience than the other trainees.

Fellows may also have the opportunity to participate in some of the following activities:

- *Autism Diagnostic Evaluations:* Evaluations utilizing the *Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (ADOS-2)*
- *Early Intervention Program:* Fellows may become involved in conducting evaluations of infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities. Fellows focus on partnerships with families, current approaches to early diagnostic assessment, and are exposed to a broad variety of assessment tools and strategies. They learn to consult with and interact with the wide variety of professionals that are involved with early intervention, and gain experience with home-based, team-based assessment. Interfaces with programs in the community and conferences within the Department of Health early intervention program provide valuable perspectives on this system of care.
- *Grant-related activities:* Faculty often conduct grant-supported projects that provide unique higher-level training for fellows. Past topics have included positive behavior supports, training in assessment and evaluation in autism spectrum disorders (ASD), and survey of preschool and school-aged services for children with ASD.
- *Agency Consultation:* Trainees may participate in an off-site activity with opportunities to consult with and support several special education preschool classrooms.
- *Presentations & Community Training:* Faculty often present to parents, schools, at local agencies, and at local and national conferences. At times, a fellow may be asked to assist in preparing such a presentation.
- *Quality Improvement activities:* Fellows are sometimes asked to participate in designing or assisting in the design of various program evaluation and quality improvement measures. As an example, past fellows have been involved in activities such as developing consumer satisfaction surveys and creating databases to capture program-specific, quality improvement data.
- *Research-related activities:* At times, faculty is requested to assist in evaluation activities related to pediatric research studies. Examples of past and present activities include conducting developmental screenings of preterm infants and completing follow-up evaluations on children receiving pediatric oncology services.
- *Supervision:* Fellows may partially supervise and support a part-time extern or full-time intern in their assessments.

#### Activities & Rotation Schedule

Based on a process that takes into account each fellow's interests and experience, as well as the needs of the various agency programs, a schedule is

created for each fellow which identifies the various activities that fellows will engage in.

### Supervision

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

- (1) *Individual Supervision*: Each fellow receives a minimum of 1 hour of individual supervision weekly from their primary supervisor, as well as a minimum of 1 hour of weekly individual supervision with additional supervisors, to address clinical and assessment activities. Although fellows are expected to enter the training experience with strong foundational skills, the training offers certain specialized training experiences (e.g., early childhood assessment) that may be less familiar to fellows. As such, fellows may “shadow” supervisors initially on various clinical activities and supervisors may complete certain activities in conjunction with fellows, until a fellow feels comfortable and is ready to work independently. Supervisors maintain full responsibility for each fellow’s work.
  
- (2) *Formal Professional Didactic Seminars*: Fellows participate in a variety of seminars, depending on their clinical activities:
  - The *Psychology Seminar* runs year long and is 1 hour long. The seminar is led by Psychology Faculty and focuses on a variety of topics including, understanding early childhood development across language and play domains, needs of children/family involved with the child welfare system, behavioral needs/interventions related to children with disabilities, themes related to the various roles that psychologists can take on, as well as professional development issues. Fellows are expected to also present one time each on a topic of interest.
  - As noted above, fellows also participate in didactic sessions on a weekly basis as part of *LEND*, from September to April. Sessions are led by a diverse, multi-disciplinary group of leaders, including both WIHD staff and professionals from outside agencies.
  - *Additional Training*: Fellows are also encouraged to attend training presentations, conferences, & Grand Rounds offered by WIHD, New York Medical College, Westchester Medical Center, local conferences, outside agencies and national conferences occurring locally. Occasionally there are some funds available to cover travel and registration costs.

(3) *Informal Support:* Supervisors are available throughout the week to provide informal supervision on an as needed basis.

### Time Allocation

Fellows spend approximately 3 days a week completing and writing various assessments and seeing clients. The fourth day consists of supervision and participation in didactic seminars. The final day is spent in LEND.

## **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 fellows in attaining required competencies and in the continuous quality improvement of the training program. Fellows also have many opportunities to collaborate with, and be supervised by, highly skilled agency-wide professionals from other disciplines, including social work, speech/language pathology, psychiatry, nursing, and family specialists.

