

# Neuropsychology Postdoctoral Fellowship Program

## War Related Illness and Injury Study Center

### Washington DC VA Medical Center

Ryan Brewster, Ph.D.

WRIISC-DC Neuropsychology Fellowship Director

50 Irving Street, NW

Washington, DC 20422

(202) 745-8000 x56800

<https://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/>



**Application Due Date:** December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**Fellowship Year Begins:** September 2020

### Accreditation Status

The WRIISC-DC Neuropsychology Postdoctoral Fellowship Program at the Washington DC VA Medical Center meets Houston Conference guidelines for board certification per ABCN guidelines. It is not currently accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the American Psychological Association.

### Application and Selection Procedures

The WRIISC-DC Neuropsychology Fellowship begins in September 2020. This is a two-year, full-time program with VA benefits, including 13 days annual leave, 13 days sick leave, health insurance, and 10 federal holidays. Current stipend/salary is \$51,237 for Year One, increasing to \$54,006 for Year Two. Our program is designed to provide two full years of postdoctoral training. However, advancement to the second year is contingent on successful completion of first year requirements.

We are recruiting for one WRIISC-DC Neuropsychology Fellow for the 2020-2022 training period and anticipate interviewing candidates in person or by telephone/video conference in January 2020. Notifications will likely be made prior to the APPCN match rank order submission deadline. Reciprocal offers will be considered if an applicant is able to demonstrate a verifiable offer from another program.

### Eligibility

To be considered for our postdoctoral training program, applicants must have completed a doctoral degree in Clinical or Counseling Psychology from an American Psychological Association (APA) or Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) accredited program and must have completed or be on track to complete an APA-accredited Psychology Pre-Doctoral Internship. Certification of U.S. citizenship and drug screening are required for all VA Postdoctoral Fellows. In addition, VA employment requires that males born after December 31, 1959 must have registered for selective service by age 26. Please review VA eligibility requirements for psychology trainees at [www.psychologytraining.va.gov/eligibility.asp](http://www.psychologytraining.va.gov/eligibility.asp) and [www.psychologytraining.va.gov/docs/TraineeEligibility.pdf](http://www.psychologytraining.va.gov/docs/TraineeEligibility.pdf) before applying.

The WRIISC-DC Neuropsychology Fellowship seeks and values diverse experiences and backgrounds as the building blocks of a rich training environment. Our program emphasizes respect for trainees, Veterans, and staff members representing all forms of diversity, including (but not limited to) race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, Veteran status, and political affiliation. Fellows are entitled to equal treatment in selection decisions and freedom from harassment and unfair treatment.

This program seeks to admit trainees from diverse backgrounds while selecting the most qualified candidates. As such, individuals from diverse backgrounds are strongly encouraged to apply. The VA is an Equal Opportunity Employer and the training program follows institutional guidelines in this regard. Successful

completion of his program meets postdoctoral supervised practice requirements for licensure by the Washington DC Board of Psychology.

### Application Materials

Please submit the following materials in electronic format to Dr. Brewster through the APPA CAS Postdoc Online Application:

1. A cover letter that describes:
  - a. Your background, current professional interests, and training goals
  - b. Specific reasons you are interested in training at the WRIISC-DC
  - c. Experience with neuropsychological assessment, diagnosis, and treatment, including settings you have worked in and patient populations you have worked with
  - d. Research experience and aspirations. What questions would you like to try to answer?
  - e. Strengths and weaknesses in clinical and research work
2. Curriculum vitae
3. Three letters of recommendation from faculty members or clinical supervisors who are familiar with your clinical work and research experience. Letters should be submitted directly from writers.
4. Graduate transcripts
5. Two recent neuropsychological assessment reports. Please de-identify samples according to HIPAA standards.
6. One research work sample (e.g., a first-author published article, chapter, or presentation)
7. A letter from your Dissertation Chair or Director of Clinical Training (DCT) specifying the expected date that you will complete all requirements necessary to complete your doctoral degree (e.g., successfully defend your dissertation and complete your clinical internship)

Application materials must be received by December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at 11:59pm EST.

