

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION
Office of Academic Affiliations (10A2D)
Washington, DC**

PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

ACADEMIC YEAR 2019-2020 (FISCAL YEAR 2020) TRAINEE SUPPORT FOR ASSOCIATED HEALTH AND NURSING PROFESSIONS: REQUEST FOR TRAINING POSITIONS & STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE REPORTS

1. OVERVIEW

This program announcement provides instructions, policies, and procedures to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities for the preparation and submission of Associated Health Education and Nursing trainee requests to the Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) for Academic Year 2019-2020 (Fiscal Year 2020). Associated Health Professions and Nursing trainees are processed via this program announcement while allopathic and osteopathic medicine, dentistry, and all Advanced Fellowship positions are handled by OAA's Graduate Medical Education and Advanced Fellowship sections, respectively. While we have a combined allocations process for the Nursing and Associated Health Sections of OAA, questions regarding a particular professional training program should be addressed to staff members of the respective Nursing or Associated Health sections.

a. Submission and Due Dates. Your Request for Training Positions and Standards of Excellence (SoE) reports entered online are due into the OAA Web-based support center by **Thursday, October 11, 2018**. The link to access the support center is <http://vaww.oaa.med.va.gov> (see instructions in Attachment B). **Please read through this entire announcement before responding to this request.**

Please note that several national program offices have recommended to OAA that the distribution of Associated Health base positions remain the same for AY 2020 as the base positions for the current academic year. Therefore, SoE and position requests are not needed for the following professions:

- **Audiology**
- **Blind Rehabilitation**
- **Chiropractic Care**
- **Clinical Pastoral Education**
- **Licensed Professional Mental Health Counseling**
- **Marriage and Family Therapy**
- **Physician Assistant**
- **Psychology**
- **Speech Pathology**

b. Program Office Consultation. Using the reported data, discipline leads from the VHA Office of Patient Care Services will make recommendations to OAA regarding the recommended distribution of stipends.

c. Funding Notification. Decisions regarding funding support for trainees will be communicated to VA facilities and Veterans Integrated Services Networks (VISNs) by **January 31, 2019**.

2. GENERAL BACKGROUND

a. Funding for associated health and nursing educational programs and positions are provided to fulfill Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) statutory mission to train clinicians for the VA and the nation. These programs provide a pipeline of well-prepared clinicians for potential employment in VA. The training programs also contribute to the morale of training supervisors and to the overall quality of Veteran Care.

b. VA facilities must demonstrate excellence in their training programs when competing for limited trainee funds. Standards of Excellence in profession-specific clinical education and training, including interprofessional education, are designed to maintain and enhance the quality of clinical education in VA.

c. All training programs must also meet the following criteria:

1) VA clinical education and training programs must meet or exceed standards established by accrediting agencies and defined by the profession-specific national program office while adhering to VA's goal of providing Veteran-focused interprofessional education.

2) The facility and VISN educational infrastructure (staff, education coordinator, and material resources) support excellence in clinical education and training.

3) Training programs contribute to Veteran-focused care that reflects VA's health care priorities including (but not limited to) special emphasis programs such as blind rehabilitation, geriatrics and long-term care, homelessness, palliative care, polytrauma, psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery, PTSD, serious mental illness, suicide prevention/crisis intervention, spinal cord injury or dysfunction, substance use disorders, OEF/OIF/OND Veterans, and women's health.

4) If clinical training programs at the facility are affiliated with academic programs, the relationship should be enhanced through such activities as academic faculty appointments, membership in school or university academic committees, joint ventures in continuing education programs, research, and other scholarly activities.

5) Interprofessional education addresses knowledge, skills, and attitudes appropriate for successful collaboration and teamwork in integrated clinical settings. As our system of care is heavily dependent upon interprofessional care (e.g., PACT, mental health care and pain management), interprofessional educational models are desirable.

6) Results of evaluations are used to plan and implement program improvements that promote quality educational experiences for trainees.

