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## A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO CAREERS IN THE HELPING PROFESSIONS

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### Overview

This document describes 15 helping professions both within and outside psychology. For each of the helping professions, information is provided on typical job duties, job outlook, potential earnings, required professional degrees, finding graduate programs, and graduate entrance requirements, and sources of additional information. The different professions are presented in alphabetical order (see Table of Contents below).

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# ***A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO CAREERS IN THE HELPING PROFESSIONS***

## ***INTRODUCTION***

This manual describes 15 helping professions that undergraduate psychology majors interested in a service career might wish to consider. Each of these careers involves some amount of graduate training beyond the bachelor's degree, usually a master's degree. Please do *not* interpret this to mean that in order to pursue a service career, graduate school is necessary. There are many bachelor's-level helping-oriented jobs, and most university career centers can provide interested students with information about and help in locating these. I am focusing here only on helping careers requiring postgraduate education because such information is harder to find.

### **GUIDE TO THE CAREER PROFILES**

All of the 15 different career profiles in this manual are organized around the same 3 key issues (job description, training, and additional informational resources). Please take a minute to familiarize yourself with the specific categories of information and their source(s).

### **JOB DESCRIPTION**

#### **Overview and Typical Job Duties**

This information is based on many sources: the Occupational Outlook Handbook; FOCUS and SIGI (both computerized career counseling and search programs); publications of the career's national organization(s); graduate school literature; and assorted books and journal articles.

#### **Job Outlook**

In order to be consistent across professions, I generally ignored the potentially biased information on job outlook presented by a profession's accrediting body or organization. Instead, I consulted three national data bases:

1. Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH, 1994-1995 edition): Job outlook summaries for each profession. I adopted the OOH rating system, with jobs rated as growing "much faster than average" (increase of 41% or more); "faster than average" (increase of 27-40%); and "about as fast as average" (increase of 14 to 26%). None of the jobs included in this manual are expected to grow more slowly than average or decline in growth.

2. Bureau of Labor Statistics (1998): Report on the 30 occupations with the fastest projected rate of growth, 1996-2006. I noted if a profession was on this list (BLS).

3. Michigan State University Collegiate Employment Research Institute (1997): Estimated supply and demand for college graduates of 1997-1998. I followed MSU's five-category rating system, classifying jobs as high demand/limited supply (the ideal category from a student's perspective); good demand/possible shortage; near balance/supply equals demand; adequate supply/some oversupply; and surplus/substantial oversupply (the worst category from a student's perspective).

## **Potential Earnings**

I first consulted the OOH for information and then checked FOCUS and individual professional organizations for supporting data. I included national averages for both starting and median salaries. Keep in mind the difference between these figures. Starting salaries are the earnings one can reasonably expect in one's first job in the field, usually obtained soon after graduation. Median salaries represent the midpoint earnings level of all workers in a field, i.e., employees at all levels of experience.

## **TRAINING**

### **Professional Degree Required**

This section contains a description of the specific graduate training necessary to pursue each field at the entry level and an estimate of the time the degree takes to complete.

### **How to Find Programs**

I included specific directions for obtaining a complete list of graduate programs in the field. Note that many professional organizations now include such a list on their Internet homepages. Developing Internet search skills is invaluable in seeking out career and graduate school information.

### **Entrance Requirements/Admissions**

This section provides a list of courses prerequired for admission as well as other expectations for applicants. I also included information about the competitiveness of graduate programs, based on an examination of graduate school brochures as well as published information about the median GPA/GREs of entering classes.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

At the end of each career profile, I have listed helpful resources and addresses of relevant professional organizations (Print Materials/Organizations) as well as useful Internet addresses (Internet Resources). I also recommend the following references for general information about graduate school application and admission as well as helping careers:

### **Print Resources**

American Psychological Association. (latest edition). Graduate study in psychology. Washington, D.C.: Author. (Published annually.)

Buskist, W., & Sherburne, T. R. (1996). Preparing for graduate study in psychology: 101 questions and answers. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Collison, B. B., & Garfield, N. J. (1990). Careers in counseling and human development. Alexandria, VA: American Association for Counseling and Development

Keith-Spiegel, P. (1991). The complete guide to graduate school admission: Psychology and related fields. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

U. S. Department of Labor. (latest edition). Occupational outlook handbook. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office. (Published annually; available in the Career Library.)

## **Internet Resources**

For general graduate school advice on the Internet:

<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~danhorn/graduate.html>

<http://web.indstate.edu/psych/ch5.html>

Peterson' guide to graduate schools, on the Internet: <http://www.petersons.com/graduate/>

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Notes: *Please* send me (e-mail or snail mail) your comments and ideas about this manual! I hope to update this project continually and would greatly value your suggestions. Especially useful would be any errors or omissions you find, updates I should include (e.g., changes in organization addresses, telephone numbers, or internet addresses), resources you find helpful, or additional helping careers you think should be added.

Please do not reprint the information contained here without appropriate crediting of the author and supporting institution. I wish you the best of luck with your helping career search!

## ***CLINICAL/COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGIST (PH.D./PSY.D.)***

### **JOB DESCRIPTION**

#### **Overview**

Clinical and counseling (C/C) psychologists assess and treat people with psychological problems. They diagnose psychological disorders on the basis of interviews and psychological testing, and they make recommendations about treatment, sometimes conferring with psychiatrists to determine if drug therapy is warranted. C/C psychologists conduct individual, couples, family, and group psychotherapy; the specific techniques and theories they apply vary widely.

Clinical and counseling psychology are technically distinct areas of psychology. Each has its own history, division within the American Psychological Association (APA), and graduate training programs. Clinical psychologists have traditionally attended more to the treatment of psychopathology, using the medical model as a guide. Counseling psychologists have traditionally focused more on helping people through normal developmental crises or problems of living. Another difference might be found in the area of assessment. Clinical psychology training programs emphasize assessment more strongly, with students learning to administer and interpret projective and objective tests of personality as well as intelligence tests. Counseling psychologists are more likely to learn about vocational and career testing and measures of normal personality.

In practice, however, C/C psychologists are very similar. Training programs follow similar guidelines, have the same types of research requirements, and take approximately the same amount of time to complete. Both types of psychologists are eligible for licensure in all states, with services reimbursable by third-party payers (e.g., insurance companies). They tend to engage in the same work activities (therapy and assessment), and they work in similar settings: private practices (35% of clinical psychologists, 21% of counseling psychologists), academic institutions (21% of clinical psychologists, 34% of counseling psychologists), hospitals, counseling centers, community mental health centers, and medical schools.

#### **Typical Job Duties: Applied or Practicing C/C Psychologists**

- Conducting psychotherapy with persons with psychological disorders, crises, or problems of living
  - Administering and interpreting personality, intellectual, and career tests
  - Facilitating psychoeducational and psychotherapy groups
  - Giving talks or workshops on specialty areas, e.g., eating disorders, substance abuse, relationship dynamics, sexual abuse
  - Directing and administering mental health programs
  - Supervising the clinical work of master's-level therapists
  - Responding to crises and emergency situations

Please note: Although most of these responsibilities involve direct clinical service, it is likely that in the near future, the role of doctoral level C/C psychologists will change. Psychologists are expected to be less involved in the practice of psychotherapy and assessment, due to the increasing number of lower cost providers taking on these activities (e.g., social workers, counselors, master's level psychologists). Instead, C/C psychologists may be more involved in

program development, administration, supervision, health promotion activities, community intervention, and public advocacy (see Humphreys, 1996).

### **Typical Job Duties: Academic C/C Psychologists**

- Preparing for and giving lectures/assignments to undergraduate and graduate classes
- Grading tests and papers
- Advising students
- Conducting research and writing/publishing research-based manuscripts
- Supervising graduate students on clinical cases
- Serving on campus and community committees

### **Job Outlook**

Much faster than average job growth is expected, due to the need for new programs to combat increased social problems (e.g., substance abuse, family violence, crime), greater recognition of the strong relationship between mental and physical health, and increased use of assessment and therapy with children. However, despite this job growth, few psychologists will leave the profession (in comparison with the turnover rate in other professions), and consequently, there may be only an average number of job openings in the future. C/C psychologists were not among the top 30 fastest-growing occupations as ranked by the BLS, and clinical psychologists were in the near balance/supply equals demand category in the MSU study.

### **Potential Earnings**

The average starting salary for new graduates with a Ph.D. in clinical or counseling psychology is estimated to be \$35,500. (Psy.D. salaries should be comparable.) Median salaries in 1992 were \$46,500 in public psychiatric hospitals, \$40,500 in community mental health centers and HMO's, \$64,000 in private practice, \$53,000 in Veterans Administration hospitals, and \$39,500 for university professors. Starting salaries for doctoral level psychologists in Federal government positions in 1993 averaged \$33,600; median government salaries in the same year were \$54,400.

## **TRAINING**

### **Professional Degree Required**

A doctoral degree in clinical or counseling psychology (Ph.D. or Psy.D.) is necessary to be eligible for licensure as a psychologist. Programs require a full-time commitment for at least 4-5 years (6-7 years is average), including coursework, practicum placements, qualifying examinations, research (i.e., thesis and dissertation), and a one-year, full-time, predoctoral internship.

The Ph.D. (doctor of philosophy) degree in C/C is the traditional doctoral degree, symbolizing graduate training in both the science and practice of C/C psychology. Psy.D. (doctor of psychology) degrees are a relatively new development in graduate training, beginning in 1968; emphasis in these programs is placed primarily on teaching the skills needed for practice. In contrast to Ph.D. programs, neither a master's thesis or dissertation is required, although a lengthy, high-quality, written report on a psychological issue is usually completed.

