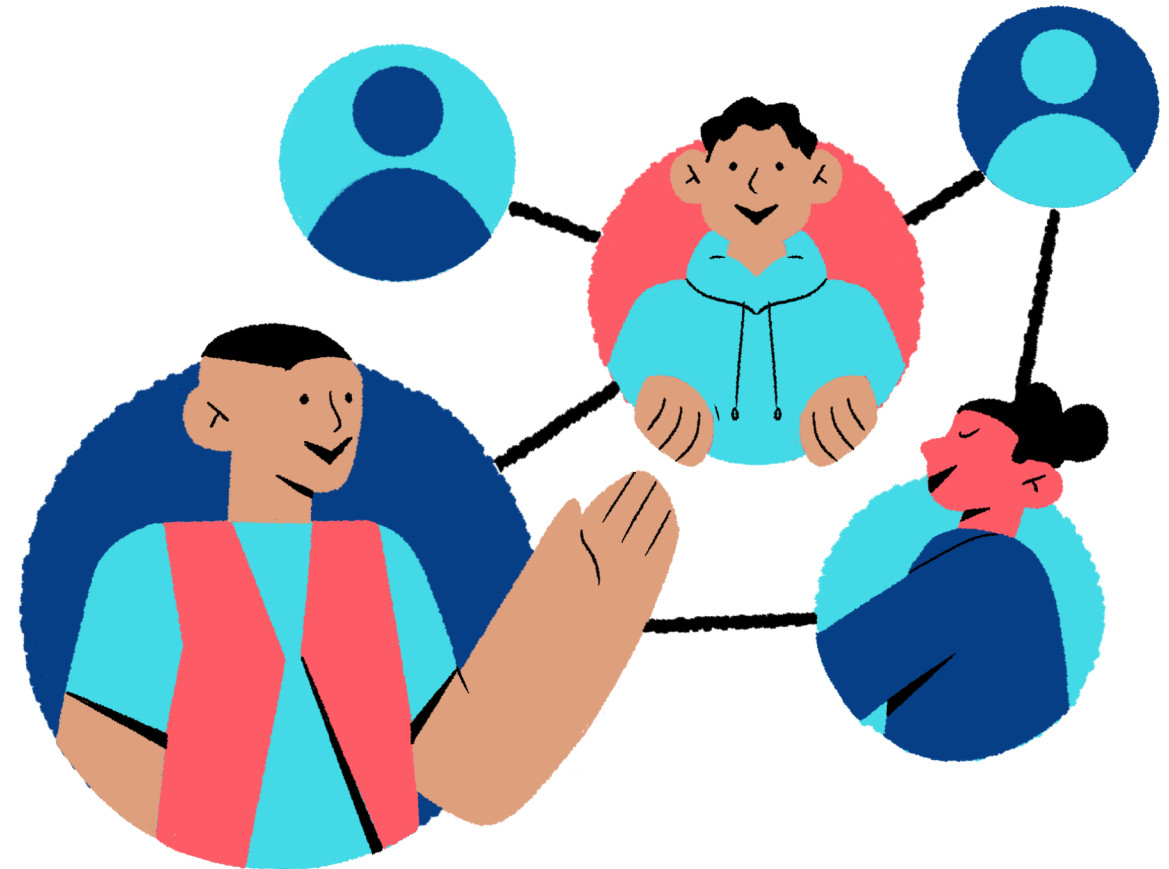


Mental Health Professions Game

Start

Help! You are working at a mental health career fair and these students need your help choosing the career that best suits them! Help guide these students by answering some common questions about different mental health professions, reviewing the roles of different mental health practitioners, and discussing what a day in the life looks like for each career.



Student Profile

What mental health career best suits Russell's interests?



Hi, I'm Russell! My favorite classes are subjects like chemistry or biology. I like a challenge and enjoy helping my friends talk through complex problems and enjoy understanding how other people's minds work. I know I want to work in medicine, so I don't mind going to school for a long time.

Psychiatrist



answer

A psychiatrist is a medical doctor who specializes in mental health. Think of them like a specialist doctor for your brain and emotions. Because they have gone through medical school (and have an M.D. or D.O. degree), they understand how the body and mind work together. They can diagnose mental health conditions like depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia. Importantly, psychiatrists are licensed to prescribe medication to help manage these conditions, and they often monitor how well the medication is working for their patients.

Education

Psychologists need a college degree, usually in a science like biology or chemistry. Then they must attend medical school to become a medical doctor (M.D. or D.O.), followed by about four years of special residency training focused on mental health. They are licensed as physicians.