3. POLICY

- a) OAA has oversight responsibility for all clinical training programs. **Trainees must only be funded through funds administered by OAA. Local funding of trainees is prohibited (see Handbook 1400.08, Education of Associated Health Professions).**
- b) All **VA funded** associated health and nursing trainees **must** be US citizens. No waivers will be granted based on inability to recruit citizens.
- c) Where nationally recognized accrediting bodies exist, only trainees from accredited programs are eligible for funding. Exceptions must be approved by OAA through a waiver process.
- d) Properly executed Affiliation Agreements and supporting materials must be on file at the VA facility prior to the appointment of trainees. These agreements must correspond with relevant federal and VA rules.
- e) Stipend rates are established by OAA, based on analyses of comparable private sector rates and federal locality adjustments. Stipend rates must not be adjusted or supplemented locally. See <http://vaww.oaa.med.va.gov/DBReports/LocBasedStipends.aspx> for local stipend rates.
- f) Trainees who participate in funded VA-sponsored training requiring one-year (2080 hours) or more of training should be appointed for at least one-year, and for a total duration not to exceed (NTE) three years and consistent with the duration of the training program; this qualifies them to participate in Federal health benefits and life insurance programs. All associated health and nursing trainees should receive continuous temporary work schedules (not intermittent) and are eligible to accrue sick leave. Trainees appointed for more than 90 calendar days must also accrue annual leave, which is pro-rated for part-time appointments. The actual length of funded training depends on the requirements of the accrediting agency for the program, the program curriculum, and the number of hours approved by OAA. Note that part-time trainees may now have the option of obtaining health insurance during the period of their appointment under OPM rule changes. If the trainee is scheduled to train for at 130 hours per month for a period of at least 90 days, they are eligible for health benefits. Your HR Service can determine whether these resources are available to part-time trainees and what their level of contribution would be for benefits.
- g) A completed “AY 2019-20 Profession-Specific Standards of Excellence in Clinical and Interprofessional Education/Training” must be submitted for each profession requesting funded positions (**see Section 1a for listing of profession specific exceptions**). Only **one report** is required from a facility for each profession being requested that requires this documentation. For example, if two pharmacy residents are requested in the **Regular Trainee** program and one is requested for **GRECC**, submit only one completed Profession-Specific Standards of Excellence for Clinical and Interprofessional Education/Training for Pharmacy requesting all three positions.
- h) Special Instructions:
- Please note the instructions for reporting trainees for these distinctive programs is included on the discipline-specific SoE.
 - Note that Associated Health and Nursing positions included in the Centers of Excellence in Primary Care are pre-approved and will be locked for making additional requests through this Associated Health and Nursing allocations process.

- OAA utilizes a separate funding mechanism for educational activities including Advanced Fellowships and Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Centers (MIRECC). These positions should be requested through the OAA Advanced Fellowship process. **Beginning with the 2016-17 Academic Year, the Psychosocial Rehabilitation (PSR) Fellowship Program was administratively realigned under OAA's Advanced Fellowships Section. Thus, PSR positions must not be requested through this Associated Health and Nursing Education process.**
 - Please also note that because the Rural Health Training Initiative (RHTI) concluded its three year pilot, all base positions previously identified as "rural health" now are included in your facility's "regular" base positions.
 - Facilities funded for 2-year neuropsychology or rehabilitation psychology positions will have these specialty psychology postdoctoral resident base positions identified as either "Psychology Postdoctoral Resident – Year 1" or "Psychology Postdoctoral Resident – Year 2."
- i) If funded trainees rotate out of a special program (e.g., GRECC) within the VA facility for other required clinical experiences, it is expected that trainees funded by that profession's regular training program will rotate into the special program. In this way, the special program will receive the full training value of each position, even if that profession has requirements to rotate trainees to a variety of settings. In some situations, a VA rotation that may meet accreditation guidelines may not be available (e.g., a pediatric rotation). Training outside of VA may not exceed one-sixth of the trainee's clinical education hours, on an annual basis. Affiliation agreements (VA Form 10-0094h) between VA and a non-VA agency/healthcare facility must be established before an off-site rotation may occur. Many VA programs offer a 1:1 trainee exchange with a local training program, which provides a brief exposure to VA and maintains the total number of trainees in both the VA and the affiliated training program while expanding training opportunities.

