

FAQ

Geriatric Scholars Program – Class 16, FY24

A workforce development program sponsored by VA Offices of Rural Health and of Geriatrics/Extended Care

OVERVIEW OF CHANGES IN NOMINATION AND ACCEPTANCE FOR FY24

Courses are designed for VA employees serving >50% rural-dwelling Veterans. These nominees will be fully funded by VA Office of Rural Health, including tuition and travel, if any. A total of 166 nominees will be accepted; additional nominees will be added to our wait list.

VISNs may also nominate non-rural serving participants to the program with VISN or facility providing travel and tuition costs, if any. These non-rural nominees will be expected to fully participate in all components of the Geriatric Scholars Program, including the Quality Improvement (QI) component and initiating a local QI project.

Only nominations from VISN offices will be accepted. The nomination form, tailored for each VISN, will designate if the nominee is fully funded by the Office of Rural Health specific funding to the Geriatric Scholars Program or by the VISN or nominee's home facility.

COURSE DATES

What are the dates for the courses?

The dates include the core course in quality improvement, plus the intensive course in geriatrics. Length of courses vary and are inclusive of the core didactic and core quality improvement workshop. Exact dates are TBD.

Face-to Face Course, FY24

E. Colorado: May 13-15, 2024 (2-day course for Rehabilitation Therapists (PT, OT, KT, RT) and Assistants (PTA, OTA, KTA, RTA) held in Denver Colorado)

Virtual courses, FY24

- May 1-3, 6-7, 2024: 4-day virtual course for Psychologists Only)
- June 2024: 5-day virtual course for Psychiatrists and CNS-Mental Health
- September 2024: 5-day virtual course for Primary Care (MD, DO, PA, NP), Clinical Pharmacists
- September 24-27, 2024: 5-day virtual course for Primary Care (MD, DO, PA, NP)

APPLICATION PROCESS

How do I apply for the Geriatric Scholars Program?

All applications are handled through VISN offices. Please contact your service chief for assistance in the local nominating process.

Please note that to be considered for the program, candidates must not have earned an added qualification in geriatrics or gerontology.

How and when can each VISN send in its enrollment form for the program?

Applications will be accepted from VISN representatives by email only.

Enrollment opens on November 15, 2023, and closes on December 15, 2023.

When will I hear if I have been selected and which program I will attend?

We will begin to send out notification letters and emails within three weeks of receiving the VISN's application.

Anyone on the wait list will be notified by email at least 4 weeks before the program. We appreciate that this short timeframe may pose difficulties and we will try, but cannot guarantee, a longer response time.

ELIGIBILITY

How many rural-serving nominees can my VISN select?

- Recommended nominations for VISNs (i.e., 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 23) include at least three (3) primary care clinicians (MD, PA, DO, NP), and/or pharmacists; at least two (2) psychologists (more nominations are encouraged), two (2) rehabilitation therapists, ideally one (1) rehabilitation therapist (PT, OT, KT, RT) and one (1) therapy assistant (PTA, OTA, RTA, KTA), ideally selecting teams that work together or team members who have not already attended (more nominations are encouraged); and at least two (2) general psychiatrists and/or mental health clinical nurse specialist (more are encouraged)
- Recommended nominations for larger VISNs (2, 5, 12, 22) include at least four (4) primary care clinicians (MD, PA, DO, NP), and /or pharmacists; at least two (2) psychologists (more nominations are encouraged), two (2) rehabilitation therapists, ideally one (1) rehabilitation therapist (PT, OT, KT, RT) and one (1) therapy assistant (PTA, OTA, RTA, KTA), ideally selecting teams that work together or team members who have not already attended (more nominations are encouraged); and at least two (2) general psychiatrists and/or mental health clinical nurse specialist (more are encouraged).

Recommended distribution of participants serving rural-dwelling Veterans settings

VISN	Primary Care (MD, DO, PA, NP), Pharmacist,		Rehabilitation Therapists (PT, OT, KT, RT) and/or Rehab. Assistants PTA, OTA, KTA, RTA)		Psychology		Psychiatry or CNS-Mental Health	
	>50% rural-serving facility	<50% rural serving facility	>50% rural serving facility	<50% rural serving facility	>50% rural-serving facility	<50% rural serving facility	>50% rural serving facility	<50% rural serving facility
1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23	3	TBD	2	TBD	2	TBD	2	TBD
2, 5, 12, 22	4	TBD	2	TBD	2	TBD	2	TBD

Nominees who serve <50% rural-dwelling Veterans

Pending approval of conference packages, achieving enrollment goals for rural-serving nominees and space availability, non-rural serving nominees will be accepted on a “first come-first served” basis to fully participate in the Geriatric Scholars Program, including didactic education and QI component.

