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 one-year, full-time training experience with the option of a second year to enhance training and build upon leadership and research skills. By the end of their training, 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 as available. 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. Fellows will spend their time providing a range of intervention and assessment services tailored to the needs of individuals with ASD ranging from birth to adult. This includes interdisciplinary assessments with a focus on advanced skills in the differential diagnosis of ASD as well as learning/providing manualized treatments to address social communication and/or anxiety. A fellow may also conduct a number of community trainings or technical assistance for individuals, their families, service providers and the larger community. Embedded in the training experience is a foundation in cultural and linguistic competence.

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 statewide. 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. During the first year of the fellowship, the core clinical activities will be primarily in the Assessment and Intervention Autism Spectrum Clinics. Their time will be split between conducting interdisciplinary assessments, parent coaching or group intervention, didactics and potentially research project. During the second year of training, the fellow’s activities can vary depending on the fellow’s interests, leadership skills and availability to research. Each year, the fellow’s individual experience and time allotted between activities will vary according to their supervision 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. The following descriptions comprise the majority of the experiences offered within the Autism Spectrum
Disorder fellowship. Core experiences in assessment and intervention will be selected from the following range of options:

**Assessment**

**Clinical Evaluation Services Unit**

The Clinical Evaluation Services Unit (CESU) integrates diagnostic services across the CDD. This unit is comprised of several evaluation clinics, each addressing specific needs for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Fellows will obtain their primary evaluation experience primarily through ASEC and may have opportunities for observation and participation in other clinics depending on availability of supervision.

*Autism Spectrum Evaluation Clinic (ASEC)*

The Autism Spectrum Evaluation Clinic (ASEC) specializes in interdisciplinary, evidence-based evaluation of children suspected of having ASD. The clinic receives referrals from pediatricians, school personnel, mental health providers, and families from across the state of New Mexico. Various clinic models are used in ASEC. Evaluation teams typically can be comprised of a psychologist and speech/language pathologist. Most of the clinics consist of a comprehensive assessment battery including a clinical interview, cognitive, language, behavior and adaptive functioning measures and the *Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule, Second Edition (ADOS-2)*. It is a fast-paced clinic where the interdisciplinary team reaches a conclusion and provides feedback to the family at time of appointment. Each family subsequently receives a written report that details test results, diagnostic impressions, and recommendations. The age range for this clinic is 3 years and above, yet a high number of referrals are young children. There may be opportunity to participate in adult evaluations. Participation in this clinic is mandatory (at least one day per week) for the first year of fellowship.

The ASEC also conducts a set of outreach clinics in different locations across the state per year. Outreach clinics typically occur in rural, underserved communities. Outreach clinics are available to fellows to gain experience in providing services to rural communities with limited access to resources and apply cultural and linguistic competencies. All travel will be in UNM vehicle at no cost to the fellow. Many locations involve driving long distances and have early departure and late return times.

The fellow will use 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 gain experience with assessing other medical, genetic, neurodevelopmental disorders, and frequently occurring issues (such as sleep and feeding problems) for children with ASD. Training will include clinical interviewing specific to ASD. 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 integrate and interpret test results, diagnostic impressions and recommendations in a family-friendly integrated report. The fellow will
learn to function effectively as a psychologist within an interdisciplinary team. This experience will provide an increased understanding of serving diverse, rural and underserved communities.

**ASD 0-3 Clinic**
The ASD 0-3 Clinic specializes in interdisciplinary comprehensive evaluations for children under 26 months of age focusing on the evaluation of ASD. Typically, a child referred by their early intervention agency or primary care provider will receive a caregiver interview, developmental assessment, adaptive behavior interview, and the ADOS-2 with a licensed psychologist and speech and language consultation with a speech and language pathologist. Testing and feedback are completed in one appointment. Children with concerns for motor, sensory, medical and psychiatric concerns may receive additional evaluation with the respective disciplines. A brief integrated report is also provided to families after the clinic. The ASD 0-3 clinic is an option for fellows wishing to develop their skills conducting evaluations with young toddlers, including the use of the Toddler Module of the ADOS-2.

**Bilingual Clinics**
Bilingual (English and Spanish) comprehensive interdisciplinary evaluations are conducted within the context of ASEC and the ASD 0-3 clinics. The interdisciplinary includes a bilingual psychologist and a bilingual speech/language pathologist. The team uses culturally appropriate assessment batteries for evaluation of children suspected of having ASD 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 may assists with the clinical interview if necessary and the family receives feedback in their preferred language. The fellow is 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 in bilingual populations. Fellows participating in this clinic should have fluency in the Spanish language, but no prior clinical experience in Spanish is necessary.

**Developmental 0-3 Clinic**
The Developmental 0-3 clinic provides developmental and diagnostic evaluations for children birth to three. Children are typically referred from their early intervention providers. Evaluations may screen for ASD and address a range of concerns including medical and environmental issues that may affect development. The evaluation team consists of a psychologist, pediatrician, occupational or physical therapist, and speech and language pathologist. Each team member completes testing in their domain, provides feedback for their domain and complete an integrated report provided to the family after the clinic. This may be an option for fellows to observe.
Neurocognitive Assessment Clinic (NCAC)
The Neurocognitive Assessment Clinic (NCAC) provides neuropsychological evaluations for cognitive, achievement, processing attention, learning and memory to clarify levels of functioning and make recommendations for support, interventions, services and resources. Second year fellows wishing to broaden their experience with a diverse neurodevelopmental population (aside from ASD) may benefit from this clinic as supervision is available.

