

Careers in Counseling

Career, College, Community, Gerontological, Mental Health, School Counseling, Student Affairs, Rehabilitation Counseling and Marital, Couple, and Family Counseling

According to the American Counseling Association (ACA): "The Practice of Professional Counseling is the application of mental health, psychological, or human development principles, through cognitive, affective, behavioral or systematic intervention strategies, that address wellness, personal growth, or career development, as well as pathology." ¹

Counselors work in diverse community settings designed to provide a variety of counseling, rehabilitation, and support services. Their duties vary greatly, depending on their specialty, which is determined by the setting in which they work and the population they serve. Although the specific setting may have an implied scope of practice, counselors frequently are challenged with children, adolescents, adults, or families that have multiple issues, such as mental health disorders and addiction, disability and employment needs, school problems or career counseling needs, and trauma. Counselors must recognize these issues in order to provide their clients with appropriate counseling and support.

Education and Training

Education requirements vary with the occupational specialty and state licensure and certification requirements. A master's degree usually is required to be licensed or certified as a counselor. Counselor education programs in colleges and universities often are found in departments of education, psychology, or human services. Fields of study may include college student affairs, elementary or secondary school counseling, education, gerontological counseling, marriage and family therapy, substance abuse or addictions counseling, rehabilitation counseling, agency or community counseling, clinical mental health counseling, career counseling, and related fields. Courses frequently are grouped into core areas, including human growth and development, social and cultural diversity, relationships, group work, career development, counseling techniques, assessment, research and program evaluation, and professional ethics and identity. In an accredited master's degree program, 48-60 semester hours of graduate study,



including a period of supervised clinical experience in counseling, typically are required. ²

Students who earn a *bachelor's degree* in psychology can work in counseling fields, but are limited in scope of providing counseling services. For this reason, many students choose to pursue a Master's degree or PhD in counseling. However, careers in social service agencies, specifically as **Social and Human Service Assistants** are available. Social and human service assistants help social workers, healthcare workers, and other professionals to provide services to people. Social and human service assistant is a generic term for workers with a wide array of job titles, including *human service worker, case management aide, social work assistant, community support worker, mental health aide, community outreach worker, life skills counselor, social services aide, youth worker, psychological aide, client advocate, or gerontology aide*. They usually work under the direction of workers from a variety of fields, such as nursing, psychiatry, psychology, or social work. Social and human service assistants work in offices, clinics, and hospitals, while others work in group homes, shelters, and day programs. Traveling to see clients is required for some jobs. Sometimes working with clients can be dangerous, even though most agencies do everything they can to ensure their workers' safety.

Programs

For Master's level programs, students should refer to [CACREP](#) and [CORE](#) as the accrediting organizations for most counseling programs. The American Psychological Association (APA) accredits PhD* *counseling psychology* programs which differ from counseling programs. Please see "Practice Areas in Psychology" sheet.

Master level:

<http://www.cacrep.org/directory/directory.cfm>

*CACREP does accredit PhD programs in Counselor Education and Supervision

Doctoral level:

<http://www.apa.org/ed/accreditation/programs/accred-counseling.aspx>

What is CACREP?

CACREP is an independent agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation to accredit master's degree programs in:

- Career Counseling
- College Counseling
- Community Counseling (often includes Addictions Counseling and other areas of specialization)
- Gerontological Counseling
- Marital, Couple, and Family Counseling/therapy
- Mental Health Counseling
- School Counseling (see the Careers in Education handout in the Advising Office for more information)
- Student Affairs

The CACREP website is provided as a service to students who are looking for a counseling degree program and to educators and practitioners interested in what it means to be a CACREP accredited program.³

What is CORE?

Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) is the organization that accredits rehabilitation counseling programs. Rehabilitation counseling is a specialized field of professional counseling that centers on the evaluation and coordination of needed services for people with disabilities. For an overview of the field of rehabilitation counseling, including educational requirements and licensure information:

<http://www.psychology.pitt.edu/undergraduate/Careerfieldsinpsychology.php>

<http://www.core-rehab.org/NonManDocs/amacorerelationtoRC.08.doc>

American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (ARCA) provides information on the field of Rehabilitation Counseling as well as links to career opportunities and publications:

<http://www.arcaweb.org/>

Licensure

Requirements for licensure as a professional counselor vary by individual state and depend upon educational program and occupational specialty. All states in the US, except California, license professional counselors. Professional counselor licensure is administered by individual state boards according to the laws established in each state. Contact individual state licensing boards for details:

<http://www.nbcc.org/directory>

Additional Resources

American Counseling Association (ACA)

<http://www.counseling.org/>

[Chi Sigma Iota \(CSI\)](#) (Counseling Academic & Professional Honor Society International) <http://www.csi-net.org/>

[National Board for Certified Counselors \(NBCC\):](#)
<http://www.nbcc.org/>

For information on salary and job projections, visit the CareerOneStop: <http://www.careeronestop.org/>

References

¹ Extracted from American Counseling Association. (2010). Retrieved from American Counseling Association: <http://www.counseling.org>.

² Extracted from Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010). *Career Guide to Industries, 2010-11 Edition*. Retrieved from Occupational Outlook Handbook: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos067.htm>.

³ Extracted from Council for Higher Education Accreditation. (2010). Retrieved from Council for Higher Education Accreditation: <http://www.cacrep.org/template/index.cfm>.

⁴ Extracted from Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010). *Career Guide to Industries, 2010-11 Edition*. Retrieved from Occupational Outlook Handbook: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos059.htm>.