

Practicum Training Manual



Dayton VA Medical Center



Psychology Practicum Training

Mission

We take pride in our profession and in the training and professional development of psychology practicum trainees. We recognize that there are special responsibilities associated with providing this training. The mission of the Psychology Practicum Program is to establish and maintain an environment that maximizes the potential for professional development for each psychology practicum trainee.

Model

The Psychology Practicum Training Program is a Pre-Internship Training experience. The Dayton VAMC Psychology Practicum Program philosophy is consistent with the practitioner-scholar model (Vail model) of academic training and practice as summarized by Rodolfa et al. (2005). This model "emphasizes the 'mutuality of science and practice', and the practical application of scholarly knowledge. Psychological science is viewed as a human practice and psychological practice is construed as a human science, and the two inform each other. The model emphasizes the development of reflective skills and multiple ways of knowing in the practice of psychology, and it stresses clinical practice and the importance of theory and the use of research to inform practice. Students are trained to be psychologists who think critically and engage in disciplined inquiry focused on the individual and who gain clinical experience rather than conducting laboratory science". Consistent with the ACCTA definition of practitioner scholar programs, it is also our philosophy to "include empirically supported treatments, a value on the psychologist as a consumer of research, recognition of the importance of generating knowledge through practice, and an expectation that practicum trainees participate in scholarly activities". Our pedagogical approach to the application of this model is that of a developmental/apprenticeship process that "nurtures people in making the transition from trainee to competent autonomous professional, thus helping them to integrate their personal and professional selves; places a high value on respecting the diversity and uniqueness of every individual; and underscores the importance of supervisory relationship and the mentoring process".

The Practitioner-Scholar Model is consistent with the tripartite mission of the VHA, which includes patient care, education/training, and research.

Approach

There are various forms of supervision. Within the practicum program, we define supervision by using the term "Supervision for the Purpose of Training".

- Inherent in supervision for the purpose of training is a complex social relationship that is operated on a number of levels simultaneously. It is important that all parties concerned recognize, and are sensitive to, the multiple levels.
- Supervision for the purpose of training has five components.

- Formal knowledge ○ Skills/experience ○ Attitudes/beliefs
- Ensure safety of consumers ○ Supervision for the purpose of training has a developmental quality.

We utilize a programmatic approach to training. Within this approach, each practicum trainee enters an ongoing patient care system and performs the duties of a psychologist. An apprenticeship approach is utilized to varying degrees. Variation is due to the specific needs of each practicum trainee and the tasks being learned.

We have adopted situational management theory as our conceptual basis. The role of a training supervisor evolves as a practicum trainee develops competence in a given task: direct, coach, consult, supervised independence. The theory is elegant in its simplicity and incorporates well the developmental nature of a psychology practicum trainee.

Within the various guidelines, rules, regulations, laws, standards of care, and models that govern our professional behavior, training is individualized in order to meet the professional needs of each practicum trainee. There is a proactive dialogue among all relevant parties that begins before, and continues throughout, the practicum year.

Practicum Structure

All practicum students must go through Practicum Training interviews if they wish to be considered. No staff psychologist may independently contract with a graduate school to provide practicum training. A designated subgroup of the Psychology Training Committee (PTC) led by the Practicum Coordinator must approve all students for training.

Only doctoral-level students from APA-approved Clinical or Counseling Psychology programs will be considered for Practicum Training interviews.

Practicum training experiences may vary from year-to-year, dependent upon supervisor availability.

For example, during the 2016-2017 training year, we offered the following training opportunity:

- Neuropsychology Clinic
- Geropsychology

For the 2017-2018 training year, we offered the following training clinics:

- Neuropsychology Clinic

Other possible practicum training tracks may include: Family Service Program and Mental Health Clinic.

Practicum Training applicants can apply to any of the tracks that are being offered for the next training year.

The time, location, and format of the interview(s) are chosen through dialogue between the Practicum Training Coordinator, the supervisors, and the practicum applicants. Practicum trainees are chosen after the interview process has been completed.

Practicum training typically begins in late summer or early fall. Training length is usually 9-12 months, depending on the requirements of a student's doctoral program. Practicum trainees typically require at least two 8-hour days on-site; however, some programs may require up to 20 hours on-site.

