

AVAPL NEWS

The Official Newsletter of the Association of VA Psychologist Leaders

IN THIS ISSUE

Letter from the President.....1

Note from History.....2

Career Advancement and
Motherhood: Deliberating on
Leadership Part 2.....4

The Psychology Postdoc
World is Changing.....6

ABPP Certification in Serious
Mental Illness.....8

SIG Spotlight: Psychologists of
Color & Allies.....8

Member Tribute: David
Carroll, Ph.D.....10

VA Psychology Leadership
Conference.....11

Editorial Staff

Managing Editors

Layne Goble | Angela Enlow

Copy Editor

Natasha Mroczek

Content Editors

Kaily Clark | Teri Connelly

Regular Contributors

Kathleen McNamara | Claire Collie

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

I've been reflecting this week on the theme of our upcoming conference, Leading in Challenging Times. What are the key challenges of leadership right now, and how are they the same or different than leading in other times and situations? Some aspects of leading during the pandemic are obviously different.

In ordinary circumstances, we don't have to figure out how to deliver therapy services without sharing airspace with our patients, or support the public health mission of VA by giving up space or educate the public about communicable diseases, vaccines to prevent the diseases or common treatments (at least most of us don't), nor have we previously been asked to help screen Veterans for medical symptoms in quite the same way before now. Similarly, many of us are struggling with the stress created by a changing sociopolitical landscape. Public health officials are seen as adversarial rather than a resource. States are passing laws that make it harder for us to support LGBTQ+ clients and harder for us to serve the needs of women Veterans and other historically oppressed groups.

In contrast, one of the biggest challenges of the pandemic seems both new and familiar at the same time - staff engagement. The "Great Resignation" has created a new context for talking about why engagement matters as we've had many colleagues leave for other jobs across the country in the last few years, but leadership has always been about engaging with our teams and figuring out how to be all the different types of a leader each person needs.

(Continued on page 2)



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

One of the things I've learned that helps, is to keep the focus on our purpose (i.e., what it is that we are all here for, how this work matters, and how each person on the team is making a valuable contribution). Quint Studer, of the Studer Group, says that about 85% of healthcare organizations are good, but if you want to move from good to great (i.e., to be a "Best Places to Work"), the key is to focus on and remind people of our shared reasons for changing and improving. At the VA that shared reason is providing the best healthcare we are capable of providing, to as many Veterans as possible, with the resources available to us, while also building a better workplace for staff and a better place for healthcare providers to practice. No matter what type of leadership role you occupy or what type of change you are hoping to lead, it's always possible to tie change back to one of those three things, and if it is not, it might be time to rethink whether this is really the right change to make.

I've been thinking about the AVAPL Executive Leadership Committee too, of the work that we've been doing collectively on behalf of the organization and how very values-driven (i.e., mission-driven) this work is.

Some of you may know that we held our annual mid-winter meeting in March. We were not able to travel to DC this year because of ongoing pandemic restrictions so we held the meeting virtually, but the focus of the meeting was still very much on ensuring that VA has adequate resources to meet the mental health needs of Veterans and that we are able to recruit and retain robust numbers of psychologists to perform that work.

I'm very pleased to share with you that we learned during the meetings that there have been significant deliverables following our FY 21 Mid-Winter Meeting. Specifically, there has been a significant expansion of resources to the LGBTQ+ program office that we believe was at least partially related to our efforts to advocate for them during the FY 21 mid-winter meeting. We are now partnering with APA to address issues affecting our ability to support families of LGBTQ+ youth or colleagues who identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community. We also learned that VA is offering Health Care Professionals Scholarships to Psychologists for the first time this year because of the efforts of AVAPL and APA to advocate for our inclusion in this program.

