FAQ
Geriatric Scholars Program – Class 11, FY19

COURSE DATES
What are the dates for the courses?
The dates include the required pre/post-conference course in quality improvement, plus the intensive course in geriatrics.
Denver: May 20 – May 22, 2019 (Rehabilitation Therapists Only)
New York: September 9 – September 13, 2019 (Primary Care)
Los Angeles: September 11- September 15, 2019 (Primary Care, Clinical Pharmacists)
Wisconsin: September 23 – September 27, 2019 (Primary Care, Clinical Pharmacists, Social Workers)

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.

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 opened on October 15, 2018 at 2pm ET and closes at November 16, 2018 at 2pm ET.

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 two weeks of receiving the VISN’s application.

Any one 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 people can my VISN select?
Each VISN is invited to nominate at least seven (7) clinicians, who work in or who support one or more PACTs in a rural community based outpatient clinic (CBOC) or rural HBPC program. VISNs are encouraged to nominate at least one (1) provider (MD, DO, NP or PA), one social worker, one pharmacist and one rehabilitation therapist. Recently combined (e.g., VISNs 2&3, 10&11, 18&22) or substantially enhanced VISNs (e.g., VISN 5) are each encouraged to nominate up to twelve (12) clinicians.

Why not more people?
The program is limited, in part, by its grant funding.

Will there be other opportunities?
We are optimistic, but cannot guarantee, that VACO and ORH may continue funding for this program in FY20 and there may be additional opportunities for enrollment.

Who is eligible?
Each Eligible Participant MUST be:
- Employed by the VA; and
- Providing healthcare as a Primary Care Clinician (MD, DO, NP, PA), OR supporting the primary care team as a clinical Pharmacist, Social Worker, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, or Kinesiotherapist; and
- Able to attend the Intensive Course in Geriatric Medicine and Quality Improvement Workshop; and
- Able to complete the program requirements, including initiating a Quality Improvement project; and
- A new enrollee in the VHA Geriatric Scholars Program; and
- Little or no previous training in geriatrics and gerontology (unless an exception is requested for staff and space is available).
  - Rehabilitation Therapist nominees should be able to engage in interactive outpatient rehabilitation (>1/week)

**Priority enrollment:**
- Works in rural CBOC or CBOC that predominately serves rural dwelling Veterans; or
- Works in rural HBPC or rural mobile van but stationed at urban facility

**Are staff stationed at non-rural facilities eligible?**
Priority should be given to staff serving rural-dwelling Veterans. Some staff, such as HBPC, pharmacists, telehealth providers, may be stationed at a parent facility while providing direct care at a rural CBOC. These individuals should be considered for priority nomination.

**Are geriatricians eligible?**
This program is designed for primary care providers and to support primary care PACT. This program is not designed for clinicians with added qualification in geriatrics or gerontology.

**Are non-Scholars eligible to attend the special Quality Improvement (QI) workshop or intensive course in geriatrics?**
Leaders within your VISN (e.g., VISN Rural Health Coordinator, Chair of GEC committee, ACOS/GEC) are invited to attend the QI workshop. It is our hope that these individuals will support the efforts of the Geriatric Scholars in their QI projects at their home facilities. The Geriatric Scholars Program will provide the course at no charge; however, the Program cannot pay for travel expenses.

Other VA staff may register for the intensive courses in geriatric medicine or pharmacy and must pay the regular registration fees as well as all travel expenses; these clinicians would not be considered part of the Geriatric Scholars Program.

**Are contract CBOC staff eligible?**
No. This program is available to VA employees.

**RURAL ONLY:**
**How do I know if my CBOC is rural? The patients live in a rural area? The CBOC is located far from the parent station, is it rural?**

Top priority should be given to staff providing healthcare at CBOCs that have been designated as rural or highly rural.

VISNs have discretion to nominate staff who serves a primarily rural population even if CBOC isn’t considered as rural.

