What MSW training opportunities are available through VCBH?
Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH) provides MSW internship opportunities in a variety of outpatient mental health clinics and programs located throughout the County of Ventura. Experience and training is provided in public mental health services.

Do you have internship opportunities for first year students?
Due to the complex clinical issues of our client population, the training program with VCBH is better suited for students with some previous mental health experience. Preference is given to 2nd year students with mental health experience that was gained previously through internships, work and/or volunteer experience.

Can you tell me more about Ventura County?
Ventura County is adjacent to the northwest border of Los Angeles County. There is easy access from Los Angeles County with a convenient drive from the San Fernando Valley or Santa Clarita areas. With a population just over 800,000, Ventura County is the twelfth most populous county in California. Racial and ethnic minorities comprise 53% of the population with 41% Hispanic/Latino American. Spanish is the primary language of 13% of the residents. Agriculture is a major industry producing just over one billion dollars in County product annually which leads to a large group of migrant farm workers living in the County. Although the median household income in Ventura County is $61,900, exceeding national and state averages, many of the department’s clients are low income and/or homeless or displaced from their homes and living below the federal poverty threshold.

What are the requirements to become an MSW intern with VCBH?
Students must be currently enrolled in an MSW program and recommended by the school’s field coordinator. Recommended students should have an interest is severe mental illness and public mental health.

Is there a required time commitment and when does the traineeship begin?
VCBH requires a full academic year commitment (September - May) and a minimum of 16 hours per week. Internships begin the first Wednesday after Labor Day. Clinics are generally open Monday – Friday 8:00 am to 6:00 pm and internship hours are completed during those hours. Specific schedules are determined with the field instructor and are based on the clinic requirements and in consideration of the student’s schedule.

How do I apply for an internship?
MSW students are referred to our department by the schools’ field placement coordinators. After receiving the referral from the school, students should contact the Internship and Workforce Development Manager to discuss the various locations and programs that are available throughout the system to find the best fit. Field instructors from specific locations or programs will contact the students to arrange interviews.
What is the time frame for the application and interview process?
The interview and selection process occurs during the months of March and April. Students are able to interview with multiple programs based on internship availability and student interests. Following interviews, the Internship and Workforce Development Manager submits the Agency Response form to the school with clinic preferences. Following the final match by the school the students will receive forms to complete the required background clearance before the internship position is finalized.

What types of questions will I be asked during the interview process?
You will be asked questions related to your interest in the mental health field, specifically in public mental health; any prior mental health experience; and current clinical knowledge. 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 with VCBH is a good fit.

What is involved in the orientation process?
All applicants complete a background clearance shortly after receiving preliminary acceptance into the program. A TB clearance is completed just prior to the start of clinical training. The first few weeks of the internship are dedicated to a variety of orientation experiences before reporting to the assigned clinic site.

What would be included in my clinical experiences?
Your experiences will typically include individual, group and/or family therapy, assessment updates and treatment planning, case management, and crises intervention. You can generally expect to have a “full caseload” within the first 2-3 months of the program. You will also be responsible for presenting at clinical case conferences, completing documentation of services and adhering to all policies and regulations.

What type of supervision is included in the training program?
VCBH employs a large number of Licensed Clinical Social Workers that fill the role of field instructors for the MSW students. Each student is assigned to a field instructor that has completed the required supervision training and meets the requirements of the Board of Behavioral Services. The field instructor provides a minimum of 1 hour of individual supervision each week. You may also receive additional group supervision.

Are there any other requirements?
Students are expected to carry student malpractice insurance but may also submit a certificate of insurance from their educational institution. You must provide evidence of insurance coverage to the Internships and Workforce Development Manager at the beginning of the internship.

Are there any stipends available for MSW students?
Bilingual second-year students (Spanish/English) may be eligible for a VCBH bilingual stipend of $6,000. CalSWEC mental health stipends may be available for students that are interested in working in public mental health. Students should contact the coordinator at their school for information regarding this stipend.

Does VCBH have employment opportunities for MSW graduates?
Graduates with an MSW degree are eligible to apply for employment with VCBH as a Behavioral Health Clinician I when the position is open for recruitment and posted on the County’s Human Resources website.