Other highlights from this year's meeting include conversations with multiple program offices about staffing challenges, issues with getting feedback about services provided to Veterans receiving treatment through care in the community, the need for ongoing support for virtual care, evidence-based psychotherapy and measurement-based care training and implementation, and expansion of workplace violence prevention. We also discussed concerns about the possibility of centralized scheduling and were assured that there are no immediate plans to implement such a strategy. We voiced our own concerns about the impact of HR modernization on our ability to recruit and retain a robust workforce. Similarly, we expressed concerns about the feedback we've been hearing on the CERNER implementation and challenges with managing patient record flags.

Please come to our talk at VAPLC to get more details about the mid-winter meeting. In the meantime, in light of our emphasis on leading in challenging times, I want to challenge each of you to think about what you're now leading or want to lead. Most importantly - WHO you want to lead and WHY. What is YOUR mission and how can you help your colleagues come to share the vision for what our shared future could be. Why does this matter to THEM and how can you make them feel seen, heard and appreciated for what they are already doing so that they are resourced to join you in the change you want to create for tomorrow.

I look forward to talking with you all again soon.

—Kaki York, Ph.D.
AVAPL President

NOTE FROM HISTORY



This year marked the 25th year psychologists across the VA recognized, through a VA Psychology Leadership Conference, the important role psychologists have in providing Veteran healthcare. This year's theme, "Together Again: Recharging our Community and Reimagining Our Next 25 Years," is reminiscent of the Conference theme 25 years earlier, "VA Psychology: Shaping Our Future." Issues for VA Psychologists at that time were unlike those now, while responsibilities were similar. The historical significance of these 25 years is found in the changing Conference themes, topics, speakers, and plenary discussions over these intervening years. What became known as the Dallas I Conference, occurred at a time when the value of psychologists' roles in the VHA seemed to be eroding. More significant than the system changes contributing to the erosion was the response of psychologists themselves. Morale was quite low.

Dallas I focused on recapturing the sense of leadership psychologists should own. The agenda emphasized breakout groups among attendees, followed by reports discussed by the full group, and action plans. A Dallas II Conference was scheduled, following up where Dallas I concluded. The title now included the words "Leadership Conference." The agenda reinforced the responsibility of participants-as-leaders in a keynote address labeled "Reengineering of the VHA Healthcare System," adding "...and its Impact on the Delivery of Psychological Services." The term "advocacy" first appears and continues to be in the agenda for many future conferences. Leaders of APA are frequently among the keynote speakers, as are VHA administrators (e.g., Under Secretary for Health, Deputy Under Secretary for Health, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health), and even the Secretary of the VA. Attendees also are exposed to fellow psychologists who achieved significant

leadership roles (Program Director, Manager for Mental Health Service Line, Associate Chief for Informatics, ACOS for Mental and Behavioral Health Care) and then the first psychologist to hold the position as Chief Consultant in the Office of Mental Health Services.

By 2002 an annual Leadership Conference is well established and for this 5th year specific themes are assigned, such as "Imagining Outcomes: VA Psychology's Contributions through Organization, Clinical, Research, and Advocacy Leadership." VHA and DVA administrators continued to accept invitations to speak, including in their comments reference to leadership roles and career paths for psychologists, and specifically naming psychology's contributions to the care of Veterans. Early conferences included psychologists with leadership roles in programs such as primary care, pain management, and traumatic brain injuries. By 2007 the conference already addressed advances in tele-healthcare for Veterans. As the military's engagement in other combat arenas resulted in Veterans with new issues, the conference topics adjusted.



What began as a way to empower psychologists to resume their leadership roles, to shape their own future, and to improve morale has been maintained and grown for 25 years. The continuing focus remains on leadership. With the current generation of leaders "reimagining" the next 25 years, VA Psychology is strong and Veterans' health care will be even stronger!

—Kathleen McNamara, Ph.D.
Principal Historian, AVAPL

CAREER ADVANCEMENT AND MOTHERHOOD: DELIBERATING ON LEADERSHIP PART 2

Tiffanie Fennell, Ph.D., ABPP & Gina Raza, Ph.D.

