

**The Help Group's Postdoctoral Fellowship Program in Clinical Psychology  
Focusing on Autism Spectrum Disorders  
2011-2012**

**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 1,300 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 three 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.

The Post-doctoral Fellowship program in Clinical Psychology Focusing on Autism Spectrum Disorders provides Fellows an opportunity to be immersed in the programs and activities of the agency that focus on serving clients on the autism spectrum.

### **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 clients with Asperger's disorder who span in age from infant to young adult, with the majority being school-aged. Approximately 500 clients with autism spectrum disorders are served in the following programs:

The Help Group Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders, an outpatient center located at the Sherman Oaks campus, provides multidisciplinary diagnostic and treatment services for infants through young 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. The 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.

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 Preschool for Autism, 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.

Kids Like Me Summer Day Camps and After-School Groups For Social Skills Development at the Sherman Oaks and Culver City campuses offers social skills groups and summer camps for children with Asperger’s Disorder and related challenges. The groups and camps accept children from 6 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.

### **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)

## **Core Training Faculty**

Dr. Karen Enyedy is the Director of Training and oversees the Post-Doctoral Fellowship, the APA-accredited Pre-Doctoral Internship, and practicum programs. Dr. Enyedy is a member of the California Psychology Association's Division II (Education and Training) Board of Directors and is Co-Chair of the Southern California Association of Psychology Training Programs. Dr. Enyedy meets with the Post-Doctoral Fellows weekly to discuss professional identity issues and to supervise them on skills related to clinical and administrative supervision.

Dr. Sara McCracken is the Director of Young Learners Preschool and Early Educational Programs at The Help Group. She supervises the Post-Doctoral Fellows on their assessment work, as well as their public speaking, program development and research endeavors. Dr. McCracken holds a doctorate in clinical psychology from Argosy University and completed a two year post-doctoral fellowship specializing in the assessment and treatment of children with autism spectrum disorders through Children's National Medical Center and The George Washington University. Dr. McCracken meets with fellows for at least one hour of individual supervision weekly.

Dr. Bonnie Auerbach is an Associate Clinical Director of The Help Group and is a Clinical Director of Village Glen, one of The Help Group's schools serving children and adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Dr. Auerbach has been treating clients with Autism Spectrum Disorders and supervising staff therapists at Village Glen for close to twenty years.

## **Goals and Competencies of the Postdoctoral Fellowship**

**Goal 1: Assessment:** Post-Doctoral Fellows will develop advanced knowledge and skill levels in performing diagnostic and psychological assessments on young children (2-5), school-aged children, and adolescents suspected of having an autism spectrum disorder.

### **Competencies:**

- a. Possesses a clear understanding of the DSM-IV criteria for each Pervasive Developmental Disorder and how to use diagnostic tools and clinical judgment for accurate differential diagnosis.
- b. Considers individual and cultural differences when developing assessment battery, writing assessment reports, and making differential diagnoses.
- c. Meets reliability in administration and scoring of all Modules of the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) through meeting reliability in training program and continued reliability with supervisor(s).
- d. Reliably administers and scores standardized developmental, cognitive, adaptive, behavioral and social measures for young children (2-5) as well as school-aged/adolescent children.
- e. Writes reports which are thorough, well-written and easy for parents/educators to understand. Diagnosis and intervention suggestions

are clearly supported by factors mentioned in report (e.g. are not “generic”).

- f. Gives oral feedback to parents in a supportive, calming and empathic manner.

**Goal 2: Intervention:** Post-Doctoral Fellows will acquire knowledge and advanced skill in utilizing empirically supported psychotherapy techniques for young children, school-aged children, and adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders in school-based and/or outpatient settings.

**Competencies:**

- a. Is well-versed in the current literature on aspects of ASD which would affect clinical intervention strategies (e.g. theory of mind, executive functioning and central coherence deficits).
- b. Possesses advanced knowledge of the particular client strengths and weaknesses found across the autism spectrum which may impact educational learning, family life, independent living and relationship building.
- c. Establishes and maintains a working alliance with parents/caregivers.
- d. Incorporates intervention strategies into practice (ABA, PRT, play therapy, CBT, art/music, etc).
- e. Possesses theoretical understanding of how each intervention strategy is targeted at ameliorating characteristics of ASD. Ability to apply this knowledge to each individual case to support use of particular intervention strategies.
- f. Writes measurable, objective goals that address core deficits in the individual client.
- g. Works within and leads a multidisciplinary team (e.g., teachers, speech therapists, psychiatrists).
- h. Possesses awareness of and sensitivity to issues of individual, cultural, ethnic diversity and how they may impact treatment.
- i. Can independently assess and intervene in behavioral emergencies, including implementing a plan of action.

**Goal 3: Program Development and Evaluation:** Post-Doctoral Fellows will develop new, innovative programs within The Help Group’s school-based and/or outpatient settings, and/or develop protocols for training professionals on how to screen, diagnose, and intervene with ASD clients.

**Competencies:**

- a. Conducts a needs assessment to inform program development.
- b. Designs, markets, and implements a program and/or training protocol within the agency and/or within the community.

- c. Develops a research or program evaluation project from beginning to end which can be completed within one year.
- d. Provides consultation to program administrators regarding program effectiveness, and makes recommendations for changes within programs.

