

# Counseling

## Includes:

- Career Counseling (CrC)
- College Counseling (CIC)
- Community Counseling (CC)
- Gerontological Counseling (GC)
- Marital, Couple and Family Counseling/Therapy (MFC/T)
- Mental Health Counselor (MHC)
- School Counseling (SC)
- Student Affairs (SA)
- Student Affairs-College Counseling (SACC)
- Student Affairs-Professional Practice (SAPP)
- Counselor Education and Supervision (CE)

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



## Career 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, middle, and secondary 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, disaster recovery, 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.



## Salary

Median earnings for full-time educational and vocational counselors were about \$42,110 a year in 2004. 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. Refer to Section IV, Table 5 of this *Directory* for more information, or see [www.ama-assn.org/go/hpsalary](http://www.ama-assn.org/go/hpsalary).



## Educational Programs

**Length.** Career Counseling, College Counseling, Community Counseling, Gerontological Counseling, School Counseling, and Student Affairs programs are a minimum of 48 semester hours or 72 quarter hours. Mental Health Counseling and Marital, Couple and Family Counseling/Therapy programs are a minimum of 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours.

**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

**Clinical Requirements.** 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 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 the course of one academic term by a programs faculty member or a supervisor working under the supervision of a program faculty member.
3. An average of 1 ½ hours per week of group supervision, 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 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 and forty hours of direct service with clients appropriate to the programs 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 1 ½ 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, recordkeeping, 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.

### Certification

Some counselors elect to be nationally certified by the National Board for Certified Counselors, Inc. (NBCC), which grants the general practice credential "National Certified Counselor." To be certified, a counselor must hold a master's degree with a concentration in counseling from a regionally accredited college or university; must have at least 2 years of supervised field experience in a counseling setting (graduates from counselor education programs accredited by CACREP are exempted); must provide two professional endorsements, one of which must be from a recent supervisor; and must have a passing score on the NBCC's National Counselor Examination for Licensure and Certification (NCE). This national certification is voluntary and is distinct from state licensing. However, in some states, those who pass the national exam are exempted from taking a state certification exam. NBCC also offers specialty certifications in school, clinical mental health, and addiction counseling, which supplement the national certified counselor designation. These specialty certifications require passage of a supplemental exam. To maintain their certification,



counselors retake and pass the NCE or complete 100 credit hours of acceptable continuing education every 5 years



### Inquiries

#### Careers

American Counseling Association  
5999 Stevenson Avenue

Alexandria, VA 22304

703 823-9800

[www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org)

#### Certification

National Board for Certified Counselors

3 Terrace Way, Suite D

Greensboro, NC 27403

336 547-0607

[www.nbcc.org](http://www.nbcc.org)

#### Program Accreditation

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs

5999 Stevenson Avenue

Alexandria, VA 22304

703 823-9800, x301

[www.cacrep.org](http://www.cacrep.org)

*Note:* Adapted in part from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2006-07 Edition, Counselors, on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos067.htm> (visited November 6, 2007).