

# *Discover the answers... ...Be a part of the solution*

Career opportunities for students interested in psychology and aging are expanding. People 65 years old and older are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population. By 2030 older adults will account for 20% of our nation's people, up from 13% in 2008 (Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, 2010). And, although there is a broad range of exciting opportunities in psychological research and practice focusing on older adults, there are not enough psychologists to keep pace with the increasing demand.

Geropsychology is the field within psychology that applies the knowledge and methods of psychology to understanding and helping older persons and their families maintain well-being, overcome problems, and achieve maximum potential during later life.

As with younger adults, a variety of treatable mental health disorders affect older adults. In fact, older adults have the highest rates of suicide of any age group in the U.S., and depression is its foremost risk factor. In addition, stressors common in late life such as loss of loved ones, relocation, health conditions, caregiving demands, change in employment status, and poverty significantly affect the health and independence of older adults. Geropsychologists address these and other issues as diverse as family relationships, memory, sexuality, capacity assessment, health promotion, and substance abuse.

*Geropsychologists are at the forefront of research on questions related to health and aging.*

Through their research, psychologists have contributed significantly to the understanding and treatment of the major health concerns of our time: heart disease, cancer, mental disorders, dementia, chronic pain, and arthritis, among others. Geropsychologists are at the forefront of research on questions related to health and aging. Why are most older adults successful in adapting to the stressors of late life while others become suicidal? Why do most older adults remain mentally sharp while others have memory problems? Research on the aging brain provides clues to the risks and protective factors for mental disorders relevant to individuals across the life span.

It is an exciting time for geropsychology! In 2003 the *Guidelines for Psychological Practice With Older Adults* became official policy of the American Psychological Association (APA). In 2010, Professional Geropsychology became a specialty of professional psychology. It's a time of *growth* for geropsychology! The number of older adults is *growing*, there is a *growing* understanding and support for efforts to address their mental and behavioral health needs, and career opportunities in psychology and aging are *growing*.

*Research on the aging brain provides clues to the risks and protective factors for mental disorders relevant to individuals across the life span.*

*As with younger adults, a variety of treatable mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression, affect older adults.*

Visit the following websites to see if geropsychology is a profession YOU might like to grow along with!!



## EDUCATION AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

<http://apadiv20.phhp.ufl.edu/>

**APA Division 20** (Adult Development and Aging) has a *Guide to Graduate Study in the Psychology of Adult Development and Aging*, sample syllabi for undergraduate and graduate adult development and aging courses, and information on student award competitions.

<http://www.geropsychology.org>

**APA Division 12, Section II** (Clinical Geropsychology), offers a directory of predoctoral internship training programs in geropsychology and postdoctoral training programs in clinical geropsychology. Additional information on research funding, student research and travel award competitions, and public policy updates is available.

<http://www.uccs.edu/~cpgtp/>

The **Council of Professional Geropsychology Training Programs** promotes education and training in geropsychology and supports activities that prepare psychologists for competent and ethical geropsychology practice. *The Pikes Peak Model Competencies in Professional Geropsychology*, *The Pikes Peak Geropsychology Knowledge and Skill Assessment Tool*, and a list of recommended resources associated with the *Model Competencies* are on its website.

<http://www.va.gov/oaa/AHE/default.asp>

The **Department of Veterans Affairs** provides training to more than 100,000 students in the health professions each year,

including psychologists. Many educational opportunities are offered in geropsychology, chronic mental illness, schizophrenia, posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, dementia, and substance abuse, all with an emphasis on evidence-based practice. Links to VA jobs in those areas are also listed.

A comprehensive listing and description of VA psychology internships and postdoctoral fellowships, both research and clinical, is available at <http://www.psychologytraining.va.gov/>.

