



VA PSYCHOLOGY LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

April 17, 2023

Dear VA Psychologists and VA Psychology Trainees:

We are very pleased to invite you to our **26th Annual VA Psychology Leadership Conference (VAPLC)** that will be held in **San Antonio, Texas from Tuesday, May 30th through Friday, June 2nd, 2023**. The conference is sponsored by the Association of Veterans Affairs Psychologist Leaders (AVAPL), the American Psychological Association (APA), and APA Division 18: Psychologists in Public Service. The Office of Mental Health Services and Suicide Prevention at VA Central Office also collaborate with the sponsoring organizations to support content for the conference. The theme this year is “Better Together: Envisioning Our Future In VA Psychology.”

This conference has historically played an important role in improving mental health and behavioral care for our nation's Veterans by fostering leadership within the VA psychology workforce. We invite you to join us for this year's conference which will focus on:

1. **Veteran focused:** Inspiration and thoughts about what can we do as psychologists to move forward the mission of serving Veterans forward (e.g., “you are a change agent”)
2. **“Better Together”:** The core belief that our diverse backgrounds, various leadership styles, personal knowledge/expertise combine together to create a stronger group of psychologists in the face of adversity while we provide the best healthcare there is.
3. **“Values Driven”:** Reinforcing and reminding attendees of the higher missions we serve: caring for our nation's heroes, the value of teaching and mentoring other psychologists to prepare the next generation of psychology leaders. We believe staying grounded in these personal individual and group values, can increase positive coping and better care for Veterans.
4. **“Dreaming” of a Better Tomorrow:** While recognizing there are robust challenges, we want to offer inspiration to help sustain existing leaders and encourage attendees to embark on a leadership path or be change agents in their current work to create an environment that further enhances their commitment to a career caring for our nation's heroes.

We have planned keynote addresses, panel presentations, and breakouts on topics such as: focusing on being stronger together, in the face of challenges, while capitalizing on the strengths/knowledge of others; envisioning and “dreaming” of a better tomorrow can lead to freedom to imagine novel ideas of serving Veterans and sustaining psychology staff; getting in touch with the “why” and personal/professional & individual group values can help us stay grounded in the work we do, while coping with potential professional stress.

This conference is meant to bring VA psychologist together as a way of supporting each other, while hopefully taking away meaningful and tangible ways of making a difference. We are the catalysts and “change agents” for finding meaningful and tangible ways of sustaining our valuable

psychology workforce at VA with the intention of providing the best healthcare possible to the Veterans we serve. In our time of connection, we will get to connect on topics related to the incredible work we do at VA, including ways of utilizing technology to enhance the delivery of healthcare services; working with special populations, such as working with Veterans at high-risk for suicide; building strength and resilience within the VA Psychologist Community; inspiration from Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs); VA Psychologist retention; and updates/aspirations from our National and Local Leaders (e.g., OMHSP, VA Secretary, etc.)

These are just a few highlights from our exciting agenda which is still in progress so be sure to visit the conference website regularly to see the most recent agenda: <http://conference.avapl.org>

Open Plenary Session: Submissions Accepted

We invite all VA psychologists and psychology trainees to consider submitting a proposal for a brief presentation on novel or innovative best practices for improving mental health care for Veterans through honoring the conference theme of being “better together” and leaning on each other to obtain generational knowledge, mentorship, and ideas for making VA psychologists the strongest discipline at VA. We want to highlight the freedom to “dream” and “envision” what VA psychology can look like, given experiences of stress, while capitalizing on our own values/anchors and reminding us of the “why” we are here.

- Topics may include, but are not limited to: connection with each other as a way to overcome adversity; envisioning the future of VA as focusing on high-quality healthcare and psychologist supporting each other; retainment/hiring of VA psychologists; DEI as related to “better together” and/or “envisioning our future as VA psychologists”; best practices for VA healthcare during times of adversity; using measurement based care for the purposes of enhancing the quality of care for our Veterans in the future; treating specific populations, including Veterans at high-risk for suicide, PTSD, SUD, etc. while preventing compassion fatigue or burnout.

***We will select three to five proposals for this open session which will be announced by March 8, 2023. Proposals should be submitted via email to Plenary Session Committee Chair, Dr. Margaret M. Schmitt, at Margaret.Schmitt@bcm.edu using the “Poster and Open Plenary Submission Form” found at conference.avapl.org/. The deadline is February 22, 2023.**

Poster Session: Submissions Accepted

The VAPLC will host a poster session again this year, which has proven to be a popular feature of the conference. The theme for this year’s posters is the same as the conference theme (“Better Together: Envisioning Our Future in VA Psychology”) and preference will be given for posters consistent with this theme. Please see above for additional content related to the theme of this conference. Posters may present original research, descriptions of clinical programs, best practices, or implementation of programs within VA. We also welcome and will consider other quality presentations, including research that has been presented elsewhere.

