



CAREERS IN COUNSELLING

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OVERVIEW

What Is Counselling?

Formal counselling can be defined as intervention by a trained counsellor, in the form of assessment, guidance, education, and support in order to assist clients in coping with various life situations. This process is geared towards change in cognitive, affective, behavioural, and contextual experiences that interfere with healthy development and functioning of a person. While it does *not* tell someone what to do, it certainly offers different perspectives and new strategies to deal with situations, and the client takes an active role in the process.

Intervention can range from short-term counselling to long-term therapy, be performed on a one-on-one basis or group setting, over the phone or through face to face contact, and focus on personal or other type of issues, depending on the client group and circumstances. Clients are individuals or groups of all ages and from a wide range of backgrounds, who are in need of professional assistance. They might experience personal problems (such as anxiety, anger, grief, crisis, illness, depression, addictions, eating disorders, relationship conflicts etc.) or be concerned about an event of their daily life (such as employment transition, career management, educational planning, financial budgeting etc.).

Careers Within Counselling

The term *Counsellor* in Canada is not regulated by government legislation through licensure (except for the Province of Quebec). However, certain professional associations certify only candidates who have a particular level of training and adhere to their ethical framework.

Counsellors work in all types of work settings (government, education community, health, business, private practice) depending on their client group, area of specialization, education, and experience. Since salary expectations, employment outlook, and educational requirements vary, students are encouraged to do their own research. The following two charts give a brief overview of some areas of specialization within counselling, as well as counselling professions and related occupations.

Addictions Counsellor

Job Description

Addiction is a disease that affects millions of people. From alcohol to drugs to gambling, addictions can be brought on by many factors. Luckily, there are experts who help their clients overcome this disabling condition. Counsellors meet with addicts of all kinds. They learn about their clients' history and habits. Many addicts also suffer from emotional problems. Feelings of depression and anxiety are common for these clients. All clients have unique needs. They tend to meet their counsellors on a regular basis. Counsellors get to know their clients very well. This allows them to decide on the best treatment to use.

Addictions counsellors keep detailed records of clients' progress. They decide when a client no longer needs treatment. It's common for these experts to focus on treating one type of client. Some counsellors

work with alcoholics or drug addicts. Some of them help clients to quit smoking. Others focus on clients with behavioural issues, like gambling or eating disorders.

Workplace

Addiction counsellors can work in private practices, day treatment centres, and rehab facilities. They can work for detox centres, addiction treatment organizations, social service agencies, or be self-employed.

Core Tasks

- Meet with clients to assess the extent of their addictions
- Develop treatment plans or refer clients to recovery programs
- Counsel, support, and encourage clients through the recovery process
- Monitor clients' progress and write reports
- Educate the public on addiction prevention

Attributes and Abilities

- Patient
- Understanding and empathetic
- Non-judgemental
- Communication and listening skills
- Good with people

Earnings and Education

You can get a degree or diploma in addictions studies and counselling. You may want to study a related area, like psychology or social work. Many universities and colleges offer programs in these areas. Programs last from 2 to 4 years. Shorter certificate programs are available as well. Most students already have a degree or diploma before they get a certificate.

You can become certified in this career. Your title will be International Certified Alcohol and Drug Counsellor (ICADC). This option is offered by the Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Federation (CACCF).

Requirements to work in this field vary by region. In some areas, you need a certificate from the CACCF. In others, you must complete an internship and get a licence. In certain regions, you need a graduate degree. Your degree can be in addictions counselling or a related subject.

Addictions counsellors can work full time or part time. Most people in this career get paid an hourly wage. Some earn an annual salary.

Earnings in this field can range from about \$30,000 to \$70,000 a year. Some senior counsellors earn more than \$80,000 a year. Incomes vary by region. They also depend on a person's level of education and area of specialization. Counsellors with more education tend to earn more money.

