

University of New Mexico Center for Development & Disability

Postdoctoral Psychology Fellowship in Autism Spectrum Disorder

General Description

The postdoctoral psychology fellowship in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at the University of New Mexico (UNM) Center for Development and Disability (CDD) is designed to provide a specialized training experience in a range of evidence based and best practice clinical services to children who have ASD, their families, and community providers. The fellowship program is a two year, full-time training experience. By the end of the two years, fellows are expected to be well-rounded child clinical psychologists with specialized training within ASD. The fellowship program is designed to integrate competencies across the following five major domains of knowledge and practice: Assessment, Intervention, Teaching and Consultation, Interdisciplinary Relationships and Professionalism. Research activities may also be incorporated depending on availability. Each fellow's activities are organized within their emphasis area of ASD, together with participation in Clinical and Leadership Education activities across the CDD and the UNM Health Sciences Center.

Over the two years of the program, fellows will acquire advanced skills in differential diagnosis of ASD. Each fellow will also acquire skills in providing a range of intervention services tailored to the individual needs of the child with ASD. Partnership with communities and local service providers is another important area of professional practice and the fellow may conduct a number of community trainings or technical assistance about ASD in a variety of modalities with diverse audiences.

A unique aspect of this program is the opportunity to provide clinical services in an underserved, rural state with a diverse, minority population. The CDD is located in Albuquerque, New Mexico; however, clinical services and trainings are conducted state-wide. While the majority of clinical activities, supervision, and didactics are housed within the CDD, a substantial training component of the fellowship program includes travel within the state.

Major Activities Description

The fellow will spend most of their time providing services in the Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities (AODD) Division, which is one of the many divisions at the CDD. The following descriptions comprise the majority of the experiences offered within the Autism Spectrum Disorder fellowship. Each fellow's individual experience and time allotted between activities will vary according to their Individual Development Plan, which is created in conjunction with the fellow, the training director, and primary supervisors, based upon each fellow's skills, interests, and learning goals.

Assessment Experiences

Clinical Evaluation Services Unit

The Clinical Evaluation Services Unit (CESU) integrates diagnostic services across the CDD. This unit is comprised of four evaluation clinics, each addressing specific needs for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. The Autism Spectrum Evaluation Clinic (ASEC) completes interdisciplinary evaluations for individuals from ages 3 to 22 suspected of having ASD. The Early Childhood Evaluation Program (ECEP) also completes interdisciplinary evaluations for children birth to three who are referred for a range of developmental concerns, including ASD, and complex medical and developmental comorbidities. The Supports and Assessments for Feeding and Eating (SAFE) clinic provides interdisciplinary evaluations for children and adolescents with feeding difficulties. The Neurocognitive Assessment Clinic (NAC) provides diagnostic and

neuropsychological evaluations for children suspected of having prenatal exposure to alcohol, as well as children with genetic disorders. Family support service, medication management care also key support components to the CESU that provide additional supports for families who need follow-up for ASD and for children with neurodevelopmental disabilities that require medication management. Fellows will obtain their primary evaluation experience primarily through ASEC and ECEP and may have opportunities for observation and participation in other clinics depending on availability of supervision.

Autism Spectrum Evaluation Clinic (ASEC)

Supervising Psychologists: Sylvia Acosta, PhD, Courtney Burnette, PhD, and Marybeth Graham, PhD

The Autism Spectrum Evaluation Clinic (ASEC) specializes in interdisciplinary, evidence-based evaluation of children suspected of having ASD, ages three and older. Teams can be comprised of a psychologist, speech/language pathologist, pediatrician, and/or a family therapist/social worker. The clinic receives referrals from pediatricians, school personnel, mental health providers, and families from across the state of New Mexico. This is a fast-paced clinic in which clinicians conduct diagnostic interview, as well as administer the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule, Second Edition (ADOS-2) and cognitive, language, behavior and adaptive functioning measures. The interdisciplinary team reaches a conclusion and provides feedback to the family at time of appointment. Each family also receives a written report that details test results, diagnostic impressions, and recommendations at a later date.

Participation in ASEC is a required experience at least one day a week for the first year of the fellowship. A fellow is also expected to participate in outreach clinics (see below) when training within ASEC. The fellow will learn best practice assessment procedures for making a diagnosis of ASD, as well as conduct assessment of frequently diagnosed comorbid conditions: developmental delay/intellectual disability; anxiety, depressive, and behavior disorders; speech/language disorder, impact of abuse/neglect and prenatal drug exposure. The fellow will also learn about other medical, genetic, neurodevelopmental disorders, and frequently occurring issues (such as sleep and feeding problems) for children with ASD. The fellow will also be trained in conducting clinical interviews for this population. Emphasis is placed upon learning how to reliably administer, interpret, and convey the results of the various modules of ADOS-2, and cognitive and behavioral assessment measures. The fellow will be expected to contribute to written reports including test results and interpretation, as well as assist in formulation of diagnostic impressions and intervention recommendations. Fellows will work as part of an interdisciplinary team, with emphasis upon functioning effectively as a psychologist within a team environment. Fellows will also gain an increased understanding of providing psychological services within diverse, rural and underserved communities.