## **How to Find Programs**

Clinical and counseling psychology programs are accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA). Attending an accredited program is critical for obtaining licensure and professional employment upon completion of the degree. A complete list of accredited programs is available on the APA home page (address below). It is also published each year in the December issue of the American Psychologist. This journal is sent automatically to all APA members (check with psychology department faculty) and is available in college libraries. As of December, 1997, there were 189 accredited doctoral programs in clinical psychology, 69 programs in counseling psychology, and 9 combined programs. For detailed information about specific programs, check the most recent APA Graduate Study in Psychology guide.

One confusing issue when gathering information about Psy.D./Ph.D. programs is the distinction between academic and professional schools of psychology. In academic programs, graduate training is based in a university department of psychology or education. Professional schools of psychology are free-standing institutions, usually not tied to any university. Professional schools are more likely to stress practice over research (about half offer the Psy.D. rather than the Ph.D.), to admit larger classes (on the average, five times as many students as in academic programs), and to make fewer demands of students. Perhaps most critically, professional schools are far more expensive because there is no associated university to absorb the high cost of training graduate students (often more than \$20,000/year). Think carefully before taking on the substantial loans necessary for most students to attend professional schools; salaries for psychologists today, even those in private practice, are not high enough to make paying back loans an easy matter.

## **Entrance Requirements/Admissions**

For Ph.D. programs, an undergraduate major in psychology is expected, with statistics and research methods courses essential. Taking elective courses in varied fields of psychology (e.g., both experimental and applied areas) is preferable to taking all social/personality/clinical area electives. Research experience is also strongly encouraged, and the more independent the research the better (i.e., presenting one's own project at a psychology conference would be valued more highly than working on a faculty member's research). For Psy.D. programs, a well-rounded psychology major is also recommended, but research experience may be less critical.

Gaining admission to C/C Ph.D. programs is highly competitive, although standards have fallen somewhat in the past decade because of the increase in professional schools. Although required minimums may average a 3.2 GPA and 1100 GRE-combined scores, many programs do not even examine applications that do not meet a cutoff in the neighborhood of a 3.5 GPA and 1200 GRE-combined scores. Other important criteria: letters of recommendation, well-written personal statements, a good match between applicant's and program's interests, research experience, and clinical volunteer or work experience (Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, & Spiegel, 1994). Admission to C/C professional school programs is less competitive, and research tends to matter less than clinical experience. For more specific information about getting into graduate programs in C/C psychology, see Nietzel, Bernstein, and Milich (1994) or Mayne, Norcross, and Sayette (1994).

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

### **Print Materials/Organizations**

American Psychological Association (APA), 750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002-4242. 202/336-5500.

Humphreys, K. (1996). Clinical psychologists as psychotherapists: History, future, and alternatives. American Psychologist, 3, 190-197.

Keith-Spiegel, P., Tabachnick, B. G., & Spiegel, G. (1994). When demand exceeds supply: Second-order criteria used by graduate school selection committees. Teaching of Psychology, 21(2), 79-81.

Mayne, T. J., Norcross, J.C., & Sayette, M.A. (1994). Admission requirements, acceptance rates, and financial assistance in clinical psychology programs. American Psychologist, 49, 806-811.

Nietzel, M. T., Bernstein, D. A., & Milich, R. (1994). Introduction to clinical psychology (4th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. (Appendix: Getting into graduate school in clinical psychology).

### **Internet Resources**

APA home page (for list of accredited programs, click on “graduate”):  
<http://www.apa.org/students/>

Rank orderings of clinical psychology Ph.D. programs:  
<http://www.socialpsychology.org/clinrank.htm>



## ***CLINICAL/COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY: MASTER'S (M.A./M.S.) DEGREE***

### **JOB DESCRIPTION**

#### **Overview**

Master's-level clinical and counseling psychology practitioners (“C/CPPs” for purposes of this manual; in some states, clinicians with this degree cannot legally call themselves “psychologists”) conduct assessment and therapy with people having psychological problems. They work in community mental health centers, psychiatric hospitals, non-profit organizations, and private practices, usually under the direction of doctoral level C/C psychologists.

C/CPPs are trained to do the same type of work that doctoral-level C/C psychologists do, but only four states currently grant C/CPPs a license, which allows them to practice independently. In contrast, master's level social workers and counselors with the appropriate credentials can be licensed to practice independently in almost all states. (In fact, in some states, C/CPPs are eligible to, and do, seek counseling licenses in the effort to gain career independence.) The Northamerican Association of Masters in Psychology (NAMPP; address below) is currently working to change this somewhat discouraging licensing status. Despite the opposition of the wealthy and powerful American Psychological Association (APA), there are signs that this movement is beginning to have an impact. For more information about C/C psychological work as well as information about similarities and differences between clinical and counseling psychology, see the “Clinical/Counseling Psychologist (Ph.D./Psy.D.)” career profile.

#### **Typical Job Duties**

See this section under the “Clinical/Counseling Psychologist (Ph.D./Psy.D.)” career profile.

#### **Job Outlook**

Faster than average job growth is expected, for all the same reasons that jobs for doctoral level C/C psychologists are predicted to grow. However, C/CPPs face strong competition for jobs from other master's-level helping professionals (e.g., social workers, counselors, creative arts therapists). The uncertain licensing status of C/CPPs may hurt in the job market where financially strapped mental health centers cannot afford the time or money for supervision. C/CPPs were not among the top 30 fastest-growing occupations as ranked by the BLS, and they were not included in the MSU study.

#### **Potential Earnings**

The average starting salary for new graduates with a master's degree in clinical or counseling psychology is estimated to be \$25,000. Median salaries in 1992 were \$37,000 in counseling psychology and \$40,000 in clinical psychology.

### **TRAINING**

#### **Professional Degree Required**

A master's degree in clinical or counseling psychology is the required degree. A master \*of arts (M.A.) degree typically requires a thesis; a master of science (M.S.) degree typically does not, although this distinction is not always maintained. Master's programs usually require

at least two years of full-time study and frequently do not allow students to attend on a part-time basis. Please note: The master's degree that C/CPPs earn is often called a "terminal" master's degree to distinguish it from the master's degree that Ph.D. psychologists may earn en route to their doctoral degree.

### **How to Find Programs**

Terminal master's degree programs are listed in APA's Graduate Study in Psychology guide. Be sure to check Sections III and IV, "Graduate Departments Offering Less Than the Doctoral Degree." (Again, terminal master's programs are to be distinguished from the master's degrees awarded in doctoral programs.) There are very few terminal master's programs in counseling psychology.

### **Entrance Requirements/Admissions**

As with doctoral-level C/C programs, an undergraduate major in psychology is expected (although not required), with statistics and research methods courses essential. Taking elective courses in varied fields of psychology (e.g., both experimental and applied areas) is preferable to taking all social/personality/clinical area electives. Both research and clinical experience (volunteer or work) are recommended.

Gaining admission to a master's program is competitive, but not as competitive as it once was, given the many helping profession options that students interested in a master's degree now have. Standards are on a par with counseling programs, with preferred or required minimums in the neighborhood of a 3.0 GPA and 900-1000 GRE-combined scores.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

#### **Print Materials/Organizations**

American Psychological Association (APA), 750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002-4242. 202/336-5500.

Northamerican Association of Masters in Psychology (NAMP), P.O. Box 721270, Norman, OK 73070. 800/919-9330.

#### **Internet Resources**

APA home page: <http://www.apa.org/>

NAMP home page: <http://www.nampwebsite.org>

## ***COLLEGE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONAL***

### **JOB DESCRIPTION**

#### **Overview**

This category encompasses a broad range of positions involving counseling or human development work on a college campus. Student development, or student affairs, professionals work in partnership with faculty and administrators to help students have a personally satisfying and productive college experience. Specific areas in which student affairs employees can be found include admissions, counseling and career centers, financial aid, residence life, student centers, health centers, and athletics. These are also the college staff responsible for providing specialized services (academic and personal) to disabled, minority, international, and commuter students.

#### **Typical Job Duties**

Job duties depend on a student development professional's area of specialization. Some examples include:

- Academic support services: working with individual students to plan academic schedules; coordinating tutoring programs; conduct programs on time management or study skills
- Admissions: recruiting and conducting interviews with prospective students; visiting high schools and participating in college fairs; evaluating college applications
- Career development and placement: counseling students about majors and careers; occupational assessment; maintaining occupational resource library; hosting on-campus job fairs
- Financial aid: counseling students and their families about economic matters; reviewing and awarding aid packages; working with loan and work study programs
- Residence life and housing: supervising undergraduate resident assistants; conducting educational and social programs; providing personal advising, crisis management, and discipline of students
- Student activities: advising student organizations; coordinating leadership development programs; developing wide range of cultural/social programming; overseeing student center

#### **Job Outlook**

Faster than average job growth is expected overall due to increasing college enrollments, greater emphasis on higher education, and growing competition for students among colleges and universities. Residential counselors rank 27th on the BLS list of the 30 fastest-growing occupations.

#### **Potential Earnings**

Starting salaries vary widely (roughly \$24,000-\$30,000), depending on specialization area and the size and type of college/university at which one is employed. Median salaries range from \$30,000-\$35,000. Administrative position salaries (e.g., Director of Admissions, Dean of Student Activities, Career Center Director) range from \$30,000-\$60,000, again depending on the type of campus and breadth of responsibilities.

## **TRAINING**

### **Professional Degree Required**

Most entry-level positions in student development require a master's degree. A number of relevant graduate degrees are possible, and although all are related, the names of degree programs vary, e.g., guidance and counseling, college counseling, college student personnel, counselor education, higher education administration, and student development. Each requires approximately two years of full-time study.

### **How to Find Programs**

Because of these varied routes to a career in college student development, identifying and research graduate programs is not so easy as in some fields. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) maintains a directory of accredited programs in a category called "Student Affairs Practice in Higher Education" (SAPHE). CACREP can send this list or you can examine it via the American Counseling Association web site (addresses below). Consult the list to locate the strongest programs in this general field, but keep in mind that a general counseling degree might also suffice.

