

**NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY & SHIRLEY RYAN ABILITYLAB
NEUROLOGIC PHYSICAL THERAPY RESIDENCY**

**INFORMATION PACKET FOR 2027-2028 RESIDENCY
(Admission cycle 2026-2027)**

Thank you for your interest in The Northwestern University & Shirley Ryan AbilityLab Neurologic Physical Therapy Residency Program. We are pleased that you are interested in furthering your education, accelerating your professional development, and enhancing your clinical reasoning skills.

Residency Description

The Northwestern University & Shirley Ryan AbilityLab (formerly The Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago) Neurologic Physical Therapy Residency is a 53-week program designed for licensed physical therapists interested in neurologic specialization and training under the auspices of a nationally top-ranked rehabilitation hospital, academic medical center, and physical therapy school.

The residency is a partnership between the Department of Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences (PTHMS) of the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine (FSM) and the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab (SRAlab). Neurologic *clinical practice* and training take place at SRAlab clinical sites. The residency *didactic* component is at NU-PTHMS and SRAlab.

Top-Ranked Institutions in a World Class City

The Medical Campus

Located in the heart of Chicago's famed Magnificent Mile district, just a short walk from Lake Michigan with its 27-mile-long lakefront bike paths and close-by beaches and harbors, the medical campus enjoys all the benefits of this vibrant global city and its myriad cultural, sporting and entertainment opportunities.

The medical campus includes several institutions collectively known as Northwestern Medicine, plus two independent specialty hospitals, SRAlab, and Lurie Children's Hospital (formerly Children's Memorial Hospital), both of which are linked to Northwestern Medicine with regards to medical faculty, medical residency training, and other collaborations.

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab

Every year since 1991, U.S. News & World Report (USN&WR) has ranked SRAlab (formerly The Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago (RIC)) as the "#1 Rehabilitation Hospital in America" an unparalleled recognition of SRAlab's success in realizing its visionary



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commitment “to advance human ability”. SRALab aims to “serve as the world’s leading scientific hospital for the innovation and application of new and more promising treatments that improve and eliminate the effects of injury, disease and debilitating health conditions.” SRALab has been designated an SCI Model Systems Center, has been awarded Magnet Recognition for nursing, and is a federally designated Rehabilitation and Research Training Center for stroke. SRALab has 43 board certified neurologic clinical specialists throughout the system of care.

SRALab opened in March of 2017, with triple the square footage enabling it to maintain its global leadership in cutting edge rehabilitation and science for decades to come. In that same spirit, SRALab and NU-PTHMS are collaborating on multiple fronts: orthopaedic, neurologic, and women’s/pelvic health residencies, PTHMS faculty practice privileges at SRALab, an academic track including faculty appointments for select SRALab physical therapists, research, and expanded training opportunities for PTHMS DPT students.

Department of Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences

Consistently ranked among the top 10 U.S. physical therapy schools by USN&WR, PTHMS is the oldest physical therapy school in the U.S. and has garnered a global reputation for:

- Excellence in training the next generation of leaders in physical therapy practice and research through professional and post-professional education programs.
- Training new researchers in the field of Movement and Rehabilitation Science (MRS).
- Development and implementation of technology-supported therapeutic interventions.
- Advances in rehabilitation science including the quantification of movement disorders and clinical outcomes.

Besides its renowned physical therapy school, PTHMS is increasingly recognized for its unique dual-degree DPT-PhD program in conjunction with NU’s McCormick School of Engineering, and a PhD degree in Movement and Rehabilitation Science offered through the Northwestern University Interdepartmental Neuroscience PhD program (NUIN).

Northwestern Medicine

The institutions making up the Northwestern Medicine health system are the NU Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern Memorial Hospital (NMH), and Northwestern Medical Group (NMG). NMG is a multi-specialty practice of approximately 1000 physicians wholly owned by Northwestern Memorial Health Care, the holding company for NMH. NMH was recently recognized as the top hospital in Illinois and is ranked among the top 10 hospitals nationally by USN&WR with superior recognition in multiple medical specialties including orthopaedic surgery, neurology and neurological surgery.