**Goal 4: Public Speaking:** Post-Doctoral Fellows will develop professional speaking and writing skills.

**Competencies:**

- a. Identifies training needs within and outside the agency and develops and presents in-service trainings.
- b. Synthesizes information on a particular area of ASD into a paper for publication or presentation at a national or local conference.
- c. Develops a format and style of presentation that is geared to a particular audience (e.g., parents, professionals, students).
- d. Produces articles and/or papers that are clearly and cogently written.
- e. Demonstrates skill at maintaining audience interest and involvement.
- f. Portrays professional demeanor during speaking engagements.

**Goal 5: Ethical and Legal Considerations:** Post-Doctoral Fellows will demonstrate knowledge of the legal and ethical principles that guide the practice of psychology.

**Competencies:**

- a. Is familiar with the legal and ethical guidelines in California, and the APA ethics code.
- b. Understands and conforms to all mental health reporting laws.
- c. Understands the boundaries and limits of confidentiality.
- d. Critically thinks through own and other's ethical dilemmas.
- e. Demonstrates awareness of when it would be prudent to consult and who would be an appropriate consultant.

**Goal 6: Professionalism:** Post-Doctoral Fellows will develop a clear professional identity as a psychologist with advanced knowledge of Autism Spectrum Disorders and will be prepared for independent practice.

**Competencies:**

- a. Appropriately accesses and uses supervision.
- b. Provides effective supervision and consultation to others (including teachers, mental health professionals, and other staff members).
- c. Completes paperwork in a timely manner.
- d. Maintains awareness of own strengths and weaknesses.
- e. Ability to work collegially with fellow professionals.
- f. Integrates into and understands the broader Help Group community.

### **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. Early in the training year, the fellow, in consultation with his/her supervisors, will prepare a learning plan outlining individualized training goals and the specific activities that will help them attain these goals. The fellow's initial self-assessment will aid in the creation of this plan. The fellow's subsequent self-assessment along with the supervisor's mid-year assessment in February will provide information at the mid-year mark for further refining the learning plan. At the end of the year the fellow will evaluate his/her growth through self-assessment and the supervisor will do likewise through the end-year evaluation. Additionally, the fellow will meet quarterly with the Director of Professional Development to reflect on his/her professional development and growth, to consider subsequent career goals/plans, and to reflect on ways the program may or may not be meeting his/her training needs. The goal of these meetings is to mentor the fellow as well as consider ways to enhance the training program. Similarly, as part of the program's ongoing self-study, post-doctoral fellows are asked to formally evaluate the program at mid-year and end-year. Due process/grievance procedures are clearly outlined in the Post-Doctoral Handbook and reviewed with the fellows at the onset of the training year.

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 and Evaluation\*: 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. Supervision: Supervise Trainees and/or teachers and paraprofessionals\*; participate in supervision group for educational staff.
7. In-service trainings\*: Prepare and present in-service trainings for agency staff
8. Public Speaking\*: Presentations in forums for parents, educators, professionals, and other related service providers in the community.
9. Contributions to the field of neurodevelopmental disorders: publish papers and/or present at professional conferences.
10. Grant writing: assess needs of agency and write grants for agency programs.
11. Progress toward Licensure: Sit for the EPPP\*; Complete all required courses required for licensure in the State of California\*.

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

1. Individual supervision, minimum 2.5 hours/week.
2. Group supervision on clinical cases, minimum 1 hour per week.
3. Individual or group supervision on supervision and professional development, minimum 1 hour per week.
4. Possible participation on Quality Management Committee.
5. Attendance at weekly clinical staff meetings.
6. Attendance at national conferences on Autism Spectrum Disorders.
7. Attendance at The Help Group's Annual Summit.
8. Participation in agency in-service trainings.
9. Possible participation in Grand Rounds at UCLA.
10. Attendance at Didactic Seminars, including, but not limited to: Diagnostic and Treatment Considerations for Children with Autism-Spectrum Disorders; Behavioral Interventions with children with Autism-spectrum disorders; Diagnosis of Pediatric Disorders.
11. Quarterly meetings with the Director of Professional Development.

### **Qualifications:**

1. Completed all doctoral degree requirements (Ph.D. or Psy.D.) from an APA accredited graduate school.
2. Has attended an APA-accredited Internship or an APPIC-member 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 online and on-site library privileges at UCLA.
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 Supervised Professional Experience (SPE) in California. Fellows working full-time for the entire calendar year will accumulate 2000 hours of SPE.

### **Application:**

The application includes the following:

1. Cover letter addressing your future career goals as well as what you are interested in learning and doing in your post-doctoral year as it relates to Autism Spectrum Disorders.
2. CV
3. A work sample related to assessing or treating children with autism spectrum disorders
4. 3 letters of recommendation (one of which must come from your internship program - either the primary supervisor or internship director).

All materials should be mailed to: Dr. Karen Enyedy, c/o The Help Group, 13130 Burbank Blvd., Sherman Oaks, CA 91401. The deadline for submission of these materials is 5:00 PM February 11, 2011.

After reviewing the application materials, a decision will be made regarding inviting the candidate for an interview. Subsequent to the interview, graduate and undergraduate transcripts will need to be submitted.

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.

