JCCA

PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

JCCA

Repair the world
child by child

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INTRODUCTION

JCCA is a child welfare agency that currently services more than 17,000 children and their families in its various programs. JCCA's many programs target largely underserved families from lower socioeconomic statuses which are comprised largely of African- and Caribbean-American and Latinx populations. Many of the children and adolescents we serve are in foster or residential care because of challenges within the family, including emotional disturbance, substance dependence, and transgenerational trauma. The agency provides behavioral health, casework, aftercare, medical, nursing, education, and psychiatric services to children and families. Thus, interns are exposed to different perspectives from which to view and understand each child with whom they work. JCCA's internship program provides training in both assessment and clinical intervention with this challenging and diverse population to ensure that our training goals for competency are met. In addition, through direct and frequent contact with various professionals within the agency, interns develop consultation skills and learn to function in a team setting.

MISSION

JCCA's mission is to provide the highest quality child welfare and mental health services to New York's neediest and most vulnerable children and families to ensure that their safety, permanency and well-being leads to a life of stability and promise. We are guided by the Jewish mandate of tikkun olam—the responsibility of every person to make the world a better place. Our highly trained, dedicated staff works in partnership with families to build on their strengths, preserve the family when possible and help create new families when necessary, so that all children may thrive through experiencing the benefits of a healthy family and belonging to a community of support.

PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

THE JCCA INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

JCCA's psychology internship program has been sponsored by JCCA since 1970 and has been approved by the American Psychological Association Commission on Accreditation since 1991. The internship program adheres to the American Psychological Association (APA) Ethics Code and, as a member of the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC), follows all of its guidelines. The 12-month, full-time JCCA psychology internship program is open to advanced pre-doctoral psychology students in clinical, school and counseling psychology programs. Our practice is based on the science of psychology which, in turn, is influenced by the professional practice of psychology. The training program is sequential, cumulative, and graded in complexity.

JCCA's Doctoral Internship consists of three primary sites:

- **Bronx Foster Home Services** – Outpatient services for youth in foster care (MATCH # 148212)
- **Brooklyn Foster Home Services** – Outpatient services for youth in foster care (MATCH #148215)
- **Westchester Residential Treatment** – Residential Treatment Center (MATCH # 148214)
- **Westchester Residential Assessment-Focused** – Residential Treatment Center at START Program (MATCH # 148215)

Although there is one interview date per applicant, prospective interns can rank any or all of the four programs, as each program has a distinct match number. Interns will match to one of the four programs.

Throughout the year on Fridays, interns convene for training seminars. Interns also come together with the psychology staff for case presentations throughout the training year. At present, site-wide trainings, meetings, and other presentations are conducted both remotely via the Zoom or Microsoft Teams platforms, and in-person.

OVERVIEW OF TRAINING ACROSS ALL THREE SITES

Additionally, psychological evaluations tailored to specific referral questions, such as diagnostic clarification, discharge planning, identification of developmental disabilities or need to gain information regarding underlying emotional disturbance are also requested of our interns. Furthermore, annual behavioral assessments are required for many of our youth in foster homes over the age of three; such specific assessments are unique to the training experiences at the Bronx and Brooklyn locations. The array of assessment opportunities allows psychology interns to gain enhanced training in administration, scoring and interpretation of psychological data. These evaluations also provide a useful service to the agency by identifying at-risk youth who need immediate intervention and additional services. In addition, they provide an opportunity for interns to become familiar with a range of psychological presentations, diagnoses and levels of functioning.

Beginning in the 2019-2020 training year, interns had the opportunity to develop skills in Telehealth, providing therapy remotely using the Zoom platform. Although services on the campus are now conducted exclusively in person (often outside), opportunities for tele-health may be available on a case-by-case basis for interested interns. There is a combination of remote and in-person services for interns in the Bronx and Brooklyn sites. As Department of Health guidelines change, we will adapt our program to meet the evolving needs of our clients and clinicians. Our priority will remain the physical and emotional safety of staff and clients alike, as well as ensuring that interns have a comprehensive training experience.

WESTCHESTER RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT (THE CAMPUS)

JCCA offers various residential treatment programs for youth, all of which are situated on the 100+ acre campus in Pleasantville, NY. Residential treatment centers (RTCs) are the highest level of care within the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) continuum. Thus, all programs on the Westchester Campus provide clinical services to youth who have significant emotional and/or behavioral challenges. All clients require considerable supervision and support, and therefore, reside on the Campus under 24-hour supervision by trained staff. The campus' location in a suburban town within Westchester County, approximately 30 miles north of Manhattan and outside of the five boroughs, makes it unique from the other two internship locations.