The coronavirus pandemic put a spotlight on many societal disparities. Mothers working outside the home have disproportionately felt the strain of managing childcare and jobs, resulting in some leaving the workplace. We interviewed eight female VA psychologists to discuss how they balance career advancement and family life. These women are diverse in terms of their background, marital status, geographic location, and career stage. Some decided to forge ahead with career aspirations, some decided to take a step back, and some are ambivalent. In this edition, we focus on those forging ahead. This is part 2 of this interview – you can read the part 1 in the April, 2021 Newsletter.

Ambivalent

Genevieve Davis, Ph.D. is also concerned about the uncertainty of career advancement in light of becoming a mom. She is currently pregnant and considering whether to pursue leadership opportunities. She enjoys taking on new work responsibilities, like supervision and mentorship. Previously, she applied to leadership positions but was not selected due to lack of management experience. Despite thoughts that she should be further along in her career, especially being as career-focused as she has been since graduation, she is uncertain as to what to expect once her baby arrives. She voiced shame for both having ambition and not having ambition at times. She has been advised to focus on her health, pregnancy, and beginning parenthood. At this time, she is working on acceptance.

"Uncertainty at home does not allow me much space for uncertainty at the workplace."

Katie Juhasz, M.S., Health Science Specialist, also feels the pull to advance her career. Childcare has been a significant hurdle, as she has 4- and 6-year-old children. In 2019, the government shutdown closed their "non-essential" daycare for 6 weeks. This contributed to a decision for her husband to take a new job closer to family; however, childcare issues have arisen again during the pandemic. She was able to maintain her job with the National Center for PTSD during the pandemic; however, she desires a leadership position. At the same time, the reliability of childcare has been a major determining factor for her. There is also limited support in her local community to work outside the home, as most mothers there stay at home or work part-time.

"Having a supportive community would help."

Margaret Bencomo-Rivera, PsyD is a VA Psychology Team Lead. Her twins are 10 years old. She enjoys her clinical work and the flexibility in her schedule. She has worked at the VA for the past 13 years and has considered leadership positions; however, career advancement would involve a significant change in clinical work. She is concerned she will not have the patience and energy she needs to be a good parent if she commits to such new growth at work. She has come to recognize that she is still a good psychologist even if she does not take on new leadership roles at this time. She considers that 10 years down the road, her patient isn't going to remember one cancelled appointment, but her children will remember whether she was there for them at an important event.

"I'm still a good psychologist even if I don't take on a leadership position at this time."

Stepping Down

Katy Bottonari, Ph.D. is one of a couple of women who shared how they transitioned out of their leadership roles to accommodate their family lives. After working at several VAs for nearly

(Continued on page 5)

CAREER ADVANCEMENT AND MOTHERHOOD CONT'D

12 years, she was selected for Section Chief after returning from maternity leave. She found it difficult to maintain boundaries with her time, often taking work home. She has just decided to step down from her role and values having more control over her time. She now feels able to solidly work the hours of her tour, feeling good about her work, and truly be present with her child when at home. She plans to have a long VA career and made peace with maintaining a solid reputation at work and pursuing career advancement when the timing is better.

“You can step out of leadership, and you step back in later.”

Meg Martinez, Ph.D. recently left the private sector for the VA in order to achieve a better a work-life balance. She obtained her “dream job” as the clinical director of a residential/partial hospitalization program for eating disorders while on her postdoc. She worked part-time on evenings and weekends until she completed postdoc. The long hours did not end there. Once full-time, she often worked 10-hour days plus weekends, and was on-call. She managed a team of 14 therapists and felt isolated as one of very few psychologists. The pace was exhausting. After becoming pregnant, she knew that she did not want to continue working those hours. She consulted with colleagues and applied for a VA job prior to going on maternity leave. She has been pleased with multiple aspects of her decision to join the VA: training opportunities, collegial support, and satisfaction that she is effective at work. She also values the mentorship she has received through AVAPL.