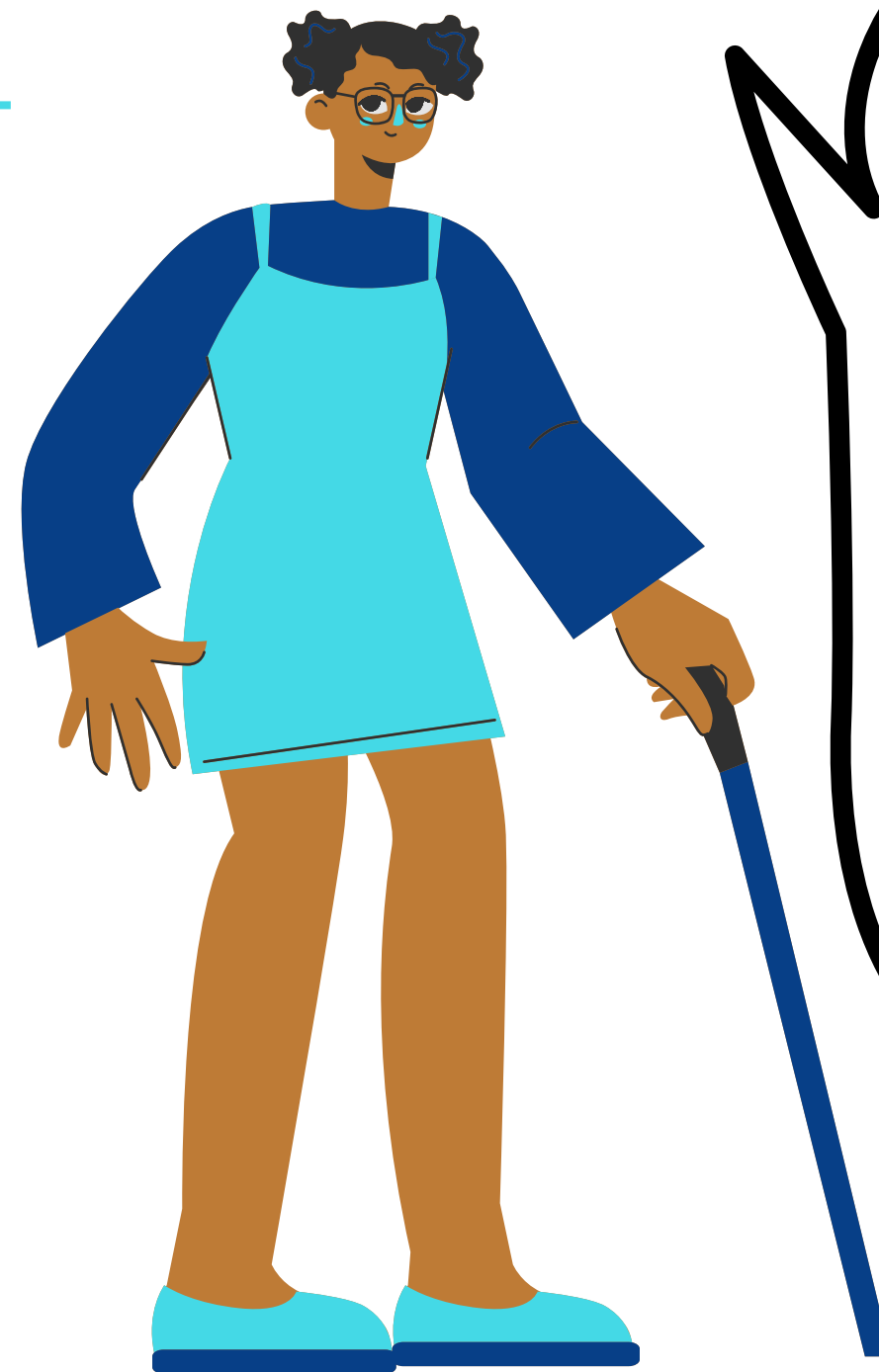
Salary

\$265,000 - \$295,000*

*salaries are estimates pulled from websites like Glassdoor and Indeed. Salary ranges will vary based on workplace, years of experience, and education.

Student Profile

What mental health career best suits
Alexia's interests?



Hi, I'm Alexia! I'm fascinated by the "why" behind people's actions – how our thoughts and feelings shape who we are, and I really enjoy digging into these ideas in psychology class. I think I'd like to help people understand themselves better through talk therapy, and maybe even do research to learn more about the mind.

Psychologist



answer

A psychologist studies how people think, feel, and act. They usually have a doctorate degree (like a Ph.D. or Psy.D.), which means they've had many years of education and training, but they are not medical doctors. Their main focus is often providing "talk therapy" (psychotherapy) to help people understand their problems, learn coping skills, and make changes in their lives. Psychologists can also give special tests to understand a person's learning abilities, personality, or the specific mental health challenges they might be facing. Most psychologists cannot prescribe medication.

