

## Behavioral Health Worker Practicum

### VENTURA COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH (VCBH): Behavioral Health Worker Practicum FACT SHEET

VCBH is part of the Ventura County Health Care Agency's integrated public health care system which includes Ventura County Medical Center, Santa Paula Hospital, Ambulatory Clinics, Public Health, Emergency Medical Services, and the Medical Examiner's Office.

The Ventura County Behavioral Health Department provides a system of coordinated outpatient services to meet the mental health and substance abuse treatment needs of Ventura County. Services are delivered from regionally based Behavioral Health Centers for children and families, adolescents, transitional aged youth (ages 18-25), adults, and seniors. Specialized services are also provided in partnership with city and county agencies, courts, local law enforcement, schools and community-based coalitions.

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#### MISSION

To promote hope, resiliency and recovery for our clients and their families by providing the highest quality prevention, intervention, treatment, and support to persons with mental health and substance abuse issues.

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#### VALUES

Respect - for diversity, the individual, and each other

Excellence - achieved by personal and organizational accountability

Leadership - through innovation and collaboration

Integrity - evidenced by unquestionable ethics, open and timely communication

Commitment - to proven, high quality care

## Behavioral Health Worker Practicum

The practicum program, offered by VCBH, is dedicated to providing comprehensive training opportunities for students enrolled in Addictive Disorders Studies programs. The practicum provides comprehensive clinical experiences, excellent supervision and supplemental seminars and workshops. In the first semester of the practicum experience, students are oriented to the County Behavioral Health System and observe services in the Substance Use Services programs to ensure exposure to the 13 Competency Domains for Addiction Counselors. In the second semester of their practicum, students are assigned to an out-patient mental health program as a Mental Health Associate Intern to strengthen case management and documentation skill.

Program locations:

Ventura - Oxnard - Santa Paula - Fillmore - Simi Valley - Thousand Oaks

## Substance Use Services Programs

**New Start for Moms:** Comprehensive day treatment program and outpatient counseling to pregnant and/or parenting women that are using alcohol and/or other drugs.

**Alcohol and Drug Treatment Centers:** Outpatient centers that provide assessment, treatment, crises intervention, and referrals for alcohol and other drug abusing adolescents, adults and their families.

**Driving Under the Influence Program:** Educational program for persons referred by the Court, Probation or the California Department of Motor Vehicles. This program provides information, counseling, and support system to modify attitudes/behaviors related to alcohol and other drug abuse.

**Forensic (adolescents in the juvenile justice system):** Alcohol and other drug assessment and treatment provided through the mental health juvenile justice program.

**Alcohol and Drug Prevention Division** Utilizes environmental/public policy prevention initiatives and education to prevent underage and binge drinking, impaired driving and

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### What type of experience would I gain?

Your caseload and specific experiences are based on the assigned program and current skill level. Typical responsibilities might include screenings, intakes, group counseling, conducting educational groups, targeted case management, providing referrals, and completing case write-ups. Observations in the Substance Use Services Division will include exposure to the 13 Competency Domains for Addiction Counselors.

All activities in the mental health placement are supervised by a mental health professional employed by the department. The supervisor meets with the intern on a regular weekly basis. MHA Interns also attend a monthly 2-hour supervision/training session in addition to the supervision received at the clinic site. During these sessions, a variety of topics are covered such as case management skills, legal and ethical issues, self-care in working with mentally ill population, motivational interviewing concepts, confidentiality laws and basic CBT concepts. Depending on the program, students might also participate in treatment team meetings, with students from other clinical disciplines such as psychologists, marriage and family therapists, social workers, or art therapists

Hours in SUS programs are supervised by a CAADAC or CAADE certified professional employed by the department, usually in a group supervision format.

### Is there an orientation for the internship?

Orientation is provided during the first 4 weeks of the internship. This includes a general overview of the department and training is provided on a variety of topics such as cultural competency, confidentiality, documentation, working with mental health clients, safety protocols and legal/ethical guidelines.

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### What are the requirements to participate in a practicum with VCBH?

All students must have completed a minimum of 12 semester units of pre-requisite courses in an Addictive Disorders Studies/ Substance Abuse Counseling program and be currently enrolled in a field experience course in a school with which VCBH by has an active Memorandum of Understanding.

