



## **PSYCHOLOGY EXTERNSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM**

### **Overview**

The Psychology externship program at the Sunset Terrace Family Health Center is committed to the teaching of cultural sensitivity and issues of multi-culturalism as they pertain to psychological practice. The externship has 5 available positions. Opportunities exist to focus on different aspects of service delivery - i.e. service delivery to child and adolescent outpatients, service delivery to adult outpatients, service delivery to severely mentally ill populations, service delivery to forensic populations or clinical research. Across all service delivery areas, externs provide individual and group therapy, psychodiagnostic testing and intake and screening activities.

The Sunset Terrace Family Health Center is proud of its contribution to the cross-cultural research literature since it is the site where two culturally sensitive clinical methods have been developed and evaluated: the "Cuentos" intervention which is a child and family therapy technique using Latino folk tales to illustrate important psychological principles and the "TEMAS" (Tell-Me-A-Story) project, which is a thematic apperception test for ethnic minority and non-minority children. The author of these two methods, Dr. Giuseppe Costantino, is former Clinical Director of S.T.F.H.C. and presently serves as Director of Training and New Programs for the Lutheran Family Health Center Network. Additionally, several research programs are ongoing and involve issues related to cultural sensitivity in mental health services. The clinical and research goals of the externship are taught to students by way of a core set of supervision experiences and seminars.

### **Background**

Lutheran Medical Center (LMC) is a 476 bed medical center whose extensive network of community care facilities has received national recognition. LMC was recently awarded best community practice by the Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations. Located in Sunset Park, a multi-ethnic, low to middle income neighborhood near the Brooklyn waterfront and the largest Urban Historic District in the Northeast Area, the medical center is a major teaching hospital, serving as a teaching site of the State University of New York Health Science Center of Brooklyn.

The Ambulatory Care Services of LMC are delivered through The Lutheran Family Health Center Network. Since its inception in 1967, the Family Health Center has developed into one of the largest and most comprehensive federally qualified community health centers in the nation. There are a number of community based satellite facilities in the Lutheran Family Health Center Network. This network of healthcare services in the Sunset Park, Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights, Park Slope, Red Hook, and East Flatbush communities, offers comprehensive primary care, specialty & support services as well as educational programs. The Sunset Terrace Family Health Center (STFHC) is one of the specialty clinics operating within the Lutheran Family Health Center Network. Serving the communities of Bay Ridge, Sunset Park, Park Slope and Red Hook, STFHC

currently has the largest Hispanic patient population of any outpatient mental health center in Brooklyn, and as such, in NYC. In addition, substantial portions of our population are comprised of immigrants from China, the Caribbean, Pakistan, the former Soviet Union, Jordan, Italy, Greece, and other countries. More specifically, approximately 80% of the active patient caseload is comprised of Latinos with the remaining 20% comprised of European and Asian immigrants. The distinctive demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of this catchment area have necessitated that over the years STFHC develop an integrated network of comprehensive culturally sensitive mental health services to meet the need of its multi-cultural ethnic minority patient population.

Currently STFHC prides itself for providing a variety of culturally sensitive treatment programs, including Adult OPD treatment, Child and Adolescent Services, the On-Site School Mental Health Project, Chemical Dependency Services and a Day Treatment Program. The center has strong innovative treatment and clinical research programs, which involve both staff and students in projects that typically lead to data collection, presentations and publications. These include: The Cuento Therapy Project, a culturally sensitive treatment modality; TEMAS (Tell-Me-A-Story), a multicultural projective test; a special treatment program for sexually abusing and abused youngsters; and psychological treatment of patients with HIV/AIDS infection.

### **Program Description**

There are 5 externship positions available requiring a time commitment of 20 hours per week. While externs can select a specific specialty area to focus on, each extern will also participate in a core program that is clinic based.

#### **1. Core Program**

The STFHC outpatient mental health clinic provides comprehensive services to its patient population, thereby giving externs the opportunity to develop clinical skills. Services include intake and assessment, psychological testing, psychotherapy and crisis intervention. The patient population includes children, adolescents and adults, and spans a broad range of psychiatric diagnoses. The Child and Adolescent Service is a subunit within the outpatient clinic.

Treatment modalities include psychotherapy, group psychotherapy, brief therapy, marital therapy, family therapy, filial (parent-child) therapy and psychoeducational treatment with severely impaired adults. Innovative culturally sensitive modalities are also provided, such as Cuento Therapy, TEMAS Narrative Group Therapy, and the Frieda Kahlo Group Therapy Project. The clinic services a caseload of over 3,000 patients and provides upwards of 65,000 mental health visits per year, making it among the most active outpatient mental health programs in New York City. Externs from all specialty areas are expected to participate in the intake and screening process at the outpatient mental health clinic, to conduct psychodiagnostic testing in the clinic setting, and to carry a small caseload of clinic patients.