“Don’t feel like you have to climb the ladder because you think you need to.”

(Continued on page 12)

SIG UPDATE: EARLY CAREER PSYCHOLOGISTS

The Early Career Psychologist (ECP) Special Interest Group (SIG) continues to evolve and grow, which has led to several recent changes in the executive committee. We congratulate Dr. Jennifer Presnall-Shvorin for her new role as the AVAPL Secretary, which led to Dr. Christina L. Vair assuming the SIG Chair duties ever-so-slightly ahead of schedule. The SIG also welcomes Drs. Alefiyah Pishori, Caressa Slocum, and Carrie LeMay as the new VAPLC conference liaisons. In addition, Dr. Laura Zambrano-Vasquez is serving as the Social Media Lead, while Dr. Ariel Reid has taken on the challenge of Webinar Coordinator.

Speaking of webinars, the SIG recently hosted a Preparing for Retirement session in April. The subject matter experts who presented on the topic were incredibly well-versed in all things retirement. The presentation was notably well received and of significant benefit to those in attendance. The SIG welcomes any and all ideas for future webinar offerings that would be of value to those in the early stages of their career development. Please send any suggestions for topics or speaker to Dr. Reid (Ariel.Reid@va.gov).

Looking ahead, the ECP SIG is excited to host a networking lunch for ECPs (and ECP supporters!) at the upcoming VAPLC conference in San Antonio. We also intend to gather for a social event at least one evening of the conference and hope to connect meaningfully with many colleagues whom we’ve not been able to see face-to-face in recent years.

THE PSYCHOLOGY POSTDOC WORLD IS CHANGING

Shiloh Jordan, PhD, ABPP; Amy Silberbogen, PhD, ABPP; and Wayne Siegel, PhD, ABPP

Within the past five years, there has been a change in the postdoctoral training landscape influenced by the Model Licensing Act, a modification in the APA CoA SoA to further differentiate postdoctoral training from internship, as well as an increase in the number of postdoctoral positions both within and outside of VA (Silberbogen et al., 2018).

Recent APPIC surveys of potential postdoctoral applicants indicate that about 13% of potential applicants choose not to apply to postdoctoral positions. There is reason to believe this is actually an underestimate, as those who do not apply to postdocs are less likely to be interested in completing the survey. For those that do apply to postdoc programs, the top reasons include 1) becoming more competitive for future employment, 2) developing additional competency, 3) gaining additional professional mentorship, 4) obtaining eligibility for board certification, and 5) and accruing hours for licensure. For those that choose not to apply to post doc positions, the top reasons include 1) postdoc salaries are too low, 2) they do not believe they need advanced training, and 3) the State in which they plan to practice does not require postdoctoral hours for licensure.

The impact of these changes on psychology recruitment and selections is evident, as there are currently more postdoctoral positions available than there are applicants. This imbalance is happening at a time in which there are a high number of staff positions available, psychologists have been identified as a shortage profession within the VA (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2021), and there is a pressing need for access to mental health care due to the impact of the pandemic. With an increase in post-internship opportunities, including trainees entering the VA system at the GS-11 level post-internship, programs have an opportunity to identify ways to ensure the postdoctoral training experience truly benefits the trainee. Postdocs can bolster trainees' development in a meaningful way versus serve primarily as an accrual of hours for licensure.

(Continued on page 7)

SIG UPDATE: WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

The Women in Leadership SIG is excited about our upcoming face-to-face time at the VA Psychologist Leadership Conference in San Antonio May 31 – June 3! Please check the schedule of events and plan to join us for a lunchtime discussion group and social gatherings. For more information on conference happenings or the WiL SIG,



Contact:
Nicole.Shiber@va.gov or
Mary.Shea@va.gov

We encourage all who are interested in Women in Leadership in VA to join the Teams channel: Women in Leadership. Simply open Teams on your VA computer, go to "Teams" on the left bar, scroll to the bottom, and click "Join or create a team." Search for "Women in Leadership" and join. There is a wealth of information, support, podcasts, courses, videos, etc. It's a great resource available right on your desktop. It is a VA-sponsored Team and not affiliated with AVAPL or the WiL SIG.

