

Counseling Psychologist

Professional Activities

Counseling psychologists assess and evaluate individuals' problems through the use of case history, interview, and observation and provide individual or group counseling services to assist individuals in achieving more effective personal, social, educational, and vocational development and adjustment. They use various techniques, including interviewing and testing, to advise people on how to deal with problems of everyday living.

Some of the more specific tasks they perform are: counseling clients to help them understand personal or interactive problems, define goals, and develop realistic action plans; collect information about individuals or clients, using interviews, case histories, observational techniques, and other assessment methods; develop therapeutic and treatment plans based on individual interests, abilities, or needs of clients; and select, administer, or interpret psychological tests to assess intelligence, aptitude, ability, or interests. They may advise clients on the potential benefits of counseling or make referrals to specialists or other institutions for noncounseling problems. They analyze data, such as interview notes, test results, and reference manuals and texts to identify symptoms and diagnose the nature of clients' problems.

A psychologist's specialty and place of employment determine working conditions. Clinical, school, and counseling psychologists in private practice have their own offices and set their own hours. However, they often offer evening and weekend hours to accommodate their clients. Those employed in hospitals, nursing homes, and other health facilities may work shifts including evenings and weekends, while those who work in schools and clinics generally work regular hours.

Psychologists employed as faculty by colleges and universities divide their time between teaching and research and also may have administrative responsibilities. Many have part-time consulting practices. Most psychologists in government and industry have structured schedules.

Increasingly, many work as part of a team and consult with other psychologists and professionals. Many psychologists experience pressures due to deadlines, tight schedules, and overtime work. Their routine may be interrupted frequently. Travel usually is required to attend conferences or conduct research.

Aspiring psychologists who are interested in direct patient care must be emotionally stable, mature, and able to deal effectively with people. Sensitivity, compassion, and the ability to lead and inspire others are particularly important qualities for clinical work and counseling. Research psychologists should be able to do detailed work independently and as part of a team. Excellent communications skills are necessary to succeed in research. Patience and perseverance are vital qualities because results from psychological treatment of patients or from research usually take a long time.

Educational Requirements

Psychologists need a master's, specialist, or doctoral degree in psychology. Practicing psychologists also need a license or certification. Most clinical, counseling, and research psychologists need a doctoral degree. Psychologists can complete a Ph.D. in psychology or a Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.) degree. A Ph.D. in psychology is a research degree that culminates in a comprehensive exam and a dissertation based on original research. In clinical, counseling, school, or health service settings, students usually complete a 1-year

internship as part of the doctoral program. The Psy.D. is a clinical degree and is often based on practical work and examinations rather than a dissertation.

School psychologists need a master's, specialist (Ed. S. degree, which requires a minimum of 60 graduate semester hours), or doctoral degree in school psychology. Because their work addresses education and mental health components of students' development, school psychologists' training includes coursework in both education and psychology.

Graduates with a master's degree in psychology can work as industrial-organizational psychologists. When working under the supervision of a doctoral psychologist, master's graduates also can work as psychological assistants in clinical, counseling, or research settings. Master's degree programs typically include courses in industrial-organizational psychology, statistics, and research design.

Entry into psychology graduate programs is competitive. Most master's degree programs do not require an undergraduate major in psychology, but do require coursework in introductory psychology, experimental psychology, and statistics. Some doctoral degree programs require applicants to have a master's degree in psychology, while others will accept applicants with a bachelor's degree and a major in psychology. Most graduates with a bachelor's degree in psychology find work in other fields such as business administration, sales, or education.

Academic Programs

[Adler School of Professional Psychology](#)

[Chicago School of Professional Psychology](#)

[Illinois Institute of Technology](#)

[Loyola University](#)

[Northern Illinois University](#)

[Northwestern University](#)

[Roosevelt University](#)

[Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science](#)

[Southern Illinois University](#)

[University of Illinois at Chicago](#)

[Wheaton College](#)

Employment/Salary Outlook

Greater demand for psychological services in schools, hospitals, mental health centers, and social services agencies should drive employment growth.

Demand for clinical and counseling psychologists will increase as people continue to turn to psychologists to help solve or manage their problems. More psychologists will be needed to help people deal with issues such as depression and other mental disorders, marriage and family problems, job stress, and addiction.

Psychologists also will be needed to provide services to an aging population, helping people deal with the mental and physical changes that happen as they grow older. Through both research and practice, psychologists are also helping other special groups, such as veterans suffering from war trauma, other trauma survivors, and individuals with autism.

Demand for psychologists in the health care industry is also expected to increase, because their work on teams with doctors, social workers, and other healthcare professionals provides patients with comprehensive, interdisciplinary treatments. In addition to treating mental and behavioral health issues, psychologists work on teams to develop or administer prevention or wellness programs.

As the overall number of students grows, more school psychologists will be needed to work with students, particularly those with special needs, learning disabilities, and behavioral issues. Schools also rely on school psychologists to assess and counsel students. Additionally, school psychologists will be needed to study how both in-school and out-of-school factors affect learning, which teachers and administrators can use to improve education.

Employment of industrial-organizational psychologists is expected to grow 35 percent, much faster than the average for all occupations, as organizations use these psychologists to help select and keep employees, increase productivity, and identify potential workplace improvements. However, because it is a small occupation, the fast employment growth will result in only about 800 new jobs over the 10-year period.

State and National Wages

Location	Pay Period	2021		
		Low	Median	High
United States	Hourly	\$22.60	\$39.67	\$80.51
	Annual	\$47,010	\$85,510	\$167,460
Illinois	Hourly	\$19.12	\$39.18	\$100.00+
	Annual	\$39,760	\$81,500	\$208,000+

State and National Trends

United States	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings ¹
	2021	2031		
Clinical, Counseling, and School Psychologists	65,400	71,900	10%	5,100
Illinois	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings ¹
	2020	2030		
Clinical, Counseling, and School Psychologists	5,770	5,910	+2%	400

¹Job Openings refers to the average annual job openings due to growth and net replacement

Professional Organizations

American Psychological Association (apa.org)

References

Occupational Outlook Handbook, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/psychologists.htm>)

O*NET OnLine (<http://online.onetcenter.org/link/summary/19-3031.03>)

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