

**The Help Group's Postdoctoral Program in Clinical Psychology  
Concentrating on Autism Spectrum Disorders  
2007-2008**

**THE HELP GROUP**

**Overview of the Agency**

The Help Group is a family of affiliated non-profit agencies deeply committed to serving children, adolescents and families with compelling special needs related to the full range of autism spectrum disorders, mental retardation, learning and language disabilities, serious emotional disturbance, and abuse, abandonment and neglect. At the heart of The Help Group is the mission to enable young people to fulfill their potential to lead positive, productive and rewarding lives.

Recognizing that the problems of our community are complex and multifaceted, The Help Group, one of the largest and most comprehensive non-profit organizations of its kind, offers a continuum of services, ranging from outpatient counseling to 24-hour residential care. In addition, the programs within each of The Help Group's agencies are offered individually or may be combined to address the unique needs of each child or family. This range of services affords the hundreds of children, adolescents, young adults and families served by The Help Group a tremendous opportunity for continuity of care, as clients can move fluidly from one level of care to another as needed.

The programs of The Help Group receive funding from the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, the California State Department of Social Services, the Los Angeles Unified School District and other local school districts, the Community Development Department of the City of Los Angeles, and other governmental agencies. It is a member agency of United Way of North Los Angeles, as well as a recipient of other private philanthropic support.

The programs of The Help Group serve a broad spectrum of children, adolescents, and families of varied ethnicities, cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic levels. Many of the clients in each of the Help Group programs live below the poverty level. All of The Help Group's services are designed to be sensitive to cultural differences and bilingual needs. Over 60% of The Help Group's clients are from minority populations. All services are offered in both Spanish and English and bilingual staff are employed across all disciplines.

The programs of The Help Group continue to grow to meet the ever-changing needs of the community. This year, over one thousand clients have been served through our outpatient mental health programs, and over 1,200 through our non-public school based therapeutic programs. The Help Group is deeply committed to addressing the needs of the community, and services expand each year with new and innovative programs to address these needs.

The Help Group is located on four campuses in the suburban San Fernando Valley as well as in Culver City, half an hour from downtown Los Angeles. The campuses are situated in the culturally and ethnically diverse metropolis of Los Angeles County where cultural, professional and recreational opportunities abound. Numerous major universities, professional schools and training institutes are in close proximity.

### **Programs Serving The Autism Spectrum Population**

The Help Group has been serving children with autism spectrum disorders since 1975. Currently, The Help Group offers diagnostic, therapeutic, and educational services to a full range of clients within the autism spectrum including low and high functioning autistic clients and Asperger's clients who span in age from infant to adult. Approximately 500 autism spectrum clients are served in the following programs:

The Help Group Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders, an outpatient center located at the Sherman Oaks, provides multidisciplinary diagnostic and treatment services for infants through adults with special needs including autism, Asperger's Disorder and pervasive developmental disorders. The following services are available: diagnostic evaluations, developmental and psychological assessments, parent training and support, behavioral intervention therapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, play therapy, sensory integration therapy, family counseling, sibling workshops and psychiatric services. Additionally, this Center provides training for professionals in the community.

Village Glen School, located at both the Sherman Oaks and Culver City campuses, is an innovative, multidisciplinary and unique therapeutic day school, is designed for elementary through high school students who have severe socialization and communication problems and are not highly prone to behaviorally acting out. Most of these students are diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder or High Functioning Autism and have varying co-morbid disorders as well.

The Village Glen Summer Day Camp For Social Skills Development at the Sherman Oaks and Culver City campuses offers a social skills summer camp for children with Asperger's Disorder and related challenges. The camp accepts children from 9 to 14 years of age who would benefit from a brief, intensive social skills development program. The program is designed to develop skills in conversation, team building, non-verbal communication, anger management, organization, emotional development and creativity.

Bridgeport School in Sherman Oaks serves students who are in the borderline range of cognitive development. The school was created to bridge the gap that often exists between academic and vocational programs. It is designed for students who would benefit from both an academic curriculum as well as hands on life skills training and pre-vocational and vocational services. This integrated educational and therapeutic program promotes communicative, behavioral, social, academic, motor, adaptive and living skills.

Sunrise School in Sherman Oaks serves students who are both within the autistic spectrum and are moderately to severely mentally retarded. These students have deficiencies in language development, self-regulation and adaptive daily living skills. This program is highly structured with a strong behavioral management component including discrete trial training, and an emphasis on adaptive daily living skills. It is dedicated to promoting communicative, behavioral, social, motor, adaptive and independent living skills.

Young Learners Therapeutic Preschool Program, located in Sherman Oaks and Culver City, is an intensive therapeutic preschool program designed for children ages 2.9 –5 years with neurodevelopmental disabilities that include autism and associated disorders. The Young Learners program fosters growth in the areas of socialization, communication, language development, emotional development, behavior, academic readiness skills and fine and gross motor skills.

Pacific Cove Program is located at the Van Nuys campus. This school-based milieu program is for children and adolescents on the Autistic spectrum who display acting out behaviors and who benefit from a small, structured classroom environment.

### **Professional Development Opportunities**

As a leader in the service of clients with autism spectrum disorders, The Help Group provides a wide range of professional development opportunities to the community through major conferences and seminars, as well as a bi-annual newsletter featuring internationally recognized experts in the fields of Autism, Asperger's Disorder, Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Disorder. Some examples of The Help Group's professional development and research activities include:

The Help Group Summit, a yearly national conference bringing together experts in the field of neurodevelopmental psychology and focusing on the latest research and the best practices in autism spectrum disorders, learning disabilities, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Helpletter, a professional newsletter published biannually as a public service to heighten awareness of issues related to children with special needs.