There are two distinct match opportunities for campus. For the Westchester Residential Treatment placement, interns match to the campus as a whole, with the Edenwald Center (EC) and Pleasantville Cottage School (PCS) serving as primary placements for campus trainees. Trainees are assigned to either EC or PCS for their training year, with strong consideration given to each intern's preference; this assignment occurs the summer before the internship starts. Given the size of the programs, EC usually has two interns and PCS has one. Both programs generally have at least one extern as well.

For the Westchester Residential Assessment-Focused placement, an intern is placed in the Short-term Assessment and Rapid Treatment Center (START) program, which is an intensive, diagnostic, short-term treatment center serving 25 young people. This position offers a unique opportunity for a prospective intern with a strong interest in psychological assessment within a residential treatment setting. This intern will carry a caseload that is predominantly assessment-based within the START program, with a small therapy caseload. Evaluations routinely include

cognitive, adaptive, and social/emotional functioning, with opportunities to incorporate projective measures as clinically indicated. In addition to the START intern, all JCCA interns across sites complete at least one psychological evaluation for the START program during the training year. Results of the START psychological evaluation are presented to the interdisciplinary team, including the youth's caregiver, in the Initial Treatment Conference.

The Campus serves youth from across New York State, with the vast majority coming from the five boroughs of New York City. EC serves approximately 100 young people ranging from about age 10 to early 20s who have diagnoses related to developmental delays and/or Autism Spectrum Disorder and are also experiencing severe emotional and/or behavioral difficulties. PCS serves approximately 75 young people ranging in age from about 12 to early 20s with severe emotional and/or behavioral difficulties; youth at PCS generally have Average to Low Average intelligence.

The campus has a cottage format, with subsets of youth within each program residing in specific cottages. Each cottage has its own interdisciplinary team comprised of case planners, residential youth counselors, nurses, a psychiatric provider and recreation staff. While in residential treatment, the youth typically attend one of two schools on campus: the Edenwald School or the Mount Pleasant Cottage School, which are independent schools that are a part of the Mount Pleasant School District and are not affiliated with JCCA. Some youth are also employed, whether on campus or in the local community, and are provided with vocational training and support. Therapeutic recreation services are offered to residents and include such activities as intramural sports (some of which are part of a league for various residential programs), a pep squad, and off-campus trips. Members of the psychology department are assigned specific youth, rather than entire cottages, thus allowing for interns to build relationships with various youth as well as a rich and unique opportunity to integrate into various interdisciplinary teams.

FOSTER HOME SERVICES (FHS)

JCCA's Foster Home Services operate in two boroughs. One office is located in a commercial/residential area in the Bronx known as "the Hub" and the other is located in Downtown Brooklyn. Both foster programs serve infants, children and teens (ages 0-21) in non-kinship foster homes, kinship foster homes and therapeutic foster homes. The FHS psychology department in each site exists within a rich multidisciplinary setting, including psychiatric and medical staff, education specialists, social workers and case planners, among others. Interns are highly valued and integrated members of the multidisciplinary team.

Brooklyn and Bronx FHS internship sites offer very similar training experiences. However, please note that the Bronx training site has two interns, while the Brooklyn site has one intern. These sites also have three psychology externs, which makes for a sizeable and supportive training cohort. Interns provide psychological services to the culturally, ethnically, and diagnostically diverse youth, families, and foster parents served in our outpatient clinics and via Telehealth. In addition to carrying individual therapy caseloads, FHS interns work closely with the parents and caregivers of their clients (e.g., collateral and/or dyadic sessions, behavioral training). They also have the unique opportunity to develop and co-facilitate foster parent trainings (e.g., improving communication with adolescents, healthy sexual development, psychoeducation on therapy, trauma, etc.) and therapy groups (e.g., emotion regulation, social skills, creative expression). Interns have had opportunities in both locations to provide clinical services in other languages (e.g., Spanish, Creole, Russian).

As noted in the training overview section above, FHS interns typically carry two assessment cases at any given time. They also evaluate at least one youth through the Westchester Residential Campus' Short-Term Assessment and Rapid Treatment Center (START), an intensive, diagnostic, short-term treatment center. Afterwards, they present findings to the interdisciplinary team, including the youth's caregiver, in the Initial Treatment Conference.

PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

PHILOSOPHY OF TRAINING

While JCCA interns work at different geographic sites and with a variety of programming, they share a common focus: child welfare and assisting traumatized children and families on their journeys towards recovery. JCCA serves a population that has often experienced a great deal of trauma. In order to be sensitive to this trauma and appropriately intervene, the psychology department works from a trauma informed care lens, which provides a framework to help clients understand how trauma has impacted them and how they can heal. This approach incorporates work with clients, their families and the systems in which they function.

Our clinical work is guided by the principles of trauma informed care, which emphasizes the impact of trauma on relationships and one's experiences in the world. This approach frames symptomology as a reaction to trauma rather than an isolated and endogenous phenomenon. A recognition that trauma is pervasive in the experience of human beings forms the basis of our work, with a focus not only on the people who seek services, but equally on the people and systems who provide those services. We strive to model this perspective in our interactions with colleagues and clients.

In addition to the above, JCCA also places high importance on cultural competency and race equity. An agency-wide Race Equity Committee works to generate thoughtful dialogue and specific programming to advance racial equity in our communities.

JCCA also has an agency-wide Pride Committee that is open to all staff and which focuses on providing education about, advocating for, and celebrating the LGBTQIA+ community, which includes clients, staff, and families.

Interns across sites are strongly encouraged to participate in cultural learning opportunities and activities on a consistent basis throughout the year. A Juneteenth celebration and an annual campus Pride parade are examples of such activities. In addition, cultural competency is built into the foundation of individual and group supervision as well as weekly intern didactics.

SUPERVISORY STAFF

The supervisory staff is comprised solely of New York State licensed psychologists. Each intern is assigned to two supervisors for the entire training year. Supervisors meet individually with interns, as well as serving as mentors and role models throughout the interns' training year. While interns are provided with two formal hours of individual supervision a week, all supervisors have an open-door-policy and are available for consultation and support outside of scheduled supervision times. Interns also work within a multidisciplinary treatment team including psychologists, psychiatric providers, psychiatric nurse practitioners, social workers, case planners, nurses, residential youth counselors, foster parents and pediatricians, etc.. Additionally, as mentioned previously, formal peer and group supervision is provided.

SALARY AND BENEFITS

The internship program is a full year beginning in September and running through August. The stipend is $30,000. There is a $2,000 language differential offered to interns who are fluent in a language needed at their particular site. Medical insurance is available after 30 days. Interns are offered four weeks of vacation time, five sick days, and three personal days. Additional professional development days may be afforded, as applicable, for dissertation defense and graduation. Hours vary depending on site, but interns are expected to work a 40-hour work week, with an hour allotted for lunch each day.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANCE

Each intern at JCCA is provided with their own laptop computer, an app-based phone line, as well as access to any necessary clerical equipment and materials. Interns are expected to maintain their own paper documents and digital files over the course of the training year. Furthermore, interns are ensured adequate clerical time so that paperwork can be completed on site during the allotted internship hours. JCCA's Information Technology (IT) department is available across sites to offer assistance with technical equipment whenever necessary. Members of the IT department are easily accessible via an online portal and typically respond within one to two business days. In addition, JCCA's Program Quality department provides oversight and support to ensure that all staff are fully supported in maintaining agency-wide, policy driven procedures.

The Program Quality team works closely with all agency staff, and is available for consultation and feedback across sites.

OBJECTIVES FOR COMPETENCY

The following competencies are intended to guide the intern's development over the course of the training year:

Competency 1. The intern will achieve competency in area of research.

- The intern will demonstrate the ability to independently formulate research ideas or other scholarly activities.
- The intern will conduct research or other scholarly activities as appropriate.
- The intern will critically evaluate and disseminate research or other scholarly activities via professional publication and presentation at the local, regional, or national level.

Competency 2. The intern will achieve competency in areas of ethical and legal standards.

- The intern will be knowledgeable and act in accordance with the current version of the APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct; relevant laws, regulations, rules, and policies governing health service psychology at the organizational, local, state regional and federal levels; and relevant professional standards and guidelines.
- The intern will recognize ethical dilemmas as they arise, and apply ethical decision-making processes in order to resolve the dilemmas, including seeking consultation as needed.
- The intern will conduct thamselves in an ethical manner in all professional activities and interactions

Competency 3. The Intern will achieve competency in the areas of individual and cultural diversity.