Please contact Ryan Brewster, Ph.D., WRIISC-DC Neuropsychology Fellowship Director, via electronic mail at [Ryan.Brewster@va.gov](mailto:Ryan.Brewster@va.gov) with any questions about the application process.

### Training Setting



The WRIISC-DC is housed within the Washington DC VA Medical Center, a 205-bed hospital that provides care to more than 78,000 Veterans on an outpatient basis. There is a nursing home (the Community Living Center, or CLC) located on-site. In addition, the medical center has 5 satellite outpatient clinics (CBOCs) located in Charlotte Hall, MD, northeast Washington, DC (the Community Resource and Referral Center, or CRRC), Fort Belvoir, VA, southeast Washington, DC, and Prince George's County, MD.

The DC VAMC is located in the heart of the District of Columbia, approximately 3 miles from the US Capitol, 4 miles from the White House, and in close proximity to a number of other medical centers (e.g., MedStar National Rehabilitation Hospital and Children's National Hospital). Washington, DC is a vibrant, diverse city with many charming neighborhoods, exciting cultural opportunities (including the Smithsonian museums, which offer free admission), extensive and excellent dining and nightlife options, a comprehensive public transportation system, sports arenas, beautiful parks, and trails providing access to outdoor recreational activities.

### **Training Model and Program Philosophy**

The WRIISC is a national program that provides a second opinion for Veterans with war-related illnesses and injuries that remain unexplained after examinations by local VA medical centers. Three WRIISC centers, located in Washington, DC, East Orange, NJ, and Palo Alto, CA, were established to address these complex cases. Veterans from the south-eastern US are referred to the WRIISC-DC, where they receive comprehensive interdisciplinary evaluations tailored to their medical concerns. Diagnoses are made when possible, and recommendations for management of the Veteran's concerns are given to the Veteran and their referring medical center. The WRIISC-DC team includes clinical (e.g., integrative medicine, neurology, nutrition, deployment health, neuropsychology, social work, environmental exposure, and health coaching) and research (e.g., neuroscience, exercise physiology, neuroimaging, and cognitive science) staff. Fellows that join our interdisciplinary team have the opportunity to directly assist our unique population.

The WRIISC-DC Neuropsychology Fellowship provides clinical, research, and educational training. Fellows can expect to gain an advanced understanding of brain-behavior relationships; develop advanced skills in neuropsychological evaluation and consultation; generate and implement a feasible research project within the time constraints of the fellowship; and learn to interpret, adapt, and incorporate new clinical research findings from the literature in order to improve assessment validity and treatment effectiveness.

### **Clinical Overview**

Throughout the course of the two-year postdoctoral fellowship, the fellow will be provided with opportunities and training to develop a strong foundation of knowledge and skills pertinent to advanced clinical practice in neuropsychology. Supervision hours per week may vary by number of Veterans seen, but will not fall below two regularly scheduled hours. Through a variety of training-related activities, the fellow will learn fundamentals of functional neuroanatomy, neuropathology, and neuropsychological assessment. The neuropsychology fellow will develop skills working in an interdisciplinary setting and providing consultation to providers with varied backgrounds. Neuropsychological assessment is often a key component of a WRIISC-DC evaluation and the feedback provided by the neuropsychology fellow to the Veteran and their medical team can be critical.

Although the fellow's primary clinical assignment is with the WRIISC-DC, the fellow will also see clinical cases through the DC VAMC Mental Health Neuropsychology Service and Polytrauma Service. This experience will provide the fellow with broad exposure to a diverse patient population (e.g., ages 18 to 85+) with a variety of presenting concerns (e.g., traumatic brain injury, multiple sclerosis, stroke, seizure disorders, dementia, etc.).