We use the title of Psychology Practicum Trainee in order to be consistent with the titles used in this medical center and with the State of Ohio.

Typical supervised direct service activities for practicum trainees can include a variety of assessment and intervention opportunities, including: individual, group, and family therapy, psychological assessments, and consultation.

Application Procedures and Timeline

1. The Practicum Coordinator usually supplies an updated Site Summary to each regional psychology graduate program by January each year. This is to allow each student ample time to review next year's training clinics, possible supervisors, typical training opportunities, and populations served.
2. Interested students can feel free to contact the Practicum Coordinator directly with questions about the Site Summary and/or training opportunities: 552psychpracticum@va.gov
3. Students interested in applying for practicum are required to obtain approval from their Director of Clinical Training prior to sending application materials (e.g., cover letters, CVs, etc.) to the Practicum Coordinator: 552psychpracticum@va.gov
4. Once approved to apply, applicants should send all materials by email only. Please note that no regularly mailed or faxed application materials will be reviewed or considered.
5. The Practicum Coordinator will contact applicants chosen for interview by mid-March. Interviews typically occur during the 3rd or 4th week of March.
6. After all interviews are complete, the Practicum Coordinator then informs each graduate program of its selections and rankings. After internal deliberations, each graduate program determines which students will train at the Dayton VA during the upcoming training year and notifies all parties in April or May.

Trainee Eligibility Requirements

1. Only doctoral students in good standing at an APA-accredited graduate program in Clinical or Counseling psychology are eligible to apply at any VA Medical Center for psychology practicum training.
2. Prior approval by the applicant's graduate program training director to apply to the Dayton VA practicum is required.
3. Psychology practicum trainees are subject to fingerprinting and background checks. Commencement of practicum training are contingent on passing these screens.

Additional Eligibility Requirements

1. There must be an existing Affiliation Agreement between an applicant's psychology graduate program and the Dayton VA Medical center prior to beginning training on site.

For detailed information about VA training requirements go to:

www.psychologytraining.va.gov/eligibility.asp

Problems, Conflicts, Developmental Issues, Impairments, and their Resolution

General Comments and Philosophy

The training staff makes considerable efforts to establish and maintain a positive growth environment for practicum trainees. Training staff and practicum trainees form a special kind of relationship. Primarily, it is a collegial relationship designed to support practicum trainees in professional development.

Problems, misperceptions, miscommunications, disagreements, and occasional conflict can be anticipated as part of the Practicum experience. Varying degrees of discomfort, tension, and disagreement are expected and normal. The sources of problems and conflicts are quite varied. Such issues are inherent in any organization. The Practicum year is an opportunity to learn how to deal with such issues in a supportive environment.

We are responsible for the maintenance of a quality Practicum training program. Each practicum trainee is responsible for his or her professional development. By design and on a practical level the two sets of responsibilities are almost synonymous. Discrepant needs occur occasionally. At such times, the two phenomenologies can become quite divergent. Individual needs of practicum trainees are recognized and considered as part of decision-making processes. The Psychology Training Committee makes reasonable efforts to be flexible within the parameters of the Practicum program. Training staff and practicum trainees are expected to behave in a professionally responsible manner when dealing with such issues.

No one set of procedures can be established to cover all scenarios nor can one dictate specific directions for all situations. Emphasis is placed on the resolution (1) at the lowest possible level, (2) using the least formal means, (3) as part of the natural course of events, and (4) in a manner that supports all parties involved. Some situations may require little if any input from the training committee, some events may require formal action immediately, while some situations may involve long term informal monitoring. Professional judgments will be required. In all cases it is important to maintain the identity and integrity of the Practicum program.

General Structure

Together with Psychology Internship and Postdoctoral Fellowship training, Practicum Training completes the Psychology training experience of the Dayton VAMC Psychology Training Program.

The Practicum Coordinator is responsible for the administrative oversight and operation of Psychology Practicum Training, while Practicum Supervisors are responsible for all clinical aspects of practicum training of the practicum trainees they supervise. The Co-Directors of Internship and Fellowship Training are resources to the Practicum Program and together with the Lead Psychologist maintain an "open door" policy. The Lead Psychologist maintains ultimate responsibility for the Dayton VAMC Psychology Training Program.