Education

Requires a college degree in psychology, social sciences, or something similar, plus a doctorate degree (Ph.D. or Psy.D.) in psychology, which takes about 5-7 years after college. To practice, they also need supervised experience and must pass a national licensing exam.

Salary

\$100,000 to \$160,000

What is one KEY difference between a psychiatrist and most psychologists?

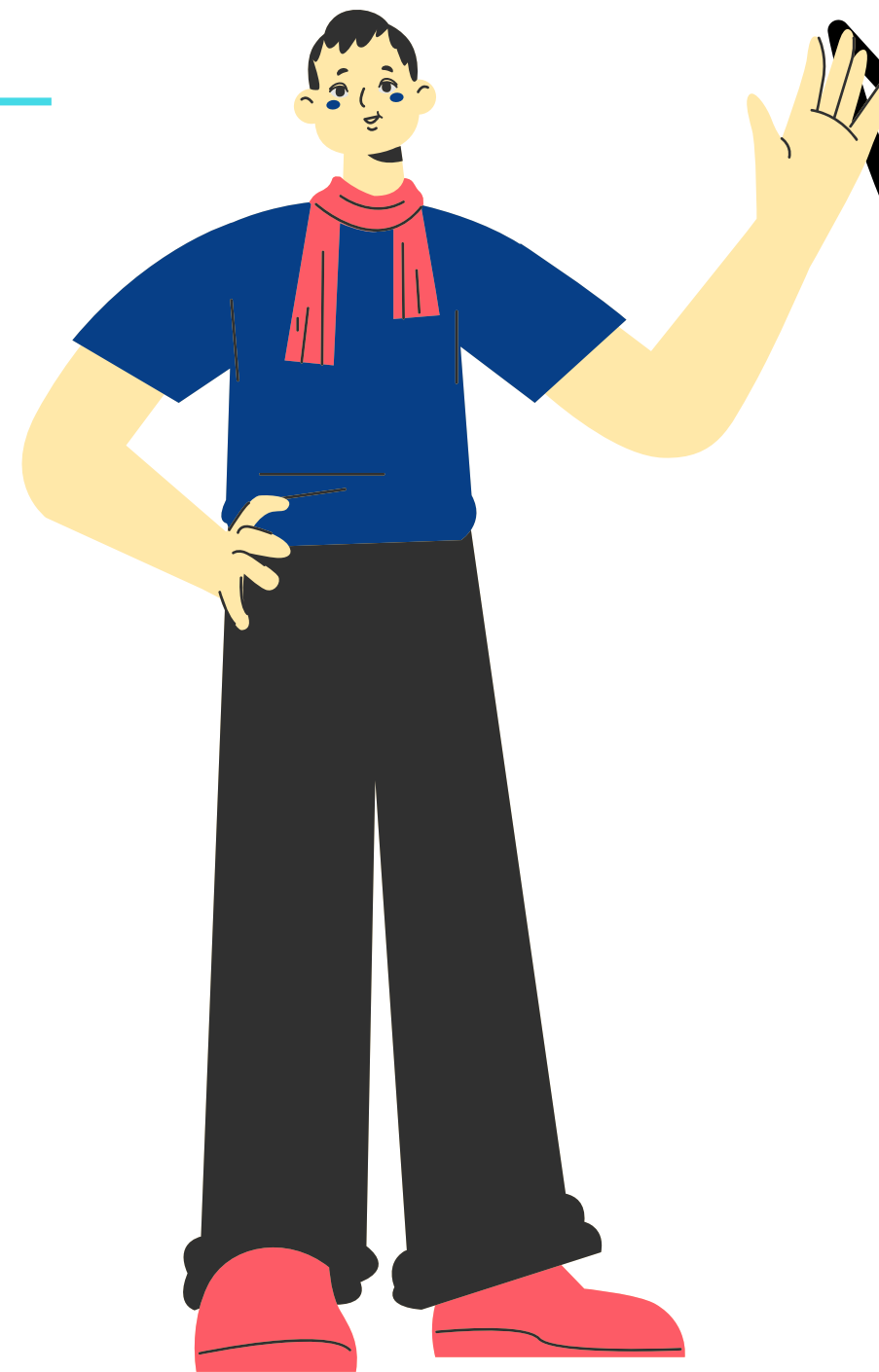
- a** Only psychologists can do talk therapy.
- b** Psychiatrists are medical doctors and can prescribe medication.
- c** Only psychiatrists work in hospitals.
- d** Psychologists focus only on group counseling.

answer

b **Psychiatrists** are medical doctors and can prescribe medication.

