



JOINT NEWS RELEASE



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State-funded psychology internship program earns national accreditation ***“Grow our own” strategy aimed at keeping grads in state to practice***

ANCHORAGE, AK --The American Psychological Association (APA) recently accredited the Alaska Psychology Internship Consortium (AK-PIC), a statewide internship program that provides the final, required training component for doctoral-level clinical psychologists. Granted through 2019, the accreditation term is the longest period achievable for such programs.

AK-PIC (www.ak-pic.org) began in 2008. Funding for planning, development and on-going support was provided by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the State of Alaska Division of Behavioral Health as a “grow our own” workforce development strategy aimed at educating and retaining psychologists for work in Alaska. The consortium includes the Alaska Family Medicine Residency-Providence Hospital, Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API), Hope Counseling Center, Norton Sound Health Corporation, and Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC).

Prior to 2008, no accredited in-state internship positions were available for Alaska psychology students to complete their doctoral training without leaving the state. “With the parallel development of the joint UAF-UAA Ph.D. program in clinical-community psychology, it became critically important for Alaska to develop an in-state internship or risk these Alaska-trained psychologists leaving the state and not returning for professional practice,” said Dr. Sarah Dewane of Alaska Family Medicine Residency-Providence Hospital and co-director of AK-PIC.

In each of the past several years, more than 800 internship-ready doctoral psychology candidates across the country have gone unmatched for internships, according to APA. With this critical shortage of training positions, especially in the West, Alaska’s internship is also attracting out-of-state interest. “Last year AK-PIC reviewed over 75 qualified applications for seven internship positions,” said Dr. John DeRuyter of Hope Counseling in Fairbanks, and co-director of AK-PIC. “I’ve never had the luxury of having that sort of demand for a behavioral health position in Alaska.”

The year-long AK-PIC internship includes supervised clinical practice, instruction and professional development at one of the five consortium locations. The first cohort of interns began training in 2010; the third cohort began training last July. There have been 12 graduates and all but two have remained in Alaska for post-doctoral practice. The program was recently awarded funding from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to add additional training positions and allow the program to expand.

The APA Commission on Accreditation is recognized by both the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation as the national accrediting authority for professional education and training in psychology. Since development of the AK-PIC internship program, the Alaska VA Healthcare System has established a psychology internship in Anchorage. It was accredited by the APA in January 2011.

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