#### **1. Clinical Caseload and Supervision: WRIISC-DC**

The fellow is expected to see approximately four WRIISC neuropsychological evaluations per month, supervised primarily by the WRIISC-DC Fellowship Director (Dr. Brewster) and occasionally by the WRIISC-DC Director (Dr. Reinhard). The fellow will present cases at a weekly WRIISC Clinical Team interdisciplinary meeting. The fellow will also participate in the screening of WRIISC-DC consults. A weekly individual supervision hour will be completed with Dr. Brewster and additional supervision will be provided as needed.

2. **Clinical Caseload and Supervision: DC VAMC Mental Health Neuropsychology Service**  
The first-year postdoctoral fellow will be scheduled for approximately two neuropsychological evaluations per month. This running average may vary due to patient cancellations, clinical need, holidays, and annual leave. The fellow will be responsible for the clinical interview, neuropsychological testing, test scoring, interpretation, and report writing for cases seen. Fellows will complete supervision with the supervisor that was present for each case seen through the MH Neuropsychology Service. The second-year fellow will be responsible for the above, and will also have the opportunity to supervise either a neuropsychology extern or intern per a vertical supervision model for one case per month. Based on their interest and clinical demand, fellows may also have an opportunity to develop a cognitive rehabilitation group in different clinics (e.g., Primary Care, Neurology, Community Living Center, etc.) based on materials created by Dr. Strang.
3. **Clinical Caseload and Supervision: DC VAMC Polytrauma Service**  
The fellow will have the opportunity to gain experience evaluating and treating Veterans with traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) and related co-morbidities under the supervision of the Polytrauma Clinic Faculty. Training opportunities may include provision of outpatient psychotherapy and participation (e.g., observation and research) in a social cognition rehabilitation group for Veterans with TBI and PTSD. There is also the potential to participate in neuropsychological assessments through the Polytrauma Clinic. Caseload in the Polytrauma Clinic will be arranged between Dr. Brewster, Dr. Sherer, and the fellow.

### **Research Overview**

The research component of the fellowship is designed to provide advanced training in health care research related to deployment-related illnesses and injuries. Fellows will have the opportunity to enhance their research skills through a variety of educational, mentoring, and training activities. Fellows will be involved in multiple projects relevant to the WRIISC that may involve programmatic research, research that informs VA policy, environmental exposure research, neuroimaging research, and other topics. In addition, fellows are encouraged to develop a mentored research project based on their own interests. Fellows will mentor study coordinators in research activities, practice presentation skills in research meetings, collaborate with other WRIISC team members on presentations/posters, and assist with protocol and grant application writing. Fellows will receive individualized research supervision and mentoring from Drs. Costanzo, Brewster, and Reinhard.

1. **Ongoing WRIISC Research:**  
Fellows will become involved in at least one research project initiated and directed by WRIISC staff. Research may involve analyses with an administrative database, working directly with research participants, evaluating clinical efficacy, efficiency, utilization, or assisting with program development. A variety of neuropsychological assessment, medical symptomatology, treatment adherence, sleep, exercise, EEG, eye-tracking, and war-related exposure data are currently being analyzed.
2. **Fellow Research Project:**  
Fellows will design a mentored research study that can be completed within the term of the fellowship. This may include developing a sub-study based on an existent IRB-approved project or developing an independent study. Drs. Costanzo and Brewster will provide guidance in the development of a testable research idea, preparation of a research proposal, data collection, data analysis, and presentation of the results (i.e., an abstract or manuscript). Mentors will also provide guidance on submission of protocols to the VA IRB and R&D Department.

## **Educational Activities**

1. **Neuropsychology Video Teleconference (VTC):** Fellows will participate in a weekly neuropsychology video teleconference with trainees from several other neuropsychology training programs. This fellow-led educational activity generally includes one hour of reading discussion and one hour of case presentation per week. Each fellow also has the opportunity to practice skills to prepare for board certification (e.g., mock ABPP-CN fact findings).
2. **Neuropsychology Service Seminar:** Fellows will participate in a weekly MH Neuropsychology Service seminar. The seminar includes presentations on a variety of neuropsychology-related topics, case conferences, and discussion of journal articles.
3. **WRIISC-DC Journal Club:** Fellows will participate in a periodic meeting with WRIISC-DC staff and colleagues from outside departments to present research findings and discuss journal articles covering clinical and research interests of the group (e.g., exposure, health coaching, neuropsychological assessment, neuroimaging, etc.). Fellows will present an article of interest at least twice per year.
4. **Professional Conference Attendance:** Throughout the training year, fellows will have the opportunity to attend professional conferences with funding typically covered by the WRIISC for one conference per year. Following return from a professional conference, the fellow is expected to provide an informal presentation of relevant material to the fellowship faculty.

