

HARTFORD/VA SOCIAL WORK SCHOLARS PROGRAM APPLICATION

The Gerontological Society of America (GSA) offers a limited number of eligible PhD-level social workers from Veterans Health Administration the opportunity to participate in the Hartford Geriatric Social Work Scholars Program administered by GSA and funded by the John A. Hartford Foundation. This prestigious program provides mentorship and development for post-doctoral social workers pursuing advanced academic, applied research, and/or policy careers involving issues of aging. VA Social Workers selected as Scholars must be able to devote time dedicated to research and other scholarly activity related to their training and research project. VA participants will have full access to the resources offered by the Scholars Program, including participation in all educational activities and access to all mentorship opportunities. The Scholars Program will provide financial support for reasonable travel expenses for Hartford/VA Scholar's participation in the Program, consistent with the VA-GSA MOU and in accordance with both organization's policies and legal recruitments.

What is the Hartford Scholars Program?

This two-year program provides: 1) career development institutes and workshops several times each year addressing topics of importance to aging and health care in America; 2) a nationally recognized research mentor selected by the Hartford Scholars Program to assist the Scholar's research and career development and; 3) participation in an ongoing community of peers and mentors seeking to advance knowledge and practice to improve the nation's health and the profession. More information about the program is found at <http://www.gswi.org/programs/hfs.html>.

Who is eligible within the VA to apply?

Applications to the Scholars Program will be accepted from doctoral level VA employees who have at least one graduate degree from a social work program and have an interest in issues of aging. In addition to their VA appointment, they may also hold a rank of assistant or associate professor at an affiliated academic institution. VA employees holding rank of full professor are not eligible. Priority is given to applicants who show demonstrated leadership potential and who are at a stage in their development where they can benefit from the intensive exposure to issues in research and gerontological content. For example, the program has funded Scholars who have recently finished their doctoral work and also have funded some educators and researchers who are turning their focus towards aging. Ordinarily, applicants should be no more than 12 years from acquiring their doctorates. Each applicant must identify a local VA mentor¹.

What is the VA component to the application process for VA Social Workers?

VA employees stating interest in the Hartford Program and in pursuing application to the Hartford Scholars Program must receive approval of eligibility from VA Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA). The following must be submitted to OAA not later than October 1, 2011:

- Cover letter from candidate stating interest in program and describing how the applicant achieves the following:
 - Can be in any paid VA staff appointment or is a VA Advanced Fellow
 - Must qualify for license by the time of program completion

¹ The local VA mentor shall be a faculty-level individual serving as the principal advocate for the applicant at the VA facility. The local VA mentor shall have subject-matter expertise in geriatrics or other subjects relevant to the applicant's area of inquiry. The local VA mentor shall have sufficient involvement at the applicant's VA facility and sufficient knowledge to effectively assist the applicant in developing a research plan, fulfilling all local requirements for approval of research projects, obtaining and maintaining sufficient institutional support to fulfill the applicant's proposed program.

- Must possess a Ph.D. from a social work program or a Ph.D. from any relevant, health related field. If the Ph.D. is not from a social work program, the applicant must have a masters degree in social work.
- Must have local VA leadership support, and commitment for protection of time to participate in research activities and Hartford Scholar curriculum meetings.
- Current contact information including physical address, e-mail address, and telephone number.
- Letter of support from local VA mentor approved through VAMC Designated Education Officer (or ACOS/Education) and Facility Director. This letter of support shall address at least:
 - Local VA mentor background, including prior mentorship experience
 - Local VA mentor time commitment to support this application
 - Current program's capacity in gerontology, e.g. curriculum, grants, faculty, and other initiatives;
 - A tentative plan for integrating and using the expertise and experience gained by the applicant through the Scholars Program in the VA's activities.
 - Institutional commitment for participant's time, space, and equipment required for program participation
- Applicant CV

The OAA review is to determine that the candidate meets VA and program eligibility requirements. After successful OAA review, the candidate will be authorized to complete the application materials defined by and submitted directly to the Hartford Scholars Program. The deadline for submission of the complete application materials to Hartford Scholars Program is February 1, 2012.

Criteria to Be Considered in Selection of VA Scholars

- Leadership potential
- Importance of the research area in improving the health and well-being of older American veterans and their families
- Quality and feasibility of the research project
- Evidence of the research site's commitment to the project
- Evidence of the applicant's ongoing commitment to the welfare of aging American veterans and their families
- Nature and extent of the involvement of the VA applicant in educational, research and professional activities
- Extent of the local VA mentor's ability to foster the scholar's development, training and research
- Evidence of local VA social work program's commitment to the applicant's professional development in gerontological research

Objectives of the Scholars Program

The Gerontological Society of America, with funding from the John A. Hartford Foundation of New York City, will identify outstanding social workers committed to teaching, research, and leadership in the area of geriatric care. The Hartford Geriatric SW Scholars Program for VA Social Workers will provide these Scholars with the resources necessary to enhance their research, teaching, and leadership skills, and to support them in conducting research that addresses the health care of aging American veterans and their caregivers. The program aims to enhance the effectiveness of Scholars as research leaders within the VA, role models and mentors for future generations of social work professionals working in gerontology. The Scholars Program will foster an intellectually stimulating and supportive network of colleagues involved in research and teaching in gerontological social work who can train the next generation of social workers to provide care to older Americans and their families.