Residency Accreditation Status

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Physical therapy residencies and fellowships are accredited by the American Board of Physical Therapy Residency and Fellowship Education (ABTPRFE), an APTA affiliate. The NU-SRALab Orthopaedic Residency was accredited in 2015. The NU-SRALab Neurologic Physical Therapy Residency was accredited in 2017 and renewed accreditation in 2022.

Residency Mission

The *NU-SRALab Neurologic Physical Therapy Residency* will be a training ground and model for the specialized practice of neurologic physical therapy in the 21st century, to foster an ability-driven, outcomes-based professional culture committed to the integration of science-based clinical reasoning and clinical care, and to lifelong learning and research.

Residency Vision

Our vision is to mobilize the abundant scientific, educational, and healthcare resources of Northwestern University, Northwestern Medicine, and SRALab, to foster development of the next generation of regional, national, and global leaders in neurologic physical therapy.

Goals

The NU-SRALab Neurologic Physical Therapy Residency will train residents to achieve:

- Specialist practice in the area of neurologic physical therapy
- Evidence-based clinical reasoning.
- Effective and efficient examination and evaluation.
- Development of cognitive, affective, psychosocial, and psychomotor skills in the area of neurologic physical therapy.
- Participation in research and data collection towards the advancement of the science and practice of neurologic physical therapy.
- Development of professional and leadership capabilities through the honing of skills involving communication and inter-professional interactions
- Development of teaching skills through participation in mentored teaching in the DPT curriculum at PTHMS.

Residency Program and Content

- The typical week for a resident: Residents are typically scheduled for 32 clinical hours per week including the mandatory mentored hours and intermittent weekend hours. Other residency activities such as didactic sessions, specialty clinical observations and experiences, research, and independent study-time are in addition to scheduled clinical time. At least one day per week will typically be devoted to a combination of didactic pursuits, clinical observations, interacting with other healthcare professionals, research, and teaching. The other 4 to 4.5 days will be spent treating patients either independently or in conjunction with a mentor.
- Clinical practice: Clinical practice will occur throughout the SRALab system of care, including specialized inpatient floors, termed Innovation Centers, serving patients with diagnoses of spinal cord injury, brain injury, and stroke, as well as

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other complex neurologic diagnoses. Additional clinical practice will occur in adult outpatient departments of the main hospital as well as at Day Rehabilitation offsite locations of which there are multiple in the Chicago-land area. Acute care observations take place at Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

- Clinical mentoring: The residency incorporates 150 to 200 hours of clinical mentoring (3 to 4 hours per week), the majority of which involves the mentor observing the resident, followed by discussion. Residency mentors are selected primarily from among SRALab's over 50 board-certified neurologic specialists (NCS), through a competitive process.
- Educational content: The NU-SRALab Neurologic Physical Therapy Residency will cover all didactic content required by ABPTRFE and will prepare residents for the ABPTS neurologic board-certification examination. Content will be presented partially through the lens of Northwestern's Motor Control Framework emphasizing movement analysis. Learning modules will include the following as examples, plus additional didactic work:
 - Vestibular Rehabilitation: Theory, Evidence, and Practical Application
 - Current Evidenced-Based Concepts and Management of Individuals with Spinal Cord Injury
 - Current Evidenced-Based Concepts and Management of Individuals with Stroke
 - Cerebral Palsy Across the Lifespan
 - Application of Diagnostic Imaging in Physical Therapy Practice
 - Discussion of Ethical Issues in Rehabilitation
 - Clinical Reasoning and Decision Making in Rehabilitation
 - Research and scholarship
 - Motor Control Factors Associated with Movement Problems
 - Teaching and Learning in Physical Therapy Practice
 - Neuroanatomy Review of Structure and Function
- Educational Structure:
 - Educational hours: Over 350 hours including research and time spent teaching in the DPT program, the Teaching Practicum
 - Periodic didactic sessions at PTHMS with one or more members of the PTHMS neurologic faculty team, including board certified specialists in neurologic physical therapy.
 - Sessions will be a combination of lecture, lab, online modules, discussions, and independent study.
 - Weekend and/or evening seminars and workshops provided by SRALab Academy or PTHMS.
 - Grand rounds opportunities in various related departments including: PTHMS, SRALab, PM&R and others.
 - Journal Clubs/Brown Bags
 - Collaboration and joint sessions with orthopaedic, acute care, and women's and pelvic health residents

