

VA Puget Sound, Seattle
1660 South Columbian Way
Seattle, Washington 98108

Dear Dr. McCutcheon,

My name is Mary Blendermann and I am a doctoral candidate in clinical psychology at the University of Pittsburgh. I am interested in pursuing the Psychology Internship Program at VA Puget Sound, Seattle for my predoctoral internship. I am excited for the opportunity to deepen my specialization in trauma-focused treatment and complementary modalities along with well-rounded generalist training. The program at the Seattle VA is an excellent fit for my goal of a clinically-focused career in an academic medical center, where I can provide clinical training and guide treatment implementation in active collaboration with intervention research.

My primary clinical interest is evidence-based treatment for anxiety- and trauma-related disorders, and the PTSD Outpatient Clinic at the Seattle VA offers an ideal opportunity to extend my existing experience with PTSD assessment and treatment. I previously completed a practicum in the VA Pittsburgh Trauma Recovery Clinic, where I delivered cognitive processing therapy (CPT) and written exposure therapy (WET) to veterans with PTSD, and I found working with sexual assault survivors in this context to be particularly rewarding. I am interested in providing women's programming within the PTSD Outpatient Clinic to gain more experience with this unique population. I also look forward to receiving more advanced training in CPT and learning to deliver prolonged exposure (PE).

To complement my trauma-focused treatment experience, I am interested in completing a rotation with the Mental Health Intensive Services IOP to gain more experience with short-term stabilization and crisis management. In my prior experience co-facilitating DBT skills groups in the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic (WPIC) Center for Eating Disorders, I saw how empowering DBT skills can be to help individuals maintain a recovery trajectory. Symptom stabilization is often a necessary step for individuals with more acute symptom presentations prior to starting trauma-focused treatment, and training in the Mental Health Intensive Services IOP would ensure I have a strong understanding of DBT and other modalities focused on effective coping.

A rotation in the Pain Clinic within Behavioral Medicine would round out my training with treatment experience for complex chronic pain. I have observed in my clinical work that chronic pain commonly presents alongside posttraumatic stress, and I would like to understand chronic pain better from both medical and psychological intervention standpoints. In my prior experience with CBT and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) for chronic pain, I have appreciated the focus of these treatments on improving functioning and quality of life, even if symptoms do not remit. Gaining more experience with acceptance-based treatments in the Pain Clinic would complement both my clinical focus on posttraumatic stress and my research interest in mindfulness. I would also value the opportunity to collaborate with a multidisciplinary care team, which is integral experience for my career goal of working in an academic medical center.

Based on the excellent match between these training opportunities and my professional goals, I am convinced that the Psychology Internship Program at VA Puget Sound, Seattle would be an outstanding fit for me, and that I would be a thoughtful and dynamic contributor to your training cohort. I appreciate your consideration in this process and look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

Mary Blendermann, M.S.