The Help Group Advisory Council, comprised of professionals both nationally and internationally who are at the vanguard of theory and practice in the field of neurodevelopmental psychology, autism spectrum disorders, learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

For more information regarding all of the Help Group's programs, please check our website: [www.thehelpgroup.org](http://www.thehelpgroup.org)

### **Postdoctoral Program Activities**

The Help Group training staff is dedicated to working with the postdoctoral fellow to tailor a program that will meet his/her specific professional interests and needs and that capitalizes on the ideas, initiative and creativity of each fellow. Activities to meet the fellow's training goals will include the items with an asterisk, and may include any or all of the other activities:

1. Direct Service: Individual\*, family\* and group therapy, case management\*, multidisciplinary teamwork\*, and crisis intervention\* with six to eight clients in the autism spectrum.
2. Intake evaluations: Conduct intake evaluations to determine appropriateness of clients for one of the Help Group Schools and present evaluation findings to the Admissions Committee.
3. Diagnostic Testing and Assessment\*: Assess infants through adults who are suspected of having an Autism Spectrum Disorder.
4. Program Development\*: Enhance current programs (e.g., pre-school, summer camp, assessment program) or create new programs for clients in the autism spectrum (e.g. after school day program).
5. Applied Research: Participate in applied research on autism spectrum disorders.
6. Supervise Trainees and/or teachers and paraprofessionals\*
7. Participation in supervision group for educational staff
8. In-service trainings\*: Prepare and present in-service trainings for agency staff
9. Public Speaking\*: Presentations in forums for parents, educators, professionals, and other related service providers in the community.
10. Contributions to the field of neurodevelopmental disorders: publish papers and/or present at professional conferences
11. Grant writing: assess needs of agency and write grants for agency programs

### **Supervision and Training Activities:**

1. Individual supervision, minimum 2.5 hours/week, with at least two different licensed psychologists
2. Group supervision on clinical cases
3. Individual or group supervision on supervision.
4. Participation on Quality Management Committee.
5. Attendance at weekly clinical staff meetings
6. Attendance at national conferences on Autism Spectrum Clients.
7. Attendance at The Help Group's Annual Summit
8. Participation in agency in-service trainings.
9. Monthly professional development meetings with other agency fellows (e.g. neuropsychological fellows)
10. Bi-monthly participation in professional development journal club

### **Qualifications:**

1. Has earned a Ph.D. or Psy.D. from an APA accredited graduate school.
2. Has attended an APA or APPIC Internship where the focus is working with children and families.

3. Has some experience working with clients in the autism spectrum.
4. Has experience conducting psychological testing with children.
5. Has experience working in a milieu environment or in a multidisciplinary team.
6. Has a significant interest in autism spectrum clients and plans on specializing in this field.

**The following would be preferred (this is not in any particular order):**

1. Has some experience with program development/program evaluation.
2. Has some experience in applied research. Has done research on autism spectrum disorders, or has working knowledge of the literature in at least one area (e.g. theory of mind).
3. Has some experience with providing supervision.
4. Has experience or interest in designing and implementing discrete trial training programs.
5. Has good working knowledge of cognitive-behavioral therapy, and ability (or desire to learn) to apply this theoretical model to ASD clients.
6. Strong understanding of behavior modification, particularly operant conditioning procedures.

**Logistics of the Training Year:**

1. The postdoctoral program begins the third week in August and runs for a full calendar year. (If this interferes with a current pre-doctoral internship the start date may be open to negotiation.)
2. The stipend for the year is \$30,000.00, with an additional \$2,500.00 for fully bilingual Spanish-speaking fellows.
3. In addition, the following benefits are available:
  - health and dental benefits chosen from among different plans, requiring different contributions and beginning approximately October 1;
  - two weeks leave time at the end of December;
  - nine holidays, when the agency is closed;
  - up to 64 hours of time devoted to professional development activities
4. Fellows are provided with an office, access to computers and printers, voice mail, and email.
5. Fellows will be given a UCLA library card
6. Fellows will provide the majority of services at the Sherman Oaks campus, but will also have the option of working at the Culver City and/or Van Nuys campuses, depending on the training needs of the fellow.
7. The postdoctoral hours meet the requirements for Supervision Professional Experience (SPE) in California. Fellows working full-time for the entire calendar year will accumulate 2000 hours of SPE.
8. Fellows will be required to take the EPPP and complete all required coursework for California licensure by the end of the post-doctoral year.

**Application:**

Please send a cover letter and vita either through email [kenyedy@thehelpgroup.org](mailto:kenyedy@thehelpgroup.org) or postal mail: Dr. Karen Enyedy, c/o The Help Group, 13130 Burbank Blvd., Sherman Oaks, CA 91401. The deadline for submission of these materials is April 18, 2007. In your cover letter, please address what you are interested in learning and doing in your post-doctoral year as it relates to Autism Spectrum Disorders, as well as your future career goals.

After reviewing the vita and cover letter, a decision will be made regarding inviting the candidate for an interview. Subsequent to the interview, graduate and undergraduate transcripts will need to accompany the application, along with three letters of recommendation, one of which must come from your internship program (specifically, either the primary supervisor or internship director).

Please note that applicant acceptance is pending fingerprint clearance from the Department of Justice and the FBI, pre-employment physical, and verification of your legal right to work in the United States. Additionally, fellows are required to have a car for transport to the varying Help Group sites.

Please note that this description of the postdoctoral program is subject to change.