### **Entrance Requirements/Admissions**

See this section under the "Counselor, Community" job profile. One difference: The type of volunteer or work experience most helpful for college student development program applicants would likely be in college student services (e.g., working as an RA, experience in student activities, internships in student affairs offices).

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

### **Print Materials/Organizations**

Collison, B. B., & Garfield, N. J. (1990). Careers in counseling and human development. Alexandria, VA: American Association for Counseling and Development. (Chapter 4: Careers in postsecondary settings).

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), 5999 Stevenson Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22304. 703/823-9800. Directory of accredited counseling programs.

### **Internet Resources**

American Counseling Association (ACA) home page (for graduate school/CACREP information, click on "Students in Counselor Education" and then "CACREP Directory"):  
<http://www.counseling.org/>

American College Personnel Association (ACPA) home page:  
<http://www.acpa.nche.edu/>

National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) home page:  
<http://www.naspa.org/>

## ***COUNSELOR (COMMUNITY)***

### **JOB DESCRIPTION**

#### **Overview**

Professional counselors help people with personal, family, social, and developmental problems or concerns. Counselors work with individuals, couples, and families; they may also work with people in small groups. The specific counseling techniques they employ differ according to the nature of their clients' difficulties.

Counseling is a broad category, encompassing a range of related job titles. Community counselors (also called agency or mental health counselors) typically work in mental health centers, social service agencies, counseling centers, and private practices, emphasizing the prevention and amelioration of mental health problems. This category also includes such specializations as marriage and family counseling, pastoral counseling, and substance abuse (addictions) counseling. School counselors (see "Counselor, School" job profile), also called guidance counselors, work with K-12 students in school systems. Rehabilitation counselors (see "Rehabilitation Counselor/Psychologist" career profile) are trained to work with disabled individuals and are often employed by rehabilitation hospitals or social service agencies.

Counseling requires a master's degree. If a counselor pursues graduate education in counseling beyond the master's level, the doctoral degree is earned in a field known as "counseling education and supervision." This degree is not needed for independent practice in counseling, but it does allow an individual to teach in the counseling field at a college or university. Note that this degree differs from a doctorate in counseling *psychology* (see "Clinical and Counseling Psychologist [Ph.D./Psy.D.]" career profile).

#### **Typical Job Duties**

- Counseling (also called psychotherapy) individuals with personal problems, career concerns, or psychological disorders
- Counseling distressed couples and families
- Conducting workshops on psychoeducational topics, e.g., stress management, assertiveness training, career development
- Leading therapy groups for individuals with specific types of problems, e.g., substance abuse, eating disorders, depression
- Planning and overseeing the day-to-day schedule at a group home
- Administering a prevention program for at-risk teens
- Recruiting, training, and supervising volunteers to staff a community hotline
- Responding to crises and emergency situations

#### **Job Outlook**

Faster-than-average job growth is expected due to a greater societal focus on psychological well-being. In addition, positions may expand as health insurance and public-sector contracts continue to increase funding for master's-level clinicians. However, government jobs are likely to be limited by budgetary constraints. Counselors were not among the top 30 fastest growing occupations as ranked by the BLS, and counseling was in the near balance (supply equals demand) category in the MSU study.

## **Potential Earnings**

The average starting salary for new graduates with a master's degree in community counseling is estimated to range from \$25,000 to \$35,000. The median salary of experienced counselors is estimated to range from \$30,000 to \$40,000. A wide range is provided because of the diversity of work settings in pay scales (i.e., from non-profit organization work at the low end to private practice at the high end).

## **TRAINING**

### **Professional Degree Required**

A master's degree in community counseling is necessary for certification and/or licensure as a professional counselor. Accredited programs require approximately 60 semester hours of course and field work and take about two years of full-time study to complete. Many, if not most, programs allow students to pursue graduate degrees on a part-time basis.

### **How to Find Programs**

Counseling programs are accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). CACREP maintains the following categories of accreditation: community counseling, community counseling with a specialty in gerontological counseling, school counseling, and marriage and family counseling and therapy. Write to CACREP for a list of accredited programs (there are 119 accredited institutions) or visit the CACREP web site (addresses below).

CACREP accreditation is important for obtaining both national certification as a clinical mental health counselor as well as state licensure. Currently most states license counselors; the license is the credential needed for independent practice. In addition to graduation from a CACREP program, licensure usually requires a set number of post-degree hours of supervised clinical experience (e.g., 3000 hours) and passing a national exam.

When researching programs, pay attention also to the concentrations offered within community counseling. This will tell you about a program's strengths or emphases. For example, if you have a strong interest in substance abuse counseling, you would want to be certain that a program offers significant course work in that area. In addition to substance abuse counseling, other common concentrations include marriage and family counseling, counseling the aged, and employee assistance.

### **Entrance Requirements/Admissions**

Counseling programs do not specify particular undergraduate majors required for admission; a psychology major, especially in the context of a broad liberal arts background, is considered good preparation. A far more important consideration is a candidate's experience in the human services field. The ideal candidate has both volunteer and paid work experience in diverse settings. Taking time off to gain both experience and maturity would be viewed positively by most counseling admission committees.

Counseling programs are moderately, but increasingly, competitive. Counseling programs in many states have experienced a rise in applications in recent years, probably due to the relatively recent phenomenon of licensing for professional counselors. This change gives counselors the credentials and status of social workers, who have long been allowed to practice independently. The profession might also be viewed as a step ahead of master's-level clinical or

counseling psychology practitioners, who can only practice independently in four states (see “Clinical/Counseling Psychology: Master’s (M.A.) Degree Level” job profile). Students who primarily wish to practice psychotherapy upon graduation (as opposed to conducting psychological assessments) and who see themselves helping people with less severe psychological problems (e.g., problems of living or developmental crises) may be happier with a master’s degree in counseling than in clinical psychology.

Some counseling programs request a 3.0 GPA and 1000 GRE combined minimum for application; others provide no data on minimum requirements. Data on median GPAs/GREs of entering classes is hard to find. From observations of students who have applied to counseling programs in recent years, grades seem more important than test scores, and a strong record of volunteer and paid work in human services can make up for borderline (those below the preferred minimums) grades or test scores, although not both.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

### **Print Materials/Organizations**

American Counseling Association (ACA), 5999 Stevenson Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22304. 703/823-9800.

Collison, B. B., & Garfield, N. J. (1990). Careers in counseling and human development. Alexandria, VA: American Association for Counseling and Development. (Chapters 7 & 8: Careers in private practice; careers in public and private agencies).

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), 5999 Stevenson Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22304. 703/823-9800. Directory of accredited counseling programs.

Journal of Counseling and Development (1995). Special Issue. Professional counseling: Spotlight on specialties, 74(2). (Issue includes articles on each specialty area, on credentialing and professionalization of counseling, and on issues related to specialization.)

### **Internet Resources**

American Counseling Association (ACA) home page (for graduate school/CACREP information, click on “Students in Counselor Education” and then “CACREP Directory”): <http://www.counseling.org/>

CTOnLine (newsletter for professional counselors): <http://www.counseling.org/ctonline/>  
“Cybrary” (a resource bank of links to hundreds of internet sites related to specializations in counseling): [http://www.ced.appstate.edu/hpc/Cybrary/cyb\\_sic.htm](http://www.ced.appstate.edu/hpc/Cybrary/cyb_sic.htm)

## ***COUNSELOR (SCHOOL)***

### **JOB DESCRIPTION**

#### **Overview**

School counselors (also called guidance counselors) provide personal, social, educational, and career assistance to students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Elementary school counselors focus more on helping students understand and deal with personal and/or behavioral problems, whereas secondary school counselors more frequently emphasize advising students regarding college, careers, and jobfinding skills.

In terms of training, school counselors have much in common with community counselors (see “Counselor [Community]” job profile). Graduate programs that offer one specialty typically offer the other as well, and the course work required in each usually overlaps. The basic differences between the two professions are in setting (school systems vs. community agencies) and clientele (children and adolescents vs. individuals of all ages).

#### **Typical Job Duties**

- Conducting individual and group counseling with students experiencing personal, social, behavioral, or family problems
- Planning and leading workshops on psychoeducational topics, e.g., drug and alcohol prevention, anger management, study skills
- Administering and interpreting achievement, aptitude, and vocational testing
- Advising high school students about trade or technical schools, college applications and admissions, financial aid, and college entrance exams
- Providing career counseling and teaching jobfinding skills
- Consulting with parents, teachers, school administrators, or social workers regarding student adjustment issues
- Responding to school crises and emergency situations
- Developing a dropout prevention program or coordinating a peer mediation program

#### **Job Outlook**

Faster-than-average job growth is expected for many reasons: increasing enrollments; new legislation in many states requiring counselors in elementary schools, greater emphasis on providing high school students with career information, and the expanded use of counselors in crisis situations. However, job growth could be limited by state budget cuts, in which case counselors may be forced to serve more than one school. School counselors were not among the top 30 fastest-growing occupations as ranked by the BLS, but school counseling was categorized in the good demand/possible shortage category in the MSU study.

#### **Potential Earnings**

The average starting salary for new graduates with a master’s degree in school counseling ranges from \$25,000 to \$33,000. (When comparing this to other helping profession salaries, keep in mind that school counselors work a 10-month year.) According to a study conducted by the Educational Research Service, the median salary of school counselors during the 1992-1993 academic year was \$40,400.



## **TRAINING**

### **Professional Degree Required**

A master's degree in school counseling (sometimes called "counseling and guidance") is necessary for certification as a school counselor. School counselors must be certified in the state they wish to work, but requirements for certification vary greatly from state to state. School counseling programs typically require approximately two full years of course and field work, with practicum experiences taking place in schools. Part-time pursuit of this degree is usually permitted.

