

University of Florida

Postdoctoral Disability Research Training Program

Funded by National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research

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Overview

Purpose: In partnership with a Veterans Health Administration (VHA) policy research center, the University of Florida (UF) developed a post-doctoral fellowship program that will train six postdoctoral fellows to conduct high-quality multidisciplinary disability policy research in the area of *community living and participation* for Veterans with disabilities. Fellowships will be two years in length and fellows will prepare and submit proposals for further career development, such as a VHA Career Development Award (CDA), an NIH K01 or K12 award, or for fellows with a disability, a VHA disability supplement award. The ARRTTP will provide an important component in the career development of disability policy researchers.

Background: This proposal draws on the strength of three main components: 1) participation and expertise of rehabilitation investigators at UF, 2) UF rehabilitation professional degree programs and Ph.D. programs in rehabilitation science, and health services policy, and 3) a two site (Gainesville and Tampa, Florida) VHA Center of Innovation for Disability and Rehabilitation Research (CIDRR8). For postdoctoral fellows, partnership with CIDRR8 brings the opportunity for immediate experience in ongoing disability policy related projects focused on Veterans with disabilities. The partnership also allows the post-doctoral fellows the opportunity to develop, through close mentorship, disability policy research proposals that extend to non-Veteran populations. The VHA partnership provides the postdoctoral fellows with the prospect of a research career within the VHA, beginning with the VHA Career Development Award (CDA) program. Those fellows who secure a K01 or K12 award may continue their career as junior faculty at a research university. Investigators participating in this post-doctoral fellowship program have experience in mentoring postdoctoral fellows, and CDA, K01, and K12 recipients.

Goals and Objectives: The overall goal of the proposed fellowship program is to advance disability and rehabilitation policy. Objectives include: (1) increase capacity in the field by providing postdoctoral training in disability policy research to six postdoctoral fellows; (2) conduct disability policy research, which collectively for all fellows across the five year project period, results in fellow participation in 10 collaborative research projects, 10 conference presentations, 10 research grant proposals and 10 peer reviewed publications; (3) advance each postdoctoral fellow to the next stage in their research career through securing NIH or VHA career development support; and (4) select at least one (15%) of the postdoctoral fellows from a minority or underserved population.

Innovation: The UF partnership of disability and rehabilitation researchers, health policy researchers, VHA Central Office and the VHA CIDRR8 creates a uniquely rich experience for postdoctoral fellows in the area of disability policy research.

Dissemination: The postdoctoral fellows will be involved in dissemination activities through research presentations at conferences and peer reviewed publications. Further, a Disability and Rehabilitation Policy Seminar will be planned and implemented by the postdoctoral fellows and will provide practical experience in establishing a research network for research dissemination.

Application Process

To apply, please send to Dr. Mann by email:

- Transcript(s) of your graduate education
- Statement of research interest related to policy research in community living and participation
- Three letters of reference from people familiar with your work such as your dissertation advisor.

We will schedule a time for an interview with you by phone or in person.

Once accepted into the program, fellows select a mentor who monitors and guides progress. Each potential mentor has an established research track record and has experience working with graduate students and/or junior investigators. During the first week of the postdoctoral experience, AR RTP fellows meet with all investigators to become familiar with the specific research activities and projects currently in progress. Two additional mentors will be identified to form the mentorship committee for each AR RTP fellow.

Each fellow develops a Fellowship Plan— a written document outlining courses to be taken, topics for research studies, target dates for grant submissions and the important dates leading up to submissions, and manuscript and conference paper submissions. Following the first week of orientation, the fellow meets with Dr. Mann and the mentor to identify specific projects in which you will participate as an active investigator. A series of goals related to specific research projects will be identified, and the timeline to accomplish these goals will be spelled out. These goals will be based on the project objectives presented earlier. The fellowship mentors work with each fellow to ensure that the individualized goals and project objectives are multidisciplinary, realistic, and accomplishable. The mentor will meet weekly with you to ensure that adequate progress is being made in the selected research activity and to problem solve and/or assist you in successfully completing the selected research project. You will interact with your mentor and other investigators on a daily basis while conducting selected research projects. Dr. Mann, you and your mentor will meet quarterly to discuss progress in the fellowship activities. The development and review of goals will be completed each quarter to assess whether adequate progress is being made. At each quarterly meeting, program goals and objectives will be discussed, but it will also be a time for you to assess your own progress. At the end of each year, individual fellow goals will be reevaluated, and modifications will be made to start the following fellowship year. You will be asked to evaluate your own progress and to provide solutions for problems you may have encountered. Fellowship mentors will provide guidance and act as a sounding board for your progress assessment

DESIGN OF TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Program Overview

The post-doctoral training program provides structured multidisciplinary postdoctoral disability policy research experiences related to community living and participation. The training design incorporates lecture and discussion sections, research and demonstration project activities, an interdisciplinary seminar series, journal club, mock presentations and study sections for grant proposals, mentoring workshops, and manuscript and grant writing courses built around foundational rehabilitation courses.

Program Objectives.

The training methods to achieve the following objectives will include:

1. Apprenticeship research experiences where a fellow works closely with an established investigator in an area of research interest,
2. Didactic experiences involving classroom and formal instruction in research methods, rehabilitation and health science, scientific integrity, and health and disability policy,
3. Practical experiences in working with Veterans who are disabled and with disability and advocacy organizations.

