

# HIV Health Psychologist

Ryan E. Flinn, PhD

APA CECPT SPTA Representative



AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

**Contact Us:**

[earlycareer@apa.org](mailto:earlycareer@apa.org)

**For further resources, please  
click [here](#) to check out our  
ECP website**

***Please describe the area of psychology you practice.  
What does your day-to-day schedule look like?***

**I am a counseling health psychologist working in HIV care at an academic medical center. Most of my practice consists of providing screening, assessment, brief intervention, and referral to treatment in integrated healthcare settings. I collaborate with teams of providers to ensure patients with unmet mental health needs are identified, triaged appropriately, and followed to address mental health and psychosocial issues that impact their ability to remain engaged in HIV care and other needed treatment. I am especially passionate about providing treatment for people living with PTSD and Substance Use Disorder.**

***Were there specific factors that led you to choose this area of psychology? Was there a critical moment that changed your career trajectory?***

**I have been consistently interested in health issues disproportionately impacting LGBTQ+ identified people since college. During my master's level training, however, my partner at the time was diagnosed with HIV, which was the first time to my knowledge that I had been at substantial risk of HIV transmission. I realized after my partner was diagnosed that I actually knew very little about what HIV was, how it was transmitted, how it can be treated, or how transmission can be prevented. I also knew very little about the mental health effects of living with a highly stigmatized, chronic disease, and the structural and systemic factors that are associated with heightened risk of transmission and burden of disease among BIPOC, sexual and gender minorities, and people living in poverty. I decided I wanted to specialize in caring for people living with HIV.**



***What advice would you give to an  
ECP who wants to pursue a position  
or additional training opportunities in  
this area of psychology?***

**I encourage ECPs to consider trainings that can increase competency in integrated behavioral healthcare, primary care psychology, and addiction psychology. A career in integrated care at an academic medical center would be especially well-suited for people who enjoy providing team-based, collaborative care; feel passionate about working with medically ill people; possess strong skills in evidence-based treatments; enjoy training others; and are culturally curious and humble. There is great need for psychologists in medicine, and we are generally well-respected and often well-utilized. The Public Interest Directorate offers resources on HIV/AIDS, which I recommend as a great place to start learning about issues salient to this area of practice.**