



CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY POSTDOCTORAL RESIDENCY WITH SPECIALIZATION IN NEUROREHABILITATION PSYCHOLOGY

Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center
Department of Health Services-Los Angeles County

APPLICATION DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 1st, 2025 TO BEGIN TRAINING SEPTEMBER 1st, 2026

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Rancho Los Amigos Department of Psychology offers a one to two-year postdoctoral residency training program in Clinical Psychology with a Major Area of Study and Specialization in Neurorehabilitation Psychology designed to prepare a trainee to function independently as a rehabilitation psychologist. Our postdoctoral training program is a full member in good standing of the Council of Rehabilitation Psychology Postdoctoral Training Programs (CRPPTP). The program conforms to the proposals from the National Conference on Postdoctoral Training in Professional Psychology and the Baltimore Conference Rehabilitation Psychology training guidelines. It fulfills eligibility requirements for board certification in Rehabilitation Psychology through the American Board of Professional Psychology. Residents will spend at least 80% of their time in supervised experience involving at least 70% of their time devoted to clinical care of persons with disability receiving rehabilitation services, their family members and care teams.

We have 8 psychologists involved in the training program at various levels, including 2 board certified rehabilitation psychologists and 1 board certified neuropsychologist. Residents will work in a culturally diverse setting and gain experience with a variety of medical and psychological diagnoses and working as part of an interdisciplinary team that includes physicians, nurses, social workers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech and language pathologists, recreation therapists, and case managers. We have an active Language and Culture Center that provides interpretation services so that staff can provide services to non-English speaking patients, as well as bilingual psychologists that can provide services and supervision in Spanish, Portuguese and German. We endorse the "apprentice psychologist" training model and provide mentoring. The program is generally tailored to help the resident broaden and fine tune training experiences with a variety of medical diagnoses. The resident will gain experience working with patients who have strokes, traumatic brain injuries, and spinal cord injuries, as well as patients with other medical and neurological conditions such as amputation, pain disorders, Guillain-Barre Syndrome, multiple sclerosis, chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy, tumor resections, West Nile Virus, functional neurological symptom disorder, and epilepsy.

Rehabilitation services at Rancho include: Adult and Pediatric Brain Injury, Adult and Pediatric Spinal Cord Injury, Gerontology and Stroke Rehabilitation, Ortho-rehabilitation, and Cardiac Rehabilitation.

Medicine and surgical services at Rancho include: Limb Preservation/Ortho-Diabetes Surgical service, Epilepsy Assessment service, Chronic Medicine service, Neurology and Acute Stroke.

ABOUT RANCHO LOS AMIGOS

Rancho Los Amigos is a nationally acclaimed 150 bed comprehensive physical rehabilitation and acute care medical center located in Downey, California. It is CARF accredited, has achieved The Gold Seal of Approval from the Joint Commission, and is listed as one of the top rehabilitation centers in the nation. Rancho is one of four hospitals and medical centers operated by the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services and is also a major training center for allied health professionals from across the nation. Rancho is located approximately 10 miles from the beautiful Pacific coastline and 11 miles from downtown Los Angeles.

In addition to providing excellent rehabilitation and medical services, Rancho has supportive programs for staff such as H3 (Helping Healers Heal), EDIA (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Antiracism), and the Don Knabe Wellness Center that runs health and wellness programs open to patients and staff.

EMPHASIS OF CLINICAL TRAINING GOALS

The Major Area of Study for this residency is rehabilitation psychology. We offer a clinical training experience at the residency level in *Clinical Psychology with Specialization in Neurorehabilitation Psychology*. The Rancho Psychology Department views the primary practice goals of the Clinical Neurorehabilitation Psychology specialization as the following:

- 1) Intervention and treatment of psychological conditions associated with physical disorders.
- 2) Diagnosis and removal or remediation of psychological and neuropsychological barriers that restrict the patients' availability to medical care and the physical rehabilitation process.
- 3) Assist individuals in the development of compensatory behaviors and adjustment to catastrophic loss and physical trauma.
- 4) Prevention of further injury or deterioration through enhancement of compliance with rehabilitation and medical treatment goals.
- 5) Reintegration of the patient into his or her unique family, school/work, social-cultural and leisure time milieu.