Due Process: General Guidelines

Due process ensures that decisions made about practicum trainees are based upon performance and not arbitrarily or personally based. The Practicum program has identified specific evaluative procedures along with appeal procedures that are available to practicum trainees. All steps need to be appropriately implemented and documented. The general due process guidelines include:

- Provide practicum trainees with the program's expectations regarding professional competencies and functioning in written form.
- Stipulation of the procedures for evaluation at regular intervals.
- Articulation of the various procedures and actions involved in making decisions regarding impairment.
- Communication early and frequently with graduate programs about suspected difficulties with practicum trainees to include seeking constructive input on how to best deal with such difficulties.
- When indicated, institution of a remediation plan to include a time frame for expected completion, along with the consequences for not rectifying the inadequacies.
- Provision of a written procedure that describes how a practicum trainee may appeal a decision.
- Assurance that a practicum trainee has sufficient time to respond to any action taken by the training committee.
- When indicated, use of input from multiple sources when making decisions or recommendations regarding a practicum trainee's performance.
- Appropriate documentation of the rationale and actions taken by the training committee.

Problems

A problem is defined as a situation that presents difficulty, uncertainty, and/or perplexity. Various problems can and do arise during the course of the Practicum that impact on the quality of training and possibly raise question about completion: extended illness, loss of staff, personal problems, changes in the delivery of services, major changes in rotations, changes in career plans, etc. It is important to deal with such problems in a constructive manner in order to maximize positive outcome for all parties involved. In general, the following guidelines will be observed.

- Competent, safe, and uninterrupted patient care are the foremost principles that will guide problem resolution.
- Emphasis is placed on supporting the practicum trainee in successful completion of the Practicum while maintaining the integrity of the Practicum program. This includes ensuring that patient care needs are met appropriately.
- The general orientation is one of a problem (or problems) to be solved: identification of relevant variables, definition of successful outcome, responsibilities, etc.
- All parties involved are expected to form a mutual problem solving relationship.
- If completion of the Practicum is in question and/or there is an anticipated delay in completion, the Training Director at the practicum trainee's graduate program will be contacted and included as an integral part of the problem solving process.
- The amount and type of documentation required will depend upon the nature and extent of the problem.

Problematic Situations in Supervision

While the vast majority of practicum trainee-supervisory pairs establish a productive working relationship, it is understood that there may be relationship difficulties that emerge or evolve. Examples of the problematic situations include, but are not limited to: *perceived failure to provide adequate supervision or perceived improper conduct by a supervisor or any member of the PTC*. We encourage difficulties to be worked out in the context of their professional relationship and expect that all parties behave in a professional manner. This includes protecting the integrity of the practicum trainee and the supervisor (APA Code: General Principles A-E, 1.04, 1.07, 3.01, 3.02, 3.03, 3.04). The following are guidelines to be followed by all parties involved:

Informal Problem Resolution

- When a practicum trainee has a concern regarding the quality or nature of his/her training, it is expected that the practicum trainee first address the concern with the supervisor during the rotation as soon as possible. An exception to this guideline would be in the case that an practicum trainee perceives that an EEO violation has occurred

(sexual harassment, sexual discrimination, hostile work environment, etc.). In that event, the practicum trainee may choose to pursue avenues as described by HRMS.

- If the practicum trainee is not satisfied with the supervisor's response to their verbal discussion, then the practicum trainee can contact the Practicum Coordinator to initiate an informal mediated discussion between all parties. If the practicum trainee's supervisor and the Practicum Coordinator are the same person, the practicum trainee can meet informally with a Co-Director of Training or proceed directly to formal problem resolution procedures as detailed below.