### **How to Find Programs**

As with community counseling programs, school counseling programs are accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). However, the more important regulating body in school counseling is a program's associated state department of education or public instruction, which is the organization responsible for certifying both teachers and school counselors. Many, if not most, school counseling programs are not accredited by CACREP, although this is likely to change in the future. (One advantage of CACREP certification would be that a school counselor could qualify for national counselor certification; it would also be easier to make a switch to community counseling should that ever be desired.)

For a list of accredited programs, you can write to CACREP or visit the CACREP web site (addresses below). For other programs in school counseling, you will have to consult a Peterson's guide, available in most university career center and academic libraries. Look for school counseling under "education" or "counselor education" headings (not under "psychology"). On the Internet, you might be able to find a list of school counseling programs by first visiting your state's department of education web site.

### **Entrance Requirements/Admissions**

See this section under the "Counselor [Community]" career profile. School counseling may be less competitive than community counseling, especially at non-CACREP schools.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

### **Print Materials/Organizations**

American School Counseling Association (ASCA), 5999 Stevenson Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22304. 703/823-9800.

Collison, B. B., & Garfield, N. J. (1990). Careers in counseling and human development. Alexandria, VA: American Association for Counseling and Development. (Chapter 3: Careers in school settings).

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), 5999 Stevenson Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22304. 703/823-9800. Directory of accredited counseling programs (school counseling included in this listing).

Paisley, P. O., & Borders, L. D. (1995). School counseling: An evolving specialty. Journal of Counseling and Development, 74, 150-153.

**Internet Resources**

American Counseling Association (ACA) home page (for graduate school/CACREP information, click on “Students in Counselor Education” and then “CACREP Directory”):  
<http://www.counseling.org/>

American School Counseling Association (ASCA) home page:  
<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/>

# ***CREATIVE ARTS THERAPIST***

## ***(Art Therapist, Dance Therapist, Drama Therapist, Music Therapist)***

### **JOB DESCRIPTION**

#### **Overview**

Creative arts (art, dance, drama, and music) therapists apply the techniques of their respective arts in the effort to improve individuals' physical and mental health. Most often, creative arts therapies are geared toward work with children and adults with learning, physical, developmental, or emotional disabilities. However, non-disabled populations (e.g., school children, nursing home residents, medically ill patients) benefit from creative arts therapy as well. Creative arts therapists (CATs) are most commonly employed by medical and psychiatric hospitals, residential and day-treatment centers, community mental health centers, rehabilitation facilities, substance abuse programs, and correctional facilities.

It is important to recognize that CATs are *both* artists and helpers. As the information about training will make clear, CATs are expected to enter graduate school prepared to build on an already solid base of knowledge in their arts field.

*Art therapists* use drawing, painting, and sculpture as a vehicle for client self-expression, creativity, and emotional release. An art therapist might pose a question to a client and ask that the answer be drawn or painted; in this way, art is used as a tool for gaining psychological insight.

*Dance (or movement) therapists* encourage clients to express themselves through movement of their bodies. A dance therapy group might help clients, especially females, gain confidence and comfort with their bodies, thereby improving overall self-esteem.

*Drama therapists* use role-play, theater games, mime, puppetry, and improvisational techniques to help clients act out conflicts, take the perspective of significant others, or release pent-up emotions. Psychodrama, one type of drama therapy, involves acting out one's internal thoughts, feelings, reflections, and perceptions.

*Music therapists* organize and conduct musical programs with the goal of facilitating relaxation, providing support, encouraging creativity, increasing self-confidence, and providing an outlet for the expression of feelings in clients. Musical programs might involve vocal, rhythmic, instrumental, or listening activities; instrument instruction; music appreciation and theory; or folk ensembles, bands, and choruses.

#### **Typical Job Duties**

- assessing client needs in order to prescribe an individualized creative arts treatment plan
- developing and implementing activities for creative arts groups (e.g., singing, beating on drums, making clay objects, dancing)
- working individually with clients, using the arts to encourage self-expression
- teaching clients basic skills necessary to engage in creative arts (e.g., a dance step, mime, how to use a potter's wheel)
- conferring with allied health professionals (e.g., psychiatrists, psychologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists) about the goals and objectives for each client
- maintaining records on client progress and assisting in discharge planning
- evaluating clients' responses to creative arts therapies through observation and interview

## **Job Outlook**

Faster than average job growth is expected due to anticipated expansions in long-term care, physical and psychiatric rehabilitation, and services for the disabled. (However, keep in mind that these are highly specialized occupations, so even though jobs are increasing quickly, they are likely to be less plentiful than in more traditional helping professions.) CRTs were not among the top 30 fastest growing occupations as ranked by the BLS. Music therapy, the only creative arts therapy examined in the MSU study, was ranked in the adequate supply/some oversupply category.

Art and music therapy are the more established creative arts specialties; more jobs likely exist in these areas than in dance and drama therapy. Overall, CATs with the greatest likelihood of obtaining jobs are those who are credentialed in another, more traditional helping profession (e.g., counselor, social worker) in addition to their creative arts certification.

## **Potential Earnings**

According to the American Art Therapy Association, starting salaries for art therapists average \$25,000, and median salaries range from \$28,000-\$38,000. Starting salaries for music therapists average \$29,000 and median salaries average \$38,000. No data on dance or drama therapists could be located.

## **TRAINING: ART THERAPY**

**Professional Degree Required.** A master's degree, requiring two years of full-time study, is the entry-level degree. The master's can be earned in art therapy, or it can be earned in a related field with 21 credit hours in art therapy.

**How to Find Programs.** Art therapy graduate programs that follow specific curricular guidelines developed by the American Art Therapy Association (AATA) are called "approved" programs. Attending an approved program qualifies a student for registration and board certification as an art therapist. Write to the AATA for their list of approved programs (address below).

**Entrance Requirements/Admissions.** The undergraduate major of choice is either psychology or art. Ideally, a student would major in one field and minor in the other, completing at least 12 credit hours in psychology and at least 15 credit hours in studio art. Specific prerequisites in art include courses in drawing, painting, and using clay, plus two other studio classes. Recommended psychology courses include introductory psychology, personality, abnormal psychology (psychopathology), developmental psychology, and, for some programs, statistics.

Competitiveness is difficult to judge. Typical requirements include a 3.0 GPA and "acceptable" GRE scores, but more important criteria appear to be personality and interpersonal qualities, based on an interview, and a student's art portfolio.

## **TRAINING: DANCE THERAPY**

**Professional Degree Required.** A master's degree in dance/movement therapy, requiring two years of full-time study, is the entry-level degree.

**How to Find Programs.** Dance therapy programs are approved by the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA). Currently, there are only five approved master's programs in the country:

- Antioch New England (Keene, NH)
- Columbia College (Chicago, IL)
- Allegheny University (Philadelphia, PA)
- Naropa Institute (Boulder, CO)
- UCLA (Los Angeles, CA)

**Entrance Requirements/Admissions.** No specific undergraduate major is required, but a broad liberal arts background with an emphasis in psychology is recommended, along with extensive training in a variety of dance forms (including courses in theory, improvisation, choreography, and kinesiology). Applicants should also have experience teaching dance and experience in service to others.

Despite the scarcity of programs, dance therapy programs do not appear to be highly competitive in terms of application numbers. This may be due to the cost of these programs; all but UCLA are private institutions offering little to no financial assistance. Programs do not generally specify minimum GPA/GRE requirements.

### **TRAINING: DRAMA THERAPY**

**Professional Degree Required.** A master's degree in drama therapy, requiring two years of full-time study, is the entry-level degree.

**How to Find Programs.** Drama therapy programs are approved by the National Association of Drama Therapy (NADT). Currently, there are only two approved master's programs in the country:

- California Institute for Integral Studies (San Francisco, CA)
- New York University (NY, NY)

**Entrance Requirements/Admissions.** No specific undergraduate major is required, but applicants should have a solid background in drama/theatre, including experience in improvisational drama and theatre performance. Recommended psychology electives include developmental and abnormal (psychopathology).

As with dance therapy, numbers seem to favor applicants at this point. Minimum GPA/GRE requirements are not specified.

### **TRAINING: MUSIC THERAPY**

**Professional Degree Required.** The baccalaureate degree in music therapy is an acceptable entry-level degree. Students who have already earned a bachelor's degree in another field can elect to complete a degree equivalency program in music therapy, offered by most universities with music therapy programs. Degree equivalency programs allow students to complete only required coursework rather than pursuing a second baccalaureate degree.

To enter a master's program in music therapy, students must have already earned a bachelor's degree in music therapy, or its equivalent. Graduate programs not only involve more in-depth study of music therapy but usually include a research requirement as well.

**How to Find Programs.** Music therapy programs are approved by the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA). Write to the AMTA for the list of approved programs (baccalaureate- and master's-level) or view the list via their home page (addresses below).

**Entrance Requirements/Admissions.** Students at a college or university with no music therapy program would likely pursue music therapy through a bachelor's equivalency program, at least initially. Application in this case is essentially a transfer application, meaning that no

courses are prerequired. However, the more courses required for a music therapy degree that can be completed in advance, the faster the equivalency is earned. Required courses in music therapy programs include at least 54 credit hours in music (a minimum of 6 hours of music history, 12 hours of music theory, 3 hours of music leadership, courses in basic knowledge of band/orchestral instruments, and courses in a student's major and secondary performance areas); one course in human anatomy/physiology; and 14-17 hours in psychology, including general psychology, psychology of exceptional children, abnormal psychology, and research methods. The remaining requirements are in music therapy (at least 20 credit hours) and may not be transferred from another program.

