

What is Counselling Psychology?

Counselling psychology focuses on the emotional, social, vocational, educational, health-related, developmental, and organizational concerns as they promote personal and interpersonal functioning throughout life. Always sensitive to multicultural issues, counselling psychologists integrate theory, research and practice, to help people improve their well being, alleviate distress and maladjustment, resolve crisis, and increase their ability to live more highly functioning lives. Counselling psychologists usually deal with reasonably well-adjusted people, however, they can also aid those with mental dysfunctions.

What Do Counselling Psychologists Do?

Counselling psychologists participate in teaching, research, psychotherapeutic and counselling practice, career development, assessment, supervision, and consultation. They help individuals, groups, and organizations to function optimally as well as to mediate dysfunction. Interventions may be either brief or long-term; they are often problem-specific and goal-directed. These activities are guided by a philosophy that values individual differences and diversity with a focus on prevention, development, and adjustment across the life span.

Persons of all ages and cultural backgrounds, including late adolescents or adults with career/educational concerns and children or adults facing severe personal difficulties are serviced by counselling psychologists. They may also consult with organizations seeking to enhance their effectiveness or the well being of their members.

Where Do They Work?

Counselling psychologists are employed in a variety of settings depending on the services they provide and the client populations they serve. Some are employed in colleges and

universities as teachers, supervisors, researchers, and service providers. Others are employed in independent practice providing counselling, psychotherapy, assessment, and consultation services to individuals, families, groups, and organizations. Additional settings in which counselling psychologists practice include community mental health centres, business and industrial organizations, and consulting firms.

How Does One Become A Counselling Psychologist?

Usually the path to becoming a counselling psychologist includes a 4-year undergraduate degree in psychology and either a Master's (MA, MSc) and/or a Doctorate (PhD) in Counselling Psychology. There is also a Special Education Counseling program that focuses on counseling within the education system (M.Ed). Examples of this are guidance counselors at schools or universities.

Both the CPA (Canadian Psychological Association) and APA (American Psychological Association) accredit certain universities that have demonstrated standards at a level of quality set forth by the accrediting group. For more information regarding accrediting, what it means and which schools have been accredited in the United States and Canada visit the APA website and the CPA website. Both links can be found under the 'Useful Links' section of this handout.

What is Clinical Psychology?

Clinical psychology deals with the assessment and treatment of people who have mental, emotional, or physiological disorders. Clinical psychologists usually work with clients whose behavioural problems are more severe than those of clients of counselling psychologists. A clinical psychologist might provide individual or group therapy, assist clients with drug-related problems, or test patients for psychological and neurological problems.

The services provided by clinical and counselling psychologists almost always require at least a masters or doctoral degree. Most of these psychologists have completed four or five years of graduate training and many have completed additional years in a supervised therapy setting. The degree requirements for clinical psychologists are usually more stringent than those of counselling psychologists.

To become a clinical psychologist one must attend a clinical degree program. There are many schools in Canada that offer clinical programs for both a Master's and Ph.D. The same accredited list of programs offered by schools is available for clinical as well as for the counselling on the CPA website.

Acceptance into a clinical program is extremely competitive and one must have both a strong academic record, including top GRE scores, as well as relevant research experience. It can be difficult to find research experience that is clinically related and this area is often where most applicants are deficient. However, one way to gain the experience is to volunteer in hospitals doing assessments, writing research reports or volunteering within a lab already conducting clinical research.

Useful Links:

Canadian Psychological Association - www.cpa.ca

Canadian Counselling Association – www.ccacc.ca

Counselling Foundation of Canada – www.counselling.net

American Psychological Association Division 17 Society of Counselling Psychology – www.apa.org

University of Calgary FAQ on Clinical Psychology (good!) - www.psych.ucalgary.ca/students/careers/clinical_faq.html



DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY, NEUROSCIENCE & BEHAVIOUR



INFORMATION REGARDING COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

Many students often confuse counselling psychology and clinical psychology. This pamphlet will help clarify the difference between the two areas of psychology.

Science Career Services

<http://www.science.mcmaster.ca/scs/index>

Career Services

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/services/career.cfm>