

ADDICTION PSYCHIATRY FELLOWSHIP: HOW AND WHY TO APPLY

General Subspecialty Overview Questions

What is this subspecialty?

Addiction Psychiatry offers specialized training in the evaluation and management of individuals with substance use and co-occurring mental health disorders.

What kinds of patients do psychiatrists in this subspecialty see?

Patients with all substance use disorders including alcohol, tobacco, cocaine, methamphetamine, benzodiazepines, opioids, cannabis, and designer drugs, often with other co-occurring mental health illnesses. A few other addiction psychiatrists work primarily with individuals with behavioral addictions including addictions to gambling, internet or pornography to name a few.

In what settings do psychiatrists in this subspecialty work?

Some psychiatrists work in specialized tobacco or alcohol cessation programs. Some work only with individuals with opioid-use disorders, in an Opioid Treatment Program (OTP) with methadone or at outpatient buprenorphine clinics. Others work with sub-populations such as pregnant/peripartum women or adolescents. Some work in inpatient or outpatient rehabilitation units including dual diagnosis units. Others provide consultation to other medical specialties like pain management, liver transplant or infectious diseases like HIV/Hepatitis C. Some addiction psychiatrists are purely involved with addictions research, or a combination of clinical work and research.

Can I get board (ABPN) certification in this subspecialty?

The American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology (ABPN) offers certification in Addiction Psychiatry. Graduates from an ACGME-accredited addiction psychiatry fellowship training program are eligible to sit for the subspecialty exam in Addiction Psychiatry after they have successfully passed their general psychiatry boards.

Why Do a Fellowship?

Why do an addiction psychiatry fellowship?

Addiction Psychiatry is an exciting area of practice that involves working with a challenging and complex illness. Given the permeability of substance use disorders in most aspects of mental health treatment, additional training in addictions helps make the physician more confident and effective. Most residents choose to pursue this training due to their inherent interest in this field and their need to better understand the addictions process. There is a tremendous potential for research in all aspects of addictions, ranging from molecular and gene therapy to public health studies. Opportunity to participate in NIDA T32 programs (<https://www.drugabuse.gov/funding/research-training/extramural-research-training-career-development>) is an added bonus. The wide variety of career paths and a generally relaxed lifestyle, combined with the potential of a slightly higher salary than a general practitioner, makes this an attractive option.

What type of career might you pursue after addiction psychiatry fellowship?

The choice of career varies widely based on preference for working with individuals who use a particular substance, or with a subpopulation. Other factors that influence this decision are based on previous training experience or research interest. Some addiction specialists choose to remain in general psychiatry practice.

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Specific Subspecialty Resources

What is the national organization for addiction psychiatry fellowship?

American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry (AAAP) <https://www.aaap.org/>

Should I join and how much does it generally cost?

Interested individuals can join online through AAAP website. The cost is free for medical students and \$45 per year for residents/fellows, as of 2019.

When is the annual meeting typically, and are there trainee scholarships to attend?

AAAP annual meeting is typically held during the first week in December every year. Trainee scholarships are sometimes available. Please contact AAAP directly to inquire:

<https://www.aaap.org/contact/>

Where can I read more about this subspecialty area?

- American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry (national organization)

<https://www.aaap.org/clinicians/trainee-resources/trainee-fellowship-faqs/>

- The College on Problems of Drug Dependence (CPDD; research oriented national organization)

<https://cpdd.org/>

- The American Journal on Addictions (journal)

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/15210391>

- The American Psychiatric Publishing Textbook of Substance Abuse Treatment, Fifth Edition (textbook)

- ASAM Principles of Addiction Medicine, Fifth Edition (textbook)

- Providers Clinical Support System (PCSS; online resource)

<https://pcssnow.org/>

Does the national organization for this subspecialty have a mentorship program?

Yes, the AAAP has a mentoring program: https://www.aaap.org/?page_id=4206&sid=4206

PCSS-MAT also has a mentoring program: <https://pcssnow.org/clinical-coaching/>

How can I get more involved in the national organization for my subspecialty?

Attending the AAAP annual conference is a great way to get involved. Medical students, residents and fellows can also apply for travel/other awards, submit abstracts or posters, or sign up for a mentor.