Student Profile

What mental health career best suits Matt's interests?



Hi, I'm Matt! I find myself really drawn to understanding why people struggle with challenges like addiction, and I feel a strong desire to support those who feel lost or are trying to make a big change in their lives. I believe people can overcome enormous obstacles, and I want to learn how to effectively help them find hope and build a path to recovery.

Substance Abuse Counselor



answer

A substance abuse counselor is trained specifically to help people dealing with problems related to using drugs or alcohol. They work with individuals to understand their addiction, develop plans to stop using, prevent relapse (going back to using), and build a healthier life in recovery. They might lead group counseling sessions, meet with people one-on-one, and help families understand addiction. Their main goal is to support people on their journey to overcome substance abuse.

Education

Requirements vary greatly by state, ranging from specific certification programs after high school to associate's, bachelor's, or master's degrees. Most need supervised work hours and to pass a state certification or licensing exam.

Salary

\$55,000 to \$75,000

*salaries are estimates pulled from websites like Glassdoor and Indeed. Salary ranges will vary based on workplace, years of experience, and education.

Who Helps?

Mrs. Lee is meeting with a high school student named Jordan who is struggling with anxiety around test taking. They talk about coping skills to help navigate this anxiety, and they talk about Jordan's overall goals in school. Jordan eventually realizes that his test anxiety is coming from the belief that if he fails any tests, he won't get into a "good" college. Mrs. Lee helps Jordan research colleges he's interested in and look at the application criteria so he can better understand what he needs to achieve in high school to get into the schools he's interested in.



What mental health profession have you learned about so far that would be **best suited** to handle this situation?

answer

School Counselor

Student Profile

What mental health career best suits
Brittany's interests?



Hi, I'm Brittany! I often notice how people's situations – like their family life, community, or access to resources – impact their mental health, and I feel driven to help people navigate those challenges. I want to be able to offer counseling while also connecting people with practical help like housing and food resources to help address the whole picture.

Social Worker

Social workers help people solve problems and cope with challenges in their everyday lives. Some social workers, often called clinical social workers (you might see LCSW after their name), are specially trained to provide mental health counseling, much like psychologists or therapists. They often look at the "bigger picture," considering a person's environment, family, school, or job situation. Besides therapy, they can also connect people with community resources like housing assistance, food programs, or healthcare services to help improve their overall well-being.

Education

Requires a college degree in social work, psychology, public health, education, or something similar and then a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree. To become licensed to provide therapy independently (LCSW), they need years of supervised work experience after the MSW and must pass a licensing exam.

Salary

\$60,000 to \$125,000.

*salaries are estimates pulled from websites like Glassdoor and Indeed. Salary ranges will vary based on workplace, years of experience, and education.

This professional often focuses on "talk therapy" and psychological testing to help people understand their thoughts and feelings, but usually cannot prescribe medicine. Who is it?

- a** Psychiatrist
- b** Mental Health Nurse Practitioner
- c** Substance Abuse Counselor
- d** Psychologist

answer

d Psychologist.

Both psychiatrists and Mental Health nurse Practitioners can prescribe or manage medication, and a substance abuse counselor does not provide regular talk therapy.

Who Helps?

Maya is meeting with a young adult named Sadie who is a few months into her recovery journey from opioid addiction. Sadie explains during her session that she's been feeling strong urges, or cravings, to use again, especially when she feels stressed about finding a job or hangs out near places where she used to buy drugs. She admits she's worried she might give in to the cravings. Maya listens patiently, validates how difficult cravings can be, and then works with Sadie to review the coping skills they've practiced, like identifying her specific triggers. Together, they call Sadie's sponsor or a supportive family member, and review using mindfulness techniques to get through the urge without acting on it.



What mental health profession have you learned about so far that would be **best suited** to handle this situation?