- The intern will demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which their own personal and cultural history, attitudes and biases may impact their understanding of and interactions with people different from the intern.
- The intern will understand the current theoretical and empirical knowledge base as it relates to addressing diversity in all professional activities, including research, training, supervision/ consultation, and service.
- The intern will be able to integrate awareness and knowledge of individual and cultural differences in the conduct of professional role.
- The intern will be able to work effectively with a range of diverse individuals and groups encountered during the training year.

Competency 4. The intern will achieve competency in the areas of professional attitudes and behavior.

- The intern will behave in ways that reflect integrity, deportment, professionalism, accountability, a commitment to lifelong learning, and concern for the welfare of others.
- The intern will engage in self-reflection regarding personal and professional behavior. This includes engaging in activities to maintain and improve performance and professional effectiveness.
- The intern will actively seek and demonstrate openness and responsiveness to feedback and supervision.
- The intern will respond professionally in complex situations with a progressively increasing degree of independence as they advance across levels of training.

Competency 5. The intern will achieve competency in the areas of communication and interpersonal skills.

- The intern will develop and maintain effective relationships with a wide range of individuals, including colleagues, clients, supervisors, organizations and communities.
- The intern will produce and comprehend oral and written communications that are informative and well-integrated.
- The intern will demonstrate effective interpersonal skills and the ability to manage difficult communication well.

Competency 6. The Intern will achieve competency in the area of assessment.

- The intern will demonstrate current knowledge of diagnostic classification systems and functional and dysfunctional behaviors, including consideration of client strengths and psychopathology.
- The intern will demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of human behavior within various contexts (e.g., family, social, societal, and cultural).
- The intern will demonstrate the ability to apply their knowledge of functional and dysfunctional behaviors, including contextual factors, to the assessment and/or diagnostic process.
- The intern will select and apply assessment methods that draw from the best available empirical literature, and that reflect the science of measurement and psychometrics.
- The intern will collect relevant data using multiple sources and methods appropriate to the identified goals and questions of the assessment. This includes relevant diversity characteristics of the recipient.
- The intern will interpret assessment results following current research and professional standards and guidelines to inform case conceptualization, classification, and recommendations, while guarding against decision-making biases. In other words, intern is able to distinguish the aspects of assessment that are subjective from those that are objective.
- The intern will communicate orally and in written documents the findings and implications of the assessment in an accurate and effective manner which is sensitive to a range of audiences.

Competency 7. The intern will achieve competency in the area of intervention.

- The intern will establish and maintain effective relationships with a wide range of clients.
- The intern will develop evidence-based intervention plans specific to the service delivery goals.
- The intern will implement interventions informed by the current scientific literature, assessment findings, diversity characteristics, and contextual variables.
- The intern will demonstrate the ability to apply the relevant research literature to clinical decision making.
- The intern will modify and adapt evidence-based approaches effectively when a clear evidence-base is lacking.

- The intern will evaluate intervention effectiveness, and adapt intervention goals and methods consistent with ongoing evaluation.

Competency 8. The intern will achieve competency in the area of supervision.

- The intern will demonstrate knowledge of supervision models and practices.
- The intern will apply supervisory knowledge in direct or simulated practice with psychology trainees or other health professionals.

Competency 9. The intern will achieve competency in the area of consultation.

- The intern will demonstrate knowledge and respect for the roles and perspectives of other professions.
- The intern will demonstrate knowledge of consultation models and practices.
- The intern will apply consultation knowledge in direct or simulated practice with individuals and their families, other health care professionals, and within the multidisciplinary team.

Competency 10. The intern will achieve competency in the area of child welfare.

- The intern will demonstrate a sensitivity to the specifics of the child welfare system, and the ways in which they intersect with other culturally significant factors.
- The intern's understanding of the impact of the child welfare system on the client will influence case conceptualization, goal development and interventions.
- The intern's understanding of the impact of the child welfare system will directly influence consultation with other members of the interdisciplinary treatment team and outside agencies.

Competency 11. The intern will achieve competency in the area of complex trauma.

- The intern will demonstrate a comprehensive awareness of the impact of complex trauma on clients and systems, and will recognize the associated symptomology.
- The intern will provide services that reflect and awareness of and sensitivity to the impact of complex trauma on functioning. This includes clinical interventions and assessment selection and administration.
- The intern will demonstrate an understanding of the impact of secondary or vicarious trauma, as demonstrated in awareness of related countertransference and in relationships with other members of the interdisciplinary team.