### **Intake and Screening**

Training in conducting screening and intake interviews constitutes the core training in admission evaluations for all externs. New applicants for treatment, both with and without prior appointments, present the extern with a variety of clinical problems, which require immediate decisions. These include decisions about referral to other agencies, inpatient hospitalizations, medication and acceptance for outpatient treatment. These decisions are made in close collaboration with supervisory staff. All externs actively participate in these screening and intake functions. The intake evaluation process entails an extended and in depth interview and mental status evaluation by the extern leading to a provisional DSM-IV-TR diagnosis as well as organization of the clinical findings. Externs immersion in screenings and intakes, a process that requires continual on-the-spot clinical evaluation and decision-making, inculcates the capacity to make immediate clinical judgments with confidence and sensitivity.

### **Psychodiagnostic Testing**

Externs are expected to complete 4 full psychological batteries during the course of the externship year. Using a standard battery of intelligence and projective tests as well as more innovative multicultural assessment tests such as TEMAS, externs evaluate patients to produce differential diagnoses, to assist in referral placements to other agencies or to explore the dynamics of patients. Externs receive supervision on all aspects of psychodiagnostic assessment on a case by case basis. In addition, externs meet as a group in diagnostic seminars led by Psychology Unit supervisors. Training in dealing with issues of culture, particularly Latino and African-American cultures, in psychological assessment are a distinctive aspect of such group seminars and individual supervision.

### **Outpatient Psychotherapy**

Various psychotherapeutic approaches are drawn upon at the STFHC. Currently, attention is given to emerging Evidenced-Based Practice (EBP) consistent with developing mental health policy and best practice guidelines. At the same time, the emphasized individual therapeutic approach focuses on comprehensive and intensive understanding of the patient, the psychodynamics of personality and character development, the development of patient-therapist relations, the impact of individual psychopathology on the family and social systems in which the patient lives, and finally, the interaction between culture and the individual. Individual and group supervision for individual psychotherapy is provided. STFHC also offers group therapy as a modality. The following is a sampling of some of the groups typically offered during the year: an Hispanic women's support group, a geriatric support group, an ongoing psychoeducational group, groups for hyperactive and conduct disordered children; and adolescent girl's group; a Cuento Therapy Group; and various activity groups. The acquisition of group therapy skills occurs in the context of externs serving as psychotherapists in group therapy with a staff member or with other students.

### **Service Delivery Specializations**

#### **1. Child/Adolescent Outpatient Program**

Externs working within the child/adolescent unit spend one day a week providing onsite mental health services in the schools as part of Lutheran Medical Center's school health project. This project provides psychotherapy to youngsters in the school setting. This program was designed to make quality mental health treatment available to children and families who might otherwise never avail themselves of these services. Typically, teachers, guidance counselors, or parents refer youngsters for treatment. For many children such treatment precludes the need for referral to special education. The On-Site School Mental Health Project is a component of the Child and Adolescent Services Unit. Students in elementary and junior high school receive services by way of this project. A variety of training opportunities is provided for the extern participating in STFHC's School Health Project. The extern consults with principals, guidance counselors and teachers regarding children and adolescents who may be in need of mental health services, and then develops a treatment plan that can be carried out within the school setting. As a result of these conferences, the extern develops liaison skills and observes the interplay between psychological and educational factors. As always, when working with children and adolescents, there are opportunities for an extern to engage in treatment situations that interface with a wide range of social agencies including Administration for Children's Services (ACS), school based support teams and residential treatment facilities. Increasingly, with the emerging emphasis on integration of mental health with primary care services, it is anticipated that the on-site school mental health services may be expanded to include a screening of all school children for behavioral and/or emotional issues.

## **2. Adult Outpatient Program**

Externs choosing an emphasis in adult outpatient treatment receive 2 days training per week in a wide variety of functions performed by psychologists in the public mental health sector. An adult outpatient extern provides comprehensive service to adult clinic patients spanning a broad range of psychiatric diagnoses. These services include individual and group psychotherapy as well as the provision of concrete services, psychodiagnostic testing, and intake and screening interviews.

## **3. Severely Mentally Ill Program**

The Sunset Terrace Family Health Center operates a Day Treatment Program and Psychosocial Rehabilitation Club for patients who require a daily structured program. Individuals with severe psychiatric disorders or with histories of psychiatric hospitalizations constitute the patient caseload. The day program, the patient population of which is 90% Latino, is culturally sensitive and bilingual. Modalities provided include individual, group and family therapy. An interdisciplinary approach is utilized, including psychology, psychiatry, social work and recreation therapy. Groups for dual diagnosis patients are also available. The extern emphasizing service delivery to severely mentally ill population spends one day per week providing services in a milieu-based treatment setting for severely and persistently mentally ill adults. The opportunities for learning are multifaceted and include: assessment, diagnosis and treatment planning; co-leading group psychotherapy; co-leading community meetings and small groups; crisis intervention;

social skills training; social activities; home visits; and participation in interdisciplinary staff meetings.

