

# CAREER QUICK FACTS: MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING



UNIVERSITY OF  
**GEORGIA**  
Career Center

Mental health counselors are licensed professionals who help individuals, groups, and families with mental health and substance use concerns on cognitive, behavioral, and emotional levels. Mental health counselors may promote healthy lifestyles and help to preserve or restore mental health by:

- Providing psychotherapy (talk therapy) to help clients understand their behaviors, emotions, and thoughts
- Identifying stressors
- Teaching healthy coping mechanisms and problem-solving techniques
- Specializing in certain types of therapy like cognitive behavioral therapy, marriage and family therapy, etc.

**Important Skills/Knowledge:** counseling techniques, mental health disorders and psychopathology, crisis management, verbal communication, active listening, empathy, critical analysis

Source: Healthline.com



## How do I become a Mental Health Counselor?

There are many ways to become a mental health counselor. Mental health counselors are required to attain a graduate degree and state licensing, but there are multiple types of master's programs and licenses that can lead to a career in mental health counseling. Those interested in counseling should explore the types of degrees and licenses available in order to determine which is best for them. Requirements for licensure vary from state to state.

- **LCSW** – Licensed Clinical Social Worker. An LCSW holds a master's degree in social work and has completed two years of supervised clinical social work services (3,000 hours in GA)
- **LPC** – Licensed Professional Counselor. An LPC has a master's degree in counseling or a counseling-related field and has also completed the required amount of supervised counseling work. (usually 1,000 hours in 12 months)
- **LMFT** – Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. An LMFT holds a master's degree in marriage and family therapy or a related degree and has completed their required supervised therapy work.
- **NCC** – National Certified Counselor. A therapist with an NCC designation has a master's degree in counseling and is board certified on a national level.
- **PhD** – A doctorate of philosophy in psychology, with an emphasis in research. A therapist with a PhD in psychology is called a psychologist.
- **PsyD** – A doctorate in psychology, with an emphasis in clinical work. Therapists with a PsyD are also psychologists, but focus more on working with clients as opposed to conducting research.
- **MD** – Medical Doctor. Psychiatrists are medical doctors who can practice psychotherapy and can prescribe medication.

Source: mentalhealthmatch.com

## Career Outlook

**Projected Job Growth 2022–2032:** 15–18% depending on specialty

- Average job growth for all occupations is 3%

**Median Annual Salary:** \$49,710– \$56,570 depending on specialty

- Median salaries represent the exact middle point of salaries for this career (half are higher, half are lower).
- This is not an expectation for your *starting* salary. You will likely start at a lower salary and may see increases as you progress through your career.

\*According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (bls.gov) and US News and World Report, not including clinical and counseling psychologists at the PhD/PsyD level

The following minors and undergraduate certificates may be helpful in pursuit of this career.

### Minors to Consider

*Communication Studies – Philosophy  
Sociology – Women's and Gender  
Studies – Human Development and  
Family Science – Human Services  
International Human Rights  
Personal Health and Well-Being  
Social Work*

### Certificates to Consider

*Disability Studies – LGBTQ Studies*

### Courses to Consider

*PSYC 3100, 3230, 3250, 3260  
PSYC 4100 Cognitive Psychology  
PSYC 4220 Developmental Psychology  
COMM 2600 Communicating and  
Relationships  
SOC 3710 Science of Happiness  
WMST 1110, 2300, 3110, 3215, 3260,  
3650*

**Want to talk to a Mental Health  
Counselor?**

**Check out the UGA Mentor Program!**