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### Is there a required time commitment and when does the practicum begin?

VCBH requires a 2-semester commitment and a minimum of 400hrs - usually, 16 hours per week. Five Practicum Students are accepted each semester. Most of the clinic sites are open Monday - Friday 8:00 am to 6:00 pm, with some evening hours available. The practicum hours are completed during hours of operation. Your specific schedule is

based on the requirements of the individual clinic or program, with consideration of your school schedule and personal preferences. You will discuss a proposed weekly schedule during the interview process and finalize it with your supervisor once you have been accepted into the program. The initial weeks of the internship may require attendance on days that are different from your regular schedule, due to the orientation schedule.

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### How do I apply for a practicum?

You will need to complete the Student Internship Application – Behavioral Health Worker. Submit this form with proof of prerequisite course completion and one letter of recommendation. This application packet is submitted to the Training & Workforce Development Manager for initial review and then forwarded to the appropriate program staff. An interview is then scheduled.

**SEND APPLICATION PACKET TO:**  
Training and Workforce Development Manager  
1911 Williams Drive, Suite 200, Oxnard, CA 93036  
Phone: (805) 981-9213 | Email: [vcbh.internships@ventura.org](mailto:vcbh.internships@ventura.org)

### What is the time frame for the application and interview process?

The application deadline for a Fall Semester start date is May 1<sup>st</sup>. For a Spring Semester start date, the application deadline is November 1<sup>st</sup>. Applications submitted after this deadline may be considered if time allows for interviewing and additional spaces are still available for practicum students.

In 2021, applications for the Spring 2022 semester start date must be received by November 1, 2021.

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### What types of questions will I be asked during the interview process?

You will be asked questions that relate to your interest in mental health and alcohol and drug treatment, any prior experience and current skill level. You will also be asked about your time commitment and what you hope to gain from an internship with VCBH. During the interview you are encouraged to ask questions about the program to determine if placement within VCBH would fit your educational goals.

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## Can you provide more information about the background clearance?

Students must complete a background clearance as required of all employees, volunteers and students. Generally, students that have background issues that indicate a potential threat to any consumers or staff would not be accepted. The County of Ventura conducts an individualized analysis, considering such factors as the nature of the job, severity of and length of time since the offence. An applicant would not be accepted into the internship program if he or she is receiving services from the department as a current client (as that would be a conflict of interest and dual relationship) or has current outstanding legal matters to resolve. If you have any questions about this or have any reason to think you might not clear a background check then you should contact the Training and Workforce Development Manager in advance to discuss your situation. The background clearance, is provided at no cost to the student.

Students must complete a TB clearance, prior to the start of the practicum, which can be conducted by the student's personal physician (where student incurs cost) or can be arranged through the County's employee health services department (at no cost to the student). Students must also have proof to having vaccine records or blood titer test results for Varicella IgG, Rubella IgG, and Rubeola IgG demonstrating immune titers from previous vaccination since, these are airborne. Titer and vaccination is also available through the County's employee health services department. During flu seasons all staff and students are required to get a flu shot. There is no cost to the student when using the County's Employee Health Services department for these purposes.

**COVID-19 vaccination is required.** On August 5, 2021, a State health order was issued by the California Department of Public Health requiring all workers who provide services or work in a health care facility to have their first dose of a one-dose COVID-19 vaccine regimen or their second dose of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine regimen by September 30, 2021. If COVID-19 vaccination is declined due to a sincerely held Religious Belief or due to a Qualified Medical Reason, a COVID-19 Exemption Form must be completed and approved.

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## Are there any other requirements?

Students are expected to carry student malpractice insurance - this is usually met by submitting a certificate of insurance from their educational institution. Evidence of insurance coverage must be provided to the Training and Workforce Development Manager at the beginning of the practicum and before providing client services.

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## Is there a stipend provided for practicum positions?

Stipends are not consistently offered, as they are based on the availability of funds and funding source requirements. You will, however, receive a wealth of experience, excellent supervision and supplemental seminars that are invaluable to your professional development. A certificate of Practicum Completion is earned at the completion of 2 semesters/400 hours of field experience, which serves as verification of work experience which may be used when applying for future employment. Note: while we wish all our students success on their professional journeys, all Ventura County Hiring Rules and Regulations Processes are in effect when applying for any future County Employment possibilities.