In addition to time allocated for participation in program activities, costs to VISN or home facilities are estimated at:

- \$850-\$1200 tuition for Primary Care (MD, DO, PA, NP) and Pharmacist, depending on discipline and university course provider.
- \$2500 for travel costs for rehabilitation therapists to face to face VA-sponsored course in Denver.
- There is no cost tuition for VA sponsored virtual courses for psychology and for psychiatry and clinical nurse specialist in mental health.

PRIORITY ENROLLMENT

Nominees who serve rural-dwelling Veterans are the Top Priority. The nomination form is tailored for each VISN to identify rural facilities. If nominee provides healthcare through telehealth, rural HBPC or rural mobile clinic, eligibility is limited to employees whose patient panels are >50% rural dwelling. The nomination form will request confirmation of rural service if nominee is not assigned to a rural facility.

If VISNs need additional assistance to identify potential rural-serving VA primary care providers and associated health professionals, please contact the Geriatric Scholars Program Hub Site to discuss possible strategies to collaborate on identifying appropriate nominees.

What about non-rural serving clinicians?

The nomination form will allow VISNs to include potential participants who will be fully funded by their VISN or home VA facility to include the costs of travel and tuition, if any.

These nominees will be full participants in the Geriatric Scholars Program, which includes didactic education, Quality Improvement (QI) workshop, and initiation of a local, limited QI project with the assistance of expert coaching, and allow time for participation in program activities.

Why not more people?

The program is limited, in part, by specific purpose funding, as well as VA policy regarding conference sizes and costs.

Will there be other opportunities?

We are optimistic but cannot guarantee that the Offices of Rural Health and Geriatrics/Extended Care may continue funding for this program in FY25 or that there may be additional opportunities for enrollment.

Who is eligible?

The aim of the Geriatric Scholars Program is to integrate skills and competencies in geriatrics in general primary care PACTs where most older Veterans receive healthcare.

Each Eligible Participant MUST be:

- Employed by the VA; **and**
- Provide healthcare as a Primary Care Clinician (MD, DO, APRN, PA), **OR** supporting the primary care team as a clinical Pharmacist, Psychologist, Rehabilitation Therapist (PT, OT, RT, KT,) Assistant (PTA, OTA, RTA, KTA), Psychiatrist or Clinical Nurse Specialist-Mental Health; **and**
- Attend both the Intensive Course in Geriatric Medicine and Quality Improvement Workshop; **and**
- Initiate a Quality Improvement project; **and**
- Do not have an added certificate in geriatrics or gerontology (unless an exception is requested by a VISN for staff and space is available);

Nominees for rural enrollment slots must:

- Work in a rural* CBOC, **or**
 - Work in rural* HBPC program or mobile van, **or**
 - Work in telehealth with > 50% rural patients.
- *(rurality can be checked on the nomination form under the "Priority Facility" tab)**

Are geriatricians eligible?

No. This program is designed for primary care providers and associated healthcare professionals to support a primary care PACT that is providing healthcare for an aging Veteran. Clinical resource hub personnel in primary care, or mental health are eligible if they have not earned an added qualification in geriatrics or gerontology.

Are associated health professionals who are completing clinical experiences for added qualification in geriatrics eligible?

Yes. Some disciplines require additional clinical experience post-licensure; these clinicians would be eligible even if currently working in a geriatrics and extended care setting. The Geriatric Scholars Program is able to enhance the workforce "pipeline" from training to VA employment in care of older Veterans.

Are community care staff or trainees eligible?

No. This program is available to VA employees, unless an exception is requested by the VISN and space is available. Trainees are not eligible to attend.

COSTS, TRAVEL, FUNDING FOR RURAL-SERVING PARTICIPANTS ONLY

How will the costs of the program be handled for rural-serving participants only?

Tuition and travel, if any will be fully funded by the Geriatric Scholars Program for rural-serving clinicians only. Scholars' home facilities are asked to provide release time and coverage for their clinical duties.

How will the Scholar's travel be reimbursed for rural-serving participants only?

The Geriatric Scholars Program Hubsite will calculate a travel estimate based on authorized VA rates for travel for rural-serving clinicians only. We will then send the Scholar, supervisor, his/her travel clerk, and VISN representative an email detailing all the steps needed to initiate the travel approval process at their local facility. Upon agreement of the cost by the Scholar's local travel clerk, funds will be available through cross-funding.

Who will make the travel arrangements?

