Junior Specialist – Language and Cognitive Development in Neurodevelopmental Disorders

The Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of California, Davis invites applications for a qualified Junior Specialist focusing on the Emergence and Measurement of Language and Cognitive Development in individuals with Neurodevelopmental Disorders in the lab of Leonard Abbeduto, Ph.D. and Angela John Thurman, Ph.D.

RECRUITMENT DESCRIPTION

The incumbent for this position will be involved in several projects focused on characterizing, treating, and measuring the language and cognitive impairments in children, adolescents, and young adults with fragile X syndrome (FXS), Down syndrome (DS), and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Critical to the success of all projects is the need to recruit families with sons and daughters who are affected by the disorders of interest. This recruitment requires explaining the projects to families, answering their often complex questions, and problem solving ways of removing barriers to their participation, such as difficulties with scheduling and travel. The projects also depend critically on working with families during their visits to ensure that the testing sessions go smoothly, that family questions are answered, and the family is treated with respect. Acquiring these skills for working with families will help not only the projects of our lab, but will help prepare the incumbent to conduct clinical research more broadly. And, lastly, implementing the test protocol to fidelity requires training and learning the rationale underlying each measure. Moreover, all lab personnel participate in activities critical for the preparation of reports for presentation at scientist conferences and publication, which provides valuable experience for a host of future academic pursuits.

Under the direction of the PIs, the incumbent will learn about the various projects so that the incumbent can provide information to families regarding study objectives and requirements in person and by telephone. The incumbent will assist with participant recruitment and visit scheduling and in doing so, will learn to communicate instructions to study participants regarding a variety of study related issues, answer questions as they arise, and obtain informed consent for study participation. The incumbent will also collaborate with other members of the lab, and the PIs, to coordinate the flow of study visits between staff members. The incumbent also will learn to administer and score the questionnaires and behavioral measures that comprise the research protocols for various projects, as well as assist with setting up and video-recording testing sessions with study participants. The incumbent will also work with other members of the lab in activities needed to prepare data for analysis for reports, presentations, and publications, including data checks for accuracy and data entry. As the incumbent works with the PIs on conceptualizing and preparing reports for presentation and publication, he/she will also learn techniques for statistical analysis and presentation of data. In addition, the incumbent will attend weekly lab meetings and, in collaboration with the PIs, help to prepare manuscripts and presentations.

General responsibilities include:

I. RESEARCH ACTIVITY

- Learn procedures for participant recruitment and obtaining informed consent.
- Become sufficiently familiar with the rationale and details of the various projects of the lab so that he/she can provide explanations to study participant families regarding study objectives and logistics before and during the visits.
- Work with other lab members to coordinate activities during study visits between participating families and staff members.
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- Facilitate communication between team members including clinicians, examiners, camera operators, and the PI regarding any special circumstances pertaining to study visits.
- Learn to use specialized software to code behavioral data obtained during lab visits or applied to video-recorded sessions. This data is used to derive critical measures for the projects of the lab.
- Learn to assist with setting up, administering, and scoring standardized behavioral measures that are part of the research protocol of various projects.
- Work with PIs and other lab members to manage progress of behavioral coding projects including training, managing, and maintaining reliability with more junior lab volunteer coders.
- Accurately enter and track information in study tracking and data entry databases and train others to perform data entry.
- Assist PIs and other lab members with data processing, data checking, data management, and statistical analysis in SPSS and other software programs.

II. PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AND ACTIVITY

- Attend weekly lab meetings and MIND Institute study coordinator meetings.
- Prepare presentations for conferences and the community in collaboration with the PIs by participating in weekly lab discussions and meeting on an individual basis with the PIs to develop ideas and plans for data analysis and to review drafts of presentations and manuscripts.
- As needed, assist PI with preparation of grant applications including conducting literature searches and analyses of pilot data.
- Contribute to writing manuscripts for publication, including assisting with data cleaning, literature reviews, and synthesis of information for dissemination of research findings to the public, with these contributions determined by the agenda of the lab and the particular interests of the incumbent.
- Develop research questions in collaboration with the PIs through weekly lab discussions and individual meetings and by preparing written drafts of questions for feedback, as well as perform analyses of data collected as part of the research study to be presented at internal and/or professional conferences, with authorship possible depending on the level of contribution.
- Attend research presentations at the MIND Institute, including biweekly Research Seminar Series talks and Monthly Distinguished Lecture Series presentations, which are critical for learning about the research enterprise and about the clinical populations being studied in the lab.

III. UNIVERSITY AND PUBLIC SERVICE

- Establish and maintain positive relationships with, and provide outreach presentations to, community and neurodevelopmental disorder advocacy agencies (e.g., Down Syndrome Information Alliance of Sacramento), schools, and service providers for participant recruitment purposes.
- Participate in MIND Institute committees and meetings around research ethics and quality control, sharing information learned with other lab members.

BASIC QUALIFICATIONS

- Bachelor’s degree in Psychology, Human Development, Neurobiology, Linguistics, Communicative Disorders, Special Education, or a related field by September 2017.
- A minimum of 1 year of experience in behavioral science research or working directly with children with neurodevelopmental disorders.
- Experience with recruiting or assessing participants in behavioral science studies.
- Experience in data entry or data management.
- Excellent written skills to communicate effectively with the public, participants, and other team members in an academic setting.
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- Experience managing multiple tasks simultaneously.

- **ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS:**
  - Demonstrated ability to work effectively both independently and as part of a team.
  - Demonstrated ability to work in a fast-paced setting with composure, courtesy, and professional attitude.
  - Demonstrated ability to perform detail-oriented tasks with a high degree of accuracy.
  - Good verbal communication skills to effectively interact with the community and research participants and to train undergraduate research assistants.

- **PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS:**
  - Ability to participate in discussion of research results and contribute to manuscript preparation, including literature reviews, data cleaning activities, and synthesis of information.
  - Excellent phone and interpersonal manner.
  - Experience with basic Microsoft applications such as Word and Excel.
  - Experience in transcription for audio-recorded language samples.

**POSITION AVAILABLE/CLOSING DATE:**
This position is open effective July 28, 2017 with an initial review date of August 11, 2017. The posting will remain open until June 30, 2018 or until filled.

**TERM OF APPOINTMENT:**
This is a one-to-two year, 50% -100% appointment.

**TO APPLY:**
For full consideration, applications must be received by July 28, 2017; however, the position will remain open through June 30, 2018 or until filled. To apply, please go to the following link: [https://recruit.ucdavis.edu/apply/JPF01747](https://recruit.ucdavis.edu/apply/JPF01747)

Applicants should submit cover letter, CV or resume, and contact information for at least 3-5 references. Documents/materials must be submitted as PDF files.

**QUESTIONS:**
Please direct questions to Angela John Thurman, PhD, ajthurman@ucdavis.edu

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Under Federal law, the University of California may employ only individuals who are legally able to work in the United States as established by providing documents as specified in the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. Certain UCSC positions funded by federal contracts or sub-contracts require the selected candidate to pass an E-Verify check. More information is available [http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify](http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify).

UC Davis is a smoke & tobacco-free campus ([http://breathefree.ucdavis.edu/](http://breathefree.ucdavis.edu/)).

If you need accommodation due to a disability, please contact the recruiting department.