4. ACTION

- a. A list of the "Education Programs Eligible for Trainee Funding Support" is provided in Attachment A.
- b. The entire report will be entered on-line in a web-based system developed by OAA (See Attachment B for Instructions).
- c. Reminders:
 - 1) **Medical and Dental Resident and Advanced Fellowship (including Psychosocial Rehabilitation and MIRECC) requests must not be included in this report.**
 - 2) **OAA should be notified immediately of unfilled positions to ensure that positions may be temporarily reallocated to other facilities. In February 2017 a new database, AH and Nursing Field Filled Positions was released, which is the mechanism to alert OAA when a stipend is not used in order to make temporary reassignments.** Failure to notify OAA in a timely manner of unfilled positions may be considered in future allocations cycles. Failure to fill all positions will generally not be a negative factor in future allocations unless specific facilities have recurring unfilled positions. The positions are considered national assets for the specific discipline and all reallocations of unfilled positions should be made by OAA in collaboration with the profession's national program office.

3) Unfilled positions may not be reassigned to another discipline at the facility. They must be returned to OAA for reassignment in the same profession using OAA's AH and Nursing Field Filled Positions Database. Unused funds must still be returned through OAA's quarterly needs and excess report, but this database will allow AH and Nursing to track fill rates and protect training funds. Almost all training programs will have difficulty filling all funded positions occasionally. Only an ongoing inability to fill trainee positions in a specific category will affect future allocations. Returning funds on the quarterly needs and excess report in lieu of notifying OAA through the new fill rate database to withdraw funds for unfilled positions is not considered adequate notification. NOTE: Failure to report open positions may affect future allocations.

5. ATTACHMENTS

- a. Attachment A. Education Programs Eligible for Trainee Funding Support with Updated Position Titles
- b. Attachment B. Instructions for Completing the Trainee Request Forms and the Standards of Excellence

6. OAA PROGRAM CONTACTS

Any questions concerning this program announcement or the process for requesting **Associated Health trainee** positions should be directed to the Associated Health Education team at Assoc.Health@va.gov or directly to David Latini, PhD at 832-377-9927 or David.Latini@va.gov.

Questions concerning the process for requesting Nursing trainee positions should be directed to the **Nursing Education** representative, Dr. Jemma Ayvazian at Jemma.Ayvazian@va.gov at 202-461-7541.

ATTACHMENT A

EDUCATION PROGRAMS ELIGIBLE FOR TRAINEE FUNDING SUPPORT WITH UPDATED POSITION TITLE

| <u>Profession</u> | <u>Educational Level & Site Limitations</u> | <u>Updated Position Title (for HR job code assignments)</u> |
|---|--|--|
| Audiology | Au.D. Externship – 4 th year doctoral Predoctoral Fellow *Note that Au.D. Clinical Rotation (350 hours) are no longer funded since externship is the highest level of training prior to employment | Audiology Doctoral Extern |
| Blind Rehabilitation | Master's only at VA blind rehabilitation centers, low vision outpatient clinics, or with blind rehabilitation outpatient specialists (BROS). | Blind Rehab Mstrs Intern |
| Chiropractic Care | Postdoctoral Residency | Chiropractic Resident |
| Clinical Pastoral Education (Chaplain Residents) | Regular and Specialty – Only at VA programs accredited by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE). | Clinical Pastoral Ed Resident |
| Licensed Prof. Mental Health Counseling (LPMHC) | Pre-degree internship | LPMHC Masters Intern |
| Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) | Pre-degree internship | MFT Masters Intern |
| Nutrition and Food Service (Dietetics) (SoE required) | Post-Baccalaureate and Combined Master's. Priority will be given to programs accredited in the name of the VA or in which VA is a major participant. | Nutrition/Dietetics Intern |
| Nursing (SoE required) | Post-Baccalaureate, Master's, Post-Master's Trainees | New/Updated HR Codes for majority of nursing trainee positions |
| Occupational Therapy (SoE required) | Baccalaureate, Master's, Post-Master's | 1. OT Masters Intern 2. Occupational Therapy Fellow |