ASEC Outreach Clinic

As part of ASEC, clinicians also conduct several outreach clinics in different locations of the state annually. Outreach clinics are located in rural, underserved communities, including the Navajo reservation or one of the state's 19 Pueblo communities. Outreach clinics provide fellows with experience in rural communities with limited access to resources. The experience highlights cultural considerations of differential diagnosis of ASD. Outreach clinics involve car travel throughout the state of New Mexico and are typically two to three days including overnight travel. Evaluations typically occur at community agencies or the child's school. The psychology fellow will be with the supervising psychologist at all times. All travel will be in a UNM vehicle, at no cost to the fellow. Many locations involve driving long distances and have early departure and late return times.

Bilingual Autism Spectrum Evaluation Clinic

Supervising Psychologists: Sylvia Acosta, PhD and Marybeth Graham, PhD

Bilingual (English and Spanish) comprehensive interdisciplinary evaluations are conducted within the context of ASEC. The fellow will be part of the interdisciplinary team which includes a bilingual psychologist and a bilingual speech/language pathologist. The team uses culturally appropriate assessment batteries for evaluation of children suspected of having Autism Spectrum Disorder and who are exposed to a bilingual environment. Clinicians administer and interpret bilingual speech and language measures, non-verbal cognitive assessments, the ADOS-2 in Spanish, Spanish-language behavior questionnaires, and adaptive behavior measures. A certified language interpreter assists with the clinical interview if necessary and the family receives feedback in their preferred language. Fellows are expected to contribute to case conceptualization with a consideration of the culturally and linguistically diverse issues in addition to the use of evidence-based practice evaluation of ASD. The fellow may be responsible for the development of a reader-friendly version of the translated report. Follow-up services for families via the Family Support Services Program may also be rendered in Spanish. Fellows who participate in the bilingual evaluations and follow-up services are expected to have fluency with the Spanish language, but prior experience in evaluation or intervention services is not required.

Intervention Experiences

ASD and Anxiety Disorders Program

Supervising Psychologists: Sylvia Acosta, PhD and Marybeth Graham, PhD

The ASD and Anxiety Disorders Program specializes in the evaluation and evidence-based treatment of children and adolescents between the ages of 6-18 with co-morbid diagnoses of ASD and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders, Anxiety Disorders (e.g., Separation Anxiety Disorder, Social Phobia, Generalized Anxiety Disorder), Tic Disorders, and/or Habit Disorders. Treatment is manual guided, relatively brief, largely based upon cognitive and behavioral principles to reduce anxiety, and includes parent training throughout intervention. Both group and individual treatment modalities may be offered. Fellows may also participate in intake sessions and/or brief assessments to determine the eligibility of clients for the program. The primary modality of treatment is based on the *Facing Your Fears* program, developed by clinicians and researchers at JFK Partners, a program of the University of Colorado School of Medicine. Fellows will be expected to participate in at least one 14 week group therapy session per year. They may carry an individual caseload based on program need and interest.

Parent Home Training Program

Supervising Psychologists: Sylvia Acosta, PhD and Marybeth Graham, PhD

The Parent Home Training (PHT) program is a no-cost, short-term educational program for parents and/or caregivers of children with ASD through five years old. The program provides individualized in-home and/or telehealth consultations to families throughout the state of New Mexico. The program is staffed by consultants in a variety of disciplines such as speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, special education, and behavioral health providers. Consultants provide direct coaching to assist families to learn evidence-based strategies and integrate techniques into daily interactions with their children. The PHT model provides caregiver coaching rather than direct therapy for the child in order to promote the parent-child relationship. Fellows will participate in PHT to gain experience in parent coaching. Fellows will have the opportunity to carry their own caseload (2-6 cases depending on level of commitment and travel schedules) and work with families individually

or with other team members. In-state travel via a UNM vehicle is required. Fellows will also gain experience in working with culturally diverse, rural and underserved communities. They will be required to attend PHT staff meetings to participate in case conference and other related trainings.

Family Support Services Program

Supervising Psychologists: Sylvia Acosta, PhD, Courtney Burnette, PhD, and Marybeth Graham, PhD

The Family Support Services Program is designed to provide short-term family counseling and therapeutic support after a child has received a diagnosis of ASD. Referrals are provided through the CESU. A fellow may elect to provide additional counseling and support for families that are in need after their child receives a diagnosis of ASD. This is a short-term (six sessions or less) therapeutic service designed to address the following areas of need: additional psychoeducation to understand the diagnosis (with immediate or extended family or child), brief counseling to address grief and adjustment issues, assistance with prioritizing family goals, communicating with the school system, accessing community resources, or other identified clinical issues.