THE PSYCHOLOGY POSTDOC WORLD IS CHANGING (CONT'D)

Postdoctoral Training Directors may experience more success in recruitment by re-examining the program approach and elements that help candidates get the most benefit from engaging in postdoctoral training and to ensure that it is not a second internship (Silberbogen et al., in press). Some reflective questions for TDs in program refinement include:

- Are we offering postdoc training in an area that is needed (i.e. an emphasis or specialty area that is in demand)?
- How are we ensuring marketability of postdocs for competitive job placements (e.g., investment in mentoring and trainee engagement at the VA facility level inclusive of committees, provision of education, facility level projects)?
- Is the training experience differentiated from the internship experience and inclusive of training to advance professional skills/activities (i.e. launching career development)?
- Does the program have requirements and activities that are unique to a focus or specialty area of practice, or unique to the opportunities within the particular VA facility?
- What training opportunities and experiences can an individual training program include that differentiates the experience from an entry to practice, GS-11 position?
- Is a reallocation of positions appropriate and, if so, has the Training Director consulted with OAA and their local DEO regarding whether a reallocation of number of positions or number of postdocs converting to internship is feasible?

While the psychology postdoctoral imbalance is not within the control of the Postdoctoral Training Director, there are opportunities to examine the current structure and design of one's postdoctoral training opportunities with an eye towards determining whether the value of postdoctoral training is maximized. Both small and large structural changes within one's program that support the design of postdoctoral training can enhance recruitment and increase the value of engaging in postdoctoral training.

References

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2021). Annual determination of staffing shortages. Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCCHO) Bulletin.

Silberbogen, A. K., Aosved, A. C., Cross, W. F., Cox, D. R., & Felleman, B. I. (2018). Postdoctoral training in health service psychology: Current perspectives in an evolving profession. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology, 12*(2), 66-73. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/tep0000182>

Silberbogen, A. K., Self, M., & Aosved, A. (in press). Advanced Competency Development in Health Service Psychology Postdoctoral Training: Principles and Defining Characteristics for Program Design. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*.

SIG UPDATE: TELEHEALTH

The TeleMental Health SIG encourages members to join. In order to be added to the listserv, please send a request to either co-chairs at: AnnSmithPhD@yahoo.com OR DrGinaRaza@gmail.com

ABPP CERTIFICATION IN SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS

The American Board of Serious Mental Illness Psychology (ABSMIP) is delighted to announce that ABPP board certification in SMI Psychology will soon be accepting applications. Our ABPP portal is expected to be accessible within the next few months. However, we can make available the application information now for those who are interested in submitting as soon as it is possible.

It typically takes several months to prepare a complete application because gathering all of the necessary information can take quite a bit of time. We encourage everyone to carefully review the Applicant Manual to begin the preparation process. Please also check the ABPP website for further information and updates; contact ABPP with questions.

We value and appreciate the unique contributions and perspectives offered by individuals with diverse cultural and experiential backgrounds, and we recognize that much diversity exists within the specialty of SMI Psychology. As such, we particularly encourage applicants of historically underrepresented groups and welcome all applicants dedicated to providing culturally responsive SMI services. Further, to make board certification accessible to all individuals, we want to highlight that reasonable accommodations at any stage of the certification process can be coordinated as relevant. We look forward to welcoming all those working in this area as board certified psychologists in SMI Psychology.