Career Counsellor

Job Description

Career counsellors help clients set realistic career goals. These goals reflect who the clients are and what they want to do. Counsellors help clients understand themselves. They also show them how to find information on the many choices that are out there. They provide tips on how to job search. Writing resumes, networking, and interviewing are all part of this process. Counsellors often use testing to help clients understand what they want. They also help clients to know their options and set goals. They help them make a plan to reach those goals. They also help job seekers with personal or social problems. These issues can make it hard to find good work.

They can help employees adjust to new jobs as well. They also come up with plans to improve worker performance and cut down on stress. They help employees find other jobs within the company. Counsellors follow trends in the labour market and economy. They also learn what it takes to work in many different careers.

Workplace

Career counsellors work for schools, colleges and universities, governments, large companies, and private employment agencies. Some are self-employed. Most work 9-to-5, Monday to Friday. They may work nights or weekends if they are putting on workshops.

Core Tasks

- Use interviews and assessments to identify clients' interests, skills, and abilities
- Coach clients on interview techniques, resume writing, and networking
- Help job seekers with personal or social problems
- Research labour market trends and occupations
- Some work as consultants to companies

Attributes and Abilities

- An interest in human behaviour and development
- Knowledgeable about careers and the labour market
- Communication skills
- Patient and understanding

Earnings and Education

The education you need depends on your employer. To work at a university or college, you usually need a master's degree. This is typically in counselling or a related area. To work at a community or social service agency, you usually need a diploma or degree. You can study psychology, social work, or education. You also need training or experience in career counselling. Private companies often look for candidates who have broad training in human resources. They also want you to have specialized knowledge. This can be in career counselling or a related subject, such as organizational psychology.

It's a good idea to start by getting a bachelor's degree. You should take at least a few courses in sociology and psychology. You can then go on to take a master's degree in counselling. You can also do a post-graduate certificate or diploma in career counselling. If you want to start with a shorter

program, you can take a certificate or diploma program. There are many of these options for career counselling or development. Some include a co-op unit, which allows you to work while you learn.

The median income for career counsellors is about \$50,000 a year. Most people in this field earn between \$36,000 and \$83,000 a year. If they are also managers, or consult for successful companies, they can earn even more. Career counsellors' earnings depend on the type of company they work for. Experience, education, and location also matter.

School Counsellor

Job Description

School counsellors are there to help students make good choices concerning their career goals. They help youth handle tough situations as well. A large part of this job is giving advice on school and career goals. Many counsellors use assessment tests and interviews. These can help students to define their interests and identify their skills. At times, they meet one on one with students. In other cases, they hold career guidance workshops in classes.

To help with career plans, counsellors collect and organize large amounts of data. This relates to more than just jobs. It tells students what they need to get into their ideal college or university. They may also want to learn about apprenticeship training and financial aid. In some cases, counsellors run career centres. They may also set up job and university fairs.

work with teachers and school administrators. They talk to parents, and reach out to community agencies. They may consult psychologists and nurses about health or mental health issues.

In elementary schools, counsellors do not focus on career and academic issues. They help these younger students learn how to use their strengths. They teach ways to solve problems and how to develop good study habits. They may provide extra support to kids with developmental needs.

Workplace

School counsellors may work for: public and private schools, colleges and universities, technical and trade schools, and youth correctional facilities. They work about 7 to 8 hours a day. They also spend time preparing for the school day or overseeing after-school activities. Their yearly schedule is the same as a teacher's. They spend 9 to 10 months in school, and have 2 or 3 months off during the summer.

Core Tasks

- Use assessment tests to help students define their interests and abilities
- Provide information on post-secondary education and training, and financial aid
- Organize and run workshops and job fairs
- Help students cope with personal and social issues
- Teach communication, problem-solving, and teamwork skills

Attributes and Abilities

- A desire to help people
- Enjoy working with children and young adults

- Adaptable
- Problem-solving skills
- Communication and teamwork skills

Earnings and Education

Most school counsellors in Canada become teachers first. Those who work in publicly funded schools need a teaching certificate. After you become a teacher, you can do programs in counselling. You can also take courses in guidance and career education. These allow you to move into counselling. School counsellors also need to give personal and social advice. Many choose to do a master's degree in counselling. Others do a degree in related field, such as social work.

The Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA) offers certification. You can get the Canadian Certified Counsellor (CCC) credential from the CCPA. This is to mark professionalism. It promotes continuing education in the field. To get it, you need to do a master's program in counselling. You also have to do a certain number of hours of direct work with clients. Many school districts hire based on CCC standards.

Salaries for school counsellors range from about \$38,000 to \$99,000 a year. The median income is \$69,000 a year. Income depends on location, seniority, and level of education. Those with master's degrees or PhDs often earn more.

Abuse/Crisis Counsellor

Job Description

Counsellors work with people who are dealing with different types of crises. Some are victims of domestic violence. Others may be dealing with a trauma, such as a mugging. Some counsellors work with clients who want to hurt themselves. But all counsellors have the same goal. They want to improve their clients' lives.

Domestic violence counsellors help people who deal with abuse in the home. They start by telling clients who come to see them what options are available to them. These people need to get out of the abusive household. Counsellors also explain their clients' legal rights to them. Counsellors use different strategies to help these victims get out. It's their job to build their clients' confidence. They try to help clients realize that the abuse is not their fault. Counsellors try to empower their clients so they feel more ready to make a change.

Crisis counsellors deal with those who suffer from other crises as well. Clients might be overwhelmed by grief, fear, or anger. Counsellors help their clients cope with these feelings. They want their clients to become happy, hopeful, and productive.

Workplace

Abuse and crisis counsellors can work for hospitals, shelters, school boards, colleges and universities, social service agencies, and non-profit organizations

Their hours depend on where they work. Those who work for government agencies generally work regular 8-hour days. Others do shift work in a shelter or on a 24-hour hotline. These counsellors often work evenings, overnight, and weekends.

Core Tasks

- Provide one-on-one counselling to clients
- Help build self-esteem and confidence in clients
- Provide information on shelters, government services, and other programs
- Inform victims of abuse of their legal rights
- Raise awareness of the effects of physical and mental abuse

Attributes and Abilities

- Emotionally mature and stable
- Able to deal with people in distress
- Sensitive and compassionate
- Patient
- Communication skills

Earnings and Education

Requirements for abuse and crisis counsellors often depends on the employer. At the very least, you need a degree or diploma in a field related to mental health. Some options include psychology, social services, and social work. Many prefer you to have a master's degree. Most counsellors have a master's in social work (MSW) or clinical psychology. You can also choose to take a counselling certificate program. These programs cover areas like domestic violence and crisis intervention.

Full-time counsellors can earn between \$30,000 and \$65,000 a year. Those who become supervisors or directors can earn more than this. Counsellors who work part time can earn \$15 to \$40 an hour. There are many other factors that affect income. Education, experience, and location are just a few. Earnings also depend on employer. Those who work at a small organization tend to make less than those working for a government agency.

Marriage and Family Therapist

Job Description

These therapists help couples who are unhappy in their marriage. They also help parents and children who don't get along. They help all people cope with divorce, illness, or death. Therapists often treat problems like depression or anxiety. They may also deal with clients who have eating disorders or addictions. They handle crises like family violence or suicide prevention as well.

The first step in the process is to interview new clients. Therapists ask questions to determine how they're feeling. They also try to find out more about the issues affecting their clients. Once the assessment is done, they can plan a program of therapy. Most therapists provide short-term therapy.

They work with their clients to set and work towards goals. Therapists help clients develop the skills to solve problems. They teach them techniques to deal with stress. They also show them ways to better express their feelings to those around them. In some cases, they may refer clients to another professional for help. That could include doctors, psychiatrists, or lawyers.

