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CAPIC MHA Stipend Program: The Postdoc Qualified Site Job Search

To meet the requirements of the CAPIC MHA Stipend Agreement, a stipend recipient must serve for one year (6-months for a half-time stipend recipient) as a psych assistant at a qualified public mental health site. See CAPIC document re. *Defining Qualified Sites*. Finding such a qualified site is not always easy, especially when budgets are tight and postdoc sites are forced to cut back on services and positions.

- **There is no comprehensive list of qualified sites which receive California Department of Mental Health (DMH) funding.** Consequently, there is also no list of sites which (b) have postdoc clinical positions; and (c) have open/available postdoc clinical positions; and (d) have a licensed doctor able to supervise postdocs. (Remember that (d) is not a requirement for being a CAPIC MHA stipend payback site.)
 - o There is no comprehensive list for a variety of reasons: (a) funding streams (and amounts) constantly change; (c) individual sites' available postdoc positions change for non-funding reasons; (b) most but not all Mental Health funding is given by the California DMH to the individual counties to distribute (and track); (d) Counties generally do not track which MH sites offer postdoc training positions; and finally (e) sites themselves often are not sure whether they receive Mental Health funding, thus qualifying them as a CAPIC MHA stipend payback sites.
- **CAPIC is in the process of building such a list, but it is a slow process and this list will never be 100% complete or accurate, due to constantly changing factors (see above.)** Still, it's a good starting point.

So, how should postdocs go about finding a qualified site?

1. **If your predoc internship site has open postdoc positions, seriously consider serving your postdoc there!** Again, we have already verified that your predoc internship site qualifies for CAPIC MHA stipend payback purposes. (This is not necessarily true for all CAPIC internships, but it is true for yours.)
2. **Review CAPIC's list of potentially qualified sites.** This list is not comprehensive, but it's a good starting point.

Here are a couple of strategies for finding a qualified site:

- A. **One approach is to look for agencies that typically have postdoc positions, and then determine whether they currently receive any Mental Health funding and open positions.**
 - This approach tends to be more successful if you already know of multiple postdoc agencies.
- B. **Another is to look for agencies that typically receive any Mental Health funding, and then determine whether they currently have open postdoc positions.**
 - This approach tends to be more successful if you do not have many leads to postdoc agencies.

Both approaches have their strengths and weaknesses; there is no one right way. Regardless of which approach you take, we recommend you Network, Plan and Persist.

Network, network, network!

- o Speak with your school's training director about his/her connections in the community.
- o Speak with your school's alumni office about how to learn from previous alumni.
 - Alumni have been through the postdoc process and can provide key leads on possible sites as well as mentoring help.
- o Check with mental health sites with known or likely postdoc positions. Network with the training director, the supervisors, and the postdocs currently serving there.
- o Check with county Mental Health agencies directly. CAPIC is also in contact with them, but a second person asking questions can sometimes get a different answer to the same question.
 - Sites directly run by county MH department obviously qualify for CAPIC MHA stipend payback purposes. So do any sites which contract with these MH departments.

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- CAPIC has contact info for its pre- and postdoc member agencies on its website.
 - Even if a site doesn't currently have an opening position, it may soon have openings as current interns and/or postdocs finish working there.
 - Note that CAPIC PRE-doc internship sites frequently do not have postdoc positions and/or do not necessarily receive MH funding.
 - In addition to its own member agencies, CAPIC has a contact list (though not comprehensive and constantly changing) on its website of other agencies which typically have postdoc positions.
- Focus on the geographic area where you want to complete your postdoc service, but stay open to opportunities throughout the state.
 - Note that stipend recipients must consider positions throughout the state, if necessary, to fulfill the requirements of the CAPIC MHSA Stipend Agreement.
- *For all these possible sites, you will still need to contact them directly to confirm whether they currently receive Mental Health funding and whether they currently have postdoc openings.*

Plan, plan, plan!

- Start early. You have 180-days from your date of graduation to find qualified CAPIC MHSA stipend payback employment, but you don't need to wait until graduation to start looking.
 - By starting while in school, you will have better access to your school's resources. You may also find opportunities (e.g. upcoming open positions) before someone else does.
- Spend time researching possible sites online before spending time in person.
 - Use Network of Care website: <http://networkofcare.org/index2.cfm?productid=2&stateid=6>
 - Select the county of interest. Then select "Services." Then select "Mental Health Services and Facilities." The sites are then grouped by type of service. Select an appropriate clinical category to see various possible sites.
 - Check out a site's website (if any) and then directly contact the site.
 - Target sites which are likely to have postdoc positions. This is not always intuitive, but large hospitals, non-profits and schools are good candidates.
 - Visit the individual county's behavioral/mental health department website:
 - CAPIC has a contact list for the Mental Health agency of each CA county.
 - Some county websites (e.g. Los Angeles) have a lot of info on the web, which can be good but also overwhelming. Others have very little info.
 - Contact (via email, phone, in person) the individual county's Mental Health or Behavioral Health offices about postdoc openings at any of their own clinics.
 - People are busy and often respond better to phone calls than emails. It is also easier to clarify matters in a phone call, so they clearly understand what you are asking of them.
 - Just be sure to follow up for a response *in writing*, whenever possible.
- Be familiar with a particular site's needs and show how you in particular can help it to succeed.
 - How will you stand out from all the other applicants? Networking is important, but networking AND being prepared is better.

Persist, persist, persist!

- Follow-up on your initial contacts to agencies and sites. Everyone is busy, and a second (or third) attempt may be what they need to simply see you – and to know that you are serious.
- Don't take rejection personally, but learn from it and move on to your next opportunity.
 - Be sure to document (and save) your job search efforts. If you need to request an extension of the 180-day deadline for finding qualified CAPIC MHSA stipend postdoc employment, CAPIC will need evidence of your good faith job search efforts.
- Stay positive! This can be a long process, so be prepared for it and keep your attitude positive!

Networking, planning, being persistent AND being positive are your best tools for success!

A little luck never hurts, either. Good luck!

If you find other strategies that work, please let CAPIC know, so we can share them with your colleagues.

Best of success to each of you!