An overview webinar presentation of the new SMI Psychology ABPP certification will take place on July, 22 at 3:00 PM, EST. Advanced registration is required at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcsfuuvpjwuE9aZfsIDbQXosHLYbfqzrbFg>

SIG SPOTLIGHT: PSYCHOLOGISTS OF COLOR & ALLIES

The AVAPL Psychologists of Color (POC) & Allies SIG continues to dedicate efforts to bridge the gaps adversely impacting communities of color within VA and to celebrate the rich benefits of embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion. We gather monthly to share updates, innovative and strong practices, and provide space for community during these challenging times. Efforts include:

- SIG members presenting on OMHSP's Quarterly DEI MH Webinar Series:
 - Chanda Corbett
 - Maurice Endsley
 - Danielle Lespinasse
- Collaboration with VA's Office of Resolution Management, Diversity & Inclusion (ORMDI) Committee, including leadership by Dr. Danielle Lespinasse of the VA DEI Committee Resource Library
- Partnership with VHA NCOD on a DEI Leadership Consultation Program with POC SIG members serving as DEI SME consultants to VA leaders
- AVAPL Mentorship Program partnership to connect POC with Mentors of Color
- The AVAPL POC & Allies SIG chairs, Drs. Gayle Iwamasa & Christopher Watson, serve on VHA Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Committee
- 2022 VA Psychology Leadership Conference Activities
 - SIG leaders participate in welcome reception
 - SIG leaders participate in trainee dinner

(Continued on page 9)

SIG SPOTLIGHT CONT'D: PSYCHOLOGISTS OF COLOR & ALLIES

- Panel Presentation: "Trauma, Equity, and Compassion – How Can Psychologists Lead?" led by Drs. Chamarlyn Fairley; Nicole Jackson & Peg Dundon
- Social Committee PoC SIG Lunch on 2nd Day of the Conference
- Post-Conference professional development workshop conducted by Drs. Charlotte McCloskey, Gayle Iwamasa and Christopher Watson
- Consultation with AVAPL ECP SIG for "Diversity & Career Advancement" webinar featuring Drs. Chebon Porter, Arnold James, & Ariel Reid
- Snapshot of POC & Allies SIG Leadership & Awards:
 - President-Elect of the Arkansas Psychological Association: Dr. Marie Mesidor
 - President-Elect for Council of Professional Geropsychology Training Programs (CoPGTP): Dr. Veronica Shead
 - 2022 APA Award for Distinguished Professional Contributions to Institutional Practice: Dr. Gayle Iwamasa
- APA Division 18 Diversity Committee Co-Chairs: Ines Campoverde and Marie Mesidor
- Dissemination of Hines VAMC DEI Committee efforts on the OMHSP First Friday MH Leadership call: Drs. Maurice Endsley & Annie Tang
- SIG members serve as DEI Consultants for the soon to be launched OMHSP DEI MH consultation program
 - Facilities, VISNs, and VACO program offices can request clinical consultation, data consultation, and speakers for DEI mental health related topics
- Office of Resolution Management, Diversity & Inclusion collaboration with Karen Basnight, Director of Outreach & Retention
- Webinar Collaboration with APA Division 18 Diversity Committee and VA Section, April 26, 2022
 - Drs. Diana Mendez and Larry Burrell: "Working towards MH Equity: The Imperative Role of Cultural Humility"

Did you know?

- There is a VA Black Psychologists Microsoft Teams group – contact Dr. Ariel Reid (ariel.reid@va.gov) or Dr. Shana Napier (shana.napier@va.gov) to join the Teams group
- The OMHSP DEI SharePoint is available to share D&I innovative projects and strong practices:
<https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VACOMentalHealth/OMSHP%20BDER/SitePages/Home.aspx>
- Check out the ELEVATE TMS for VHA IDEA series that promotes upward mobility for lower GS levels
- Resources to share to the VA DEI Committee Resource Library can be submitted to VHADICommSME@va.gov

Learn More about POC & Allies SIG at: <https://avapl.org/poca.html>

MEMBER TRIBUTE: DAVID CARROLL, PH.D.