ELIGIBILITY

This program is open to psychology graduate students meeting the following criteria:

- Current enrollment in a professional psychology doctoral program in clinical, counseling, school, or community psychology
- Successful completion of all coursework
- Completion of practica training in psychotherapy and psychological assessment with children and adolescents
- Approval of their graduate school training director to begin pre-doctoral internship
- Preferred candidates will have completion of at least five integrated reports, at least three of which are child or adolescent assessments.

PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Applications for pre-doctoral internship training are made available in the fall preceding the internship year. Materials are due by November 15.

- Completed APPIC application form, which is available on the APPIC website, www.appic.org.
- Curriculum Vitae
- Internship eligibility and readiness verification
- Official transcript from the graduate program
- One child or adolescent assessment report (preferably including projective assessment)
- Three letters of recommendation

Applicants will be notified by December 15 if JCCA wishes to arrange an interview. Interviews will take place in January. In accordance with the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) recommendations, interviews will be conducted remotely via teleconference. On each interview date, there will be opportunities for Q and A sessions with staff, as well as a chance to speak to current interns.

Although JCCA has three match numbers and three internship sites, we consider ourselves a cohesive internship program. For that reason, interviews include staff from all three programs and applicants interested in both campus and FHS only have to complete one application and interview. One of the unique benefits to applying to JCCA is the opportunity to hear about everything our training program has to offer so that each applicant can make an informed decision about which of our sites is the best fit for them. Notification of acceptance or rejection is made in accordance with APPIC rules.

JCCA's internship program is listed in the APPIC Directory and is accredited by the American Psychological Association Commission on Accreditation, 750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002-4242, tel. 202-336-5979

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: How does JCCA address diversity?

A: As per JCCA's DEI statement, "All children and families deserve to lead safe, healthy, and productive lives. At JCCA, our responsibility is to foster a diverse, inclusive community where the families, children and communities we serve can thrive... We are committed to combating bias, harassment, and discrimination in all their forms".

The Psychology Department at JCCA is committed to anti-racist, affirming and culturally conscious practices as well as supporting our interns in applying these skills into their clinical work. JCCA as an agency, offers various ongoing seminars on cultural consciousness, while the Psychology Department provides additional seminars for trainees throughout the internship year. Furthermore, conversations regarding diversity are integrated regularly into supervision, both group and individual.

Q: Who facilitates the training seminars and what are some sample topics?

A: Seminars are conducted by psychologists and social workers from all of our programs, as well as highly regarded clinicians from the local community. Intern presentations on their own research, scholarly articles, various modalities, and case presentations also comprise part of the training sequence.

Below is a sampling of seminars offered:

- Using Trauma-Focused CBT (TF-CBT) with Youth in Foster Care
- Working with Youth with Problematic Sexual Behavior
- Cultural Considerations in Assessment
- Parent Child Interactive Therapy
- Clinical Work with the Immigrant Population

- Working with Commercially Sexually Exploited Children
- Treatment Planning Using SMART Goals
- Gender and Sexuality
- Presenting Feedback After an Assessment

Q: Is there a predominant or preferred theoretical orientation?

A: Our supervisors work from a range of theoretical orientations and many are eclectic and integrative in their practice. Exposure to case conceptualization and interventions across orientations is included in the training and clinical experience.

Q: Will I be conducting therapy or doing assessments in a school setting?

A: No. FHS services are conducted in our Bronx and Brooklyn clinics and operate independently from any school program. The same is true for our Westchester Campus, in that though there are two school on site, they are operated by the local school district. However, there are opportunities to consult with teachers, counselors, etc. as needed.

Q: Will I have the opportunity to work with commercially sexually exploited youth?

A: JCCA used to have a specific program for youth whom experienced commercial sexual exploitation. This program closed. However, youth in foster care are at higher risk for commercial sexual exploitation and our other programs continue to serve youth who are at high risk for or have experienced commercial sexual exploitation. Additionally, interns receive trainings on identifying commercial sexual exploitation and working with youth who have experienced it.

Q: What does a day in the life of an intern look like?

A: All interns come together on Fridays for seminar and intern presentations. However, Monday through Thursday may look somewhat different depending on whether you match to the campus or FHS. On campus, the day usually begins by checking and responding to emails, reading reports outlining campus events from the night before, and following up if necessary. Mornings are typically a great time to work on treatment plans or report writing. Campus interns may attend other meetings, as well as individual and/or group supervision. Campus interns also often schedule assessments in the morning. Cottage interdisciplinary team meetings are often held in the early afternoon; these meetings provide interns with the opportunity to learn how their clients have been doing in the cottage as well as be a part of discussions related to the client's presentation. When school ends at around 3:00pm, interns begin individual or group therapy sessions. The last half hour or so of the day is typically spent documenting sessions in the electronic medical record. Though this is a typical schedule, each day on campus is different and even the best-laid plans might be interrupted to meet the needs of individual clients.

