

**Department of State Hospitals - Atascadero
Atascadero, California**

**MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK
INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

Informational Brochure

This brochure is also available at:

<http://www.dsh.ca.gov/Atascadero/Internships/SocialWorkerInternship.asp>

**DEPARTMENT OF STATE HOSPITALS - ATASCADERO
MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

I. GENERAL SUMMARY

The California Department of State Hospitals-Atascadero (DSH-A) offers graduate students in Social Work a forensic mental health internship opportunity. The internship program is a challenging, stimulating, and growth-oriented experience which provides the intern with a practical complement to the university education. It is designed to support the intern in developing a framework of thought that allows exploration and understanding of clinical syndromes and treatment modalities. This includes: learning how the law interfaces with mental health treatment, practicing assessment, designing and evaluating treatment plans, providing psychoeducational groups, educating and assisting families, collaborating in planning patient discharges, and experience with state agencies.

II. AGENCY OVERVIEW

DSH-A opened in 1954 and is a completely self-contained psychiatric hospital constructed within a security perimeter. Located on California's Central Coast, midway between San Francisco and Los Angeles, the hospital is an all-male, maximum security, forensic, psychiatric facility that specializes in the treatment of adult, mentally ill males committed from across the state. DSH-A is fully accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations.

The hospital receives patients committed by the Courts and the Department of Corrections & Rehabilitations (CDCR). The hospital has a licensed capacity for 1,275 beds. The hospital's facilities include 34 housing units, a gymnasium, arts and crafts workshop, graphic arts center, Board of Parole Hearing rooms, mock trial facilities, staff-patient canteen, school area, computer center, music center, psychological testing center, video production center, training center, patient library, professional library, and fitness center.

The hospital employs approximately 1,920 employees in clinical, administrative and support categories. Clinical staff members with whom interns will work alongside include Physicians, Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Nurses, Dieticians, Rehabilitation Therapists and Psychiatric Technicians.

III. AGENCY MISSION

The mission statement of DSH-A includes providing evaluation and treatment in a safe and responsible manner, seeking innovation and excellence in hospital operations, across a continuum of care and settings.

IV. AGENCY GOALS

A Safe Environment:

In emphasizing public safety, DSH-A provides a secure environment within which patients can recover from the effects of their psychiatric conditions. This secure environment protects the community, as well as the people within the hospital, and enables and supports the therapeutic milieu.

Responsible Stewardship:

The hospital promotes individual responsibility and accountability. Employees and patients are empowered to identify problems, propose recommendations, and implement solutions.

Excellence in Forensic Evaluation:

DSH-A provides consumer-specific objective evaluations and recommendations to the courts and other agencies using the most up-to-date instruments and risk assessment models.

Excellence in Treatment:

The hospital provides up-to-date treatment and rehabilitation services to patients and ensures that community standards of practice and care are provided in our facility. Also, the hospital recognizes that recovery is most effectively achieved when services are person-oriented, empirically-based, and arise out of a diverse theoretical and multidisciplinary foundation.

V. AGENCY VALUES

Safety

Treatment

Responsibility

VI. DEMOGRAPHICS

The hospital's average working census consists largely of:

Mentally Disordered Offenders (MDO): Patients who are paroled to DSH-A by authority of the Board of Parole Hearings are admitted under the provisions of PC 2962 or PC 2972. Patients committed under MDO law have completed their prison sentence and are sent to DSH-A to receive psychiatric treatment as a special condition of parole. Once discharge criteria are met, patients committed under MDO law may be released to state parole supervision, placed in their county's Conditional Release Program, or within local county facilities.

Other patient commitments to the hospital include:

Mentally Ill Inmates (MII): The hospital provides acute mental health services to inmates from the CDCR, under PC 2684. The focus of treatment of the MII is to stabilize symptoms such that the inmate/patient can function successfully and safely upon return to CDCR.

Incompetent to Stand Trial (IST): The hospital provides treatment and education services to patients admitted under PC 1370, Incompetent to Stand Trial. These patients receive specialized programming targeted at helping them gain the knowledge and skills necessary to return to court as competent to understand court proceedings and effectively participate in their defense.

Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity (NGRI): Patients admitted under PC 1026, have been found not guilty by reason of insanity at the time the crime was committed. Once criteria are met, NGRI patients may be released from the hospital and placed into in their county's Conditional Release Program.

The cultural diversity of the patient population includes representatives from Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Native American, Filipino, Vietnamese, Thai, Indian, Korean, Laotian, Cambodia, Chinese, Japanese and other Asiatic groups. Patients are provided treatment services in their preferred language, when possible, which includes services in Spanish, Chinese, Farsi, Vietnamese, Russian, Tagalog, French, Hmong, Portuguese, American Sign Language to name a few. Reflecting the variety of backgrounds and needs, religious worship and spiritual services are provided to patients who identify as Protestant, Catholic, Baptist, Muslim, Jehovah's Witness, Jewish, Buddhism, Christian Science, Mormon, Pentecostal, Hindu, as well as various Native American faiths and other denominations.

VII. TREATMENT

DSH-A utilizes a patient-centered and strengths-based approach to assessment, treatment, and discharge planning of patients. The agency provides individualized active recovery services that focus on maximizing the functioning of persons with psychiatric disabilities.