<http://www.apa.org/about/division/index.aspx>

Other fields of psychology also offer a wealth of opportunities for work with older adults. These include **Clinical Neuropsychology, Health Psychology, Rehabilitation Psychology, and Counseling Psychology**. The link above to the APA divisions homepage in turn provides links to each of these divisions' web pages. Resources on these pages include career guidance on pursuing the field, directories of training programs, key readings, student affiliates organizations, grants, awards, and job openings.

## RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

<http://www.nia.nih.gov/ResearchInformation/ExtramuralPrograms/BehavioralAndSocialResearch/roybals.htm>

The **Edward R. Roybal Centers for Translation Research in the**

**Behavioral and Social Sciences of Aging** conduct research that can be applied to the problems older persons face. Research is being conducted in areas such as mobility, chronic disease self-management, and decision making.

<http://www.mirecc.va.gov/index.asp>

The **VA Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Centers** (MIRECC) generate new knowledge about the causes and treatments of mental disorders, apply new findings to model clinical programs, and disseminate these findings to enhance the quality of veterans' lives in their recovery from mental disorders. Centers focus on areas such as dual diagnosis, collaborative care, PTSD, dementia, and severe and persistent mental illness.

The Advanced Fellowship Program in Mental Illness Research and Treatment is described at <http://www.mirecc.va.gov/mirecc-fellowship.asp>.

[www.geron.org](http://www.geron.org)

The **Gerontological Society of America** (GSA) promotes the scientific study of aging. Gerontologists study the aging processes and individuals as they grow from middle age through late life. Gerontologists come from a variety of disciplines. The society's Behavioral and Social Sciences Section is composed of behavioral and social scientists from many disciplinary backgrounds, including psychology.

## PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

<http://www.va.gov/GERIATRICS/index.asp>

The **Department of Veterans Affairs** provides a variety of mental and behavioral health services for older adults and a wealth of practice opportunities in geropsychology. An overview of these programs, including geriatric medicine, research and evaluation, home and community-based long-term care, homeless programs, hospice and palliative care, and Alzheimer's/dementia care, is available.

<http://www.avapl.org/factsheets.html>

The **Association of VA Psychological Leaders** has fact sheets that describe the range of work psychologists do at the VA in areas such as anxiety, substance abuse, cancer, and posttraumatic stress disorder.

<http://www.pltcweb.org/index.php>

**Psychologists in Long-Term Care** is a network of psychologists who provide mental health services in long-term care settings, including skilled nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, and assisted living facilities. Learn about the types of services psychologists provide and publications related to this area of practice.

<http://www.careersinaging.com/careersinaging/index.html>

The **Association for Gerontology in Higher Education** has information on different careers in gerontology and associated academic programs.

<http://www.agework.com/agework/>

The **AgeWork Career Center** has a job bank of careers in aging through which one can view current openings and apply for positions online.

## GUIDELINES FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS

<http://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/older-adults.pdf>

*APA Guidelines for Psychological Practice With Older Adults*

<http://www.apa.org/pi/aging/resources/dementia-guidelines.pdf>

*APA Guidelines for the Assessment of Dementia and Age-Related Cognitive Change*

## GENERAL INFORMATION ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT

<http://www.apa.org/careers/index.aspx>

APA's online career center

<http://www.apa.org/careers/resources/index.aspx>

Psychology careers in academics, nonacademic careers, and practice are described along with information on grants and funding.

<http://www.apa.org/apags/about/index.aspx>

The American Psychological Association of Graduate Students (APAGS) develops and disseminates information to students about education and training issues, legislative positions and developments, and future

directions in the field. Its website offers resources including predoctoral internships in professional psychology, scholarships, grants, and awards.

<http://www.appic.org/index.html>

The **Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers** (APPIC) promotes quality training in professional psychology and provides assistance in matching students with training programs. Information on training resources for graduate and postdoctoral students and web links to key organizations are provided.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The APA Office on Aging in the APA Public Interest Directorate serves as the coordination point for the association's activities pertaining to aging. It strives to bring psychological knowledge to bear on matters that affect older adults and their families. A wealth of information is available on our website, <http://www.apa.org/pi/aging/>.