Admission is based on GPA, SAT scores, and a music audition. Competitiveness is difficult to gauge, given the nature of the academic program (undergraduate vs. graduate).

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

#### **Print Materials/Organizations**

American Art Therapy Association (AATA), 1202 Allanson Road, Mundelein, IL 60060. 847/949-6064. General information packet including a list of educational standards and educational programs costs \$3.

American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA), 10632 Little Patuxent Parkway, 2000 Century Plaza, Suite 108, Columbia, MD 21044. 410/997-4040.

American Music Therapy Association (AMTA), 8455 Colesville Road, Suite 1000, Silver Spring, MD 20910. 301/589-3300. Free introductory materials and educational program list.

National Association for Drama Therapy (NADT), 5505 Conn. Avenue, Washington, DC 20015. 202/966-7409.

#### **Internet Resources**

AATA home page: <http://www.arttherapy.org>

ADTA home page: <http://www.adta.org>

AMTA home page: <http://www.musictherapy.org/index.html>

NADT home page: <http://www.nadt.org>

# ***HEALTH EDUCATION/PROMOTION SPECIALIST***

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

### **Overview**

Health educators plan and facilitate educational programs designed to improve the health of children, adults, and communities. Issues addressed by health educators include disease prevention, adolescent sexuality, pregnancy and childbirth, smoking cessation, substance abuse, child safety, and environmental hazards. Health educators strive to promote healthy lifestyles, developing activities designed to encourage healthy eating, exercise, or stress management. Health educators work in public schools, colleges and universities, public health departments, hospitals and managed care settings, non-profit community organizations, and business/industry.

### **Typical Job Duties**

- planning health education curricula for secondary school students
- teaching a sex education class
- providing workshops to college students on substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, or sexual victimization in dating
- tracking the spread of an infectious disease within a community
- organizing a health fair at a city shopping mall, a community walking program, or a road race for charity fundraising event
- evaluating the effectiveness of a program to decrease the incidence of a sexually transmitted disease
- researching new methods of encouraging child safety seat use
- educating international travelers about health and sanitation issues in other countries

### **Job Outlook**

The Occupational Outlook Handbook does not provide information about the health education profession. A related category, “instructors and coaches, sports and physical training” was ranked 28th on the BLS list of the 30 fastest growing occupations. Public health was in the near balance/supply equals demand category of the MSU study.

### **Potential Earnings**

Starting salaries are estimated to range from \$25,000-\$34,000. No information on median salaries could be located.

## **TRAINING**

### **Professional Degree Required**

A master’s degree in health education is necessary for certification as a Certified Health Education Specialist. Note that the names of graduate degree programs in this area vary, e.g., health education, health promotion, public health, community health, and health behavior. Programs tend to require approximately two full years of study.

### **How to Find Programs**

Health education programs are accredited by the American Association for Health Education (AAHE), which maintains a graduate directory of all approved master’s programs

(address below). This list is also provided in the September/October (1997) issue of the Journal of Health Education.

When looking in a university catalogue for a health education program, remember that not only do the specific names of degree programs vary, but also the departments or college divisions that offer them. Try departments of health or health sciences, public health, or education.

### **Entrance Requirements/Admissions**

A variety of undergraduate social science or science majors (including psychology) are acceptable. Prerequisites differ across programs, but may include anatomy and physiology, chemistry, or courses in the behavioral sciences. Volunteer or work experience in the health education field is a plus.

Programs range in their competitiveness. Public health programs tend to describe more stringent criteria than health education programs, but requirements do vary greatly. Programs with minimum GPAs of 2.75 and “satisfactory” GREs are not uncommon, just as programs whose entering students have combined GRE averages of 1200 are represented.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

#### **Print Materials/Organizations**

American Association for Health Education (AAHE), 1900 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191-1599. 800/213-7193. State-by-state directory of health education programs (cost, \$4.50).

Journal of Health Education (1997). September/October issue has listing of health education programs.

#### **Internet Resources**

AAHE home page: <http://www.aahperd.org/aahe/aahe-main.html>



# ***HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST***

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

### **Overview**

The human resources department in an organization is typically responsible for recruiting and orienting employees, establishing and administering employee services, designing and organizing training and development programs, and ensuring equal employment opportunity. Specific jobs within the field are highly variable. In a small company, one person may oversee all human resource development (HRD) roles, whereas in a large company, the duties may be divided into as many as 20 different job titles. The majority of HRD specialists (85%) work in the private sector, which includes service industries (health, social, and educational services), labor organizations, manufacturing industries, and financial firms. The remaining 15% work in federal, state, and local government offices.

### **Typical Job Duties**

- Recruitment: advertising new positions, collecting applications, interviewing job candidates, orienting new employees to policies and procedures
- Salary and benefits administration: establishing and maintaining the pay system, overseeing the performance evaluation system, handling insurance and pension plans
- Employee assistance: arranging company-sponsored social activities, supervising employee recreation activities, conducting career and personal counseling
- Training and development: offering workshops to employees, organizing programs offered by outside professionals, helping employees develop skills needed to succeed on the job
- Equal employment opportunity: establishing and monitoring affirmative action programs, reviewing company practices related to hiring and promotion of minorities/females, investigating discrimination charges
- Other: resolving or mediating disputes, helping employees' transition out of a company, analyzing data that will be useful to management in making personnel decisions

### **Job Outlook**

Faster-than-average job growth is expected, but the job market is competitive. New jobs will be primarily in the private sector, where more resources will need to be devoted to job-specific training programs because of increasingly complex jobs. In addition, new legislation regarding employee hiring and benefits has resulted in a need for experts in these areas. HRD was not ranked among the top 30 fastest-growing occupations in the BLS study, although human resources training was listed as a "hot job" in an October, 1997, issue of U.S. News & World Report. HRD was in the near balance/supply equals demand category of the MSU study.

### **Potential Earnings**

Starting salaries for new graduates with a master's degree in human resources in 1993 averaged \$30,500. Median salaries in 1992 ranged from \$32,000-\$45,000, depending on the area. In a 1996 study, median salary estimates for HR records specialists were \$30,600; for HR

information systems specialists, \$38,800; for HR consultants, \$55,000; for affirmative action specialists, \$38,200; and for recruitment managers, \$63,800.

## **TRAINING**

### **Professional Degree Required**

A master's degree in HRD or a related field is increasingly important for employment. To be certified as a Professional or Senior Professional in Human Resources, either a bachelor's or a master's degree is sufficient, but a master's degree allows one to obtain certification much more quickly. For liberal arts graduates with little experience in HRD, a master's program is essential. Programs tend to require two years of study, with part-time enrollment usually allowed.

### **How to Find Programs**

The Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) provides a list of graduate programs in HRD on its home page (address below), but only programs that have faculty members who are AHRD members are included. Consequently, this list cannot be considered complete. Another strategy is to look up HRD in a Peterson's Guide, available in university career centers and libraries (or on the Internet, in abbreviated form). Note that HRD is listed under Business Administration and Management.

### **Entrance Requirements/Admissions**

No specific undergraduate major is required, although a social science or management major is typical. Volunteer or work experience in HRD is a plus. Programs do not appear to be highly competitive. Minimum requirements are typically a 3.0 GPA during the last 60 semester hours and a 900 on the GRE combined.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

### **Print Materials/Organizations**

American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043. 703/683-8100.

DeGalan, J., & Lambert, S. (1995). Great jobs for psychology majors. Lincolnwood, IL: VGM Career Horizons. (Chapter 12: Human resources).

Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), 1800 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. 703/548-3440.

### **Internet Resources**

Academy of Human Resource Development home page (to find list of programs with faculty who are members of AHRD, click on "Plan an HRD Career"): <http://www.ahrd.org/>

ASTD home page: <http://www.astd.org/>

Human resource development, general information (links to many organizations and resources): <http://www.teleport.com/~erwilson/links.html>

SHRM home page: <http://www.shrm.org/>

# ***OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST***

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

### **Overview**

Occupational therapists (OTs) work with people with physical, developmental, or emotional problems who need specialized care to live independent, productive, and satisfying lives. In contrast to talking therapies, interventions tend to be action-oriented. For example, for clients with physical disabilities, OTs might teach self-care skills, skills needed for employment, or skills necessary for caring for a home and family. With clients with psychological disorders, the OT program might involve assistance in time management, working productively with others, and leisure time. OTs can be found in a variety of medical settings, including general, rehabilitation, and psychiatric hospitals; nursing homes; community agencies and mental health centers; and home health care agencies.

### **Typical Job Duties**

- Assessing of physical, mental, or emotional deficiencies, especially in patients who have lost function due to illness or injury
- Counseling patients about potential impact of their disabilities on occupational performance or emotional well-being
- Teaching physically disabled patients skills needed to perform the activities of daily life
- Helping patients with emotional disturbances develop coping skills
- Analyzing job task requirements for an injured worker
- Advising employers, family members, or teachers about adapting clients' work, home, or school environments

### **Job Outlook**

Much faster than average job growth is expected for several reasons: Medical advances have enabled seriously disabled patients in need of rehabilitative services to survive, the U.S. population is aging and many disabling conditions occur frequently in the elderly, and legislation that mandates greater attention to the needs of people with disabilities is now more strongly enforced.

OT is ranked 12th on the BLS list of the 30 fastest growing occupations. It was not studied by the MSU researchers.

### **Potential Earnings**

The average starting salary for new graduates in 1995 was \$38,000. The median salary of experienced occupational therapists is estimated to be \$45,000.

## **TRAINING**

### **Professional Degree Required**

The entry-level degree for an OT is either a bachelor's degree in OT or a professional master's degree in OT. Students attending colleges or universities with no undergraduate OT program would likely opt for the latter route, as this approach allows students with degrees in fields other than OT to gain the knowledge and credentials necessary to enter the field. Master's

degree programs typically require two years of full-time study, including 2-3 summers. This time period includes at least six months of field work experience.