**What if the candidate works with CBOC staff but is not located at a rural CBOC?**
The candidate must be a member of or support the rural CBOC team. This includes clinicians who provide clinical care through telehealth or HBPC but are located at another facility.

**What if the candidate supervises CBOC staff?**
Supervision of staff (e.g., ACOS or care line coordinator) would not qualify. Scholars have direct, on-going clinical responsibilities for older Veterans in rural areas.
COSTS, TRAVEL, FUNDING

How will the costs of the program be handled?
All activities—including trainee travel, lodging, and course registration—will be fully funded by the Geriatric Scholars Program. The host sites are asked to provide “Scholars” with the necessary release time and coverage for their clinical duties.

How will the Scholar’s travel be reimbursed?
Once the Scholar has confirmed participation, the GSP hubsite will calculate a travel estimate based on authorized VA rates for this travel. 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.

Travel will be funded via the Transfer of Disbursing Authority (TDA). Funds will be sent to their facility using the facility number provided in the nomination form prior to their travel.

Is the SF182 form or other local authorization required?
This is a local issue. Your facility may require that you complete the SF182 form or other local approved document or e-form for travel. Include only travel and per diem costs. DO NOT include tuition.

Who will make the travel arrangements?
All travel arrangements should be made by the Scholar using Concur. For assistance, the Scholar should 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 (855) 857-4059. 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 VA travel clerk who can identify appropriate costs, etc, the Scholar should reserve lodging at, or up to, 150%, of the federal government rate, to avoid out-of-pocket expenses. Some facilities limit lodging costs to 100% of the government rate and you must abide by local policies.

Who will pay for the tuition?
The program will pay registration and tuition fees directly for the course vendor. Do not pre-pay tuition.

Is the Quality Improvement workshop required?
Yes. We expect that all Scholars will attend the Quality Improvement workshop. Part of the obligation of participating in this program is to be an ambassador for change at the local level. Quality Improvement projects are expected of all participants.

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. The key program elements are:

• Didactic education and clinical practicum experiences in geriatric medicine
  o Intensive course in geriatric medicine or pharmacy (≥30 hours) Required
  o Mentoring in a clinical topic (elective)
  o Experiential practica in GRECC clinical settings (elective)

• Quality improvement
  o One-day workshop and follow-up activities Required
  o Implement a Quality Improvement project Required
  o On-going support and education for Quality Improvement (elective)

• Other elective educational experiences for self-directed learning over time and to share with other facility staff
  o Monthly GRECC educational conferences
Regional/national conferences and webinars
- On-line learning community
- Rural Interdisciplinary Team Training on site at CBOC
- Leadership and Management in Geriatrics Course for Advance Scholars
- Palliative Care practicum in GRECC clinical settings for Advance Scholars
- Clinical practice sympoia by the American Geriatrics Society for Advance Scholars
- Enduring educational materials with regular updates

**OTHER QUESTIONS**

**Can others attend these intensive courses?**
The costs would **not** be covered by the Geriatric Scholars Program. If interested in the course, please make your own arrangements.

Tuition information is provided on the conference brochures. At this time, the 2019 brochures are not available. Please use the 2018 brochures as a guideline.

**Tell me about accreditation.**
All required courses are accredited by EES or by an affiliated university for CME and CEU. Most electives are also accredited 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:  [https://www.uclahealth.org/geriatrics/intensive-course](https://www.uclahealth.org/geriatrics/intensive-course)
  - Wisconsin:  [https://www.geriatricsboardreview.com/](https://www.geriatricsboardreview.com/)
  - Denver: Accreditation will be through EES.

  Pharmacy Intensive Course information is available on-line:  
  [https://www.uclahealth.org/geriatrics/intensive-course](https://www.uclahealth.org/geriatrics/intensive-course)

**Can I be board certified in geriatrics if I attend the Geriatric Scholars Program?**
- No. The ABIM requirements for board certification require participation in a 1-year fellowship program.