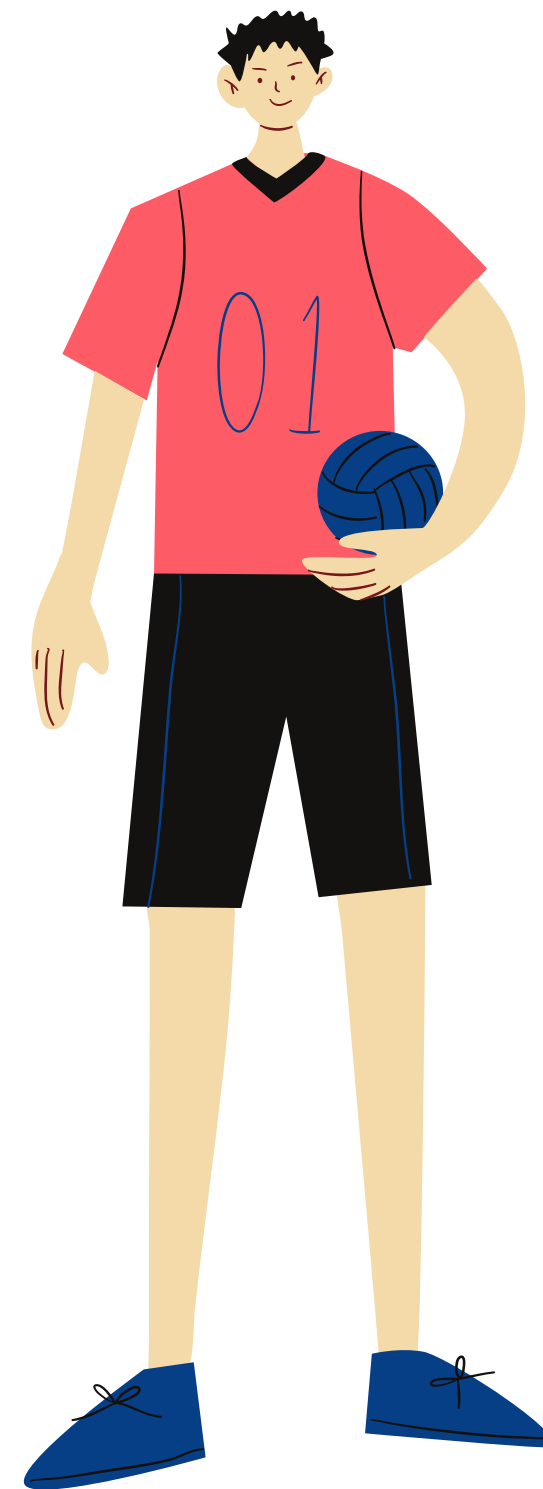
answer

Substance Use Counselor

Substance use counselors help individuals who are specifically struggling with drug or alcohol addiction. They work with folks to identify triggers, coping skills, and support systems like sponsors or family to help them avoid relapsing and continue on in their recovery.

Student Profile

What mental health career best suits Robin's interests?



Hi, I'm Robin! My faith is really important to me, and I also feel a strong pull towards supporting people through their emotional and mental struggles. I believe spirituality and mental health are connected, so I'm interested in offering guidance that includes both psychological understanding and faith-based support.

Pastoral Counselor



answer

A pastoral counselor provides mental health support while also considering a person's spiritual or religious beliefs. They blend counseling techniques with faith-based guidance. This type of counselor might be a minister, priest, rabbi, imam, or another religious leader who has received special training in counseling. They help people work through personal issues, grief, or mental health concerns in a way that respects and incorporates their spiritual life and values.

Education

Schooling varies; it could be a religious leader with extra counseling training or someone with a counseling degree focused on integrating faith. Formal licensing requirements depend on the state and their specific role.