Dr. David Carroll has led efforts for the leadership, development, implementation, and operational integrity of the VHA programs that provide Veterans with access to a full continuum of integrated mental health care and suicide prevention services. Dr. Carroll retired in April, 2022 and he will be greatly missed by many at VHA. Here are many of the highlights from Dr. Carroll's career, although this list is not comprehensive and could never fully capture the legacy that Dr. Carroll left at VHA.

- Dr. Carroll was a mission-driven leader focused on engaging Veterans and employees in lifelong health, well-being, and resilience.
- As a leader in innovation, he advanced integrated, whole health care, led the robust adoption of tele-mental health services, coordinated services across VHA and with community partners, improved consistency in care access and delivery, and spread evidence-based best practices.
- Under Dr. Carroll's leadership, VHA introduced primary care-mental health integration, team-based mental health, and measurement-based care in mental health into the mainstream.
- He is also a champion for the training, professional growth, and leadership development of VHA staff members.
- He demonstrated his commitment to VHA staff through his example, things like always leaving his door open, setting aside time to talk with his employees, and establishing the OMHSP Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Steering Committee.
- Under his leadership, attitudes about suicide prevention shifted to seeing suicide as a public health concern and taking a proactive action towards prevention. In addition to rolling out SP 2.0, VHA more than quadrupled the size of the Veterans Crisis Line, enabling them to expand their services and embrace bold new initiatives like 988 Press 1 and a peer outreach center.

Please help me in celebrating an outstanding leader as he embarks on his next chapter.

—Kaily Clark, Psy.D.

SIG UPDATE: MID-CAREER PSYCHOLOGISTS

Members of AVAPL are warmly invited to join the Mid-Career SIG! We currently have availability for new members on our small group planning committee that meets 30 minutes a month. Please consider joining our planning team or attend the monthly meetings! The Mid-Career group is a community of VA Psychologists that exists to network, create new opportunities for professional support, and share resources for job satisfaction. Our monthly meetings are a combination of presentation and open discussion. Our calls occur on the second Tuesday of the month, 2-3 pm Eastern. For more information, please contact co-chairs Shanyn Aysta, DrShanyn@gmail.com or Charlotte McCloskey, CharlotteMcCloskey@Ymail.com. If you are not a member and would like to join us, please email the webmaster at webmaster@avalp.org to be added. Psychologists are welcome to join our group anytime they feel ready!



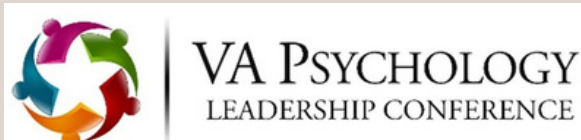
25TH ANNUAL VA PSYCHOLOGY LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

The 25th Annual VA Psychology Leadership Conference (VAPLC) will be held in San Antonio, Texas from Tuesday, May 31, 2022 through Friday, June 3, 2022. Excitement is growing as we put in place the last details and efforts to make this conference truly one to remember—as it is a time that we have a chance to see each other again, after two long years. Therefore, our theme for this year is “Together Again: Recharging Our Community and Reimagining Our Next 25 Years as Psychology Leaders”.

This is my first opportunity to serve as VAPLC Conference Chair, and I cannot help but think about when I went to the conference for the first time. As I was not necessarily a “psychology leader,” I was hoping I would fit in and that I would be accepted for the psychologist that I was, while also supporting my dreams of becoming that psychologist leader at VA. I cannot tell you how surprised and relieved I was to go to the welcome and registration reception and be welcomed by individuals that I have never even met. Colleagues extended themselves to make sure I felt included and that I actually belonged. This is a primary value for me and in the work that I do with suicide prevention. This experience then led to learning from top leadership on topics that I had maybe only heard about from memos or national presentations, while also receiving mentorship and kindness around my dreams to continue to work in the area of suicide prevention as a VA Psychologist Leader. The conference was concluded with me coming to tears, as we sat together, as a group of one, and reflected on our time together and felt united by a discipline and as the humans that we are. It was incredible.

