

Clinical Psychologist

Professional Activities

Clinical psychologists—who constitute the largest specialty—are concerned with the assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental disorders. While some clinical psychologists specialize in treating severe psychological disorders, such as schizophrenia and depression, many others may help people deal with personal issues, such as divorce or the death of a loved one. Often, clinical psychologists provide an opportunity to talk and think about things that are confusing or worrying, offering different ways of interpreting and understanding problems and situations. They are trained to use a variety of approaches aimed at helping individuals, and the strategies used are generally determined by the specialty they work in.

Clinical psychologists often interview patients and give diagnostic tests in their own private offices. They may provide individual, family, or group psychotherapy and may design and implement behavior modification programs. Some clinical psychologists work in hospitals where they collaborate with physicians and other specialists to develop and implement treatment and intervention programs that patients can understand and comply with. Other clinical psychologists work in universities and medical schools, where they train graduate students in the delivery of mental health and behavioral medicine services. A few work in physical rehabilitation settings, treating patients with spinal cord injuries, chronic pain or illness, stroke, arthritis, or neurological conditions. Others may work in community mental health centers, crisis counseling services, or drug rehabilitation centers, offering evaluation, therapy, remediation, and consultation.

Areas of specialization within clinical psychology include health psychology, neuropsychology, geropsychology, and child psychology. Health psychologists study how biological, psychological, and social factors affect health and illness. They promote healthy living and disease prevention through counseling, and they focus on how patients adjust to illnesses and treatments and view their quality of life. Neuropsychologists study the relation between the brain and behavior. They often work in stroke and head injury programs. Geropsychologists deal with the special problems faced by the elderly. Work may include helping older persons cope with stresses that are common in late life, such as loss of loved ones, relocation, medical conditions, and increased care-giving demands. Clinical psychologists may further specialize in these fields by focusing their work in a number of niche areas including mental health, learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, or substance abuse. The emergence and growth of these, and other, specialties reflects the increasing participation of psychologists in direct services to special patient populations.

Often, clinical psychologists consult with other medical personnel regarding the best treatment for patients, especially treatment that includes medication. Clinical psychologists generally are not permitted to prescribe medication to treat patients; only psychiatrists and other medical doctors may prescribe most medications. However, two States—Louisiana and New Mexico—currently allow appropriately trained clinical psychologists to prescribe medication with some limitations and similar proposals have been made in additional States.

A psychologist's subfield and place of employment determine working conditions. Clinical, school, and counseling psychologists in private practice have their own offices and set their own hours. However, they often offer evening and weekend hours to accommodate their clients. Those employed in hospitals, nursing homes, and other health facilities may work shifts including evenings and weekends, while those who work in schools and clinics generally work regular hours.

Psychologists employed as faculty by colleges and universities divide their time between teaching and research and may have administrative responsibilities. Many have part-time consulting practices. Most psychologists in government and industry have structured schedules.

Increasingly, many psychologists work as part of a team and consult with other psychologists and professionals. Many experience pressures due to deadlines, tight schedules, and overtime work. Their routine may be interrupted frequently. Travel usually is required, to attend conferences or conduct research.

Educational Requirements

A doctoral degree is usually required for employment as a licensed clinical or counseling psychologist. Psychologists with a Ph.D. qualify for a wide range of teaching, research, clinical, and counseling positions in universities, healthcare services, elementary and secondary schools, private industry, and government. Psychologists with a Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.) degree usually work in clinical positions or in private practices.

A doctoral degree usually requires 5 to 7 years of graduate study. The Ph.D. degree culminates in a dissertation based on original research. Courses in quantitative research methods, which include the use of computer-based analysis, are an integral part of graduate study and are necessary to complete the dissertation. The Psy.D. may be based on practical work and examinations rather than a dissertation. In clinical or counseling psychology, the requirements for the doctoral degree usually include at least a 1-year internship.

Persons with a master's degree in psychology may work as industrial-organizational psychologists or school psychologists. They also may work as psychological assistants, under the supervision of doctoral-level psychologists, and conduct research or psychological evaluations. A master's degree in psychology requires at least 3 years of full-time graduate study. Requirements usually include practical experience in an applied setting and a master's thesis based on an original research project. Competition for admission to graduate programs is keen. Some universities require applicants to have an undergraduate major in psychology. Others prefer only coursework in basic psychology with courses in the biological, physical, and social sciences; and statistics and mathematics.

A bachelor's degree in psychology qualifies a person to assist psychologists and other professionals in community mental health centers, vocational rehabilitation offices, and correctional programs. They may work as research or administrative assistants or become sales or management trainees in business. Some work as technicians in related fields, such as marketing research.

The American Psychological Association (APA) presently accredits doctoral training programs in clinical, counseling, and school psychology, as well as institutions that provide internships for doctoral students in school, clinical, and counseling psychology. The National Association of School Psychologists, with the assistance of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, helps to approve advanced degree programs in school psychology.

Academic Programs

[Adler School of Professional Psychology](#)
[Chicago School of Professional Psychology](#)
[DePaul University](#)
[Illinois Institute of Technology](#)

[Loyola University](#)
[Northern Illinois University](#)
[Northwestern University](#)

Employment/Salary Outlook

Employment will grow because of increased demand for psychological services in schools, hospitals, social service agencies, mental health centers, substance abuse treatment clinics, consulting firms, and private companies.

Demand for school psychologists will be driven by a growing awareness of how students' mental health and behavioral problems, such as bullying, affect learning. School psychologists will also be needed for general student counseling on a variety of other issues, including working with students with disabilities or with special needs, tackling drug abuse, and consulting and managing personal crisis.

Spurring demand for clinical psychologists will continue to be the rising healthcare costs associated with unhealthy lifestyles, such as smoking, alcoholism, and obesity, which have made prevention and treatment more critical. An increase in the number of employee assistance programs, which help workers deal with personal problems, also should lead to employment growth for clinical and counseling specialties. More clinical and counseling psychologists will be needed to help people deal with depression and other mental disorders, marriage and family problems, job stress, and addiction. The growing number of elderly will increase the demand for psychologists trained in geropsychology to help people deal with the mental and physical changes that occur as individuals grow older. There also will be increased need for psychologists to work with returning veterans.

State and National Wages

Location	Pay Period	2021		
		Low	Median	High
United States	Hourly	\$22.60	\$39.67	\$80.51
	Annual	\$47,010	\$82,510	\$167,460
Illinois	Hourly	19.12	\$39.18	\$100.00+
	Annual	\$39,760	\$81,500	\$208,000+

State and National Trends

United States	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings ¹
	2021	2031		
Clinical, Counseling, and School Psychologists	65,400	71,900	10%	51,00
Illinois	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings ¹
	2020	2030		
Clinical, Counseling, and School Psychologists	5,700	5,910	+2%	400

¹Job Openings refers to the average annual job openings due to growth and net replacement.

Professional Organizations

American Psychological Association (apa.org)

American Board of Professional Psychology (abpp.org)

Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (asppb.net)

References

Occupational Outlook Handbook, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

(<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/psychologists.htm>)

O*NET OnLine (<http://online.onetcenter.org/link/summary/19-3031.02>)

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