All travel arrangements, whether ORH funded rural-serving participant or VISN-funded non-rural serving participant, should be made by the Scholar using Concur ([Sign in to Concur | Concur Solutions](#)). For assistance, the Scholar will need to contact the facility travel clerk. For additional questions, the Concur Help Desk can be reached through its on-line Help chat function or telephone at (952) 947-1710. If additional assistance is needed, please contact the Geriatric Scholars Program Hubsite at 818 891 7711 x39311.

Who will make hotel arrangements?

Using Concur or with the assistance of the local VA travel clerk who can identify appropriate costs, etc., the Scholar should reserve lodging, abiding by local and VA policies, whether ORH funded rural-serving participant or VISN-funded non-rural serving participant. For ORH funded rural-serving participants, the Geriatric Scholars Program will reimburse lodging costs through the cross-funding mechanism after the Concur Voucher is completed. Please note, that any reservations made outside of Concur cannot be reimbursed.

Who will pay for the tuition?

For rural-serving nominees: The Geriatric Scholars Program will pay registration and tuition fees directly for the course vendor for rural serving clinicians only, who should **not pre-pay tuition**.

For VISN funded nominees: please use local processes for tuition payment and/or reimbursement from the local facility or VISN.

Is a Quality Improvement component required?

Yes. We expect all Scholars to attend the Quality Improvement workshop and Quality Improvement projects are expected of all participants. Each Scholar will be assisted by expert coaches to initiate a limited, local QI project to improve care for older Veterans.

WHAT IS THE PROGRAM ALL ABOUT?

The Geriatric Scholars Program is a longitudinal program to enhance the VA workforce's skills and competencies in care of older Veterans. The program is designed to improve access to high quality healthcare in primary care PACTs, with a special emphasis on improving care for Veterans who live in rural areas. The program is currently funded by the VA Office of Rural Health and the VA Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care. Each participant is envisioned as an ambassador of change to improve care in his/her local setting and share new knowledge with his/her PACT.

The core component includes intensive didactic education in geriatrics, an intensive workshop in quality improvement and initiation of a local quality improvement project. Alumni have opportunities to continue expanding their knowledge and skills in caring for Veterans through clinical practicum experiences and additional courses. Advanced Alumni may further enrich their experience through select additional programs. With a wide range of educational experiences, the Geriatric Scholars Program tailors training to each participant.

The key program elements are:

- ***Didactic education and clinical practicum experiences in geriatric medicine***
 - Intensive course in geriatric medicine or pharmacy (≥30 hours) ***Core Component***
 - Informal mentoring on a clinical topic available from participating GRECCs
 - Experiential practicum in GRECC clinical settings (elective)
- ***Quality improvement***
 - Interactive introductory workshop and follow-up activities ***Core Component***
 - Implement a Quality Improvement project, with GSP coaching ***Core Component***
 - Access to dashboard to facilitate QI data collection and evaluate change toward stated QI aim ***Core Component***
- ***Other elective educational experiences for self-directed learning over time and as funding allows.***
 - Clinical practicum experiences focused on specific geriatric syndromes and common healthcare problems among older Veterans to developed interprofessional team-care solutions
 - Monthly GRECC educational conferences
 - GSP webinars, case studies, TMS and other web-based resources
 - On-line learning community
 - Interdisciplinary Team Training for the primary care PACT
 - Leadership and Management in Geriatrics Course for Advance Scholars
 - Palliative Care practicum in GRECC clinical settings for Advance Scholars
 - Clinical practice symposia by the American Geriatrics Society for Advance Scholars
 - Enduring educational materials with regular updates

OTHER QUESTIONS

What are the course curricula?

At this time, the 2024 brochures for intensive courses are not available. Please use the 2023 brochures as a guideline as indicated below.

Tell me about accreditation.

All required courses are accredited by ILEAD (formerly EES), or by an affiliated university for CME and CEU. Most electives are also accredited by VA for CME and CEU for a wide range of clinical disciplines.

See brochures for accreditation information: (see links below)

Is information about the courses available on-line?

- Geriatrics Intensive Course information is available on-line:

Los Angeles:

[UCLA Intensive Course in Geriatric Medicine and Pharmacy](#)

New York:

<https://geripalboardreview.org/>

Palo Alto: Accreditation will be through ILEAD. See 2023 example here:

[VA Geriatric Scholars Program Geropsychology Competencies Course Brochure.pdf](#)

Can I be board certified in geriatrics by ABIM or ABFM if I attend the Geriatric Scholars Program?

- **No. The ABIM and ABFM requirements for board certification require participation in a 1-year fellowship program.**