### **How to Find Programs**

Education programs must be accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). AOTA maintains a list of these programs that it will send for free; the complete list can also be viewed via the AOTA web page (addresses below).

### **Entrance Requirements/Admissions**

Entrance requirements differ across programs, but programs typically require course work in biology, psychology, and sociology. Frequently-required prerequisite courses (i.e., courses that should be taken as an undergraduate) for master's programs in OT include anatomy, physiology, life span human development, abnormal psychology, statistics, and family and society. However, schools vary considerably in their requirements, so obtain information from schools of interest as early as possible (e.g., your sophomore or junior year of school) in order to plan your schedule carefully. In addition, schools tend to strongly recommend or require volunteer, internship, or paid work experiences with persons with disabilities (physical or psychological). This experience requirement is not to be taken lightly; at one highly competitive program (UNC-Chapel Hill), admitted students had an average of 598 contact hours of experience with occupational therapy practice.

Admission to OT school is competitive. Master's programs typically receive over 200 applications per year, while only admitting 20-30 students. Successful applicants tend to have undergraduate GPAs in the 3.2-4.0 range and combined GRE scores of 1100-1200. In addition to grades and GRE scores, other factors important taken into account when evaluating applicants include work or volunteer experiences, multi-cultural experience, recommendations, and knowledge about OT. Also note that state schools often give preference to in-state residents, so consider applying to public schools in your home state first.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

#### **Print Materials/Organizations**

American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), 4720 Montgomery Lane, P.O. Box 31220, Bethesda, MD 20824-1220. 301/652-AOTA. Will send free packet of introductory materials, including directory of all accredited OT programs.

#### **Internet Resources**

American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) home page: <http://www.aota.org/>  
American Occupational Therapy Foundation: [http://www.aotf.org/html/ot\\_links.html](http://www.aotf.org/html/ot_links.html)  
AOTA state-by-state listing of accredited programs (click on "Education Programs"):  
<http://www.aota.org/students/>

# ***REABILITATION COUNSELOR/PSYCHOLOGIST***

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

### **Overview**

Rehabilitation counselors and psychologists (RCPs) assist people with physical, cognitive, emotional, and developmental disabilities. They conduct assessments, provide personal and vocational counseling, plan and implement rehabilitation programs, and provide support to families. A primary goal of rehabilitation counseling is to increase a client's capacity to become independent or remain self-sufficient. In addition, RCPs attempt to change environmental or social barriers that create obstacles for people with disabilities. RCPs are employed by medical and rehabilitation hospitals, government agencies (especially departments of rehabilitation), publicly supported agencies working with disabled persons, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, and insurance companies.

Although rehabilitation counseling and rehabilitation psychology are technically different fields (the former is a division of the American Counseling Association and the latter is a division of the American Psychological Association), the work roles, responsibilities, and goals of the two professions overlap significantly. In terms of training, RC programs are likely to provide a broader introduction to different types of disabilities and a greater focus on vocational rehabilitation, whereas RP programs are more likely to emphasize psychological assessment as well as other areas of psychology (e.g., biopsychology, learning, social, and developmental). In terms of numbers, there are many more rehabilitation programs in counseling than in psychology and, consequently, more practicing RCs than RPs.

### **Typical Job Duties**

- interviewing a disabled individual regarding personal or occupational adjustment
- evaluating a disabled individual's strengths and limitations
- helping individuals and their families deal with the personal and social impact of disabilities
- conferring with allied health professionals (e.g., physicians, psychologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists) about a disabled person's progress
- advising clients about education and training opportunities, careers, and job-finding skills
- planning a client's rehabilitation program and working individually with the client to help implement it
- providing outreach programs that attempt to educate the public regarding myths about disabilities prevalent in society

### **Job Outlook**

Faster-than-average job growth is expected for many reasons: medical advances allowing seriously disabled individuals to survive, a growing elderly population, and legislation requiring equal employment rights for people with disabilities. Rehabilitation counselors were not among the top 30 fastest-growing occupations as ranked by the BLS, and rehabilitation counseling was not one of the fields examined by the MSU study.

## **Potential Earnings**

The Occupational Outlook Handbook does not differentiate between community and rehabilitation counselors in reporting salary studies. Consequently, estimates here are the same for both professions: \$25,000-\$35,000, starting; \$30,000-\$40,000, median. A 1995 study of vocational rehabilitation counselors (most frequently employed by state departments of Vocational Rehabilitation) revealed an average starting salary of \$26,000.

## **TRAINING**

### **Professional Degree Required**

A master's degree in rehabilitation counseling or psychology is the entry-level degree. Graduate programs in both fields typically require two years of full-time study and field work but usually allow students to attend on a part-time basis.

### **How to Find Programs**

RC programs are accredited by the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE), which maintains a list of accredited programs on its Internet site or will send a print version free of charge (addresses below). CORE also has a copy of its accrediting standards on its web page, which is helpful when considering the differences in curricula of counseling vs. psychology programs.

RP programs are listed in APA's Graduate Study in Psychology guide, but do not appear to be accredited by any central agency. You may find some useful information about RP through APA's Division of Rehabilitation Psychology, Division 22 (address below).

### **Entrance Requirements/Admissions**

A psychology major is excellent preparation for both RP and RC. RP programs are likely to place greater emphasis on adequate preparation in statistics and research methods and a well-rounded psychology major; RC programs are often satisfied with any helping-oriented social science major. Abnormal psychology (psychopathology) is a good preparatory elective for both fields, and field work or internship experience is important (perhaps more so for RC than RP).

Competitiveness is on a par with community counseling, with a 3.0 GPA and 1000 GRE-combined as typical minimum requirements (but grades above 3.0 could make up for sub-1000 test scores and vice versa). Programs do not appear to receive an abundance of applications, so numbers may favor applicants in this field.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

### **Print Materials/Organizations**

American Psychological Association (APA), Division 22 (Rehabilitation Psychology), 750 First Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002-4242. 202/336-5500. For Division 22 membership information, contact Rochelle Balter, Ph.D., P.O. Box 20235, Cherokee Station, New York City, NY 10021.

Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE), 1835 Rohlwing Road, Suite E, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008. 847/394-1785.

Leahy, M. J., & Szymanski, E. M. (1995). Rehabilitation counseling: Evolution and current status. Journal of Counseling and Development, 74, 163-166.

**Internet Resources**

APA, Division 22 home page: <http://www.apa.org/divisions/div22/homepage.html>

CORE home page: <http://www.core-rehab.org>

National Rehabilitation Counseling Association:  
[http://www.nchrtm.okstate.edu/NRCA\\_files/htdocs/index.html](http://www.nchrtm.okstate.edu/NRCA_files/htdocs/index.html)

# ***SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST***

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

### **Overview**

Master's-and specialist-level (a degree given only in school psychology that is mid-way between a master's and a doctoral degree) school psychologists work primarily in school systems with students, their families, and teachers. A major portion of their work involves diagnostic assessment of students' learning aptitudes, special needs, and personality, emotional, and social development. They consult with school personnel regarding academic or behavioral problems of students and recommend appropriate interventions or classroom placements.

Doctoral-level school psychologists work in school systems as well as in other settings. Like clinical and counseling psychologists, doctoral-level school psychologists can be licensed. Consequently, they can work independently in a broad range of settings (e.g., community agencies, private practices, universities), typically with a focus on children or adolescents.

### **Typical Job Duties**

Job duties for master's- or specialist-level school psychologists (approximately 80% of the profession) include:

- administering and interpreting intelligence and personality tests and conducting classroom observations
- evaluating the effectiveness of academic programs or behavior management procedures
- providing educational programs to school personnel on such topics as classroom management or teaching and learning strategies
- conducting individual and group counseling or psychoeducational programming with students
- advising teachers and school administrators on methods to enhance student motivation
- referring students and their families to appropriate community agencies for medical, vocational, or social services

### **Job Outlook**

Faster-than-average job growth is expected overall due to increasing concern about student behavioral and learning problems as well as improving public school systems. Although not among the top 30 fastest-growing occupations as ranked by the BLS, school psychology was in the most favorable category in the MSU study (i.e., high demand/limited supply).

### **Potential Earnings**

The average starting salary for new school psychologists with a master's or specialist degree in 1995 was \$28,000. According to an APA study, the median salary of master's/specialist degree holders in 1991 was \$52,000.

## **TRAINING**

### **Professional Degree Required**

A master's degree (usually two years of course work) is required for work in a school setting in most states. However, there is increasing emphasis in school psychology on obtaining the specialist degree, which adds another semester or even year of study; over 75% of non-



doctoral school psychologists hold this more advanced degree. In addition, to obtain national certification as a school psychologist from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), one must hold either a specialist or a doctoral degree.

### **How to Find Programs**

APA's Graduate Study in Psychology guide lists all school psychology programs (master's through doctoral) by state. You can also write the NASP for a list of programs approved by NASP (i.e., specialist and doctoral programs), or view UC-Berkeley's web site for a list of all programs (addresses below).

### **Entrance Requirements/Admissions**

Beyond the psychology major, no specific courses are necessary for graduate school in school psychology beyond statistics and research methods. Personality, abnormal psychology (psychopathology), and learning are frequently recommended courses for doctoral study. Educational psychology or courses in education might be useful electives. Research experience is more important for Ph.D. than M.A. programs.

The competitiveness of master's level/specialist programs varies, but typically a minimum of 3.0 GPA and 950-1100 GRE-combined are required in order to be considered for admission. However, master's programs (often called "terminal master's" programs to distinguish them from the master's degree received en route to a doctorate degree) do not appear inundated with applications. Although numbers vary region to region, a typical program might receive 25-35 applications and hope to enroll an entering class of 10 students.

