

## **Hines VA Psychology Commitment to Diversity Statement**

The practicum, internship, and postdoctoral fellowship training programs within the Psychology Service at Hines VA are committed to fostering and upholding an inclusive community that welcomes and supports trainees from all social identity groups. We believe a multi-pronged approach to creating an inclusive and supportive environment within our training programs is essential. Some of the ways in which we create an inclusive and affirming environment for all are:

- Cultivating and promoting an atmosphere of inclusion and acceptance, in which all individuals are supported and included within our work and professional environment.
- Welcoming honest and open discussion about issues in diversity.
- Incorporating diversity as a central component of our clinical training and didactics.
- Attracting psychology staff and trainees of diverse backgrounds to join our training programs and Psychology Service.

### **Statement on Diversity & Inclusion**

As a Psychology Service, we are aware that we function within a larger culture that has often ignored and shunned the needs of people of minority statuses. We are deeply committed to righting the systemic inequities for oppressed groups. In this process, we vow to work on having a continued awareness of the ways in which we may actively facilitate processes or policies that have suppressed minority groups and the individuals who belong to these groups. We welcome having our eyes opened to what we have ignored. Collectively, we seek to further inclusion and equity for all Veterans, all staff members, and all people. This is daily, effortful, and never-ending work. This is our unwavering pledge to work towards forging a more just world.

### **Psychology Diversity Committee**

Within our Psychology Service, our **Psychology Diversity & Inclusion Committee**, a group of staff psychologists, postdoctoral fellows, and interns coordinates and oversees continuing efforts to foster an atmosphere of inclusion, respect, equality, and lifelong learning. The Psychology Diversity & Inclusion Committee serves the Psychology Service and the Mental Health Service Line (MHSL) in the following three primary ways:

1. Training and Staff Education: Provide staff and trainees with opportunities to learn about and discuss a variety of diversity-related issues. These include: CE presentations, our Diversity & Inclusion Learning & Discussion Series (includes CE presentations or case presentations and the Diversity Dialogues for change series), the Diversity Seminar Series, and the National Diversity Seminar Series (see below for more details about training opportunities).
2. Consultation: Provide individualized consultation to trainees and staff members around general diversity issues and specific issues that relate to Veteran care. This includes but is not limited to: providing in-services/trainings to staff or Veterans in a clinic/program about a variety of diversity issues (e.g., microaggressions, language in the LGBTQ community) and helping staff find resources for Veterans (e.g., transgender support groups in Chicago).

3. Hiring and Retention: To assist in ensuring cultural and professional diversity among practicum students, interns, postdoctoral fellows, and staff. This includes but is not limited to: helping the Training Committee in recruiting diverse trainees and assisting the Psychology department in recruiting, hiring, and retaining diverse staff. In addition, the formal interview for Psychology applicants includes questions related to diversity to ensure that we select candidates who are knowledgeable about and interested in issues related to diversity. It also makes it clear to prospective candidates that diversity is important to us. Moreover, when feasible, a member of the Psychology Diversity & Inclusion Committee also serves on the interview panel. In this way, we place an added emphasis on diversity as a core competency when recruiting new candidates.

### **Training Opportunities**

#### **Diversity & Inclusion Learning & Discussion Series** (monthly; for all training levels and staff)

This monthly lunch-time presentation series that is a forum for staff psychologists and trainees to encourage awareness, growth, and action on topics related to the broad spectrum of diversity & inclusion that influence veteran care and teamwork in the VA. This series alternates between a case conference/seminar and small process/discussion groups every other month. We strive to promote an open and non-judgmental atmosphere and active participation and discussion is encouraged from all attendees. Discussion focuses on the promotion of multicultural learning and fostering a sense of cultural humility.

- **Case conference/CE presentations (*open to all staff and all trainees*):** Most typically, a staff member or a staff member and trainee will present a case that highlights an area of diversity or we have speakers that will present on various diversity topics. Previous topics have included: the impact of race and disability during crisis intervention; spirituality in clinical practice; privilege; the intersection of disability, gender, and sexual orientation; diversity issues and body image; discussion of diversity issues in supervision; diversity considerations in the home care setting; the impact of internalized racism on case conceptualization and treatment; and issues that arise during discharge/termination of psychotherapy.

### **Other Opportunities**

Our service affords staff psychologists time to participate in hospital Special Emphasis Programs that address individual differences and focus on cultural diversity (Asian American/Pacific Islander Program, Black Empowerment Program, Federal Women's Program, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender and Allies (LGBTQA) Program, Individuals with Disabilities Program, Hispanic Employment Program, and Native American Program). Psychology staff members and trainees are also encouraged to attend programming outside our service to promote continued enhancement of multicultural competence across professional domains. In addition, the service affords time for staff members and trainees to attend hospital-wide programming that raises awareness and celebrates diversity on a routine basis (e.g., Black History Month Celebration in February, Annual Diversity Picnic).