### **Benefits**

During the initial few weeks of the training program, fellows are provided with information about the benefits and supports available to them as fellows.

Postdoctoral fellows are eligible for benefits. All fellows are eligible for 12 days of vacation time, 2 days of personal/sick time, and 5 days of professional time, as well as approximately 11 paid holidays (plus 1 floating holiday) that are observed by the organization.

### **Physical Resources**

There are dedicated office spaces for trainees. Each fellow has their own computer and phone. Therapy and assessment sessions are conducted in a number of playrooms that are available. A number of testing materials are available to fellows, as well as computer scoring systems. In addition, all fellows are given access to the on-site and online library services department of New York Medical College, which provides on-line access to a number of

databases that feature professional papers and journals in psychology and the behavioral health sciences.

## **EVALUATION OF FELLOWS**

### **Feedback to Fellows**

Primary supervisors, with feedback from additional supervisors, complete mid-year and end-of-year evaluations of a fellow's strengths and areas for future growth. These evaluations are internal to WIHD, but become the basis upon which impressions are drawn and communicated if references are needed. When there are areas of concern regarding a fellow's performance, the supervisor will indicate these concerns, first verbally and then in writing if necessary.

### **Requirements for Completion of Training Year**

The following requirements must be met to the satisfaction of the Director of Training to receive certification of internship/fellowship completion:

- Completion of a minimum of 1750 hours of supervised work, which is the requirement for New York State licensure.
- Satisfactory completion of all training activities.
- Completion of all assigned clinical documentation & record keeping.
- Regular attendance at the following meetings: (a) Staff Meetings (b) Psychology Seminar
- Attainment of knowledge and skills at a level commensurate with that of a post-doctoral level practitioner, as based on evaluation forms.
- Completion of the LEND training experience.

## **APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

### **Eligibility for Application**

To be considered for the training program, applicants must have:

- Completed all required doctoral coursework in a professional psychology program (clinical, counseling, and/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 developmental disabilities.
- Completed internship experience that is APA or CPA, or an APPIC member internship. If an internship is not accredited or a member of APPIC, then the applicant must provide written attestation from their Director of Clinical Training and/or their Internship Training Director that the internship experience met all APPIC standards. This written

documentation will then be reviewed by the WIHD Director of Training.

### **Application Process**

Letters of interest will be accepted on a rolling admissions basis from **mid-October to February of each year**, until all available positions are filled.

- (1) Interested individuals should first submit the following to the Director of Training, Dr. Trupti Rao, at [trao@wihd.org](mailto:trao@wihd.org):
  - A Cover Letter highlighting training background & particular interests in WIHD's training program
  - Curriculum Vitae
  
- (2) The Cover Letter & CV will be reviewed and, if an applicant is determined to have interests/experiences that are a possible appropriate fit with WIHD training goals, Dr. Rao will contact the applicant for a brief phone screener and subsequently request a full application. The full application consists of:
  - A completed online application through the APPIC CAS system (<https://portal.appicpostdoc.org>)
  - Copy of Graduate School Transcript (unofficial copy is acceptable)
  - 3 Letters of Recommendation
  - 2 LEND Reference forms (available at [http://www.wihd.org/page.aspx?pid=711#.VD\\_c8WddXTo](http://www.wihd.org/page.aspx?pid=711#.VD_c8WddXTo))
  - Writing Samples (with identifiers removed):
    - 1 Evaluation Report
    - 1 Other Brief Writing Sample (e.g., Research Proposal, Literature Review, Article that you co-authored or collaborated on)

***Please note that applications will only be accepted through the CAS system.***

- (3) Upon review of a completed application packet, face-to-face interviews will then be scheduled. Candidates will be contacted via email with some possible interview dates (either morning or afternoon slots) and requested to identify a date of most convenience. The interview process typically lasts 2 ½ -3 hours. It involves several meetings with Psychology Supervisory Staff and Program Directors, the LEND Director, as well as an opportunity to meet and speak with current fellows regarding their "first-hand" experiences with the training program.

The most successful applicants are those who enter the program with a strong foundation in child assessment and clinical practice, 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 placements and priorities during the training year.

**For Further Information, Please Contact:**

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