Fellowship Application Process

How do I learn about all the addiction psychiatry fellowships nationally, and when should I start learning about them?

AAAP website has a list of all programs: <https://www.aaap.org/clinicians/trainee-resources/fellowships/fellowship-positions/>

Start learning about these programs around January the year before you plan to start (18 months in advance of the anticipated fellowship start date), typically midway through your PGY3 year.

When does the application season typically begin?

Programs generally start accepting applications in late spring (14-15 months before anticipated fellowship start date), so you should be prepared to submit your application by the end of your PGY3 year.

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Is there a formal Match through NRMP?

No, addiction psychiatry fellowships accept applicants directly into their programs.

To how many programs should I apply?

Applicants typically apply to two to five programs for this subspecialty.

How competitive is getting a fellowship spot?

Generally, it is not difficult to secure a fellowship position. However, reputable programs and/or programs in attractive geographical locations can be more competitive.

Is there a research/scholarly activity requirement or completed suggested rotations to get my desired fellowship spot?

Any experience in addictions is preferred, but not required. General psychiatry residency programs are required to offer at least one month or equivalent training in aspects of addictions psychiatry. Any further demonstration of interest will benefit your application; this includes additional clinical rotations, holding positions on committees related to addictions, involvement in teaching or advocacy activities, writing journal commentaries or textbook chapters, involvement in research projects or involvement at the addictions psychiatry conference.

Are there any eligibility requirements or things I must complete before applying/starting?

Applicants must successfully complete their general psychiatry residency (PGY4 year) before starting addiction psychiatry fellowship. Some programs prefer you complete the 8-hour DATA 2000 waiver training prior to beginning fellowship.

See [DEA Waiver for Prescribing Buprenorphine](#) for instructions on how to get a waiver.

What does the application typically entail, and how many interviews should I go to?

Application is similar in content to what is used for residency application (e.g. personal statement, CV, letters of recommendation (at least one from your current program director), and other documents listed on the individual program's website). Interviewing at least at two or three programs is probably wise.

Is there a difference between ACGME accredited and non-accredited fellowships?

Yes, only graduates from an ACGME-accredited fellowship will be eligible to sit for one of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) addictions subspecialty board exams.

Historically, Addiction Psychiatry fellowships have been ACGME accredited through the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology (ABPN). ACGME has recently accredited the Addiction Medicine fellowship as a subspecialty through the American Board of Preventive Medicine (ABPM), which is an option for graduates from anesthesia, emergency medicine, family medicine, internal medicine, obstetrics & gynecology, pediatrics, preventive medicine or psychiatry to obtain further training and ABPM certification in addictions. For details, please visit the ABPM website:

<https://www.theabpm.org/become-certified/subspecialties/addiction-medicine/>

Previous to ACGME certification, Addiction Medicine fellowships were accredited by The American College of Academic Addiction Medicine (ACAAM). Some of these programs are in the process of transitioning to ACGME accreditation. Others may still continue to be accredited by ACAAM. For a list of current ACAAM accredited fellowships, please visit <http://www.acaam.org/accreditedfellowships/>

There are few other non-ACGME and non-ACAAM accredited fellowships which usually offer greater involvement in research, education and administrative leadership development in addictions treatment.

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One example is the Interprofessional Advanced Fellowships in Addiction Treatment offered by the Veterans Affairs (VA): https://www.va.gov/oaa/specialfellows/programs/sf_advaddictiontreatment.asp

Graduates from non-accredited addictions fellowship are not eligible for specialty board certification. Some institutions may offer multiple options for applicants to choose from. Things to keep in mind when picking these options are accreditation status, eligibility of graduates to take certain specialty board exams, and the kind of career path the program helps foster.

The Fellowship Year

How long is the fellowship?

It is generally a one-year clinical fellowship. Some programs offer a two-year fellowship, where the second year is usually research focused.

What would I learn during the fellowship year?