| <u>Profession</u> | <u>Educational Level & Site Limitations</u> | <u>Updated Position Title (for HR job code assignments)</u> |
|---|---|---|
| Optometry (SoE required) | Postdoctoral Residency, Post Residency Fellow (Boston) | 1. Optometry Resident 2. Optometry Fellow |
| Pharmacy (SoE required) | Postdoctoral Residency and Fellowship | 1. Pharmacy Resident 2. Pharmacy Fellow |
| Physical Therapy (SoE required) | Doctoral, Post-graduate Residency | 1. PT Doctoral Intern 2. Physical Therapy Resident |
| Physician Assistant | Post-Baccalaureate Certificate, Master's, Post-graduate Residency | 1. Physician Assistant Resident |
| Podiatry (SOE required) | Postdoctoral | Podiatry Resident |
| Prosthetics/Orthotics (SoE required) | Baccalaureate, Master's | Prosthetics/Orthotics Resident |
| Psychology | Predoctoral Internship and Postdoctoral Residency | 1. Psychology Doctoral Intern 2. Psychology Resident |
| Social Work (SoE required) | Master's, Post-Master's, and Predoctoral | 1. Social Work Masters Intern 2. Social Work Fellow |
| Speech-Language Pathology | Master's & Clinical Fellowship Year (CFY) | 1. Speech Path Masters Intern 2. Speech Pathology Fellow |

ATTACHMENT B

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING TRAINEE REQUESTS AND THE STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE FORMS

(MEDICAL/DENTAL, AND ADVANCED FELLOWSHIP POSITIONS ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THIS PROCESS.)

1. The facility Education Office, Designated Education Officer (DEO), or person designated by the facility Director should send copies of the Program Announcement and Attachments to each clinical education coordinator or training director in disciplines that are eligible to apply for funding and require completion of a Standards of Excellence form. It is critical for facilities to review Attachment A, as nine professions' program offices will not require SoE submission. In these cases, it is recommended that the current distribution of stipends be maintained nationally except when there are extenuating circumstances (i.e., supervision or accreditation issues).
2. The facility Education Office, DEO, or person designated by the facility Director should enter requests on-line in the OAA web-based Support Center **by Thursday, October 11, 2018**. To access the OAA Support Center,
 - Enter: <http://vawww.oaa.med.va.gov>.
 - Select <Log In now>. If you are a first time user, select <Register.> **It is strongly recommended that the education coordinator at your facility, who already has Support Center access, be the focal point for completing this report. It should not be necessary to have multiple individuals applying for access to the Support Center.**

Submitting Trainee Requests: Trainee Support in Associated Health and Nursing Professions (and SOE Uploads) Database

NOTE: In the past, two independent databases ((1) Trainee Support in Associated Health professions) and (2) AH Standards of Excellence Upload Completed Forms) were used. To simplify the process, both databases were combined into a single database last year titled “**Trainee Support in Associated Health and Nursing Professions (and SOE Uploads)**”. The database will default to the <home> screen where facilities may request allocations with the ability to toggle between the <home> and <SoE Upload Utility> tabs. The SoE Upload Utility navigation tab at the top of the screen will allow facilities upload required SoE forms. Facilities also have the option to review past SoE uploads. SoE forms are updated substantially by national program offices annually so use past uploads only to refresh your memory about previous submissions.