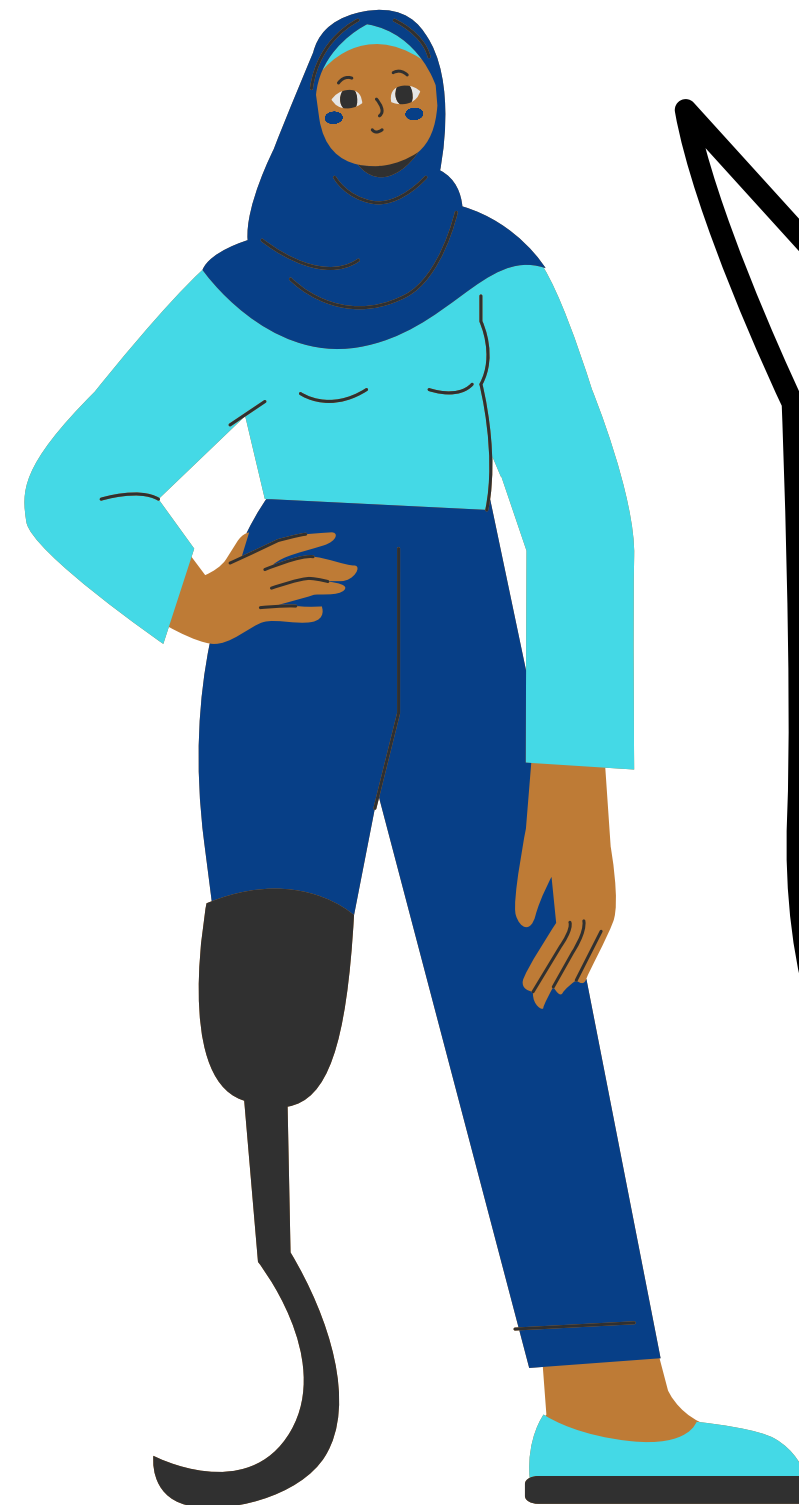
Salary

\$40,000 to \$100,000.

*salaries are estimates pulled from websites like Glassdoor and Indeed. Salary ranges will vary based on workplace, years of experience, and education.

Student Profile

What mental health career best suits Jasmine's interests?



Hi, I'm Jasmine! I'm drawn to both the science side of healthcare, like biology, and the personal side of helping people with their mental well-being. I want something that combines working in a medical setting with the ability to provide therapy and manage medications for mental health conditions.

Mental Health Nurse Practitioner



answer

A Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (often called an MHNP or PMHNP) is a registered nurse who has completed extra education and specialized training in mental health care, usually earning a master's or doctoral degree. Like psychiatrists, they are qualified to assess patients, diagnose mental health conditions, provide counseling or therapy, and prescribe medications. They bring a nursing perspective to care, focusing on the whole person and their overall health while managing their mental health needs.

Education

Requires an associate's degree in nursing (ADN) or a bachelor's degree in nursing. Must pass the NCLEX_RN exam to become a Registered Nurse (RN) and become licensed, then earn an advanced degree (Master's or Doctorate) in psychiatric mental health nursing. They need to pass a national certification exam and get licensed by the state as an advanced practice nurse.

Salary

\$140,000 to \$160,000

*salaries are estimates pulled from websites like Glassdoor and Indeed. Salary ranges will vary based on workplace, years of experience, and education.

Which professional helps people cope with various life challenges, connects them with community resources (like housing or job help), and might also provide counseling?

- a** Psychiatrist
- b** Social Worker
- c** Peer Support Counselor
- d** Psychologist

answer

d Social Worker

Who Helps?

Dr. Evans, is meeting with a patient named Sam for a follow-up appointment. Sam started taking an antidepressant medication about six weeks ago for feelings of depression and anxiety. When Dr. Evans asks how things are going, Sam explains that while their mood seems a little bit better, the medication makes them feel extremely tired all day, making it hard to concentrate at school or work. Sam feels stuck, wanting the mood improvement but struggling with the constant fatigue caused by the medicine. Dr. Evans provides Sam with some different options about how to find a balance between his medications and his goals for how he wants to feel.



What mental health profession have you learned about so far that would be **best suited** to handle this situation?