Clinical Psychology offers excellent preparatory training that fits well within the Clinical Neurorehabilitation specialization. Rehabilitation relevant areas of clinical psychology training that are emphasized include:

- 1) Assessment directed toward diagnosing the nature and causes, and predicting effects of, psychological and neuropsychological dysfunction and subjective distress on the patients' functional ability.
- 2) Application of methods and procedures for alleviating or remediating cognitive, emotional, and behavioral disability.
- 3) Treatment of psychological and emotional factors involved in, and consequent to, physical

disease and disability.

4) Investigation and treatment of family, group, and community dynamics as they impact the psychological health and recovery of the patient.

PATIENT POPULATION: MEDICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL DIAGNOSIS

Rancho's patient population tends to be medically complex. In addition to experiencing physical disability, they often also have a premorbid mental health history or will develop psychological distress due to onset of disability. Psychological diagnostic categories include but are not limited to neurocognitive disorders, mood disorders, anxiety disorders, psychotic disorders, adjustment disorders, substance-related and addictive disorders, personality disorders, and mental disorders due to medical condition.

Postdoctoral residents are exposed to a wide range of experiences that include psychological, neuropsychological, and psychoeducational testing, diagnostic interviewing, group and individual psychotherapy, consultation, crisis evaluation, neurobehavior management, in-service education, and outpatient follow-up. Residents have the benefit of formal clinical instruction, weekly Psychology Department didactic training seminars, and access to a medical center wide lecture and seminar calendar. There is a medical library on campus and the Rancho Los Amigos Language and Cultural Center provides translation and interpretation services for non-English speaking patients.

PATIENT & STAFF DIVERSITY

Residents interact with a patient population rich in cultural and individual diversity and medical diagnoses. This diversity is reflected in patients of different ages, gender, linguistic backgrounds, ethnic backgrounds, divergent social and economic conditions, and different lifestyles. Hospital staff and the Rancho Psychology Department similarly reflect this breadth of diversity, as does Rancho leadership and the Los Angeles County Board of Directors.

About half of patients served at Rancho are monolingual Spanish speakers and we serve a large number of other non-English speakers, thus our residents gain extensive experience in providing psychological services in collaboration with interpreters. Residents who are fluent in Spanish and interested in providing psychological assessment, neuropsychological assessment and psychotherapy in Spanish with monolingual Spanish speakers, have the opportunity to do so with the following supervisors: Dr. Chavarria, Dr. Martinez, and Dr. Serpa.

SUPERVISION & TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The postdoctoral residency is under the direction of Sophia Serpa, Psy.D., ABPP (RP), Director of Clinical Training and Charlotte Sykora, Ph.D., ABPP (RP), Chief of Psychology.

Training supervisors are full-time staff clinicians with recognized expertise in brain and spinal cord injury, geriatrics, pediatrics and the psychological diagnosis and treatment of special patient populations, such as those with stroke, traumatic brain injury, spine injury, diabetes, epilepsy, and other neurological conditions.

Approximately 70% of the resident's time is spent in patient care activities. Rancho Los Amigos is a pioneer in the development of interdisciplinary treatment team practice and there is a training focus that emphasizes the unique role of the psychologist as a member of such a team in an acute physical medicine and rehabilitation setting.

The Psychology Department endorses the "apprentice psychologist" training model. The resident is bound by mutual agreement to learn the profession of clinical psychology and is placed under the care of skilled clinicians for the purpose of learning the profession. To this purpose, the resident engages patients within the totality of the patient's psychological needs. Under supervision, the resident's duties entail comprehensive treatment of patient's assigned to them; from record review to intake and diagnosis, to treatment and follow up, to team consultation with physicians and allied health team members. The supervisor and resident enter into a mentor-student relationship that far exceeds the typically required four hours of supervision per week of training.