Therefore, whether you read this before, during, or after the conference, please know that you are always welcome and supported by the VA professionals that have your back—VA psychologists. If it is in-person at this year’s conference or maybe post-conference, you have innate support waiting and ready for you, as you need it. We are a group of one and we are united together through discipline and in human experience. Therefore, I want to highlight for you a brief summary of this year’s conference, as this conference is just one way to feel united, included, and inspired to “reimagine” your professional roles and focus, especially during the time of a pandemic. Furthermore, there will be opportunities to reflect on the past two years, while mainly focusing on what our discipline will look like in the future. This is based on overarching VA goals, while also taking into consideration the idea of: what do we want to add/remove in the context of having a “clean slate” after a long pandemic.

At this conference we will have opportunities to learn and discuss how to move forward, despite perhaps feeling depleted or needing a “recharge.” While we hear and have discussions about where we have been and where we are going, we will also be weaving in the important topic of diversity, inclusion, and equity—especially as it pertains to groups who have been discriminated against and where barriers to healthcare have limited access to those who need it. All three co-sponsoring organizations believe that dismantling bias, stigma, and hate are foundational toward achieving health equity. Furthermore, as the Annual VA Leadership Conference is held in San Antonio, Texas, this is our opportunity to demonstrate support for Texans and partner with local organizations. This discussion does not stop with the conference. It is an ongoing conversation with a goal of standing up in the face of discriminatory policies that prevent eligible individuals and families from accessing the mental health and physical health care, or social services they need.



(Continued on page 13)

CAREER ADVANCEMENT AND MOTHERHOOD CONT'D

Take Aways

We explored the decision-making process that women go through regarding career advancement while parenting, and were struck by many pearls of wisdom offered. Below is a compilation of that advice.

Advice from women on seeking career advancement:

- Find someone you respect as a leader, and ask how they manage work and life.
 - Ask for what you need, such as an altered tour or comp time
 - If reliable childcare is a barrier, create back-ups (we realize this has been much harder during the pandemic)
 - Take advantage of leadership development opportunities (e.g., Health Care Leadership Development Program, Leadership VA, mentoring programs)
 - Remember that you can step out of leadership; timing for your life is a personal choice
 - Find people who can mentor you and offer different perspectives
 - Partner with others in similar leadership/supervisory positions who can provide coverage when you need planned or unexpected leave
- Time is a commodity. Make a plan for how you want to spend your time, and know that your plans might change across stages of your life.
 - Know your rights in the workplace. For example, ask HR about the nuances of using FMLA.
 - Do what makes you feel confident, competent, and brings you satisfaction.
 - Don't apologize for having reasonable boundaries.
 - It's okay to leave a position that doesn't fit your life.
 - Don't give up on your leadership aspirations. Job opportunities will be there. In the meantime, keep networking, maintain your CV, and be ready when the timing is manageable for you.

Advice for peers, supervisors, and leadership:

- Model how you manage work-life balance.
- Show verbal and tangible support for work-life balance of colleagues and supervised staff.



25TH ANNUAL VAPLC CONT'D

Again, whether you are able to attend the conference or connect post-conference, you are always invited and welcome to:

1. Reimagine
2. Recharge
3. Re-define your values and goals for the next chapter in your professional work as a VA psychologist.

Sincerely,
Kaily Clark, Psy.D.
VAPLC Conference Chair 2022-2023

*Please note that 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.



**SUBMIT AN ARTICLE
TO AVAPL!**

Interested in submitting an
article to the AVAPL
Newsletter?

Do you have a suggestion
for a topic to be included in
an upcoming edition?

Please contact:

Layne Goble

Layne.Goble@va.gov

or

Angela Enlow

Angela.Enlow@va.gov