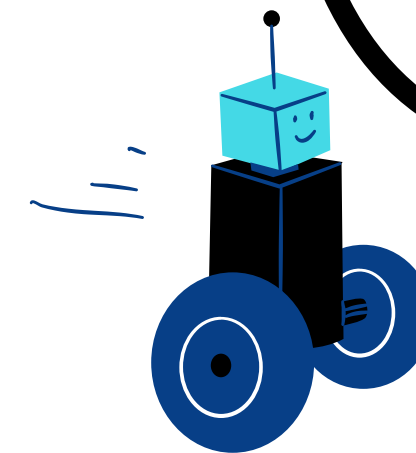
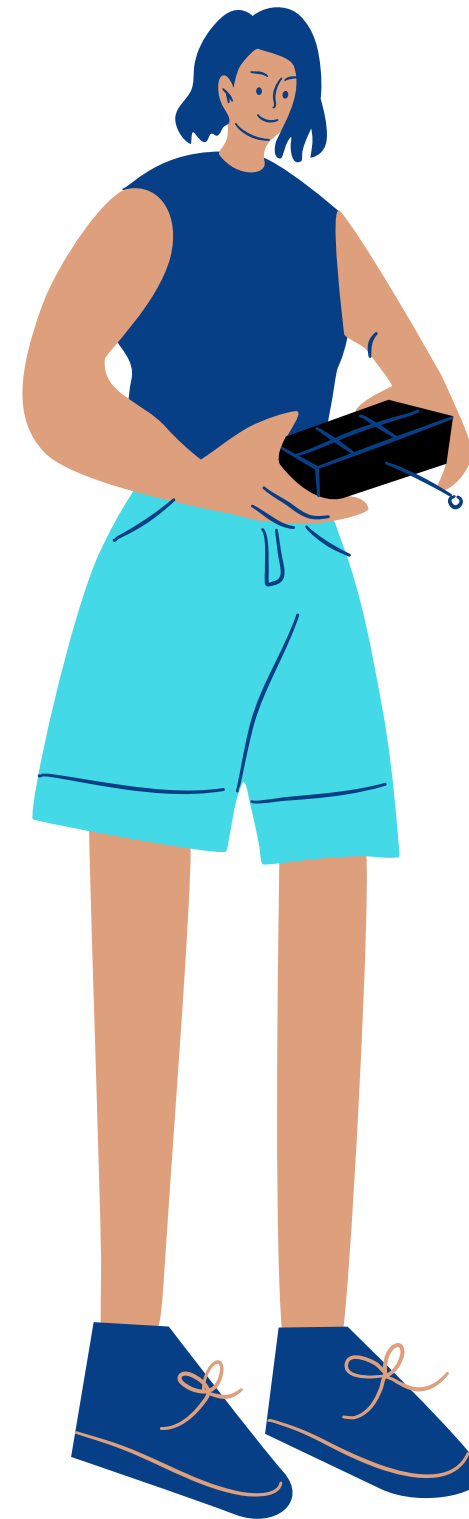
answer

Psychiatrist.

While a Mental Health Nurse Practitioner could do something similar, they are not a medical doctor.

Student Profile

What mental health career best suits Lin's interests?



Hi, I'm Lin! Going through my own challenges has shown me how powerful it is to connect with someone who truly gets what it's like because they've experienced something similar. Because of that, I hope someday I can use my own lived experience to provide real understanding, hope, and support to others on their journey.

answer

Peer Support Counselor

A Peer Support Counselor, sometimes called a Peer Specialist, is someone who has personally experienced and recovered from their own mental health challenges or substance abuse issues. They use their unique "lived experience" to help others who are going through similar struggles. They offer understanding, hope, encouragement, and practical tips based on what they learned on their own journey. They act as role models and provide support from the perspective of someone who truly understands what it's like.

Education

The main requirement is personal lived experience with mental health or substance use recovery, plus completing a state-approved training program. They typically earn a state certification rather than needing a college degree.

Salary

\$40,000 to \$60,000

*salaries are estimates pulled from websites like Glassdoor and Indeed. Salary ranges will vary based on workplace, years of experience, and education.

Who Helps?

Ms. Priya Sharma is meeting with a student named Carlos, who has been frequently missing school and whose grades have dropped suddenly. Carlos reveals that his parents are going through a difficult separation, there's a lot of arguing at home, and he often has to care for his younger sibling because his parents are distracted or working extra hours. Carlos feels overwhelmed by the tension at home and his new responsibilities, making it hard to focus on school or even want to attend. Ms. Sharma talks through what supports Carlos can rely on, like friends or a trusted adult, and helps Carlos make a list of what his morning and evening responsibilities are every day, so it feels less overwhelming. Ms. Sharma also speaks to Carlos's teachers and works with them to provide flexible due dates so Carlos can feel less pressure to get things in at a certain time. Later that week, Ms. Sharma visits Carlos and his family at home and speaks to them about how to make things easier around the house.