***Interested presenters should submit proposals via email to Poster Session Committee Chair, Dr. Margaret M. Schmitt, at Margaret.Schmitt@bcm.edu using the “Poster and Open Plenary Submission Form” found at the conference.avapl.org/ website. The deadline is February 22, 2023 and**

approximately 10-15 posters will be selected. Submissions made after February 22, 2023 will be considered on a rolling basis if there is room for additional posters.

Schedule for Conference

The schedule for the conference is similar to those of recent years and will include:

- May 30th, 2023 from 5:00-5:15pm: New Attendee Welcome Reception at the Westin (Navarro Lobby)
 - 5:15-6:30pm All Attendee Registration and Reception
 - Option for the annual “Mix and Match Social Dinner” will be at 6:30pm.
*Please note that the social hours have always been an ideal time to meet and network with fellow psychologists.
- May 31st, 2023 from 8am to approximately 5pm: Day 1 of main conference
 - Breakfast starts at 7:00am
 - At approximately 5:00pm, there is the transition to “Social hour: Silent Auction and Poster Session”
 - The silent auction will support a community partnering organization
 - Trainee option to attend the annual “Trainee Dinner” that evening
- June 1st, 2023 from 8am-5pm: Day 2 of main conference,
 - Breakfast starts at 7:00am in the Navarro Lobby
- June 2nd, 2023 from 8am to TBD: CE Leadership Workshop
 - Topic: TBD
 - Breakfast starts at 7:00am in the Navarro Lobby

Scholarships for VA Trainees

We are offering two \$300 scholarships to VA trainees (i.e., VA predoctoral interns and/or VA postdoctoral fellows/residents) who are planning to pursue a career in the VA and who are willing to assist with administrative support for the conference. Scholarship recipients are selected randomly from trainees who indicate on the conference registration form that they would like to be considered for the scholarship. Those selected will be expected to be present for the entire conference (through Friday) in order to fulfill their duties.

***Trainees who would like to be considered for the scholarships should register for the conference by March 16, 2023. A random selection of the scholarships will be announced by March 23, 2023.**

This year’s conference will be held at **The Westin Riverwalk – San Antonio**, located at 420 West Market Street, San Antonio, Texas, 78205; phone (210) 224-6500; and link to hotel: [Hotel on the Riverwalk | The Westin Riverwalk, San Antonio \(marriott.com\)](https://www.marriott.com/hotels-and-reservations/usa-tx/westin-riverwalk/). The new link to make reservations is <https://book.passkey.com/go/VAPLC2023> or call 1-888-627-8396. The conference starts on May 31st, however rooms should be available at this rate for May 30th-June 2nd. If you are having trouble booking a room, please contact the conference chair at conference.chair@avapl.org or you can call the hotel directly (see above). If you call to register, please note that you are calling as part of the “2023 VA Psychology Leadership Conference.” Our negotiated room rate is \$124/night + tax, but please make sure to bring the Texas tax exempt form with you; otherwise, you may be charged at the non-federal rate. This form can be downloaded at: <https://www.comptroller.texas.gov/forms/12-302.pdf>



Registration Fees

- AVAPL, APA, and Division 18 members: \$400
- Non-members: \$500
- Postdoctoral fellows: \$150
- Predoctoral interns: \$125
- Post-Conference Workshop \$150

Registration fees includes continental breakfast, lunch, and refreshments on Wednesday and Thursday; and breakfast on Friday for those who register for the CE Workshop. *Please note that the title for this workshop is coming very soon.

For the main conference, attendees will receive approximately 12 hours APA-approved CE credits (subject to final APA approval) for attending all of the sessions on Wednesday and Thursday. Those staying for the Friday workshop will receive 4 additional APA-approved CE credits.

For individuals seeking travel funding, information for the conference is as follows:
Course name: *VA Psychology Leadership Conference*

Vendor's mailing address:

*Association of VA Psychologist Leaders
19110 Sweet Clover Lane
Tampa, FL 33647
Telephone number: 813-410-1644
Email: treasurer1@avapl.org*

Please share the above information widely with all VA psychologists (administrators, clinicians, and researchers) and trainees at your station. Information on how to join AVAPL or APA Division 18 prior to the conference (to receive the reduced rate for registration) and additional conference information can be obtained from Dr. Kaily Clark., Chair, VA Psychology Leadership Conference Planning Committee (conference.chair@avapl.org).

This is a wonderful conference energized by the dedication, expertise, and vision of VA psychologists nationwide. We are certain you will find it both informative and inspiring, and we look forward to seeing you in San Antonio!

Sincerely,
Dr. Kaily Clark, VAPLC Conference Chair
Phone: 303-242-4609