Formal Problem Resolution

- Notice and Hearing. If the problem is not resolved via mediation with the Practicum Coordinator, then the practicum trainee may put his/her concern in writing and submit it to the Co-DoTs. The Co-DoTs will meet with the parties involved (supervisor, practicum trainee, Practicum Coordinator) and make a recommendation. This recommendation will also be presented to the PTC.
- Appeal. If the recommendation rendered by the Co-DoTs is not acceptable to either party (practicum trainee or the supervising psychologist), then the issue may be appealed in writing (by either party) to the PTC for recommendations. The PTC may choose to ask for more information in order to resolve the issue. The PTC will make the recommendation in writing and present it to the practicum trainee and the supervisor.
- Documentation: A standardized form will be used to document the formal resolution process(es) and outcomes. The form will be part of the practicum trainee's training folder.

Developmental Issues

Developmental issues or problem behaviors refer to behaviors, attitudes, or characteristics that, while of concern and requiring action, are not necessarily unexpected or excessive for professionals in training. Developmental issues or problem behaviors are considered to be present when one or more supervisors judge a practicum trainee's behaviors, attitudes, or characteristics as disruptive to the quality of his or her clinical services, relationships with staff, and/or ability to comply with appropriate standards of professional behavior. We recognize that, to varying and acceptable degrees, developmental issues are inherent in the training process. The exact manner in which issues are resolved depends on the nature of the developmental problem. In general, all parties are expected to adopt a constructive, problem solving approach. When indicated, the training director at the practicum trainee's graduate program will be contacted and included as an integral part of the process.

Impairments

Impairment is defined as an interference in professional functioning that is manifested in the following ways: (1) an inability and/or unwillingness to acquire and integrate professional standards into his or her repertoire of professional behavior, (2) an inability to acquire professional skills that meet an acceptable level of competency, and/or (3) an inability to control personal stress which leads to dysfunctional emotional reactions and/or behaviors. Professional judgments are required as to when behavior reflects impairments rather than developmental issues. Typically, impairments include one or more of the following characteristics.

- The practicum trainee does not acknowledge, understand, or address the problem when it is identified.
- The problem is not merely a reflection of a skill deficit that can be rectified by academic or didactic training.
- The quality of services delivered by the practicum trainee is sufficiently negatively affected to the extent that they are considered unhelpful or detrimental to patients.
- The problem is not restricted to one area of professional functioning.
- A disproportionate amount of attention by training personnel is required.
- The practicum trainee's behavior does not change as a function of feedback, remediation efforts, and/or time.
- Multiple and similar observations are made by more than one supervisor.

The concept of impairment denotes that there is concern about successful completion of the Practicum program. As part of the intervention, the training committee will communicate with the practicum trainee's graduate training program.

Remediation of Impairments

When implementing remediation or sanctioning interventions the training committee must be mindful of and balance the sometimes incompatible needs of the practicum trainee, patients, other practicum trainees, the integrity of the training program, training staff and other personnel in the agency. The general approach is to begin with the least and progress to the more serious interventions. Depending upon the nature of the impairment, the training committee may select a more structured intervention immediately. The general guideline is to communicate formally with the practicum trainee's graduate program training director when there is a written record – even if it is temporary.

1. An oral warning to the practicum trainee that emphasizes the need to discontinue the behavior in question. No record of the action is made or maintained.
2. A written statement to the practicum trainee that communicates formally:

- The training committee is aware of the behavior(s) and is concerned. ○
The concern has been brought to the attention of the practicum trainee.
 - The training committee will work with the practicum trainee to rectify the matter.
 - The behaviors are not significant enough to warrant more serious action.
 - The written statement will be removed from the practicum trainee's file when s/he responds to the concerns and completes the Practicum successfully.
3. A written warning to the practicum trainee that indicates the need to discontinue an inappropriate action or behavior. The memorandum will contain:
- A description of the practicum trainee's unsatisfactory performance/ behaviors
 - Actions needed by the practicum trainee to correct the unsatisfactory behavior(s),
 - The supervisor(s) responsible,
 - The time line for correcting the problem,
 - What action will be taken if the problem is not corrected, and ○
Notification that the practicum trainee has the right to appeal the action.
4. Schedule modification is a time limited, remediation oriented, and closely supervised period of training designed so that the practicum trainee is likely to attain a functional level of competency regarding the professional behavior(s) involved. Modifying a practicum trainee's schedule is an accommodation made to assist him or her in responding to personal

reactions to environmental stress with the full expectation that s/he will complete the Practicum. The period will include more closely scrutinized supervision conducted by the regularly scheduled supervisors in consultation with the training committee. Several possible and perhaps concurrent courses of action may be included to modify the schedule.