What mental health profession have you learned about so far that would be **best suited** to handle this situation?



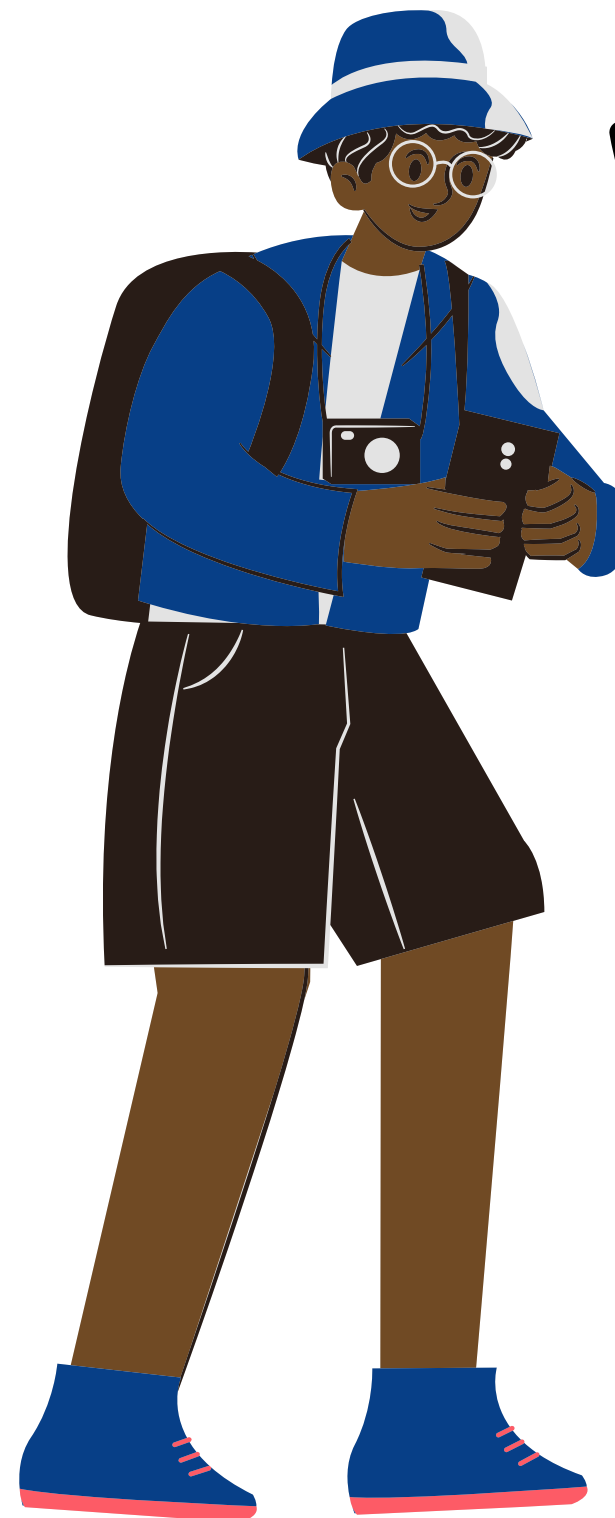
answer

Social Worker

Social Workers do a little bit of everything and often work in various parts of a client's life to help them achieve their goals, including doing counseling, conducting home visits, and connecting them to community resources.

Student Profile

What mental health career best suits Myles's interests?



Hi, I'm Myles! I want to support others to work through everyday problems and become the best version of themselves. I want to meet with clients regularly for therapy sessions and help them develop coping mechanisms and improve communication.



answer

Licensed Professional Counselor, Psychologist, or Social Worker

"Therapist" is often used as a general term for a mental health professional who provides "talk therapy," also known as psychotherapy or counseling. They are usually LPCs, psychologists, or social workers. Their main job is to help people understand and work through their problems, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. A therapist listens carefully, offers support and guidance, and teaches coping skills to help people manage stress, anxiety, depression, relationship issues, or other life challenges. While they generally don't prescribe medication, they focus on helping you make positive changes through conversation and specific therapeutic techniques.

Education

Requires a college degree in psychology, social work, sociology, or child development, followed by a master's degree in counseling. After graduation, they need thousands of hours of supervised counseling experience and must pass a state licensing exam.

Salary

\$65,000 to \$150,000

*salaries are estimates pulled from websites like Glassdoor and Indeed. Salary ranges will vary based on workplace, years of experience, and education.

A person looking for counseling that incorporates their religious or spiritual beliefs might seek help from which professional?

- a** Substance Abuse Counselor
- b** Psychiatrist
- c** Peer Support Counselor
- d** Pastoral Counselor

answer

d Pastoral Counselor

You did it!

Great job!