Medical specialties at Rancho Los Amigos are:

Adult and Pediatric Brain Injury	Limb Preservation/Ortho-diabetes
Adult and Pediatric Spinal Cord Injury	Epilepsy Assessment Service
Gerontology and Stroke Rehabilitation	Cardiac Rehabilitation
Neurology and Acute Stroke	Chronic Medicine

Potential rotations/experiences include:

- Stroke Rehabilitation Service
- Limb Preservation/Ortho-Diabetes Surgical Service
- Spinal Cord Injury Acute Rehabilitation Service
- Traumatic Brain Injury Acute Rehabilitation Service
- Pediatric Acute Rehabilitation Service
- Chronic Medicine Service
- Ortho-Rehabilitation Service
- Neuropsychological Assessment Service
- Adult Brain Injury Outpatient Day Rehab Clinic
- Outpatient Psychotherapy

COVID-19 & CLINICAL SERVICES

Our department follows hospital guidelines as recommended by Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. As health care workers, including psychology postdoctoral residents, we are required to have COVID-19 vaccinations and must show proof of vaccination at time of onboarding. Vaccinations and boosters are available to all Rancho staff, including postdocs and other trainees.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The Psychology Department Training Committee reviews applicants' statements of interest and professional goals, academic transcripts, curriculum vitae, letters of recommendation, review of sample

report, conducts interviews, and confirms criteria for application for employment with the County of Los Angeles. One resident position is available. The resident position carries a stipend (\$4,257/month with cost of living raises) with full health benefits that include dental and vision, 13 paid holidays, paid vacation time and sick time, free parking, and free breakfast and lunch in the hospital cafeteria.

Admission Requirements:

The interview/selection process is divided into three phases. Each phase is designed to select those applicants who demonstrate intellectual talent, solid foundation in clinical casework, and mastery of basic psychological principles. Applicants should demonstrate self-awareness and personal maturity, commitment to the well-being of others, awareness, tolerance, and respect for cultural and individual differences, and clear identification with the profession of psychology and concern for its standing and functioning within the community.

Phase I: Pre-screening: Applicant materials are reviewed to assure they meet minimum requirements:

1. Completion, by the start of the residency, of requirements for a doctoral degree in psychology from a program accredited by one of the six regional accrediting bodies recognized by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) and the American Psychological Association.
2. Completion, by the start of the residency, of an internship (1500 hour minimum) in psychology that meets standards as set forth by the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC).
3. Doctoral study and internship within the area of Clinical Psychology, Clinical Rehabilitation Psychology, Health Psychology, Behavioral Medicine, or closely related field, as determined by review of academic transcripts and program description.

Please be advised that at the time of application and acceptance into the program, you must be enrolled in your doctoral program. To initiate the selection process, applicants should review the minimum requirements. If these appear to be satisfied, applicants are requested to email the following documents to Dr. Sophia Serpa with Subject Title: FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION DECEMBER 1st, 2025:

1. Curriculum Vitae
2. A statement of interest and professional goals
3. Official transcripts from graduate program
4. Three letters of recommendation, with at least one from the University faculty and one from an internship supervisor
5. Copies of internship evaluations (accepted only from the internship site)
6. Sample report (de-identified) to be discussed during interview

All application materials must be received by December 1st, 2025. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Phase II: Interviews

Upon receipt of admission documents, interviews are scheduled. All interviews this year will be conducted virtually. Requests for an in-person campus tour will be honored for those interested.

At the interview, members of the clinical training staff further assess the applicant's preparation and qualifications and answer questions regarding Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center and the training program. Applicants should expect to be interviewed by the Chief of Psychology, Clinical Training Director and other potential clinical instructors/supervisors. Applicants will also have the opportunity to meet and speak with the current resident.

Phase III: For Selected Applicant, Formal Application for Employment

At the conclusion of the screening and interview process, the selected candidate will be invited to complete an application for employment with the County of Los Angeles, Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center. The candidate will be required to successfully complete FBI and DOJ background checks. COVID vaccination is required. Based on ratings given by the Department of Human Resources, the interview and selection process of the Department of Psychology, applicants are notified of their acceptance into the program.

For additional information you may contact:

Sophia Serpa, Psy.D., ABPP (RP)
Director of Clinical Training
Psychology Department, OPB Room 2049
Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center
7601 Imperial Hwy, Downey, CA 90242

562-385-6191 (office); 562-385-6678 (fax)
Sserpa@dhs.lacounty.gov