Program Description

There are three components designed to promote the Scholars' success as leaders in gerontological social work: A research project focused on improving the health and well being of older American veteran adults and their families; individualized professional development through two mentorship programs, one external to the VA and one internal to the VA, to enhance the Scholar's effectiveness as a leader in gerontological research and teaching; and career development institutes and workshops in which the Scholars will work together on research, teaching, communication and policy leadership skills.

The Research Project

Each Scholar will propose and implement a significant gerontological research project that addresses the effectiveness of social work in enhancing the physical, social, and psychological well-being of older veterans and their families. For example, previous projects have addressed the value and efficacy of social work interventions in improving access to health care and service delivery, enhancing the appropriate use of medical services, improving caregiving, reducing excess dependency, providing culturally sensitive services, and in decreasing the use of institutional care without impairing functional status and quality of life. Projects should reflect an awareness of the changing health care environment and attend to outcomes (individual, organizational, and/or systematic) that relate to improved and cost effective health care services. The project must be based in a VA practice or policy setting and must have institutional endorsement both from the Scholar's local VA mentor and the research site.

Professional Development

Each Scholar, working with his or her local VA mentor, will design a professional development plan that will lead to new competencies, which will enhance professional leadership. These plans may be modified over time to better address the Scholar's goals. In addition to this institutional support, the Program will match the Scholar with a national gerontological social work researcher who will serve as their external research mentor. These national mentors, who will be compensated for their time, will provide ongoing substantive and methodological review of the Scholar's research. The appointed national research mentor, and the local VA mentor, will receive an orientation to the program, including the objectives and their expected roles. Professional development also will be enhanced through Program-sponsored career development institutes and workshops (see below) and networking opportunities.

Career Development Institutes and Workshops

The Scholars will participate in learner-centered educational institutes, as well as workshops held in conjunction with the GSA annual meeting. Attendance at the institutes and workshops is a required component of the Scholars Program. Institutes will focus on special skill-based topics-research, teaching, communication and policy leadership. The first "kick-off" institute, to be held in October, will focus on building the relationship between the Scholars and their national research mentors around the Scholars' research agenda. During this initial institute the Scholars and mentors will meet together for small group sessions, expert consultation and planning sessions. The Scholars will actively participate in shaping subsequent institute agendas. Workshops held in conjunction with the GSA's annual meeting in November of each year will further develop the Scholar's skills in communications, dissemination of knowledge, and technological competencies. In addition, the program director and staff will develop ongoing mechanisms for fostering networking and collaboration among Scholars and national research mentors. All Scholars and mentors will be expected to have e-mail capability through the Internet.

Project Funding

The Hartford/VA Scholars program will support up to two (2) VA Scholars by providing funds for travel to program designated professional institutes & meetings, and research mentorship. Travel and expenses related to attending institutes and designated meetings will be provided by the program. The Scholar's

local VA facility is expected to provide evidence of support for the local VA mentor so that the local mentor will be available to the Scholar(s).

Program Management

The program is directed by Dr. Barbara Berkman, Principal Investigator, under the advisement of a National Program Committee of leaders in gerontological social work. The Gerontological Society of America provides the overall administration and fiscal management for the project.

Application Procedure

Each applicant must send an original (bound) plus 1 CD with the entire application in one PDF file, which must include the following in the order listed (A-H):

Please visit <http://www.gswi.org/programs/hfs.html> for examples of past scholar proposals that received funding.

- A. Applicant Data Sheet (provided below);
- B. A current curriculum vitae that includes research, professional responsibilities, publications, and teaching experience (if applicable);
- C. A letter from the applicant describing personal and professional interest in gerontology, reasons for seeking support through this program, relevant experience and training, and commitment to this area. Applicant also should address the following questions:
 - What brings you to the call of gerontological leadership?
 - Where do you see yourself professionally in five years and specifically how do you think the Hartford Scholars Program will impact/change your short and long term career objectives.
 - Identify other researchers at the VA (outside of social work) who are interested in your area of research. Is there potential for collaboration? (*Maximum 2 pages*);
- D. A rigorous proposal describing the research that the applicant plans to undertake, including the problem statement, theoretical perspective, detailed methods, analysis plan, and potential significance in improving the healthcare and well being of the elderly and/or their caregivers. Articulate the importance of the research to health and aging. [How does the research demonstrate the intersection among social issues, health, and aging?] The proposal should begin with an abstract of no more than 350 words, double-spaced. The full proposal should be a maximum length of 15 pages, not including abstract or references, double-spaced, minimum 12 pt. type size. At least 5 pages should be devoted to the methodology and feasibility of the study. A detailed research timetable, beginning September 1 and ending August 31, must also be included. If this is a resubmission, a letter stating how the proposal addresses the reviewer's comments from the prior submission must be included. Please note that all research must conform to VA research, human subjects, privacy, and information security requirements. Local VA facility Research Offices can provide complete information about these requirements.
- E. A plan for professional development during the two-year program, including a description of goals (e.g. what competencies you need to enhance professional leadership and effectiveness in teaching and research). In addition, how the applicant plans to attain these competencies (e.g., attend seminar courses, attend special workshops, use available consultation) and how will these help the applicant be a more effective leader and change agent (*Maximum 3 pages*)
- F. A letter from the local VA mentor, through VAMC Designated Education Officer (or ACOS/Education) and Facility Director which should:
 - a. confirm release time for scholar's activities, attesting to institutional support for the applicant's current and future role in the program;
 - b. indicate that the local VA mentor's time with the scholar will be supported;
 - c. document current program's capacity in gerontology, e.g. curriculum, grants, faculty, and other initiatives;
 - d. outline institutional resources available to the candidate, e.g. secretarial support, computer availability; and