#### **4. Forensic Externship**

Externs wanting to emphasize service delivery to forensic populations spend one day a week in Project Second Try, a specialized treatment program for young sexual offenders. This program was inaugurated in 1991 with the help of a Federal grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The patient population includes children, from the ages of seven to fourteen. As a rule, referred patients are court mandated, as part of probation. The treatment protocols include intake assessment, psychological testing, individual therapy and group therapy. The approach combines cognitive behavioral and psychoeducational approaches, but is also guided by psychodynamic understanding of the patient's delinquent behavior. Treatment and assessment are culturally sensitive in that TEMAS is included as part of the test battery, and cultural factors, such as these related to sexual behavior and family depression are a focus of treatment. The PST experience provides the extern with an understanding of forensic psychological issues relating to young sexual perpetrators; competence in working with delinquents, specifically those exhibiting sexual misconduct; parental and familial issues pertaining to this population; skills in working with individual and group modalities; and experience in case presentations with this population. In addition, the externs may participate in ongoing clinical research with this population. Externs will be responsible for a small outpatient caseload. Specific extern activities include intake assessment; individual and group psychotherapy, psychological testing; parents group, and case presentation.

#### **5. Research Externship**

Research activities for the extern who elects this experience are varied and afford a good match according to the student's interests, knowledge and experience. The requirements for the extern are individually determined. Activities focus around ongoing clinical research projects in the area of culturally sensitive assessment and treatment. Opportunities also exist to build independent doctoral dissertation research from these ongoing projects. Research activities may include data collection, usually in the form of psychological testing, clinical interviews, administration of questionnaire and paper and pencil tests, data entry, data analysis as well as other kinds of activities essential to the research process. At least one hour of supervision is provided weekly. In addition, a seminar dealing with the development and process of all aspects of clinical research is provided. Several large research projects are ongoing at the Sunset Terrace Family Health Center focusing on nonbiased assessment techniques and culturally sensitive treatment. Several nationally known clinical research projects funded by the N.I.M.H. have been completed at the Mental Health Center such as: the Cuento Therapy project, the use of Folktales as a Therapy Modality with Hispanic children and their parents; the Hero/Heroine Modeling Therapy for Hispanic adolescents, which utilizes biographical stories of prominent Hispanic individuals as role models; and TEMAS (Tell-Me-A-

Story), a multi-cultural thematic apperception test standardized for Hispanic, Black and White children. Several other clinical research projects, such as, the development of a questionnaire to assess cultural perception of sexual abuse among Hispanics, the collection of normative TEMAS data for adolescents, the effects of language and culture on the psychiatric diagnosis of Hispanics and others, are in progress. This program of culturally sensitive research has made a lasting contribution in the areas of culturally sensitive therapy modalities and testing of Hispanics and other minorities. Past students at STFHC have often benefited from the ongoing research incorporating their dissertation topics within the research program and completing their dissertations. Some have also published and presented at major national and international conferences.

### **Didactic Program**

The educational component of the externship is concentrated into one day-Tuesdays. Externs arrange their supervision and participation in didactic seminars during this time.

### **Clinical Supervision**

Externs receive 2 hours of individual supervision a week-one with a licensed staff psychologist and one with a doctoral level psychology intern. Supervision focuses on individual and group treatment cases and psychological test batteries. In addition, externs receive 1 hour of group supervision for clinic cases.

### **Seminars**

Seminars are designed to cover topics relevant to professional psychology. While some seminar topics have relevance to general populations, others are designed to address issues of greater relevance for a specific age group or sub population.

### **Time Commitment**

Externs are required to make a time commitment of 20 hours per week during the academic year. The time commitment includes Tuesdays, when the didactic component of the externship is scheduled.

### **Application Procedures**

The application deadline is February 15<sup>th</sup> of the year preceding the externship. Externs are required to be matriculated in a clinical, counseling, school/community or school psychology doctoral program. Materials required include:

1. 2 letters of reference
2. A curriculum vitae
3. A transcript of graduate work
4. Two writing samples

5. A letter indicating which of the externship programs the applicant is applying to.
6. A letter from the doctoral program indicating readiness for externship training.

Application materials should be sent to:

**Joseph Laino, Psy.D.**  
**Coordinator of Externship**  
**Sunset Terrace Family Health Center**  
**514 49<sup>th</sup> Street**  
**Brooklyn, NY 11220**  
**718-437-5234**  
[jlaino@lmcmc.com](mailto:jlaino@lmcmc.com)

Applicants are requested to send all materials in one packet.