Doctoral programs are more competitive, although not as competitive as clinical psychology doctoral programs. Median GPAs are in the 3.4-3.6 range and median GREs in the 1100-1200 range.

School psychology programs are more commonly found in departments of education (about 80%) than departments of psychology. National surveys of school psychology program directors (see Reschly & McMaster-Beyer, 1991) make it clear that program quality is unrelated to the college affiliation of a school psychology program.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

#### **Print Materials/Organizations**

National Organization of School Psychologists (NASP), 4340 East West Highway, Suite 401, Bethesda, MD 20814. 301/657-0270. Free packet of introductory materials including list of approved programs.

Professional Psychology: Research and Practice (1996). Special section: Future of psychological practice in the schools, 27, 5-40. (Four articles that focus on the impact of recent social, health care, and educational reforms on the practice of school psychology.)

Reschly, D. J., & McMaster-Beyer, M. (1991). Influences of degree level, institutional orientation, college affiliation, and accreditation status on school psychology graduate education. Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 22, 368-374. (A survey of school psychology programs in the U.S.; findings help clarify the differences among degree levels, types of doctoral degrees, and accrediting bodies in school psychology.)

#### **Internet Resources**

National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) home page:

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

School psychology graduate programs (list maintained by UC-Berkeley):

<http://www-gse.berkeley.edu/program/SP/html/sp-gradprograms.html>

# ***SOCIAL WORKER***

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

### **Overview**

Social workers strive to help people function to the best of their capabilities. One of the oldest helping professions, social work originally grew out of late 19th Century efforts to help neglected children and poor families. Modern social workers can be found helping individuals cope with a wide variety of problems, including unemployment, lack of job skills, financial management, physical and mental illnesses, criminal behavior, substance abuse, family and marital problems, developmental and educational problems, and aging.

### **Typical Job Duties**

Job duties depend on a social worker's area of specialization as well as the setting in which one works. Among the most common concentrations and their associated job responsibilities are:

- Clinical social work (also called mental health services specialization): providing psychotherapy and active problem-solving assistance to individuals, families, and groups
- Child welfare: investigating families suspected of child abuse or neglect; arranging protective services for abused or neglected children; providing home intervention counseling
- Medical social work: helping medically ill patients cope with their illnesses; planning and arranging follow-up health care; providing a link between doctor and patient
- Public welfare: arranging welfare services for unemployed, aged, or disabled persons or families with dependent children; planning and administering welfare programs
- Justice and corrections: developing prevention programs for at-risk youths; working with offenders post-release as probation or parole officers; working in youth correction centers and prisons with inmates and their families
- School social work: working with students who are having behavioral, attendance, or health problems; serving as a liaison between school, home, and community

### **Job Outlook**

Faster-than-average job growth is expected overall due to the increased needs of several diverse populations (e.g., the elderly, disabled persons, persons with HIV/AIDS, families in crisis). Clinical social work positions are expected to expand as health insurance and public-sector contracts continue to increase funding for master's level clinicians. Medical social work positions are also expected to increase as greater emphasis in hospitals is placed on discharge planning. Finally, employment of school social workers will likely grow due to expanded efforts to intervene in difficult family situations. Openings in government agencies may decline as funding for welfare programs decreases.

Although not among the top 30 fastest-growing occupations as ranked by the BLS, the MSU study placed school social work in the most favorable category (high demand/limited supply). Social work overall was listed in the near balance category.

## **Potential Earnings**

The average starting salary for new graduates with the MSW degree is estimated to range from \$25,000 to \$35,000. A 1993 survey of social workers in federal government positions revealed an average salary of \$41,400. Experienced social workers in supervisory positions tend to average \$40,000-\$45,000.

## **TRAINING**

### **Professional Degree Required**

Although some colleges and universities offer a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree, most specialized social work positions require a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree. MSW programs generally require two years of full-time course and field work, although many universities offer part-time programs that take longer (3 or more years) but can be completed while working in the field.

### **How to Find Programs**

MSW programs are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). You can write to this organization for a directory of program names, addresses, and descriptions (address below), although it is not free. You can also obtain information about programs via the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) home page.

When researching programs, remember that they differ with regard to the concentrations they offer. Some schools offer only generalist programs, whereas others provide students with a choice among 3-5 specific concentrations. Concentrations might include mental health services (or clinical social work), aging (or gerontology), children and families (or children, youth, and families), health care (or medical care), management and planning (or administration and planning), and community organization/social planning. Obviously, you want to be sure a program offers the particular area in which you hope to specialize.

### **Entrance Requirements/Admissions**

MSW programs do not specify particular undergraduate majors required for admission; psychology, especially in the context of a broad liberal arts background, is considered good preparation. A far more important consideration is a candidate's experience in the human services field. The ideal candidate has both volunteer and paid work experience in diverse settings. Taking time off to gain both experience and maturity would be viewed positively by most MSW admission committees.

Competitiveness of MSW programs varies. Recent data from UNC-Chapel Hill, a program routinely rated among the top 15 in the country, indicate an acceptance rate of just over 10% (65 acceptances for 600 applications). At the University of South Carolina, the acceptance rate in the same year was 18%, and at the University of Kentucky, 30%. Typical minimum requirements for application are a GPA of 3.0 and GREs of 1000, although this, too, varies widely, with some schools not even requiring GRE scores and others willing to accept promising candidates who don't meet the minimums on a probationary basis. Write to several programs in order to fairly assess your chances.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

### **Print Materials/Organizations**

Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), 1600 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-3421. 703/683-8080. Annual directory of accredited MSW programs.

National Association of Social Workers (NASW), 750 First Street, NE, Suite 700, Washington, D.C. 20002-4241. 1-800/638-8799. Free packet of introductory materials.

### **Internet Resources**

Clinical Social Work Federation (CSWF) home page (for information on clinical social work): <http://www.webcom.com/nfscsw/>

National Association of Social Workers (NASW) home page (for list of MSW programs, go to state organizations; you will access not only each state's programs but also links to the programs' home pages, if available): <http://www.naswdc.org/>

# ***SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER***

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

### **Overview**

Special education (SE) teachers instruct public school students (K-12) with physical, cognitive, and emotional/behavioral disabilities. They adapt and develop educational materials to meet the unique needs of their students, striving to ensure that disabled students reach their full learning potential. SE teachers tend to emphasize a particular type of disability in their training; the specific categories of disability differ across states (categories are defined by state departments of education), but generally include mental retardation/mental handicaps, learning disabilities, emotional/behavioral disorders, and physical disabilities. SE classes are usually designed for students at a given grade level who have the same type of disability.

Special education resource teachers function as consultants within a school system. They advise general education teachers about means of modifying teaching methods for work with disabled children in their classrooms. They may lead a school “resource room” where disabled general education students come for specialized instruction.

Early childhood special educators work with disabled or slowly developing preschool children and their families. They devise activities that encourage the growth of a child’s abilities, teaching these to children as well as helping parents implement them at home. Early childhood special educators are employed by preschool programs, community centers, hospital-based outreach programs, and specialized day care centers.

### **Typical Job Duties**

- teaching children and adolescents with cognitive, physical, or emotional/behavioral disabilities, usually in a small classroom of 8-10 students
- assessing how each child learns best and then adapting teaching methods to fit unique learning styles (e.g., improving a learning disabled child’s reading by encouraging reading aloud; designing a behavior management program for a student with a poor attention span)
- working closely with parents and school professionals planning services to be provided to children (i.e., writing IEPs, or individualized education programs)
- consulting with general education teachers about working with children with disabilities in their classrooms
- planning and developing creative teaching and learning activities
- administering diagnostic tests and evaluating outcomes of teaching methods

### **Job Outlook**

The need for SE teachers is expected to grow much faster than average due to legislation mandating educational opportunities for individuals with disabilities, greater numbers of survivors of accidents and illnesses who have disabilities, and growing public interest in individuals with special needs. SE teaching was ranked 13th on the BLS list of the fastest growing occupations, and an October, 1997, article in U.S. News & World Report described SE teaching as a “runner-up hot track” career. In the MSU study, two special education areas were listed in the high demand/limited supply category (learning disabilities and emotional disturbance), three were described as good demand/possible shortage (mental handicaps, visual

handicaps, and hearing-impairment), and physical handicap specialization was rated as near balance/supply equals demand.

Early childhood special educators are also expected to be much in demand in the future. Federal legislation has led to a push for early intervention and preschool education for all preschoolers with disabilities.

### **Potential Earnings**

The average starting salary for new special education teachers with a master's degree is \$29,000. Median salaries are estimated to be \$38,000-\$40,000. Remember that these estimates are averages across all states; remember also that these are annual salaries for a 10-month year.

## **TRAINING**

### **Professional Degree Required**

A bachelor's degree in special education is the usual entry-level degree. However, teacher certification requirements differ greatly from state to state, with master's degrees necessary for permanent certification in some states. Master's degrees also lead to higher salaries in most states.

Students who have already earned a bachelor's degree in another field can complete a second bachelor's degree in SE (i.e., only those courses necessary for teacher certification). It may also be possible for such students to enter a master's program in SE directly, taking extra courses at the graduate level to make up for the lack of an undergraduate degree in education. Policies in this regard differ from state to state.

### **How to Find Programs**

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) maintains a database with a list of colleges and universities offering both undergraduate and graduate programs in special education (addresses below). However, the CEC makes no claim that their database is 100% complete or accurate, so you would be wise to check a Peterson's Guide as well, available in university career centers and libraries. Begin by looking under education; then find the special education subheading.

For programs within a particular state, write to a state's department of education for a list of approved programs in SE. Many state departments of education (sometimes called different things, e.g., department of public instruction) provide such a list on their Internet home pages.

