

Counseling-Related Professions

Includes:

- Community counselor
- Marriage and family counselor/therapist
- Mental health counselor
- School counselor
- Student affairs practitioner

Note: *Career information and educational program listings for rehabilitation counseling and genetic counseling are listed separately.*



Job Description

The counseling profession differs from other human service professions in its developmental approach to problem solving. Counselors deal with human development concerns through support, therapeutic approaches, consultation, evaluation, teaching, and research. Simply stated, counseling is the art of helping people grow.



Employment Characteristics

Professional counselors can be found in a variety of settings, including:

- private practice
- Elementary and middle schools
- Colleges/universities
- Hospitals
- Health maintenance organizations
- Insurance firms
- Drug and alcohol abuse rehabilitation agencies
- Mental health agencies
- Correctional institutions
- Career development and vocational training facilities

Success in the counseling field requires motivation, a commitment to service, and skills in communication. Counselors will be faced with numerous challenges and opportunities in the future, including drug abuse, homelessness, and the “graying of America,” with an increasing percentage of Americans who are senior citizens. The foundations of the counseling profession have been intertwined with both social and educational reform movements in this century and will continue to be so in the future.

Median earnings for full-time educational and vocational counselors were about \$42,110 a year in 2000. The bottom 10% earned less than \$23,560 a year; the top 10% earned over \$67,170 a year. As with most professions, pay scales differ based on education, prior experience, and geographical location.



Educational Programs

Length. Community counseling, school counseling, and student affairs practitioner programs are a minimum of 48 semester-hour or 72 quarter-hour credits. Mental health counseling and/or marriage and family counseling/therapy compose graduate-level study with a minimum of 60 semester-hour or 90 quarter-hour credits required of all students.

Curriculum. Curricular experiences and demonstrated knowledge in each of the eight common-core areas are required of all counseling students:

1. Professional Identity
2. Social and Cultural Diversity
3. Human Growth and Development
4. Career Development
5. Helping Relationships
6. Group Work
7. Assessment
8. Research and Program Evaluation

Students must complete supervised practicum experiences that total a minimum of 100 clock hours. The practicum provides for the development of counseling skills under supervision. The student's practicum includes all of the following:

1. Forty hours of direct service with clients, including experience in individual counseling and group work
2. Weekly interaction with an average of 1 hour per week of individual and/or triadic supervision which occurs regularly over a minimum of one academic term by a program faculty member or a supervisor working under the supervision of a program faculty member
3. An average of 1½ hours per week of group supervision that is provided on a regular schedule over the course of the student's practicum by a program faculty member or a supervisor under the supervision of a program faculty member
4. Evaluation of the student's performance throughout the practicum including a formal evaluation after the student completes the practicum

The program requires students to complete a supervised internship of 600 clock hours that is begun after successful completion of the student's practicum. The internship provides an opportunity for the student to perform, under supervision, a variety of counseling activities that a professional counselor is expected to perform. The student's internship includes all of the following:

1. Two hundred forty hours of direct service with clients appropriate to the program of study
2. Weekly interaction with an average of 1 hour per week of individual and/or triadic supervision, throughout the internship, (usually performed by the on-site supervisor)
3. An average of 1½ hours per week of group supervision provided on a regular schedule throughout the internship, usually performed by a program faculty member
4. The opportunity for the student to become familiar with a variety of professional activities in addition to direct service (eg, record keeping, supervision, information and referral, in-service and staff meetings)
5. The opportunity for the student to develop program-appropriate audio and/or videotapes of the student's interactions with clients for use in supervision
6. The opportunity for the student to gain supervised experience in the use of a variety of professional resources such as assessment instruments, technologies, print and nonprint media, professional literature, and research
7. A formal evaluation of the student's performance during the internship by a program faculty member in consultation with the site supervisor



Inquiries

Careers

American Counseling Association
5999 Stevenson Ave
Alexandria, VA 22304
703 823-9800
www.counseling.org

Certification

National Board for Certified Counselors
Three Terrace Way/Ste D
Greensboro, NC 27403

www.nbcc.org

Program Accreditation

Nan Bayster, Accreditation Associate
Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational
Programs
5999 Stevenson Ave
Alexandria, VA 22304
800 347-6647, Ext 301
E-mail: cacrep@aol.com
www.counseling.org/cacrep/index.htm