

Assessment and Therapy

Mental health professionals provide a variety of services, including therapy and assessment. **Therapy** helps people better understand and cope with thoughts, feelings and behaviors. **Assessments** are analyses a mental health professional conducts to build a full picture of a person's strengths and weaknesses, and can sometimes result in a mental health diagnosis.

All of the types of providers below can provide therapy and assessment services, although each has a different certification and different strengths. None of these providers can prescribe medications.

Psychologist

Psychologists hold a doctoral degree in clinical psychology or another specialty such as counseling or education. They are trained to evaluate a person's mental health using clinical interviews, psychological evaluations and testing. They can make diagnoses and provide individual and group therapy. Some may have training in specific forms of therapy like cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) and other behavioral therapy interventions.

- ❖ **Degree requirements:** Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in a field of psychology or Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.), or MA/MS of Psychology plus Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC)
- ❖ **Licensure & credentials:** Psychologists are licensed by licensure boards in each state.

Counselor, Clinician, Therapist

These Master's-level health care professionals are trained to evaluate a person's mental health and use therapeutic techniques based on specific training programs. They operate under a variety of job titles—including counselor, clinician, therapist or something else—based on the treatment setting. Working with one of these mental health professionals can lead not only to symptom reduction but to better ways of thinking, feeling and living.

- ❖ **Degree requirements:** master's degree (M.S. or M.A.) in a mental health-related field such as psychology, counseling psychology, marriage or family therapy, among others.
- ❖ **Licensure & Certification:** Varies by specialty and state. Examples of licensure include LCPC (Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor), LMFT (Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist) and LCADAC (Licensed Clinical Alcohol & Drug Abuse Counselor).

Clinical Social Worker

Clinical social workers are trained to evaluate a person's mental health and use therapeutic techniques based on specific training programs. They are also trained in case management and advocacy services.

- ❖ **Degree requirements:** master's degree in social work (MSW).
- ❖ **Licensure & credentials:** Examples of licensure include: LICSW (Licensed Independent Social Worker), LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker), ACSW (Academy of Certified Social Worker)

Other Professionals Providing Mental Health Support

Many professionals provide mental health services outside the traditional clinical setting. These professionals provide unique sets of services that often complement the work of prescribers and therapists.

Certified Peer Specialists

These specialists have lived experience with a mental health condition or substance use disorder. They are often trained, certified and prepared to assist with recovery by helping a person set goals and develop strengths. They provide support, mentoring and guidance.

Social Workers

Social workers (BA or BSW) provide case management, inpatient discharge planning services, placement services and other services to support healthy living.

Pastoral Counselors

Pastoral counselors are clergy members with training in clinical pastoral education. They are trained to diagnose and provide counseling. Pastoral counselors are members of the Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC) and can have equivalents to a doctorate in counseling.