The default (when requesting trainee allocations) will be <group by program,> but an option to <group by discipline> is also available. You may alternate to each grouping by selecting the green and blue tabs above the grid. When entering new requests you may use either option. <Group by program> separates positions by special initiative (e.g. GRECC, Mental Health, Regular) while <Group by discipline> separates positions by discipline and reflects the program type for each row within a single discipline. If you fail to request positions for any program and/or discipline **where a SoE is required**, you will not receive allocations for those positions. Base positions in AY 19 for audiology, blind rehabilitation, chiropractic care, clinical pastoral education, licensed professional mental health counseling, marriage and family therapy, physician assistant, psychology, and speech pathology will remain the same as the current base positions. These positions have been pre-approved and facilities will not have the ability to edit the number of requested positions, as pre-approved rows in the database will be locked. Facilities that were temporarily reallocated positions in AY 19 will not maintain those additional positions in subsequent years (only base positions are pre-approved).

In addition, positions requested/awarded in VA's Physical Therapy (PT) Residency Educational Enhancement, Emergency Medicine and Mental Health Physician Assistant Residency, and Pain Management – Opioid Reduction Pharmacy Residency must not be included in your request. OAA will manually enter PT, PA, and Pharmacy residency positions in the database when award decisions are made. Positions awarded in Mental Health Education Expansion Phase I - VI are locked and preapproved in this database.

Associated Health positions included in the Centers of Excellence in Primary Care are already pre-approved. Positions previously listed in the Centers of Excellence in Specialty Care are now listed as Associated Health regular positions and must be requested through this Associated Health and Nursing allocations process, as they are not pre-approved.

OAA utilizes a separate funding mechanism for educational activities including Advanced Fellowships and Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Centers (MIRECC). These positions should be requested through the OAA Advanced Fellowship process. **Please also note that the Psychosocial Rehabilitation (PSR) Fellowship Program is now administratively realigned under the Advanced Fellowships Section. Thus, PSR positions are no longer requested through this Associated Health and Nursing Education process.** In addition, Rural Health Training Initiative (RHTI) concluded its three-year pilot, and all base positions previously identified as “rural health” in our database are now identified as “regular” base positions. Similarly, facilities funded for 2-year neuropsychology or rehabilitation psychology positions have these specialty psychology postdoctoral residency base positions identified as either “Psychology Postdoctoral Resident – Year 1” or “Psychology Postdoctoral Resident – Year 2” and have been pre-approved.

1. Once you have logged into the Support Center, select the Database heading at the top of the screen and select <enter> next to **<Trainee Support in Associated Health and Nursing Professions (and SoE Uploads)>**.
2. The specialties and the number of base allocations that your facility was allocated in AY 2018-19 will appear under the AY 2019-2020 Base column. Your requests for AY 2019-2020 have been pre-populated for you with the AY 2018-2019 number of base positions at your facility (see Requested number of trainees column in tan). **If you do not adjust these numbers in the “Requested number of trainees AY 2019-20” column, it is assumed that you wish to maintain the same numbers for the upcoming year. Each education office must speak directly with facility training directors requesting positions to ensure requests reflect each discipline’s expectations. For professions that also require listing requested positions in the SoE forms, it is especially critical that the number of requested positions in this database match the requests identified in the SoE form.** SoE forms are not required for Audiology, Blind Rehabilitation, Chiropractic Care, Clinical Pastoral Education, LPMHC, MFT, Physician Assistant, Psychology, and Speech Pathology, and base allocations have been pre-approved and maintained for AY 2020.
3. To adjust requested hours and/or positions click on the <EDIT> pencil (first column) for each existing record you wish to revise that has not yet been pre-approved. After updating the information, a green check will appear when changes have been updated successfully. You may reset the checkmark by clicking directly on it.
4. If you wish to add a new row with a discipline not yet identified select <Add a New Entry Below> (at top above grid). Similarly, if within a profession trainees may complete a training experience with a different amount of hours, then each number of hours should be specified in a separate row, and keep in mind stipends must not be split between multiple students (e.g. Physical Therapy may have one row for trainees at 400 hours and one row for trainees at 600 hours). If a discipline is not listed in the drop down menu select <Can't find?> Please note that some disciplines are only authorized to train at specific facilities. In these instances send an email to the Associated Health Education team at Assoc.Health@va.gov for Associated Health positions or