In FHS, the mornings are similarly variable. This time is often used to check e-mail, complete documentation and work on clinical reports. Program-wide meetings and supervision may also be scheduled for the morning hours. Assessments are also often completed in the morning hours.

Interns see most of their therapy clients in the afternoon, with the exception of some older youth who are not in school. Although all therapy sessions are scheduled, staying flexible and in communication with clients and case planning teams will help to ensure that you see them regularly and as planned. Activities such as foster parent trainings, group therapy, peer supervision, and case-related meetings will add variety to your weekly schedule.

Regardless of location, lunch hour is a great chance to take a walk, catch up with other interns or externs, or decompress before seeing clients! Across sites, schedules change according to individual client need and unexpected crises. Flexibility and willingness to adjust is key to having a satisfying and positive training year.

Q: What are the typical internship hours at each site?

A: Interns placed on the residential campus typically work from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.. The FHS sites are open on Monday through Thursday from 9:00am until 7:00 p.m. and on Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.. Since FHS interns do their best to maximize afternoon and evening hours (thus ensuring that there is enough time for clinical intervention), they typically work from 10-6 or 11-7 on Monday through Thursday.

Q: Will I be required to travel among sites?

A: Weekly Friday seminars are held both virtually, and in-person, rotating between the three locations. In addition, all interns are assigned at least one comprehensive assessment at the campus START Program and are required to travel to the Campus to complete the evaluation.

Q: What's so great about New York City and Pleasantville?

A: So many things! Not only does New York City have amazing cultural and entertaining activities, it's easy to travel to other cities in the Northeast. Both Boston and Washington D.C. are about a four hour trip from New York City. We're also not far from the ocean and the mountains, as well as all the fun activities that come along with them. Pleasantville is situated about 20 miles north of New York City and is linked to other areas by a conveniently located MetroNorth railroad station. It has a cute downtown area filled with interesting shops and restaurants and is within a short drive of many parks and greenspaces.

New York City is home to world-renowned museums and, of course, Broadway. There are lots of opportunities to experience New York culture either for free or on a budget. TimeOut New York has weekly listings of free events and there are ticket lotteries for drastically reduced Broadway shows. There's so much fun to have outside of New York City as well. Pleasantville is home to the Jacob Burns Cultural Arts Center which shows independent films as well as mainstream movies. The Performing Arts Center at Purchase College is about 20 minutes from Pleasantville and has a wide variety of musical, theatrical and dance performances. Pleasantville, as well as many of the neighboring towns and villages, have thriving local events including farmer's markets.

Due to the close vicinity of New Jersey and Connecticut, interns have various options for housing. Many of the Psychology staff and previous interns have relocated to the New York Metro area. For interns relocating to New York City or Westchester, we are happy to provide information to help you with the relocation process.

Q: Is there public transportation available?

A: Public transportation is easily available for our city locations. FHS interns who live in NYC typically commute by subway, bus, bike or foot to Brooklyn and Bronx sites. Parking garages, as well as street parking (Bronx only), are also available nearby for those who choose to drive. For FHS interns traveling occasionally to Pleasantville, the MetroNorth is available, with a shuttle running hourly between the campus and the train station. Interns also often carpool when possible. Campus interns typically drive to their site daily.

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STAFF BIOS

Dr. Sabine Mahillet
Director of Psychology for Community Services

Dr. Sabine Mahillet is a graduate of Pace University's combined School-Clinical Child Psychology program. Additionally, she obtained a bilingual extension in Haitian Creole to her School Psychology degree. She completed her APA- accredited pre-doctoral internship at New York City Children's Center (Queens campus) where she gained experience working with youth diagnosed with severe mental illness and their families. After completing her doctoral studies, Dr. Mahillet worked for several years at St. Christopher's Inc., a residential treatment center providing services to youth who were often dually diagnosed with developmental disabilities as well as psychiatric disorders. Dr. Mahillet is passionate about working with marginalized and vulnerable populations: helping them to recognize their inherent power and strength while also acknowledging and addressing systemic barriers. She was previously a member of JCCA's CSEC (Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children) council and the Civic Engagement Subcommittee of JCCA's Race Equity Committee. In her spare time, she enjoys traveling, good food, attending concerts and connecting with her family and friends.