1. Fellows will develop investigator skills by completing core courses

- Successfully complete minimum one core course per year
- Identify elective courses consistent with area of research focus
- Successfully complete a minimum of one elective course during fellowship period
- Complete courses related to scientific integrity and ethics of rehabilitation research

2. Fellows will be able to plan and implement a Multidisciplinary Graduate Seminar on Disability Policy

- Identify persons involved in rehabilitation research at UF and CIDRR
- Plan and coordinate seminar and presentations by mentors (six per year)
- Develop a system to monitor rehabilitation research activities in area of research focus
- Develop a website focusing on multidisciplinary disability and rehabilitation policy research opportunities
- Disseminate results using at least two methodologies (e.g., lecture, web site)

3. Fellows participate in a community-based disability project that serves Veterans with Disabilities (min. 40 hours/year)

- Select role in one or more of the disability organizations that serve Veterans in Florida
- Arrange to spend 40 hours per year in activities of the organization
- Prepare written and oral presentation of community based experience, including analysis of how disability policy impacts the program
- Policy areas of significant concern to Veterans, around which this project could focus, include: Transportation; Shelter; Employment; Recreation; Substance-Related Disorders; Access to Health and Other Services; Caregiver Support.
- Examples of organizations include: Center for Independent Living; Disabled American Veterans Association; Wounded Warriors Project; American Gold Star Mothers <http://www.goldstarmoms.com/Depts/AllDepts/AllDepts.htm>; American

Legion <http://floridalegion.org/>; AMVETS <http://amvetsdof.com/>; Disabled American Veterans <http://www.davmembersportal.org/fl/>; Korean War Veterans Association <http://dfl.kwva.org/>; Military Officers Association of America <http://www.moaaf.org/>; Military Order of the Purple Heart <http://www.floridapurpleheart.org/>; Paralyzed Veterans of America <http://www.pva.org/site/c.ajlRK9NJLcJ2E/b.6463495/k.C5D5/Florida.htm>; Veterans of Foreign Wars <http://myfloridavfw.org/public/>; Vietnam Veterans of America <http://vvafsc.org/>

4. Fellows will enhance investigator skills by completing courses emphasizing scientific methodology

The investigators recognize that a broad knowledge base is crucial to a productive research career. As such, all fellows will participate in a variety of core and elective courses during the AR RTP. During orientation, mentors will work with fellows to identify courses consistent with their chosen research focus area. If a postdoctoral applicant has recently (within three years) completed advanced graduate level statistics and research methods course work (9 credits or more), he or she may substitute additional advanced statistics and research methods course work in place of the courses listed below; the selection of the advanced courses will be made jointly by the mentor and the fellow.

- **Rehabilitation Science Theory (RSD 6930):** This course reviews the (1) historical, philosophical, and theoretical foundations of rehabilitation science, including analysis of the components, stages, or domains of the disabling-enabling process; (2) selected rehabilitation research; (3) ethical, funding, and social implications of rehabilitation science; and (4) evolution of rehabilitation systems in the United States. It compares and contrasts models of disability, e.g., IOM, NCMRR, ICIDH, and ICF. Fellows prepare an in-depth paper describing how the levels of the ICF model relate to their research focus area.
- **Research Methods in Rehabilitation (RSD6940):** This four-credit course discusses issues in sampling, measurement, analysis, and reporting.
- **The College Classroom-Teaching, Process and Practice (RSD6931):** This course provides fellows with basic skills to succeed as faculty members in the college classroom environment.
- **Grant Writing AGG6830:** Fellows learn how to prepare and submit grants for research funding.

Successfully complete a minimum of one course related to scientific integrity and ethics of rehabilitation research.

Successfully complete a minimum of one elective course during fellowship period: Elective courses will be selected by the postdoctoral fellow in consultation with the fellowship mentor and other appropriate mentors. Drawing on the strength of the UF Department of Health Services Research, Policy, and Management, the following represent potential elective courses in the area of health policy (Table 1).

Department	No.	Title	Credits
HSA	6427	Legal and Ethical Aspects of Health Administration	3

HSA	6152	Health Policy	3
HSA	6114	Introduction to the US Health Care System	3
HSA	7414	Society, Health, and Medical Care	3
HSA	7437	Advanced Health Economics	3
HSA	7759	Quality and Outcomes in Health Services Research	3
HSA	7116	Health Service Organizational Research	3
HSA	7936	Health Care Cost & Financing Medical Neuroscience	3
HSA	7106	Health Care Access and Utilization	3

5. Each fellow will participate in 2 multidisciplinary advanced-level research projects

- Identify fellow's specific area of interest with assistance of project supervisor
 - Identify specific research problems
 - Develop goals and timeline for research projects
 - Conduct studies and collect/analyze data, prepare articles for publication

6. Each fellow will prepare and submit one grant proposal in an area of research interest each year

- Based on area of interest, identify appropriate funding source
- With assistance of mentor and other investigators, plan and write grant proposal
- Identify internal and external reviewers for pre-submission review/feedback
- Present Specific Aims at CIDRR investigator meeting
- Submit completed proposal to appropriate funding agency

7. Each fellow will submit one article for publication as first author each year

- Identify research questions that fit with specific areas of interest
- Develop protocols and timelines for conducting studies
- Conduct studies and collect/analyze data
- Prepare and submit article for publication to appropriate professional journal

8. Each fellow will submit one conference presentation based on research activity each year

- Identify policy research questions that fit into fellow's research areas of interest
- Develop plan for studies and timelines
- With assistance of supervisor and mentor, complete studies and collect/analyze data

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