



# Health Careers In Alaska

[www.HealthCareersInAlaska.Info](http://www.HealthCareersInAlaska.Info)

## Mental Health Counselor

**M**ental health is an important part of a person's total health. Mental health counselors focus on helping individuals improve their daily functioning. There are several job titles that fall into the category of mental health counselor, and all involve counseling and assisting individuals in achieving a healthy mind.

Mental health counselors use their knowledge and skills to assess and diagnose behavior problems, psychological problems (the way the client thinks), and social problems (the way the client gets along with other people). A diagnosis is based on conversations with the client, specialized tests, and/or an assessment of the person's family, education, work, friends, and living conditions.

Mental health counselors often use verbal counseling to help clients

better understand the cause of their problem, and to develop a plan to change the behavior, lifestyle, or surroundings that contribute to this problem. Using these approaches, the mental health counselor helps clients understand and solve their own problems.

An important part of this job is to be an expert on the resources and programs available to clients. Mental health counselors not only refer clients to information, but also assist them in contacting other resources, including physicians, alcohol and substance abuse counselors, social workers, financial and housing assistance agencies, and educational programs. Alternatively, the counselor may provide case management services and assist the client in coordinating these service providers.

## Mental Health Counselor Facts:

### Where do mental health counselors work in Alaska?

Mental health counselors work in hospitals, mental health centers, group practices, non profit agencies, and tribal health organizations.

### Educational Requirements

Mental health counselors come from a variety of educational backgrounds, but most have degrees in human services, nursing, psychology, education, or social work. All follow a similar educational plan:

- Graduation from high school.
- Completion of a four-year college program in human services, counseling, nursing, psychology, education, or social work.
- Completion of one to four years of graduate school in psychology, social work, counseling, or education, usually specializing in counseling or psychotherapy. One of the following degrees is required to be a professional counselor: Master of Social Work (MSW), Master of Education (MEd), or Master of Arts in psychology (MA). In psychology and education, a doctorate can be completed (PhD or EdD). A Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) holds either a master's or doctorate degree, has two years of clinical supervision and must pass a written examination to become licensed

### Hourly Wage Range:

\$17.38-\$38.14 (Mean \$26.70)

*\*based on Alaska DOL data*

### Years in School:

5-8 years (after high school graduation).

### Academic Programs in Alaska

#### University of Alaska Anchorage

School of Nursing: <http://nursing.uaa.alaska.edu/>

Psychology Department: <http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/psych/>

College of Education: <http://coe.uaa.alaska.edu/>

School of Social Work: <http://socwork.uaa.alaska.edu/>

#### University of Alaska Fairbanks

School of Education: [www.uaf.edu/educ/graduate/index.html](http://www.uaf.edu/educ/graduate/index.html)

Department of Social Work: [www.uaf.edu/socwork/](http://www.uaf.edu/socwork/)

Department of Psychology: [www.uaf.edu/psych/](http://www.uaf.edu/psych/)

Alaska Pacific University: [www.alaskapacific.edu/academics/](http://www.alaskapacific.edu/academics/)

Departments/psych/Pages/Default.aspx

### State Contacts:

#### Alaska Counseling Association

Web site: <http://www.akcounseling.net/>

### National Contacts:

#### American Counseling Association

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

#### American Mental Health Counselors Association

Web site: <http://www.amhca.org>

#### Mental Health America

Web site: <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/about-us>