- Increasing the amount of supervision, either with the same or other supervisors.
 - Change the format, emphasis, and/or focus of supervision.
 - Recommendation of personal therapy.
 - Reducing the practicum trainee's clinical or other workload.
 - Requiring specific academic coursework.
 - The training committee will determine the duration and termination of a schedule modification period.
5. Probation is a time limited, remediation oriented, closely supervised training period with a twofold purpose. One is to assess the potential for the practicum trainee to complete the training program successfully. The other is to increase the likelihood that the practicum trainee will attain a functional level of competency regarding the professional behavior(s) involved. Probation defines a relationship in which the training committee monitors very closely and systematically the training of the practicum trainee. The practicum trainee is informed of probation in a memorandum that includes:
- Specific behaviors associated with the unacceptable rating.
 - Recommendations for rectifying the problem(s).
 - Responsibilities for all relevant parties.
 - Duration of the probation during which the problem is expected to be ameliorated.
 - Procedures and criteria to ascertain whether the problem has been rectified appropriately.

If the Psychology Training Committee determines that there has not been sufficient improvement to remove a practicum trainee from probationary status, the members will discuss the matter to determine the course of action. A memorandum will be sent to the practicum trainee informing him or her that the conditions for terminating probation have not been met and the course of action taken by the PTC.

6. Suspension of Direct Service Activities requires a determination by the training committee or official entity at this medical center that the welfare of the practicum trainee's patients or consultation sources has been jeopardized. Therefore, direct service activities are suspended for a specified period of time. At the end of the suspension period, the training committee and/or official entity at this medical center will assess the

practicum trainee's capacity for effective functioning and determine when direct services can be resumed.

7. Administrative Leave denotes the temporary withdrawal of all medical center responsibilities and privileges at the medical center.
8. Dismissal from the Practicum denotes the permanent withdrawal of all medical center responsibilities and privileges. The decision is made after an especially serious breach of conduct, when physical or psychological harm to a patient is imminent, and/or reasonable efforts to rectify a significant deficiency have been unsuccessful.

Procedures for Responding to Inadequate Performance by a Practicum Trainee

If a practicum trainee receives an unacceptable rating from any of the evaluation sources or if a staff member has concerns about a practicum trainee's professional behavior, the following guidelines will be used.

- The training supervisor or staff member will consult with the Practicum Coordinator and training committee to determine if there is reason to proceed to more formal action or if the professional behavior(s) in question is being dealt with effectively.
- PTC or PTC subcommittee will discuss the performance rating or concern and decide on a course of action.

Graduated Levels of Responsibility

Purpose

In accordance with VHA Handbook 1400.04 *Supervision of Associated Health Trainees* and its supervision requirements related to graduated levels of responsibility for safe and effective care of veterans, Practicum Supervisors will evaluate each practicum trainee's clinical experience, judgment, knowledge, and technical skill in **both** psychological assessment and psychological intervention. Practicum supervisors will determine that the trainee will be allowed to perform those clinical activities (i.e., psychological assessment and psychological intervention) within the context assigned levels of responsibility. Practicum supervisors will use the Graduated Levels of Responsibility for Psychology Students, Interns, and Unlicensed form to document each trainee's progress.

Pursuant to VHA Handbook 1400.04 guidelines, Practicum Supervisors will encourage and permit trainees to assume increasing levels of responsibility commensurate with their individual progress in experience, skill, knowledge, and judgment.

Supervision:

In accordance with VHA Handbook 1400.04 *Supervision of Associated Health Trainees*, supervisors will adhere to the following:

Scope and Purpose:

Supervision is an educational experience provided by a qualified supervising practitioner with a trainee. This relationship is evaluative, extends over time, and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the professional functioning of the trainee while monitoring the quality of services delivered. Supervision is provided through observation, consultation, directing the learning and activities of the trainee, and role modeling.

