

## **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.

### **Psychology Diversity Committee**

Within our Psychology Service, our **Psychology Diversity Committee**, a group of staff psychologists and postdoctoral fellows, coordinates and oversees continuing efforts to foster an atmosphere of inclusion, respect, equality, and lifelong learning. The Psychology Diversity 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 Case Conference, the Diversity Seminar Series, and the National Diversity VTEL 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 Committee also serves on the interview panel. In this way, we place an added emphasis on diversity when recruiting new candidates.

### **Training Opportunities**

**Diversity Case Conference** (monthly; for all training levels and staff)

The **Diversity Case Conference** was implemented to provide an opportunity for staff and trainees to

learn together about diversity issues that may not be commonly experienced in clinical rotations or seminars. This monthly lunch-time presentation series is open to all psychology staff and trainees. Most typically, a staff member or a staff member and trainee will present a case that highlights an area of diversity. 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. 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.

#### **Diversity Seminar Series** (8-week series; for interns and postdoctoral fellows)

In the 2018-2019 year the **Diversity Seminar Series** was implemented for interns and postdoctoral fellows. The Diversity Seminar Series meets bi-weekly from October through February and covers four core topics (1. Privilege and Exploring Self-Identity, 2. White Fragility, 3. Race, Racism, and Oppression, and 4. The Practice of Cultural Humility) and four elective topics (e.g., Addressing Ableism and Reducing Microaggressions against Individuals with Disability, Cultural Considerations in Assessment, Gender and Gender Roles in the Military and VA). Staff members with expertise and interest in issues of diversity are invited to present these seminars. Seminars aim to include experiential components that foster awareness of one's own biases and areas for growth in a safe space.

#### **National Diversity VTEL Seminar Series** (monthly; for postdoctoral fellows and staff)

In the 2019-2020 year our Psychology Service joined the **National Diversity VTEL Seminar Series**, which is open to postdoctoral fellows and staff. This virtual series is held monthly in partnership with several other VA hospitals across the country. Our postdoctoral fellows help coordinate discussion among Hines participants and between participants across participating VA hospitals. Previous topics have included: working effectively with spirituality and religion in clinical practice; health status discrimination; culturally competent assessment; and culturally sensitive supervision.

#### **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).