Workplace

Marriage and family therapists work for social service agencies, community organization and counselling centres, hospitals, correctional facilities, or are self-employed.

Some work in private practices, either on their own or with other health professionals. Therapists with agencies and community programs usually work 40 hours a week. They may work on evenings and weekends. Some do home visits.

Core Tasks

- Interview clients and assess their situations and feelings
- Listen to clients' concerns about depression, divorce, family conflict, and other problems
- Provide one-on-one or group counselling to clients
- Refer clients to resources, such as legal aid
- Keep records and monitor clients' progress

Attributes and Abilities

- Emotionally mature and stable
- Listening skills
- Communication skills
- Non-judgemental and open-minded
- Volunteer experience is useful

Earnings and Education

Many bachelor's degrees will prepare you to train as a therapist. It's common to get a degree in psychology or social work. A family studies or nursing program would also be suitable. After the bachelor's degree, you need a master's degree in marriage and family therapy (MFT). You can also do a master's degree in another mental health field. Psychiatry and psychology are suitable subjects. Clinical social work or psychiatric nursing are other options. You can then study MFT in-depth in a post-graduate training program. You also need to become a member of a professional association for MFTs. Each province and territory has one. Check with the association in your area for more details.

Most therapists earn between \$35,000 and \$90,000 a year. Those just starting out at an agency or community program can make between \$30,000 and \$35,000 a year. As they gain experience, they can earn between \$40,000 and \$75,000 a year. With even more experience, higher earnings are possible. Established therapists can earn around \$90,000 a year. Agency or program directors earn the most.

Other Careers in Counselling

- **Rehabilitation counsellor**
- **Adoption counsellor**
- **Credit counselor**
- **Community worker**
- **Career coach**
- **Mediator**
- **Genetic counsellor**
- **Bereavement counsellor**
- **Child and youth work**
- **Travel agent**
- **Psychologist**
- **Occupational therapist**

More information can be found on Career Cruising by logging into [CLNx](#) and checking under the "Resources" tab.

SKILLS AND QUALITIES

The work of counsellors involves matters of sensitive and confidential nature. The following skills and qualities are needed to perform well in this profession.

- **Communication** (both verbal and written) – interview clients, listen actively, ask relevant questions, speak clearly and concisely, read and write reports.
- **Interpersonal** – assist, advise, teach, and guide clients through process of evaluating situations and taking action
- **Problem solving and creativity** – observe and analyze situations from different perspectives, evaluate and interpret client's responses to show options for solutions, actions, and consequences
- **Knowledge of subject matter** – apply appropriate counselling methods relevant to client's needs
- **Organization** – plan, develop, schedule, and administer counselling programs
- **Objectivity** - assess situation from different perspectives free from personal values, interests, beliefs, or judgment
- **Emotional maturity** - ability to handle difficult situations and distance oneself from client's problems or emotions
- **Awareness of diversity** - be sensitive to differences in age, culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic class etc.
- **Confidentiality** - ensure that client's personal information is kept confidential
- **Respect, patience, responsibility, empathy, willingness to help** - important in dealing with clients

FURTHER EDUCATION

There is not one defined route to become a Counsellor. The educational requirements for a career in Counselling depend on the type of counselling, client group, work setting, and region one wants to work in. Most employers prefer to hire candidates with post-secondary education. For Accreditation

through Professional Associations, a combination of post- secondary education at the Master's level, supervised hours of practice and experience in direct counselling is essential.