Dr. Ashley Robinson
Deputy Director of Psychology for Residential Programs

Throughout her life, Dr. Ashley Robinson has moved up and down the east coast. After residing in South Florida for many years, she completed her doctorate at Spalding University in Louisville, Kentucky (2016). Dr. Robinson completed her internship through the St. Louis Psychology Internship Consortium, in which she designed a training year focusing on trauma and Forensic Psychology. Dr. Robinson completed a Forensic Psychology Post-Doctoral Fellowship at the Audrey Hepburn Children's House in New Jersey, during which she conducted forensic evaluations for child protective services as well as individual therapy with victims of abuse/neglect and their non-offending caregivers. Dr. Robinson joined the team on JCCA's Westchester Campus in 2018. In addition to clinical work, she provides supervision to the staff psychologists as well as trainees. She is also a member of JCCA's Race Equity Committee, which is committed to increasing racial consciousness and equity across JCCA. Dr. Robinson is passionate about working with youth in underserved populations, and specifically those with severe emotional and behavioral difficulties who have juvenile justice and/or child protective services involvement. She also places a high value on maintaining a healthy work-life balance. In her free time, she enjoys being outdoors with family and friends, hiking, listening to audiobooks, as well as traveling.

PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

Dr. Patricia Cummings
Coordinator of Psychology for Residential Programs

Dr. Cummings received her doctorate at Alliant International University in San Francisco, CA in 2011 and completed an APA internship at Westcoast Children's Clinic in Oakland, CA, providing therapy and assessment to children and adolescents in the foster care system. She completed a post-doctoral fellowship at Psychological Services Center, also in Oakland, CA. Post-licensure, Dr. Cummings continued to supervise students there, becoming the assessment coordinator and supervising post-doctoral students, interns, and externs in assessment and therapy. She maintained a private practice in the San Francisco Bay Area for six years prior to moving to New York and joining the team at JCCA in 2018. Dr. Cummings' areas of specialization include the mental health needs of the LGBTQ population, trauma-informed care, and comprehensive assessment. More recently she has (not especially) enjoyed developing expertise in the intricacies of managed care billing for the mental health service needs of vulnerable youth. When not spending time on the JCCA Westchester campus, she enjoys spending time with family outdoors, trying new recipes, and playing card or board games.

Dr. Leah Hallow
Supervising Psychologist

Dr. Leah Hallow has been working in the mental health field since 2001. She is specialized in dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), trauma-informed care, sexual and gender identity issues, LGBTQIA+ mental health needs, and neuropsychological assessments. Dr. Hallow is also trained in TF-CBT and EMDR therapies. She completed her doctoral degree at University of Indianapolis in 2013 and had the unique experience of completing her internship at two sites: The Center for Pediatric Neuropsychology in Germantown, Tennessee and Devereux Foundation Advanced Behavioral Health in Rutland, Massachusetts. She completed her post-doctoral training at the Astor Home for Children in Rhinebeck, NY and then went on to become the Director of Clinical Training at Upstate Physician Services in Troy, NY. In addition to her role as a supervising psychologist, Dr. Hallow is also the chair of the JCCA Pride committee. She enjoys reading whenever possible and traveling whenever she can.

Dr. Jessica Schutte
Supervising Psychologist

Dr. Jessica Schutte earned her doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology from the University of Hartford's Graduate Institute of Professional Psychology. She completed her pre-doctoral internship and post-doctoral training at JCCA's Pleasantville Cottage School before becoming a staff psychologist. Over the course of her training, Dr. Schutte has provided individual and group therapy to children, adolescents, and young adults, many of whom had extensive histories of trauma, as well as significant emotional and behavioral challenges. Dr. Schutte has clinical interest and expertise in the areas of attachment, trauma, serious mental illness, and working with youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC). In addition to training in relational, psychodynamic, and dialectical behavioral (DBT) approaches, she is trained in trauma-focused therapies including TF-CBT and EMDR. Dr. Schutte also considers case conceptualization and diagnosis as areas of specialty. She is passionate about using strengths-based and affirming approaches to work with diverse clients and is currently a member of JCCA's Pride Committee. Outside of work, Dr. Schutte enjoys creating art, reading whenever possible, baking, and spending time with her family.

PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

Dr. Lisa Szczesniak
Supervising Psychologist

Dr. Lisa Szczesniak earned her doctorate in School Psychology at Teachers College, Columbia University. She also earned a Master of Arts in Education Psychology: Schooling degree, a Master of Education in School Psychology degree, and a Master of Philosophy degree during her graduate training. Dr. Szczesniak has been with JCCA since September 2022, when she began her pre-doctoral internship on the Westchester campus in the PCS program. Dr. Szczesniak then transitioned into the role of staff psychologist and continued in this work. Dr. Szczesniak spent her graduate training years working in various hospitals and schools across the greater New York City area, with special interest in serving clients with high acuity and life-threatening behaviors. She also has a particular interest in addressing issues of equity that contribute to adverse childhood experiences and youth involvement in child protective services. Presently, Dr. Szczesniak serves on the Race Equity Committee and assists with the planning of the annual Pride Parade on campus. Dr. Szczesniak is committed to improving outcomes for individuals with marginalized identities. Dr. Szczesniak's other responsibilities include providing individual therapy, group, therapy, conducting a variety of psychological assessments, and providing supervision to trainees. Outside of work, she enjoys cooking, reading, attending live performances, and spending time with family.

Dr. Raven Oshiro
Staff Psychologist

Dr. Raven Oshiro identifies as a bilingual bicultural clinical psychologist and uses she/her pronouns. She attended Albizu University in Miami, FL, where she achieved a doctorate in clinical psychology with an emphasis on child and adolescent psychology. Dr. Oshiro received her practicum training in both inpatient and community outpatient settings, working with child and adolescents with a particular emphasis on trauma treatments. She completed her APA accredited predoctoral internship at the Institute of Living/ Hartford Hospital in Hartford, CT. Here she received extensive training in psychosis, suicidality, milieu management, trauma-informed care, and pediatric consultation as part of her primary rotations on the child/ adolescent psychiatric inpatient units, outpatient care, and Connecticut Children's Hospital.

Dr. Oshiro later pursued a post-doctoral level position at the Institute of Living/ Hartford Hospital on the child/ adolescent psychiatric inpatient units. Here she honed her skills within CBT, DBT, psychodynamic psychotherapy, crisis management, group therapy, consultation, and participated in the provision of training and supervision. Dr. Oshiro has extensive training in comprehensive psychology assessment batteries, including cognitive, psychoeducational, personality measures, and projectives. She joined the JCCA psychology department in 2021 as a full-time psychologist, carries a caseload, and supervises trainees. Dr. Oshiro is passionate about working with children and bringing families together. Outside of work, she enjoys cooking, traveling, and spending time with her family and friends.

PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY INTERNSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

Dr. Melissa Sital
Staff Psychologist

Dr. Melissa Sital earned her doctorate with a concentration in child and adolescent psychology through Montclair State University's Clinical Psychology PhD program. Dr. Sital completed her pre-doctoral internship at JCCA Foster Home Services in Brooklyn, and post-doctoral training at JCCA Foster Home Services in the Bronx, after which she returned to JCCA Foster Home Services in Brooklyn as a staff psychologist in 2025. Dr. Sital has received training in a number of settings, including a psychiatric research institute conducting comprehensive psychological assessments, a community outpatient clinic providing child and adolescent therapy and assessment, a hospital day program offering individual and group therapy and milieu services to adolescents, and a group private practice offering CBT- and DBT-based individual and group therapy to children, adolescents, and adults. Through these experiences, Dr. Sital has strengthened her skills in CBT, DBT, crisis intervention, trauma-informed care, psychodynamic therapy, and psychological assessment. Dr. Sital is especially passionate about serving children and adolescents from underserved and diverse backgrounds, as well as those with extensive trauma histories and internalizing disorders. Outside of work, Dr. Sital enjoys reading, exploring the city, playing board games, and spending time with family and friends.

Davina Sasunian
Psychology Service Provider

Davina Sasunian will be receiving her Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at Alliant University in Los Angeles, CA, with an emphasis in Multicultural and Community Psychology. She joined JCCA as a pre-doctoral psychology intern and continued with the agency following the completion of her internship. Prior to joining JCCA, Davina gained clinical experience in outpatient and intensive outpatient settings working primarily with children and adolescents.

Davina's clinical approach is client-centered and humanistic, with an emphasis on building strong therapeutic relationships and meeting youth where they are. Her clinical interests include trauma-informed care, play therapy, Autism and ADHD assessment, LGBTQIA+ affirming care, identity development and exploration, and emotional regulation. She values collaboration with families, residential staff, and other members of the treatment team as an important part of supporting the youth she works with. In her free time, Davina enjoys watching movies, playing board games, and spending time in nature.