What practicum/clerkship opportunities are available through VCBH?

Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH) provides doctoral level practicum opportunities in an outpatient public mental health setting. Advanced students with previous mental health experience and/or previous practicum hours are given priority in the recruitment process due to the severity of our population.

I am not familiar with the area. Can you tell me more about Ventura County?

Ventura County is located just northwest of Los Angeles County. There is easy access from Los Angeles County with one of the locations located within a 20 minute drive from the San Fernando Valley. Ventura County is the twelfth most populous county in California. Racial and ethnic minorities comprise 53% of the population with 41% Hispanic/Latino American. Spanish is the primary language of 13% of the residents. Although the median household income in Ventura County is $61,900, exceeding national and state averages, many of the department’s clients are low income and/or homeless or displaced from their homes. Agriculture is a major industry producing just over one billion dollars in County product annually.

What is the required time commitment?

VCBH requires a minimum of a 12-24 month commitment (depending on individual level, school requirements and program selected). Practicum placements begin July 1st or September 1st. Doctoral students must be available for a minimum of 12 hours per week. Clinic sites are typically open Monday – Friday 8:00 am - 6:00 pm. The specific schedule is based on the requirements of the individual clinic or program in consideration of your personal preferences. During the interview process you would discuss a proposed weekly schedule and finalize it with your supervisor once you have been accepted into the program.

What is the time frame for the application and interview process?

The application deadline is February 20th. If selected for an interview, you will be contacted by a clinic manager or supervisor to schedule an interview. Interviews are completed and candidates are selected and offers are made by the end of March. Applicants must complete a background clearance after receiving this preliminary offer into the program. Forms will be provided to you after being selected for the program and there is no cost to the student for the background clearance. Your formal acceptance into the program is contingent on completing the background clearance process.

What is involved in the orientation process?

A TB clearance is completed just prior to the start of the practicum. The first few weeks of the practicum are dedicated to a variety of orientation experiences. You will attend a New Student Orientation and participate in other orientation activities to become familiar with the department and clinic settings.
How do I apply for a practicum?

Submit an application packet to the Internship and Training Manager by the application deadline: February 15th. The application packet should include the following items:

1. VCBH application form
2. Cover letter
3. Curriculum vitae (or resume)
4. Two letters of recommendation.

What would be included in my typical caseload and clinical experiences?

Your caseload is based on the assigned program and the type of clinical training program you have selected (Practicum, Clerkship, Combined 2-year Practicum/Clerkship). For Practicum and Combined programs the experience will typically include assessments, individual, group and/or family therapy, treatment planning, case management, and crises intervention. You can generally expect to have a “full caseload” within the first 2-3 months of the program. You will also be responsible for presenting at clinical case conferences, completing documentation of services, writing testing reports, and adhering to all policies and regulations. Students will be exposed to evidence based practices that have been implemented in the department and will learn about the Mental Health Services Act and public mental health services.

What type of supervision is included in the training program?

Each doctoral practicum student is assigned a licensed psychologist as a primary supervisor. This supervisor provides 1 hour of weekly individual supervision and assists with case assignments. You may also receive additional supervision from a delegated supervisor and/or attend group supervision if it is available at your assigned program or clinic. The department adheres to all Board of Psychology regulations. During the interview the student can gain information about the proposed supervisor’s theoretical orientation and clinical approaches so the student will be able to include that information in the decision making process about joining VCBH for a practicum.

What types of questions will I be asked during the interview process?

You will be asked questions that relate to your interest in the mental health field, any prior mental health experience and current clinical knowledge. Specific questions might be related to your interest in public mental health, research interests, reason for choosing this profession, and clarification of long term goals. You will also be asked about your time commitment and what you hope to gain from a practicum with VCBH. During the interview you are encouraged to ask questions about the program to determine if placement with VCBH would fit your educational needs. The interview is meant to be a collaborative process so VCBH, your educational institution, and you are fully satisfied with the decision to participate in a practicum and/or clerkship with VCBH.

Are there any other requirements?

Students are expected to carry student malpractice insurance but may also submit a certificate of insurance from their educational institution. You must provide evidence of insurance coverage to the Internship and Workforce Development Manager at the beginning of the practicum.