Supports and Assessment for Feeding and Eating (SAFE)
The NM SAFE pediatric clinic provides interdisciplinary evaluations for infants and children who may have a variety of challenges with feeding. This clinic is only available for observation.

Prenatal Exposures Clinic
The Prenatal Exposures Clinic provides diagnostic and consultation services for individuals aged birth through 21 years who have a history of prenatal exposure to alcohol and/or other substances. The multidisciplinary team includes medicine, neuropsychology, psychology, occupational therapy, and social work. Diagnostic evaluations are focused on determining the presence of a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder when prenatal alcohol exposure is suspected or confirmed. Assessment encompasses developmental, intellectual, academic, sensorimotor, adaptive behavior, and social emotional functioning along with a physical examination of growth and dysmorphology. Team members also provide consultative services via in-service trainings around the state and attendance at Individual Education Program meetings.

Intervention
ASD and Anxiety Disorders Program
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. The fellow conducts 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. The ASD track fellow 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
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. The fellow will participate in PHT to gain experience in parent coaching. They will 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 is required. This experience provides in-depth experience in working with culturally diverse, rural and underserved communities.

Research Experiences

Postdoctoral psychology fellows at the CDD are encouraged to be active participants in research-related activities. Although there are no requirements for publication during the fellowship, trainees are strongly encouraged to engage in activities that promote the advancement of their research skills. Fellows are expected to be up-to-date with the current literature in their respective field of study. Opportunities for participation in on-going research may be available with CDD faculty or in collaboration with UNMH faculty.

Navajo Birth Cohort Study
The Navajo Birth Cohort Study (NBCS) is a prospective birth cohort study designed to better understand the relationship between heavy metal exposures and children’s development. It is part of the Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes (ECHO) program, a large NIH funded program that includes approximately 80 cohorts with a goal of enrolling 50,000 children. In addition to metals, environmental exposures include social, behavioral, chemical, and physical aspects of the environment. NBCS follows children and mothers prenatally through age 7. This includes comprehensive neurodevelopmental evaluations of children at age 4 and 7 at several sites on and near the Navajo Nation. A fellow may inquire about participation in this project.

Community-Based Training Experiences

Autism Spectrum Disorder Community Training
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. The fellow is expected to acquire skills in presenting to a range of audiences through in-person and webinar trainings. The fellow will 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. In second year of training, they 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.
Mexico to promote the use of evidence-based practices in the classroom. Fellows are encouraged to submit presentations for CDD-sponsored trainings.

**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. Participation in LEND is required, yet individualized dependent on previous experience and training goals. First year fellows are expected to participate in LEND didactics and fulfill the requirements of the NM LEND curriculum for a capstone project. Second year fellows will have the opportunity to participate in advocacy and leadership training. 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/](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 opportunities to provide other services in AODD including Project ImPACT training, Family Compass, School Based Consultation program or Adult services.

There are a wealth of additional seminars, didactics, and grand rounds that are offered throughout the CDD and UNMH. Fellows may have the opportunity to participate in a Professional Development Seminar with postdoctoral psychology fellows across UNMH. Additional opportunities for didactics may be in 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). Associate Professor, Center for Development and Disability, Department of Pediatrics. Director of Psychology Training. Program Manager of the Parent Home Training Program. NM LEND Psychology Faculty. Bilingual provider (English and Spanish). Expertise/Interests: Diagnostic assessment of children including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder; Child and Family Therapy; Parent Training; Cultural and linguistic competence and multicultural issues in child assessment and treatment.

**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.

**Dina E. Hill, Ph.D.** (University of New Mexico). Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science. Expertise/Interests: Pediatric Neuropsychology, Assessment of children with neurodevelopmental disorders, including learning disorder, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorders, and Intellectual Disabilities. Diagnosis and evaluation of children with prenatal alcohol exposure/Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). Diagnosis and assessment of children with genetic disorders/syndromes. Pediatric neuroimaging research.

**Michele Iemolo, PsyD., BCBA, R-DMT** (Carlos Albizu University). Assistant Professor, Center for Development and Disability, Department of Pediatrics. Expertise/Interests: Diagnosis and assessment of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder; Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) interventions and program development for individuals with developmental disabilities and psychiatric conditions; Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) and development of Positive Behavior Intervention Plans (PBIP), Parenting Training; Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), and Creative Art Therapy (i.e., Dance/Movement Therapy; DMT).

**Brandon J. Rennie, PhD** (University of Montana). Assistant Professor, UNM Department of Pediatrics, Center for Development and Disability. Assessment of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other neurodevelopmental disabilities; Surveillance and screening for ASD; Assessment of children who are rural and/or American Indian; Disability in rural populations.

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