- e. a tentative plan for integrating and using the expertise and experience gained by the applicant through the Scholars Program in the VA's activities.
- G. Letters of support from two colleagues (excluding the applicant's local VA mentor), including at least one from outside the applicant's discipline (letters of support will not be accepted under separate covers; copies of these letters should be included in all copies of the application). These letters should be from colleagues who know the applicant well and can provide an evaluation of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses in terms of leadership and commitment to gerontology social work. The Program reserves the right to call the references for additional information;
- H. A maximum of three articles or other written materials, e.g. selected chapter(s) from a book or manuscript that illustrate the applicant's scholarship.

Selection Process

Each application will be reviewed by three members of the Program Committee. Applicants selected as finalists will be presented to the Program Committee for additional review and discussion. Those candidates selected as Scholars will be notified in April, with awards effective September 1. All Scholars and national research mentors are expected to attend the opening institute in October. Additionally, Scholars will be expected to work with their National Research Mentors over the summer (and prior to orientation) to make suggested revisions to their research proposals.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Scholars will be required to submit an updated C.V. and progress report each year, including self-assessment of achievement of project goals and professional development, a description of problems in project implementation, and an outline of plans for the next reporting period. Scholars will be responsible for notifying the Hartford program director of any circumstances that might adversely affect their ability to meet their project or professional goals. The Scholars Program staff will work with the Scholar to develop a satisfactory resolution to any problems that arise in implementation. The Hartford program director will review the first year's progress reports and use them as the basis for recommendations for continued funding. The program reserves the right to withdraw funding after one year if the Scholar is not demonstrating appropriate progress.

Checklist

- Applicant VA Data Sheet
- Curriculum vitae
- Letter from applicant
- Research proposal (including abstract)
- Professional development plan
- Letter from the VA local mentor
- Letters of support from two colleagues
- Up to three examples of scholarly work (articles, etc.)

For more information please contact:

The Hartford Geriatric Scholars Program:

<http://www.gswi.org/programs/hfs.html>

Barbara Berkman, DSW/PhD
Helen Rehr/Ruth Fizedale Professor of Health and Mental Health
Principal Investigator and National Director Hartford Geriatric
Social Work Faculty Scholars Program
Columbia University School of Social Work

1255 Amsterdam Avenue, Room 1107
New York, NY 10027
bjberkman@gmail.com

VA:

Deborah Ludke
Health Systems Specialist
Advanced Fellowships
Office of Academic Affiliations
VACO
Deborah.ludke@va.gov
(562) 826-5492

Or

Stuart Gilman, MD, MPH
Director
Advanced Fellowships
Office of Academic Affiliations
VACO
(562) 826-5323

**HARTFORD GERIATRIC SOCIAL WORK SCHOLARS PROGRAM
HARTFORD/VA – APPLICATION DATA SHEET**

Name and Degree		
VA Position		
VA Facility Name		
Work Address		
City	State	Zip
Work Phone		
Cell Phone		
E-mail		
% - time VA appointment		
Describe , if any, academic appointments and teaching responsibilities		
School	Rank	
Title of Proposed Project		

GRADUATE DEGREES

Degree and Year	Institution

Home Address		
City	State	Zip
Home Phone		
Cell Phone		
E-mail		

Preferred mailing address	<input type="checkbox"/> Business	<input type="checkbox"/> Home
How did you hear about the Hartford Faculty Scholars Program?		

LOCAL VA ASSOCIATE CHIEF OF STAFF FOR EDUCATION OR RESEARCH

Name		
Address		
City	State	Zip
Phone		
Fax		
E-mail		

LOCAL VA MENTOR

Name		
VA Position. Academic Rank, Affiliated School		
VA Address		
City	State	Zip
Phone		
E-mail		

APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY FEB. 1st, 2012

Each applicant must send an original hard copy plus 1 CD with the entire application in one PDF file to:

The Gerontological Society of America
 1220 L Street, Suite 901
 Washington, DC 20005-4018
ATTN: Hartford Scholars Program in Geriatric Social Work