Community-Based Training Experiences

Autism Spectrum Disorder Community Training

Supervising Psychologists: Sylvia Acosta, PhD, Courtney Burnette, PhD, and Marybeth Graham, PhD

The AODD offers a range of community-based training opportunities statewide to a variety of audiences: families, non-profit agencies, schools, university classes and groups wishing to train their staff in ASD. Fellows are expected to acquire skills in presenting to a range of audiences through in-person and webinar trainings. Fellows are expected to develop proficiency within their first year in presenting to a range of audiences on core topics pertinent to their field of expertise, such as introduction to ASD, overview of evidence-based practices, and awareness and strategies for social development. Advanced fellows in second year of training may develop and conduct trainings in specific areas of interest, in coordination with identified areas of need for the community training program. The CDD has traditionally offered a number of conferences such as the Autism Spectrum Disorder Summer Institute, which takes place annually for educators throughout New Mexico to promote the use of evidence based practices in the classroom. Fellows are encouraged to submit presentations for CDD-sponsored trainings.

Camp Rising Sun

Supervising Psychologists: Sylvia Acosta, PhD or Marybeth Graham, PhD

The mission of Camp Rising Sun is to (1) provide a specialized summer camp experience for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their peers, (2) provide an opportunity for students, community volunteers, and professionals to gain experience working with those diagnosed with ASD, and (3) to provide respite for parents and caregivers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Camp Rising Sun is accredited by the American Camping Association and holds camp sessions for children 8-12 and 12-17 years of age in Manzano Mountains in New Mexico. Children and staff spend 5 days and 4 nights in cabins and participate in activities such as swimming, hiking, sports and games, arts and crafts, music, photography, campfires, ropes and challenge courses, geo-caching, kayaking, horseback riding, and other specialized programs. Although the program is designed to be primarily recreational in nature, a well-structured, carefully planned and supervised program exists to allow

campers with ASD to practice social skills, increase independence, enhance communication, develop new interests, practice motor skills, and build friendships. Children with various levels of need participate in the program and each child is provided with individual supports to address self-help skills, sensory needs, communication abilities, and interfering problematic behavior. Fellows may have the opportunity to participate in Camp Rising Sun in various ways depending upon interest and areas of expertise (e.g., providing direct support to campers; facilitating activities; providing training and support to camp staff and volunteers; behavioral consultation). For more information, visit the website at <http://www.cdd.unm.edu/camprisingsun/>.

Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) Program

A core component of the psychology fellowship program is completion of the New Mexico Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities program (NM LEND) at the CDD. The certificate program offers graduate and post-graduate leadership training in neurodevelopmental and related disabilities, including Autism Spectrum Disorder. NM LEND long-term trainees complete 300 hours or more of interdisciplinary curriculum, including didactic seminars, leadership training and project development, mentored clinical experiences, research, family/trainee experiences and hands-on training in public policy. NM LEND Seminars occur Fridays during the Fall and Spring semesters. For more information and descriptions regarding LEND curriculum and activities, visit <http://www.cdd.unm.edu/nmlend/>.

Additional CDD and UNMHSC Experiences

Fellows may have additional training and clinical experiences based upon identified areas of training need, interest, and program availability. For instance, there are also opportunities to provide school consultation services via the School Based Consultation program, as well as, opportunities for clinical assessment with infants and toddlers at-risk for ASD and with young adults self-referred for this diagnosis. There are a wealth of additional seminars, didactics, and grand rounds that are offered throughout the CDD and UNMH, such as the Department of Pediatric, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, and Clinical Neuroscience Grand Rounds.

Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities (AODD) Faculty

Sylvia J. Acosta, PhD (Colorado State University). Assistant Professor, Center for Development and Disability, Department of Pediatrics. Program Manager of the Parent Home Training Program. Bilingual provider (English and Spanish). Expertise/Interests: Diagnostic assessment of children including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder; Child and Family Therapy; Parent Training; Multicultural issues in child assessment and treatment.

Courtney Burnette, PhD (University of Miami). Associate Professor, Center for Development and Disability, Department of Pediatrics; Co-manager of Autism Clinical Services and Neurodevelopmental Evaluation Clinic. Expertise/Interests: Diagnosis and assessment of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder; Early screening in community settings for children at-risk for Autism Spectrum Disorder; Assessment of Native American children presenting with developmental delays and risk for Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Marybeth Graham, PhD Marybeth A. Graham, PhD (University of Notre Dame). Assistant Professor, Center for Development and Disability, Department of Pediatrics. Bilingual provider (English and Spanish). Expertise/Interests: Assessment and diagnosis of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder; Trauma-informed delivery of service and interventions for children and families chronically at risk; Assessment and treatment of severely and chronically mentally ill populations; Provision of individual, family, marital, group therapy across the lifespan; multicultural issues in treatment and assessment.