Jemma.Ayvazian@va.gov for Nursing positions with your justification and program information and ask that your facility be allowed to request positions. If authorized by OAA, your facility may be added to the restricted list and then the program would appear in the drop down list.

5. After all requests are entered for your facility and all required SoE uploads are complete (see instructions on pg. 8) select <Confirm Complete> in green at the top of the page. A “Completion of Database” screen will appear and you must check the red box indicating <Mark Completed Now> to notify OAA you have finished both the trainee request and SoE upload processes (see screenshot on next page).

Completion of Database
AH Standards of Excellence Upload Completed Forms 2014
for
Columbia VAMC (SC)

Check if you have NO DATA to Enter (negative report)

Mark Completed Now

I have reviewed and updated the data for database
AH Standards of Excellence Upload Completed Forms 2014
and it is complete as of today,
8/18/2014 .

Please Rate this Database. 5 Stars being the Best.

Interface Ease of Use
★★★★★

Interface Understandability
★★★★★

Overall User Experience
★★★★★

Standards of Excellence

1. Each coordinator or discipline training director requesting funding from each facility should complete the appropriate discipline-specific **SoE in Clinical and Interprofessional Education and Training, with the exception of requests from the nine professions identified on page 1. Please do not complete this form for disciplines that do not request funding for trainees.** All SoE forms may be accessed independently by training directors, as the support center report does not require registration. The following link may be distributed to facility training directors and leaders: [Link to reports on OAA Intranet Site](#). Each education office is asked to submit the completed SoE reports electronically (see instructions below).

2. The Program Coordinator, facility Education Office, Designated Education Officer, or person designated by the facility Director should upload all of the completed SoE forms. Please submit your SoE on-line by **Thursday, October 11, 2018**. To access the OAA Support Center, follow the instructions above.

3. Once you have logged into the Data Support Center, you will upload SoE forms in the same Database where trainee positions were requested, titled **“Trainee Support for Associated Health and Nursing Professions (and SoE Uploads).”**

4. On the home screen, select <SoE Upload Utility> on the top navigation tab. To view forms from previous years you may select <SoE Past Uploads> and select the academic year you wish to review. Please follow the steps below to upload your profession-specific SoE forms for dietetics, nursing, occupational therapy, optometry, pharmacy, physical therapy, podiatry, prosthetics/orthotics, and social work.

| Steps | Action |
|--------------|--|
| Step 1 | Select <u>one</u> clinical profession for which site is requesting positions from the drop down list provided. Only professions with required SoE forms will appear. |
| Step 2 | After selecting the profession the prefix will appear as [Profession]Standard_, and you must add a suffix (e.g. "BlindRehabStandard_Accreditation", "Dietetics_Core") to allow program offices to identify your documents efficiently. You may choose your suffix based on the content you are uploading, and each upload must include a suffix. |
| Step 3 | The document will be uploaded by clicking<browse> and selecting the appropriate file. Only one document may be selected for each entry. Since some professions request multiple documents, the suffix for the document title must be used to differentiate the file content. |
| Step 4 | Select <Upload Document> |
| Step 5 | Complete Step 1 – 4 until all required forms for professions requesting funding are submitted |
| Step 6 | If you are completing uploads after entering your allocation requests, ensure you select <confirm complete> (described on page 7-8). If you have not entered requested positions complete this before selecting <confirm complete.> You may return to the trainee allocation request screen by selecting <home> on the top navigation tab. |