Masters Level Programs in Ontario

- *Saint Paul University, Counselling and Spirituality, Master of Arts*
- *The University of Western Ontario, Counselling Psychology, Master of Arts*
- *University of Guelph, Family Relations and Applied Nutrition, Master of Science*
- *University of Ottawa, Education, Master of Arts/Master of Education*
- *University of Toronto, Counselling Psychology, Master of Arts/Master of Education*
- *Wilfrid Laurier University, Theology, Master of Arts*

Doctorate Level Programs in Ontario

- *McMaster University, Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics, Doctor of Medicine*
- *Saint Paul University, Counselling and Spirituality, Doctor of Philosophy*
- *University of Toronto, Counselling Psychology, Doctor of Philosophy*
- *University of Ottawa, Education Counselling, Doctor of Philosophy*

Additional Resources

Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association

<https://www.ccpa-accp.ca/students/graduate-programs/canadian-graduate-programs/>

OntarioColleges.ca

<https://www.ontariocolleges.ca/en/programs/education-community-and-social-services/counselling-social>

CareerWise

<https://careerwise.ceric.ca/2020/09/21/master-of-counselling-programs-in-canada/#.X2wuKpNKgzU>

BUILDING EXPERIENCE AND FINDING WORK

Experience is key in counselling careers. Gaining direct counselling experience as a student might be easier in certain settings (e.g. Crisis Line Counsellor), but difficult in others (e.g. Genetic Counselling). But it is a good idea to acquire *relevant* experience, for instance in dealing effectively with people by building and improving interpersonal, communication, problem solving, and other essential skills through a volunteer, part-time, summer job, or internship. By getting involved in an organization that provides services to the client group you want to work with later on, you can explore the area of specialization within counselling or the work setting that you are interested in. The training provided by organizations for these positions often provides you with relevant skills for counselling roles (e.g. Crisis Line, Distress Centre, Rape Crisis Centre, Residence Dons).

For example:

- a) You want to become a Career Counsellor in a university setting and want to gain relevant experience. One way to do this is working as a Career Assistant in the UTM Career Centre, as you will deal with university students in their career development process, and the type of client group you will be working with later on. The training provides you with specific skills in active listening, dealing with students' career questions etc.
- b) You are thinking of becoming a Social Worker, possibly with a focus on Family and Marriage Counselling. To gain relevant experience you could volunteer for a community organization that provides services to families with relationship problems, for example be a Mentor for assaulted women with Victim Services of Peel. Their training is extensive and covers practical topics (e.g. active listening) to theoretical background on the Domestic Violence.

Events

Attending career panels, networking events, employer info sessions, and career fairs is a great way to meet professionals and learn more about careers, companies, and industries.

Talk to Professors

Connecting with your professors can be a great way to explore the different paths a major can lead you to, as well as learn about possible opportunities for research, volunteering, or becoming a TA. Drop by during their office hours or request an appointment.

Student Organizations

Join a student club or an academic society at UTM to meet like-minded people, explore your interests, and make valuable connections. To view a list of current clubs and societies, visit the Centre for Student Engagement's website. Some organizations you may consider are:

- Psychology Association of Undergraduate Students at Erindale
- Sexual Education & Peer Counselling Centre
- Health Out Loud
- OUT&UTM

Professional Associations

There are many benefits of becoming a member of association(s), such as developing a network of contacts, learning about industry trends, accessing industry-related job postings, and stating your affiliation on your resume. Some associations related to this career are:

- [Canadian Counselling Psychotherapy Association \(CCPA\)](#)
- [Ontario Association of Mental Health Professionals \(OAMHP\)](#)
- [Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Federation \(CACCF\)](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association

<https://www.ccpa-accp.ca/>

Canadian Association of College & University Student Services

<https://www.cacuss.ca/index.html>

Ontario Association of Mental Health Professionals

<https://oamhp.ca/>

Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Federation

<https://caccf.ca/>

UTM Career Centre Job Postings

<https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/jobs/job-postings>

The Counselling Foundation of Canada

<https://counselling.foundation/>

Careers In Psychology

<https://careersinpsychology.org/starting-a-career-in-counseling/>

Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers

<https://www.cacee.com/>

Ontario Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

<https://oamft.com/>

Canadian Association for Genetic Counsellors

<https://www.cagc-accg.ca/>

Ontario School Counsellors' Association

<https://www.osca.ca/>

College of Psychologists of Ontario

<https://cpo.on.ca/>