### **Entrance Requirements/Admissions**

Programs are not highly competitive. For students pursuing a second bachelor's degree, no courses are technically prerequired, although some psychology and education courses may fulfill state certification requirements. Check with specific programs in which you are interested. Master's programs most often prerequire an undergraduate teaching certificate but, again, requirements vary from state to state.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

### **Print Materials/Organizations**

Council of Exceptional Children (CEC), 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191-1589. 888/CEC-SPED.

National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, address same as CEC. 800/641-7824. Free fact sheets about professions.

### **Internet Resources**

CEC home page: <http://www.cec.sped.org/>

CEC National Clearinghouse home page (for list of programs):  
<http://www.cec.sped.org/ncpse.htm>



# ***SPEECH PATHOLOGIST***

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

### **Overview**

Speech pathologists (technically called speech-language pathologists, and sometimes, less appropriately, called speech therapists) assess, diagnose, and treat persons with communication disabilities (e.g., stuttering, impaired language, articulation problems). They often work in medical settings in which they serve as members of a team of allied health professionals, e.g., with physicians, psychologists, social workers, physical therapists, and audiologists. Speech pathologists also can be found in schools, nursing homes, community mental health/health centers, and private practices.

Some speech pathologists are also certified to practice audiology, which involves the identification, assessment, and rehabilitation of hearing disorders. Audiologists may prescribe and fit hearing aids, provide training in speech reading, or serve as consultants in business/industry regarding environmentally-induced hearing loss.

### **Typical Job Duties**

- helping individuals who stutter increase their fluency
- assisting people who have had strokes or brain injuries to regain lost language and speech
- designing and implementing training programs for children and adolescents with speech/language disorders
- counseling individuals and families to better understand and deal with speech/language disorders
- serving as a consultant to educators of persons with speech/language problems
- assessing the relationship between psychological and social factors and speech/language problems

### **Job Outlook**

Much-faster-than-average job growth is expected because of a growing elderly population (prone to hearing loss problems), medical advances that improve the survival rate of premature infants and trauma victims (prone to speech/language problems), and increased emphasis on early detection and prevention of speech/language disorders.

Speech/language pathologists and audiologists are ranked 17th on the BLS list of the 30 fastest-growing occupations. The professions appeared in two categories in the MSU study: good demand with possible shortage and near balance.

### **Potential Earnings**

The average starting salary range for new graduates in speech/language pathology in 1995 was \$30,000. According to a survey conducted by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), the median salary in 1997 for certified speech-language pathologists was \$44,000; for audiologists, \$55,000; and for professionals certified in both, \$53,000.

## **TRAINING**

### **Professional Degree Required**

Although some universities offer an undergraduate major in communication disorders, a master's degree is necessary for certification as a speech pathologist and is generally considered the entry level professional degree. Typically, this degree requires two years of full-time study.

### **How to Find Programs**

Graduate programs are accredited by ASHA. You can write to this organization or view its home page for a complete list of programs (addresses below).

### **Entrance Requirements/Admissions**

Some graduate programs prefer applicants with an academic background in communication disorders (i.e., either the undergraduate major or selected course work); other graduate programs neither require nor prefer this (i.e., any undergraduate liberal arts major is acceptable). However, students who have no prior course work in communication disorders will likely need to take extra courses in graduate school, often adding 1-2 semesters to the time required for the master's degree. Among schools requesting undergraduate exposure to communication disorders, typical prerequisites include one or more courses in linguistic and psycholinguistic bases (e.g., psychology of language), one or more courses in physical and psychological bases (e.g., applied phonetics, sound patterns in language, linguistic phonetics), one or more courses in anatomic and physiologic bases for the normal development of speech and hearing, and one course in statistics.

The competitiveness of speech pathology programs varies. Many schools do not provide minimum GPA/GRE standards nor data on the qualifications of incoming classes, making comparisons across programs difficult to assess. When minimums are reported, they tend to be in the 3.0 GPA and 1000 combined-GRE range. ASHA has surveyed program directors about this information and maintains summary statistics of programs that supply it on its home page.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

### **Print Materials/Organizations**

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). 10801 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852. 301/897-5700. Free brochures, fact sheets, and list of accredited programs.

Funding Sources: A guide for future audiologists, speech-language pathologists, and speech, language, and hearing scientists (1996). Available from ASHA for \$20.

### **Internet Resources**

ASHA home page: <http://www.asha.org/>

ASHA list of accredited graduate programs: <http://www.asha.org/students/students.htm>

# ***THERAPEUTIC RECREATION SPECIALIST/ RECREATIONAL THERAPIST***

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

### **Overview**

Therapeutic recreation specialists (TRSs) use recreation and leisure activities to help people with illnesses or disabilities. Recreational activities include sports, games, art, music, dance, outdoor experiences, field trips, structured social events, and relaxation exercises. The goals of recreational intervention include helping individuals acquire specific behavioral skills or cognitive abilities; improving physical, cognitive, and social/emotional functioning; facilitating an optimal level of personal independence; and enhancing psychological growth and development.

TRSs provide services to individuals of all ages. They are frequently employed in clinical settings, such as medical, psychiatric, and rehabilitation hospitals; nursing homes and residential centers; and group homes and correctional facilities. They might also be employed in community settings, for example, in park and recreation departments; community recreation centers and non-profit recreational facilities; public and private schools; and special education programs.

### **Typical Job Duties: Clinical Setting**

- assessing clients' physical and psychological needs and interests
- developing an individualized treatment plan, e.g., using tennis to help an individual with right side paralysis learn to use the left side; devising activity-based group experiences for an individual with poor social skills
- working with clients individually and in groups, teaching specific recreational skills and leading group recreational activities (e.g., high ropes course, community outing, exercise group)
- conferring with allied health professionals (e.g., psychiatrists, psychologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists) about client goals, progress, and discharge plans

### **Typical Job Duties: Community Setting**

- planning creative and stimulating recreational activities to meet participants' needs
- adapting activities as needed to enable individuals with disabilities to participate (e.g., adapted aquatics, wheelchair basketball, social groups for developmentally disabled individuals)
- leading group recreational activities (e.g., leisure skills classes, a swimming program, hiking and camping, summer camps activities)
- providing training and workshops to educate other staff about people with disabilities

### **Job Outlook**

Faster-than-average job growth is expected for TRSs in clinical settings due to anticipated expansions in long-term care, physical and psychiatric rehabilitation, and services for the disabled. Therapeutic recreation specialists were not among the top 30 fastest-growing occupations as ranked by the BLS; TR was ranked in the adequate supply/some oversupply in the MSU study.

## **Potential Earnings**

The average starting salary for recreational therapists (bachelor's-degree level) is estimated to range from \$22,000-\$28,000. A 1991 survey conducted by the American Therapeutic Recreation Association (ATRA) revealed an average salary for ATRA members of \$31,000. In 1995, average earnings for positions in the Federal government were \$36,000.

## **TRAINING**

### **Professional Degree Required**

A bachelor's degree in therapeutic recreation/recreational therapy or in leisure studies with an emphasis in therapeutic recreation (TR) is the usual entry-level degree. Students who have already earned a bachelor's degree in another field can complete a second bachelor's degree (i.e., only those courses in TR), or, depending on the university, a master's degree in TR.

### **How to Find Programs**

TR programs are accredited by the National Recreation and Park Association/American Association for Leisure and Recreation Council (NRPA/AALR). Undergraduate programs earn general accreditation in Recreation, Park, and Leisure Studies and then specific accreditation in one or more specialty areas: leisure services management, natural resources recreation management, leisure/recreation program delivery, and therapeutic recreation. The directory of all accredited programs is available from the National Therapeutic Recreation Society (NTRS), a branch of the NRPA, in print form or on the Internet (addresses below). Students interested primarily in TR would want to be sure the TR specialization is noted (i.e., a program may have overall accreditation but no specialization in TR).

The importance of attending an accredited program in this field is unclear. Students in accredited programs may have an easier time earning certification as a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS) upon graduation, but students in non-accredited programs (depending on the program's quality) are by no means prevented from gaining certification. Accredited and non-accredited programs differ primarily in educational philosophy. In accredited programs, students get training not only in TR but also in other areas of leisure studies; this broader education equips students to work not only in clinical TR but also in community settings. Non-accredited programs in TR are typically more narrowly focused on TR.

The bottom line: To obtain a directory of *all* therapeutic recreation programs, write the American Therapeutic Recreation Association (ATRA, address below). Note that this agency is *not* affiliated with the National Recreation and Park Association.

### **Entrance Requirements/Admissions**

When pursuing TR as a second bachelor's degree, no courses are technically prerequired. A course in anatomy and physiology may save on course work, since most programs will require this class.

A student with a bachelor's degree in another field may wish to pursue a master's program in TR. Again, such programs may or may not require background preparation or undergraduate degrees in TR. Among those which do not, students without such preparation are asked to complete additional graduate level coursework. Schools do not appear to be highly competitive: Minimum requirements are in the 3.0 GPA and "satisfactory" GRE score range.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

### **Print Materials/Organizations**

American Therapeutic Recreation Association (ATRA), P.O. Box 15215, Hattiesburg, MS 39404-5215. 800/553-0304. Directory of colleges and universities with TR costs \$5.

National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification, P.O. Box 479, Thiells, NY 10984-0479. 914/639-1439.

National Therapeutic Recreation Society (NTRS), 22377 Belmont Ridge Road, Ashburn, VA 20148. 703/858-0784. Free list of accredited programs.

Preparing for a Career in Therapeutic Recreation (1996). Available for \$7.50 from the Publications Center, National Recreation and Park Association, 22377 Belmont Ridge Road, Ashburn, VA 20148.

### **Internet Resources**

ATRA home page: <http://www.atra-tr.org/index.html>

NTRS home page (for list of accredited programs, click on "Career Information"):  
<http://www.nrpa.org/branches/ntrs.htm>