Supervision Requirements

- a. The supervising practitioner is considered the primary provider and is responsible for all services delivered to each veteran by the trainee. All trainees must function under the supervision of supervising practitioners at all times. Supervisors must be readily identifiable and available when supervisees provide health care services.
- b. Supervising practitioners are allowed to provide supervision only for those clinical activities for which they are qualified and have been approved to perform. In those instances where licensure or certification is required, the supervising practitioner must hold the required credential.
- c. Substitute supervising practitioners may at times be delegated the responsibility for care of the veteran and the supervision of the trainees involved. The substitute supervising practitioner must be fully qualified to provide supervision and to provide clinical services to the veteran. The supervising practitioner must ensure that trainees are informed of such delegation and can readily access a supervising practitioner at all times.
- d. In compliance with the Ohio Revised Code, each Practicum Supervisor will provide, on average, weekly face-to-face supervision devoted to the trainee's cases at a ratio of no less than one hour per ten hours on site.
- e. No less than one hour per week, and no less than 50% of the supervision was individual in-person supervision provided by a licensed psychologist licensed by the Ohio board or by the psychology licensing board in another state, territory, the District of Columbia, or Canadian province when the supervised experience took place.

Note: Up to 50% of the required face-to-face supervision may be individual or group supervision provided by licensed allied mental health professionals deemed appropriate by the Practicum Supervisor of record, such as, but not limited to psychiatrists, professional clinical counselors, or clinical social workers; or, individual supervision provided by a predoctoral intern or post-doctoral trainee conducting supervision of the trainee under an umbrella supervision arrangement with a licensed psychologist.

- f. The placement included regularly scheduled and documented interaction concerning the trainee's progress between the Practicum Supervisor and the CoDoT, Practicum Coordinator, or doctoral program designee.
- g. Each Practicum Supervisor must register each supervisee with the State of Ohio, per the Ohio Revised Code requirements, per State of Ohio requirements.
- h. Each Practicum Supervisor will complete the Supervision Agreement form with each supervisee within 60 calendar days of the start of the trainee's practicum.
- i. Types of supervision can include live supervision, reviewing of audio tapes, reviewing of video tapes, and/or chart reviews.
- j. Each Practicum Supervisor will complete each practicum trainee's graduate program's training activity reports and keep a copy of each report in the trainee's records.
- k. Each Practicum Supervisor will complete regular evaluations of each trainee's progress. As each graduate program has their own form, each Practicum Supervisor will utilize each program's standard evaluation form. Evaluation of progress are typically completed at the 90-day, 180-day, and year-end marks.
- l. Each Practicum Supervisor will ensure that the Practicum Coordinator will receive copies of the original Supervision Agreement, the State of Ohio practicum trainee registration form, and all trainee evaluations.
- m. The Practicum Coordinator will provide to each Practicum Trainee a Supervisor Rating Form near the end of their practicum experience. The Practicum Coordinator will then review the Supervisor Rating Form with each supervisee. Similarly, the Practicum Coordinator will review feedback with each supervisor after the conclusion of the practicum training year.

Compliance

A Practicum Supervisor is required to be compliant with the following documents:

- Guidelines and Principles for the Accreditation of Programs in Professional Psychology
- Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct
- Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Psychology Internship Centers Guidelines
- Ohio Revised Code 4732
- VHA Handbook 1400.04 *Supervision of Associated Health Trainees*
- Medical Staff Rules
- Medical Staff By-Laws
- Medical Center Policy 11-25: Resident Supervision

- Medical Center Policy 11-35: Psychology Training Program

Role of Practicum Coordinator

The Practicum Coordinator has responsibility for ensuring:

1. Administration of the Practicum Training program
2. Coordinating trainee interviews
3. Coordinating on boarding of trainees including:
 - A) VA computer access and ID
 - B) Arranging and ensuring that all trainees participate in an orientation to VA policies, procedures, and roles within the VA health care system.
 - C) Keeping a trainee document file for each trainee that includes the Supervision Agreement, training activity reports, documentation of supervision registration with the State of Ohio, trainee evaluations, documentation of training hours and direct service hours and supervisor rating forms.
 - D) Completing requests for documentation of pre-internship training experience.