The curricula include, but is not limited to, developing knowledge in the biological basis for addictions, pharmacology, detoxification, latest research in the field, psychotherapeutic techniques, working with teams, working in an OTP, learning relevant state/federal regulations, documentation requirements and insurance complexities/CFR 42 rules regarding substance abuse treatment, and working with comorbid mental health disorders.

In what settings would I work during fellowship?

Programs vary in their available resources and settings but typically include inpatient dual diagnosis units, detoxification centers, residential units, outpatient substance abuse clinics, outpatient buprenorphine clinics, OTPs with methadone and/or buprenorphine, inpatient or outpatient women's or adolescent addiction units, and exposure to pain management, HIV/Hep C treatment, addictions consultation, research, psychotherapy, and didactic experience.

Are there major differences between the fellowship programs, and if so, how do I choose the right program for me?

Programs vary in their training experience and it is generally a good idea to explore this during the interview process. Most programs have a similar core training structure, but some programs may offer a specialty experience like exposure to adolescent addictions or perinatal addictions, while others may have a focus on therapy or research. You can start by thinking about the kind of training you are interested in (e.g. focus on clinical, research, education or leadership). Addiction training directors can answer your questions about what kind of careers their graduates are pursuing. Talking to peers and mentors informally at conferences or other venues can give you a lot of information about different programs. The AAAP staff and members of the AAAP Education Committee (<https://www.aaap.org/about/committees/>) can also be quite helpful as you navigate your way through this important decision.

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DEA WAIVER FOR PRESCRIBING BUPRENORPHINE

Who can prescribe buprenorphine for the treatment of opioid use disorder?

In addition to a medical license and DEA number, you need a DEA waiver (also known as an “X number”) to prescribe buprenorphine for the treatment of opioid use disorder. Any physician (MD or DO) can obtain a waiver. NPs and PAs can also apply for a DEA waiver, though scope of practice rules may vary by state.

How do you I get a waiver to prescribe buprenorphine?

The waiver application process has two steps. First, you must complete an 8-hour training related to opioid use disorder and buprenorphine prescribing. This can be done entirely in-person or you can do 4 hours online and 4 hours in-person (“half-and-half training”). Next, submit a “Notification of Intent Waiver Application” online at <http://buprenorphine.samhsa.gov/forms/select-practitioner-type.php>. Once you have completed this online application, email your training certificate to csatbupinfo@dsgonline.com. You will then receive a new DEA certificate in the mail. It will list both your old “general” DEA number and your new X-number. This will allow you to treat up to 30 patients with buprenorphine.

Where can I can the buprenorphine waiver training for free?

There are many organizations that offer this training and several that offer it for free. The Provide Clinical Support System (PCSS) offers free half-and-half trainings, combining 4 hours of online training with 4 hours of in-person instruction. Visit <https://pcssnow.org/education-training/mat-training/> for a calendar of trainings and for information on scheduling an in-person training at your institution. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) also offers live, online, and book-based waiver training. The in-person training takes place during the APA Annual Meeting (NYC, May 2018) and during the IPS: Mental Health Services Conference (Chicago, October 2018). Online and live trainings are free for resident-fellow members (RFM) of the APA. Note that APA membership is free for the first year for RFM members. That means, first-year residents can join APA, take the training, and get their DEA waiver all for FREE! For non-resident members, the APA training costs \$74. For more information, visit <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/education/signature-initiatives/buprenorphine-prescriber-training>

Does it cost anything to get a buprenorphine waiver?

After completing the training, getting you waiver from the DEA is FREE. If you’ve already paid for your DEA number (or have a fee-waived DEA through your employer), there is no additional cost to get an X number from the DEA.

I heard the DEA can inspect my office if I prescribe buprenorphine. Is that true?

The DEA can conduct unannounced inspections of waived providers. In an inspection, DEA officials will only look at required records. The primary records required are: (1) a log of patients treated with buprenorphine and (2) a prescription log. The patient log can simply be an excel sheet with names and medical record numbers. Prescription logs can be kept in a patient’s paper chart. Alternatively, e-prescribing makes it easy to simply print a prescription log from the patient’s chart. The Provider Clinical Support System (PCSS) provides more information about DEA inspections, including sample record keeping documents. These are available for free at <https://pcssnow.org/education-training/mat-training/>.