Their Futures Depend on What You Do Today

Almost Home Kids (AHK), an affiliate of Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital is announcing a new Scholars Program in Developmental & Behavioral Pediatric (DBP), Mental Health (MH) and Complex Care (CC) for Advance Practice Registered Nurses.

Nationally there are more than 3 million children with special healthcare needs and growing at 5% annually, they are among the most rapidly growing subgroups of the pediatric population. In Illinois, there are currently 14,000 children who are medically complex. Advances in medicine and technology are allowing children who are medically complex to live longer lives which results in an increased need for supportive services from medical the community.

Parents and providers report that families face 9-12-month delays to see a subspecialist in Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics (DBP) for diagnosis and treatment interventions and the same is true for children and adolescents waiting to see a psychiatrist for mental health services. Many children with complex care needs are forced to be hospitalized longer than necessary, putting these children at higher risk for poor health outcomes due to limited availability of providers, such as Almost Home Kids.

Recognizing the need to increase the core group of medical professionals competently trained to care for these children, AHK has developed a new initiative with a goal of educating Advance Practice Registered Nurses (APRN’s) in the subspecialties of Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics, Mental Health, and Complex Care. With advanced training, APRN’s will be able to diagnose, manage, co-manage, and refer as needed, children for developmental disabilities (including cerebral palsy, autism, and learning disabilities), medical complexities (including epilepsy, genetic abnormalities, neurological impairment, feeding and respiratory problems), and behavioral issues (including ADHD, anxiety, depression, and incontinence).

Here’s What You Can Expect

The APRN scholar will participate in an intensive one-year, 50 week, two days, 20 hours per week, training program partnering with the University of Illinois at Chicago’s LEND (Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disorders), the Ohio State KySS (Keep Your Child Safe and Secure) online Mental Health Fellowship, ADOS-2 (Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule) training at Advocate Illinois Masonic Developmental Center, DuPage Easter Seals, Division of Specialized Care for Children (DSCC) and Professional Development Training at Erikson Institute. Program faculty including Anita D. Berry MSN, CNP, APN, CPMHS, APRN Scholars Program Director and Peter J. Smith MD. MA, and Ann B. Karch MD, Medical Directors.

Scholar Eligibility

A successful candidate for the Post Graduate Scholars Program in DBP, MH, and Complex Care must have a minimum of 2 years of primary care or acute care or 1-year outpatient DBP clinical practice, be licensed as a registered nurse in the state of Illinois and have completed an Advance Practice Nursing Program and applied for or received their APRN license by the time they begin the program.

“There is a silent crisis in the United States due to the extreme shortage of specialists who care for children with medical complexity (CMC) specifically, and Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics (DBP) in general. We are developing an innovative program to address this crucial workforce issue”

Peter J. Smith, MD, MA
Almost Home Kids Medical Director - Chicago
Career Benefits to Scholars
The DBP-APN Advanced Training Program will provide the scholar with varied clinical and educational opportunities to prepare them for autonomous practice. Upon completing this program, APRNs will have the depth, breadth, volume, and intensity of foundational knowledge coupled with appropriate clinical experience to independently manage children with the conditions served by DBP clinicians. Graduates of this APRN Advanced Training Program will be well positioned to be thought leaders in the field.

Program Curriculum
Scholars will participate in case-based discussions and journal club. The scholar will be provided opportunities for the following during the Advanced Training Program:

- understand the complex developmental processes of infants, children, adolescents and young adults, in the context of their families and communities
- understand the biological, psychological, and social influences on development in the emotional, social, motor, language, and cognitive domains
- understand the mechanisms for primary and secondary prevention of disorders in behavior and development
- analyze pathophysiology for various disease processes
- develop diagnoses, formulate treatment plans and evaluate patient response to treatment
- utilize evidence-based practices in delivering quality, cost-effective care
- educate patients and families about disease process and prevention
- develop organizational skills vital to effectively managing patient caseloads
- develop effective communication and presentation skills essential to work with an interdisciplinary team
- develop an age-appropriate treatment plan for mental health problems based on biopsychosocial theories, evidenced-based standards of care, and practice guidelines, including differential diagnosis for mental health problems.
- demonstrate behaviors that reflect a commitment to continuous professional development, ethical practice, an understanding and sensitivity to diversity and a responsible attitude toward patients, profession and society
- evaluate the relationships among access, cost, quality, and safety and their influence on health care
- demonstrate critical thinking and diagnostic reasoning skills in clinical decision making

Scholars will receive a certificate of completion from Almost Home Kids as well as certifications from ADOS-2 training, the KySS Program, and LEND.

Scholars will not receive any compensation for participating in this program and must secure professional liability insurance with limits of at least $1,000,000 per occurrence, $3,000,000 aggregate to participate in clinical rotation at the various sites.

For more information about the program or to set up a meeting, please contact:
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