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- Research
 - Each resident will be responsible for completing a neurologic focused research project in conjunction with or under guidance of PTHMS faculty or researchers at SRALab or PTHMS. Research mentors will be available early in the residency year to guide the resident in developing their project.
- Resident Teaching: Teaching Practicum
 - The resident will participate in approximately 55 hours as lab assistant and small group discussion leaders in the DPT student program.
 - Residents will receive mentoring and feedback on teaching
- Specialty experiences may include the following:
 - Observation or participation in specialty clinics that may include, but are not limited to, seating and positioning clinic, Parkinson's clinic, Technology Center, Vocational Rehabilitation, Prosthetics and Orthotics, and more.
 - Observation or participation in SRALab's Ability Labs, which include: Think and Speak, Arms and Hands, Legs and Walking, Muscle and Bone, and Pediatric.
 - Please note that some specialty experiences may rely upon the resident's motivation and outreach to pursue available opportunities.
- Special events and volunteer opportunities
 - Wheelchair division of Chicago Marathon
 - Adaptive sports

Residency logistics for SRALab-employed residents (current information, subject to change)

- Residents will be salaried employees of SRALab.
- For further details, see the SRALab job description for Neurologic Physical Therapy Resident.
- Hours: Schedule includes approximately 32 clinical hours per week plus 10 to 15 hours devoted to the didactic program, research, and observations. Schedules may fluctuate to maximize clinical, didactic, and experiential opportunities. There may be an occasional required weekend course.
- Due to the intensive nature of this 53-week residency training, outside employment during the residency is not feasible.
- Resident salary: \$58,000 per year
- Residency Tuition: \$3,500
- PTO and benefits: As specified for full time employees in the current SRALab Employee Benefits Booklet, along with some additional residency-specific policies contained in the Resident's Handbook.

Residency Completion

Upon completion of the 53-week residency, the resident's employment agreement with SRALab automatically expires. If the resident-graduate seeks further employment at SRALab, the resident should indicate this interest to SRALab HR department prior to

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residency completion so that exploration and/or interviews for any open positions can begin. We encourage and support residents to pursue employment at SRALab following residency.

Eligibility and Requirements for Admission

- Every applicant must be licensed to practice physical therapy in Illinois or provide evidence that licensure will occur prior to starting the residency. No residency candidate will be permitted to start the residency without licensure in effect on the starting date.
- Every applicant must have completed at least 12 weeks of neurologic physical therapy practice (which may include time spent in student neurologic internships) at the time of application or show evidence that such experience will have been completed prior to the first day of the residency.
- Admission to the residency requires successful completion of all the application procedures outlined below in the section “Residency Application Process”.
- Every resident participating in the on-campus residency must meet all requirements for employment by SRALab and be fully approved to start orientation as an SRALab employee prior to the first day of residency.
- **We strongly encourage admitted candidates to begin employment at SRALab prior to the residency start date to initiate orientation.**
- Note: Residency slots are limited. Therefore, admission to the residency is a competitive process. The Residency Admissions Committee is committed to admitting qualified candidates who are deemed best prepared to contribute to accomplishing the Residency’s mission and goals.

