**Internship Readiness at VA Medical Centers**

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**General Qualities of Good Applicants**

* Interest in working with veterans and reasons why (this may be obvious, but not always mentioned in cover letters or during interviews).
* Flexibility – VA Medical Centers are all very complex organizations regardless of size and rotations will be varied and sometimes complicated.
* Unless specific tracks, generally looking for generalists. Students who specialize too early limit themselves on internship.
* A thick skin. Veterans can be challenging. Some especially like to challenge younger clinicians and trainees. Interns will need to be able to gently confront this and stand up for themselves and their credentials at times.
* Willingness to deal with bureaucracy. Some stereotypes about the government are true and the HR process and other issues are fairly universal at VAMCs.

**Specific Issues Related to Readiness**

* A high number of clinical hours. At our site we have found that higher total clinical hours does not necessarily predict success, but lower total clinical hours is often a common factor for interns that do not thrive.
* A good number of assessment cases with real clients/patients. At a recent national VA Psychology Training Meeting a large amount of time was spent discussing this. For many sites, internship is seen as a place to train higher-level assessment skills (conceptualization, integration of instruments, etc.). Perception is that applicants who have done few “real world” assessments will need remediation of basics.
* Dissertation status is also important. Many sites will not offer interviews if applicants have not proposed and many want to see data collected.

**DISCLAIMER**

VAMCs vary in size, complexity, number of psychologists, etc. There is no “one size fits all” advice to give to potential applicants.