

Clinical and Counseling-Related Degrees and Certifications

Note: Degrees are listed in order by length of typical time required to receive terminal degree and licensure

Addictions/Substance Abuse Counselor

Degree Needed: Bachelors or Associates Degree

Training is focused on:

- Working with substance abuse and addictions
- Implementing therapeutic skills and techniques shown to be useful

Typical work:

- Case management in hospitals (Keep track of patients, make sure they're coming to appointments, have resources they need, provide support as needed; not therapy)
- Leading recovery-oriented groups in substance abuse centers and community clinics
- Individual support in substance abuse centers and community clinics

Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) / Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC) / Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor (LCMHC)

– Called different things by state

Degree Needed: Master's Degree in Mental Health Counseling

Training is focused on:

- General mental health, not typically severe cases
- Implementing therapies and therapeutic skills and techniques shown to be useful
- Learning about the theories behind common therapies

Typical Work:

- Private Practice
- Case management in hospitals (Keep track of patients, make sure they're coming to appointments, have resources they need, provide support as needed; not therapy)
- Leading therapeutic groups in outpatient and community clinics
- Individual therapy at outpatient and community clinics
- Sometimes at colleges as a lecturer

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT)

Degree Needed: Master's Degree in Mental Health Counseling or Marriage and Family Therapy

Training is focused on:

- General mental health, focusing on family systems and relationships
- Implementing therapy and therapeutic skills and techniques shown to be useful
- Learning about the theories behind common therapies for families and relationships

Typical Work:

- Private Practice
- Case management in hospitals (Keep track of patients, make sure they're coming to appointments, have resources they need, provide support as needed; not therapy)
- Individual support in outpatient and community clinics
- Sometimes at colleges as a lecturer

Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) / Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW)

– LCSW can become LICSW after three years of experience

Degree Needed: Master's in Social Work (MSW)

- Can go on to get a PhD if desired, but not necessary

Training is focused on:

- General mental health, with mild to severe cases, in the context of social environments
- Social justice, systems, and institutions that maintain or exacerbate mental health difficulties
- Implementing therapy and therapeutic skills and techniques shown to be useful
- Learning about the theories behind common therapies

Typical Work:

- Private Practice
- In hospitals and medical centers, typically case management, but also some therapy
- Advocate for and help clients gain access to resources while clients are struggling with mental health difficulties
- Sometimes at colleges as a lecturer or as a professor at a social work program

Clinical Psychologist (PsyD) – Practice-Focused Degree

Degree Required: Doctor of Psychology (PsyD)

Training is focused on:

- Working with a variety of disorders and diagnoses, typically higher severity
- Extensive training on testing, assessment, and diagnosis
- Extensive training on learning about the theories behind common therapies
- Implementing therapy and therapeutic skills and techniques shown to be useful
- Minimal training on conducting research

Typical Work:

- Private Practice
- Hospitals as therapists, sometimes directors
- Academic Medical Centers as therapists
- University Counseling Centers
- Community and Outpatient clinics as therapists, sometimes directors
- VA Hospitals as therapists, and sometimes directors
- Federal Government as therapists
- Sometimes at colleges and universities as a lecturer, or a professor at a PsyD Program

Counseling Psychologist (PhD)

Degree Required: Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling Psychology (PhD)

Training is focused on:

- Working with a variety of disorders and diagnoses, typically lower severity
- Implementing therapies and therapeutic skills and techniques shown to be useful
- Extensive training on testing, assessment, and diagnosis
- Extensive training on learning about the theories behind common therapies
- Extensive training on conducting independent research

Typical Work:

- University Counseling Centers as therapists, directors, or researchers
- Private Practice
- Community and Outpatient clinics as therapists, directors, or researchers
- Hospitals as therapists
- Universities as Professors and Researchers, but not as common as it is for Clinical Psychologists
- Sometimes Academic Medical Centers
- Sometimes VA Hospitals
- Sometimes Federal Government

Clinical Psychologist (PhD)

Degree Required: Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling Psychology (PhD)

Training is focused on:

- Working with a variety of disorders and diagnoses, typically higher severity
- Extensive training on testing, assessment, and diagnosis
- Extensive training on learning about the theories behind common therapies
- Implementing therapy and therapeutic skills and techniques shown to be useful
- Extensive training on conducting independent research

Typical Work:

- Private Practice
- Universities as Professors and Researchers
- Hospitals as therapists or directors
- Academic Medical Centers as therapists, directors, or researchers
- Sometimes University Counseling Centers
- Community and Outpatient clinics as therapists, directors, or researchers
- VA Hospitals as therapists, researchers, and sometimes directors
- Federal Government as therapists or researchers