Additional educational activities are available at/near the DC VAMC campus. Attendance is encouraged, but not required. Activities will include but are not limited to:

- DC VAMC Neurology Grand Rounds
- DC VAMC Pathology Brain Cutting Conference
- MedStar National Rehabilitation Hospital Didactics and Journal Club
- TeleECHO Integrative Cognitive Rehabilitation Seminars

## **Performance Evaluation**

Fellows will receive formal, face to face feedback in regard to progress being made in the fellowship twice yearly. Formal feedback will include written evaluation that includes ratings in professional competency areas related to clinical practice and scholarly inquiry. Fellows who receive ratings below developmentally-appropriate minimums in each competency area will be given specific feedback and training to improve their skills in these areas. If necessary, remediation plans designed to assist with any difficulty demonstrating development in professional competencies will be created by training faculty and completed by the fellow before the conclusion of the training program. Fellows will have the opportunity to evaluate supervisors and the training program as a whole, twice yearly. Feedback from fellows is an integral part of the continued development and improvement of the fellowship. Fellows will also be presented with a description of these evaluation procedures, mechanisms to document complaints, their rights and responsibilities related to evaluations, current due process procedures, and methods to express concerns/address grievances related to training or supervision at the start of the fellowship.

## **Training Faculty**

*Ryan Brewster, Ph.D. – WRIISC-DC Neuropsychology Fellowship Director*

*Matthew Reinhard, Psy.D. – WRIISC-DC Director*

*Michelle Costanzo, Ph.D. – WRIISC-DC Research Director*

*Ernest Aucone, Ph.D., ABPP-CN – DC VAMC Neuropsychology Service Program Manager*

*Jennifer Strang, Ph.D., ABPP-CN – DC VAMC Neuropsychology Training Coordinator*

*Carolyn Sherer, Psy.D. – DC VAMC Polytrauma Neuropsychologist*

*Lauren Skalina, Ph.D. – DC VAMC Neuropsychologist*

## **Recent Trainees**

*2017-2019 fellow:*

*Chmaika Mills, Ph.D., Howard University*

*Internship: Washington, DC VA Medical Center*

*2016-2018 fellow:*

*Carleen Schwimmer, Psy.D., American School of Professional Psychology*

*Internship: Bay Pines VA Medical Center*

*2015-2017 fellows:*

*Kayleigh Hale, Psy.D., Pepperdine University*

*Internship: Long Beach VA Medical Center*

*Lauren Skalina, Ph.D., American University*

*Internship: VA Maryland Health Care System*

*2014-2016 fellow:*

*Salya Namazi, Ph.D., California School of Professional Psychology at AIC*

*Internship: Washington DC VA Medical Center*

*2013-2015 fellow:*

*Stephanie Brooks Holliday, Ph.D., Drexel University*

*Internship: Washington DC VA Medical Center*

*2012-2014 fellow:*

*Courtney Murphy, Ph.D., Palo Alto University*

*Internship: VA Maryland Health Care System*

*2011-2013 fellow:*

*Amanda Hull, Ph.D., Palo Alto University*

*Internship: Washington DC VA Medical Center*

*2010-2012 fellow:*

*Alyssa Adams, Ph.D., Marywood University*

*Internship: Washington DC VA Medical Center*

*2008-2010 fellow:*

*Kelly McCarron, Psy.D., The Wright Institute*

*Internship: Washington DC VA Medical Center*