The hospital is organized into five residential programs consisting of several treatment units each. Programs and units are generally structured around providing treatment to patients of particular commitment categories. Although subject to change, the focus of treatment for each program is organized as follows:

- ◆ Program I Incompetent to Stand Trial
 - ◆ Program III Mentally Disordered Offender
 - ◆ Program V Mentally Ill Inmate
 - ◆ Program VI Mentally Disordered Offender, Acute Medical, Enhanced Treatment
 - ◆ Program VII Mentally Disordered Offender
- *all programs may have patients committed under Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity

The residential treatment programs provide a variety of individual, group, and unit-wide skills training, as well as rehabilitative and enrichment activities. These activities are prescribed by the patient's treatment team according to the patient's identified interests and assessed needs. Rehabilitation programs provide patients with the opportunity to learn an increasing number of vocational and work skills under the direction of trained vocational counselors and a variety of school-based classes where patients can improve academic achievement, receive a GED, or pursue advanced independent studies.

A number of specialized programs and services exist to address the broad range of patient needs. Some of these include:

- ◆ Neuropsychological Assessment and Consultation
- ◆ Psychology Assessment Center
- ◆ Bilingual (Spanish) Units
- ◆ Music Center
- ◆ Aztec School
- ◆ Community Center
- ◆ Substance Abuse Treatment and Education
- ◆ Vocational Development Services

A patient's treatment team consists of an interdisciplinary membership, including at least the patient, treating Psychiatrist, Psychologist, Rehabilitation Therapist, Social Worker, Registered Nurse, and Psychiatric Technician Sponsor. Additional treatment team members may include the patient's family, guardian, advocates, and attorneys as appropriate.

VIII. SOCIAL WORK INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

A. Program Overview

The program's mission is to train interns to function as complete professionals who can function effectively in a forensic mental health setting. The primary emphasis of the internship program is on clinical training. Interns are encouraged to think critically and apply appropriate assessment and treatment methods. Experiences within the internship program are designed to assist in achieving the goal of educational and professional competency by the end of the training year.

Expected Core Competencies:

In alignment with NASW "*Standards for Social Work Case Management*," it is expected that by the end of the training year interns will develop various levels of proficiency in many, if not all, of the following competency areas:

- ◆ Ethical & Legal Considerations
- ◆ Knowledge: Forensic Assessment & Treatment Interventions
- ◆ Cultural Competence
- ◆ Interdisciplinary & Inter-Organizational Collaboration
- ◆ Professional Development & Competency
- ◆ Service Planning, Implementation & Monitoring
- ◆ Professional Conduct
- ◆ Practice Evaluation & Improvement
- ◆ Advocacy & Leadership

Experiences by which interns develop competency include:

- Case Management and Individual meetings with patients
- Psychosocial assessment and treatment planning of culturally and ethnically diverse patient groups
- Objective writing and outcome evaluation
- Psychoeducational group co-facilitation
- Forensic education/training
- Family assessment & education
- Discharge planning & community resource coordination
- Journal article readings, trainings, & seminars
- Participation in various program and unit-based meetings
- Collaborating within a multidisciplinary team with culturally/individually diverse colleagues
- Professional consultation
- Participation in clinical supervision
- Internship program evaluation

B. Program Resources

- ◆ **Staff:** The hospital employs approximately 31 Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW) from which intern preceptors are drawn. The entire Social Work body consists of 43 Social Workers, who have a variety of experience backgrounds prior to employment and many years of experience to offer to interns.
- ◆ **Equipment:** Office space, intern computers, the hospital's professional library, and other necessary resources are provided for interns commensurate with the resources provided to staff Social Workers.

C. Intern Activities

The training program is structured, yet tailored to the identified needs of the individual intern depending on their level and type of prior experience.

Orientation

The first three weeks of training are set aside for orientation to the hospital; including first-aid, Therapeutic Strategy Interventions, forensic commitment codes of patients, rules governing documentation, clinical treatment concepts, and administrative directives. During this time, the intern will be meeting other hospital Social Workers, becoming acquainted with ancillary programs, and establishing learning goals for the year.

Rotations

Interns may complete a rotation on an admissions unit, where they will be involved primarily in conducting psychosocial assessments on newly admitted patients to the facility. Interns then participate in a rotation on selected treatment units, during which the intern will participate in treatment planning, psychoeducational group provision, family education, discharge planning/facilitation. Throughout rotations, the intern will be designated a modified caseload of the assigned unit Social Worker. The intern will be provided the opportunity, within supervised guidelines, to function as much as possible (and when appropriate) as an independent practitioner on an interdisciplinary team.

The rotation of unit assignment will be determined by the educational and experiential needs and preferences of the intern in conjunction with the needs of the Social Work Department and the hospital. While placed on a unit, the intern will be provided support from the assigned unit Licensed Clinical Social Worker. These Social Workers, will act as preceptors and support the intern in negotiating the documentation requirements as well as providing consultation in dealing with procedural or clinical issues.

IX. APPLICATION AND SELECTION

A. Admission Criteria

Social Work internships are offered to MSW students currently enrolled and in good standing with a CSWE accredited education program. Prior to the commencement of an internship at DSH-A, students must have successfully completed at least one previous year of internship placement, or have an equivalent period of forensic mental health experience. Before being placed, interns must successfully complete/pass the required security clearance, health screening, and drug screening.

B. Application and Intern Selection

DSH-A seeks Social Work Interns with diverse backgrounds of interests, education, and training, to gain experience in a forensic mental health agency. The hospital is an equal opportunity employer.

Social Work students considering applying to DSH-A for internship are encouraged to discuss with their university field internship coordinator their interest. The university field internship coordinator should make contact with the Supervising Social Worker of Professional Education at DSH-A to establish a current contact between agencies (if no current contract exists), to facilitate contact between the intern candidate and the Supervising Social Worker, and to assist in coordinating a scheduled in-person interview.

The application and interviews of intern candidates must be completed by May 1st prior to the commencement of a Fall internship.

X. CONTACT INFORMATION

For further information please contact:

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