



## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **What is the VIPER Fellowship?**

The VIPER Fellowship is a two year fellowship that provides interdisciplinary training to health professionals who have an interest in addiction research.

### **What is the goal and purpose of the VIPER Fellowship?**

The overarching **goal** of VIPER is to be a pioneer and a VA resource in competency-based interdisciplinary clinical and research training for developing the next generation of VA leaders in addiction-related clinical practice, research, and education.

The **purpose** of VIPER is to increase the number and professional diversity of highly-qualified VA clinicians, researchers, and educators prepared to reduce the burden of Veteran alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, addiction, and related health consequences in general medical and specialty settings.

### **How many fellows do you accept per year?**

Each year we are looking to recruit one Prospective Associated Health Fellow (i.e. PhD or Master's degree) and one Prospective Physician (e.g., MD, DDS, DPM, etc.). Therefore, a total of two fellows are recruited per year.

### **Do I have to be a US citizen for the VIPER Fellowship?**

Yes, applicants **must** be a United States citizen.

### **What are the qualifications to be eligible for the VIPER Fellowship?**

Prospective Associated Health Fellows must have completed all requirements needed to be a fully credentialed independent practitioner in their field (a Master's degree) or possess a Doctoral degree in a field relevant to addiction treatment. Physicians must have an active, full, and unrestricted license to practice in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Additional qualifications can be viewed under Eligibility Requirements.

### **Does my Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) count as a doctorate when compared to a PhD?**

Yes, your DNP would qualify you as being doctorally-prepared. The Associate Chief Nurse for Research at VAPHS is on the VIPER Executive Committee and will play a role in supporting fellows interested in Quality Improvement and Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) implementation-oriented projects.

**My Masters and/or Doctorate is focused in a non-clinical area such as Business Administration but my concentration is in Health Care Administration. Would I still be eligible to apply?**

Yes, we ask that all applicants have at least a Master's degree and an interest in addiction research. Therefore, disciplines such as public health, social workers, and health care administration would qualify.

**Will fellows have the opportunity to do any clinical research?**

Yes, Fellows will spend no more than 25% clinical efforts in preceptored interdisciplinary addiction-relevant clinics. Fellows will spend at least 75% of their time in research, quality improvement, and educational experiences in addiction. We will encourage an interdisciplinary approach to clinical care by pairing Fellows with preceptors who are not of their profession. All clinical activities will take place at VAPHS and will be tailored to each Fellow's clinical background, focus, and interest; each VIPER Fellow will be engaged in at least one half-day interdisciplinary clinical activity.

**Does this fellowship prepare me to take any clinical psychiatric examinations?**

No, this fellowship is not focused on preparing fellows to take any clinical examinations or receive any certifications. Fellows will not spend any more than 25% of their time in the clinics. Our focus is providing fellows with interdisciplinary training that prepares them for addictions research.

**How will mentoring be structured?**

Each Fellow will have at least two mentors, a primary and a secondary mentor. One mentor must be outside the Fellow's discipline. Fellows will be expected to meet with at least one mentor on a weekly basis and, optimally, participate in a group meeting with both mentors monthly.

**Will I have to complete a final research project as part of the fellowship?**

Yes, all VIPER Fellows will complete an Interdisciplinary Addiction Scholarly Project. Based on the Fellow's interests and goals, the Scholarly Project will provide opportunities for interdisciplinary work in addictions focused on 1) clinical research, including large and small clinical trials, patient-oriented research, epidemiologic studies, and translational research; 2) educational activities and research, including curricular design, curriculum implementation, curriculum evaluation; or 3) quality improvement (QI) projects.

Each VIPER fellow will contemplate, plan, propose, obtain funding (if necessary), initiate, manage, complete, and present findings of their VIPER Scholarly Project during the two years of VIPER. The goal of this Scholarly Project is to encourage the pursuit of independent addiction or alcohol or drug related (AOD) scholarly and research questions.

**Will I have the opportunity to attend seminars, workshops, and/or present my own scholarly work?**

Yes, VIPER Fellows will participate in weekly Health Services Research Seminars co-sponsored by the Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion (CHERP), the Center for Research on Health Care (CRHC), and RAND Health. Also, we require all fellows to present their work at investigator and staff meetings to receive feedback from other junior and senior researchers and to strengthen presentation skills.

**Are you considered a paid VA employee while in the VIPER Fellowship?**

Yes. You will be considered a paid VA employee, but since this is an Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) fellowship, it would be considered a 2-year term/temporary appointment.

**Can my dissertation research be completed during the VIPER fellowship?**

Yes, if you meet all of the qualifications of the fellowship you can do your dissertation research. The dissertation would fulfill the scholarly project required for this fellowship. To be considered for this exception, Fellows cannot receive dual compensation (i.e., Fellows cannot receive another salary outside the VA once employed). The Fellow would also need to be approved for appropriate data use permissions from the VAPHS and their academic institution.

We recommend that potential candidates considering this option contact VIPER Co-Directors, Lauren M. Broyles, PhD ([Lauren.Broyles@va.gov](mailto:Lauren.Broyles@va.gov)) and Adam J. Gordon, MD, MPH ([Adam.Gordon@va.gov](mailto:Adam.Gordon@va.gov)) prior to submitting their applications. This will determine if the fellowship would fulfill all requirements of your dissertation research.

**How does the pay scale differ from those Fellows who are deemed a Health Associate Fellow (Master-level or PhD) or a Physician (M.D., O.D.)?**

Please review <http://vawww.oaa.med.va.gov/DBReports/LocBasedStipends.aspx>  
(Facility: Pittsburgh VAMC (UD))

**Are current VIPER fellows available to discuss their experiences within the program?**

We currently have VIPER Fellows available to discuss their mentoring and research experience. This can be arranged through our VIPER Co-Directors, Lauren M. Broyles, PhD ([Lauren.Broyles@va.gov](mailto:Lauren.Broyles@va.gov)) and Adam J. Gordon, MD, MPH ([Adam.Gordon@va.gov](mailto:Adam.Gordon@va.gov)).

**Will the VIPER Fellowship pay for relocation fees?**

Due to the limitations of our funding, we are unable to provide relocation fees.

**Is there a deadline to apply?**

No, we are always taking applications until fellowship positions are filled. The VIPER Fellowship is a very competitive program so we encourage all potential candidates to apply if they have a strong interest in addiction research and meet program qualifications.