Residency Application Process

- Candidates must apply to the NU-SRALab residency through the RF-PTCAS national common residency application system, online:
<https://rfptcas.cas.myliaison.com/applicant-ux/#/login>
- Applicants must provide the following:
 - Current CV.
 - Letter of intent (750 words maximum) addressing the following:
 - A narrative summary of prior clinical and educational experience.
 - Personal goals and objectives for the neurologic residency.
 - A narrative self-assessment of neurologic clinical strengths and weaknesses.
 - Statement of resident’s short and long-term goals for neurologic practice following successful completion of the residency
- **Three** letters of recommendation from the following categories; Of these, you must include at least one clinical and one academic recommendation.
 - Current or former physical therapist supervisor (or CI, if a recent graduate with less than 6 months experience).
 - Instructor or faculty member from a CAPTE-accredited physical therapy program

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- A professional with whom the applicant has collaborated within the past year in clinical care or research.
- The PTHMS-SRALab Residency Admissions Committee reviews applications and selects candidates to proceed to the interview phase. Applicants who are selected for interview should be prepared for topics such as:
 - Why do you want to complete a neurologic residency?
 - Discussion related to any application documents.
 - Discussion of clinical practice, patient cases, and professional issues.
 - Discussion of physical therapy research.
 - Demonstration of patient interactions and/or intervention plans.
- The Residency Admissions Committee is committed to admitting residents who, based on past educational, clinical, and personal achievements, demonstrate excellent prospects for successful completion of all residency requirements, professional leadership, and application of their time and talent to the residency mission and goals.
- Admission into the residency is subject to the sole discretion of the Residency Admissions Committee and Residency Director(s).
- If admitted to the residency, a candidate will receive a Letter of Acceptance into the Neurologic Residency from the Residency Director(s) and an offer letter from SRALab Human Resources outlining the remaining SRALab employee-onboarding requirements.
- An accepted candidate confirms intent to join the residency by taking the following actions:
 - Sends a \$200 non-refundable registration deposit to Residency Director.
 - Signs the NU-SRALab Neurologic Physical Therapist Resident Agreement, which describes obligations of both the Residency program and the Resident, and commits the resident to:
 - Start and complete the residency within in the allowed time frame.
 - Follow all residency policies, procedures, and rules.
 - Accept the residency financial agreement as to salary, benefits, tuition, and fees.
 - Make arrangements with SRALab Human Resources to complete any remaining SRALab employment requirements. If for any reason, at any time, the candidate is deemed by SRALab to be ineligible for SRALab employment, participation in the residency will be automatically denied or terminated.
 - Accept terms of SRALab employment agreement.
- Upon acceptance, we highly encourage residents to begin working at SRALab prior to the residency start date to complete orientation and be ready to start the residency at the end of August. Residents will receive a full salary until the residency start date.

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Resident Handbook

More detailed information on residency policies including remediation, grievance, termination, medical leave, and other policies is provided in the Resident Handbook. This Resident Handbook will be provided to each candidate who receives an offer and joins the residency.

Residency Calendar for 2026-2027 Admissions Cycle (dates subject to change and will be updated here)

- ☐ **Residency application submission deadline: January 4th, 2027 (11:59pm EST)**
- ☐ **Candidate interviews: January or February 2027 (virtual option)**
- ☐ **Residency Director notifies candidates accepted into the residency:** Within 1-2 weeks from interview date.
- ☐ **Residency start date: end of August 2027**

For further information regarding the residency, contact the NU-SRALab Residency Leadership:

Jennifer Kahn, PT, DPT
Board-Certified Clinical Specialist in Neurologic Physical Therapy
Director NU-SRALab Neurologic Residency
jennifer-kahn@northwestern.edu

Laura Doyle, PT, MPT
Board-Certified Clinical Specialist in Neurologic Physical Therapy
Co-Director NU-SRALab Neurologic Residency
ldoyle@sralab.org