

**Training Routes and Employment for the Most Common Types of Human Services Disciplines**

Prepared by Dr. Christopher M. King

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### General notes

- The descriptions in the tables below are generally simplified for brevity's sake. It is recommended that references provided at the end be reviewed in full for a fuller sense of the complexities.
- There is generally some overlap among the disciplines below, though each represents distinct histories, philosophies, training routes, potential credentials, scopes of practice/services, etc. in many important and unique respects. While this guide refers to these disciplines as **human services disciplines**, they are also often referred to as *allied mental health disciplines*.
- Disciplines that generally do not provide any training at a given level in most locales are marked with a —.
- The time estimates provided for the graduate training program are rough estimates.
- **Health service psychology** refers to three applied areas of psychology: *clinical psychology*, *counseling psychology* (as distinct from the discipline of *counseling*), and *school psychology*. Subspecialties of health service psychology include clinical neuropsychology, forensic psychology, clinical health psychology, and pediatric psychology; however, they are just further specialization for those with doctoral degrees in clinical psychology or counseling psychology. All other areas of psychology are non-applied and thus limited to research and consulting. For example, industrial/organization (I/O) psychology has some applied aspects (particularly consulting), but it is not considered as part of health service psychology.
- To what the term **psychologist** refers depends. It can refer to professionals licensed by a state as psychologists, meaning that they have doctoral degrees in clinical psychology, counseling psychology, or school psychology (i.e., health service psychology), and are licensed to provide clinical (chiefly, assessment and treatment) services. Alternatively, it can refer to professionals with doctoral degrees in other (non-applied) areas of psychology who are working as researchers within organizations or professors within institutions of higher education. However, this latter group cannot provide clinical services, nor hold themselves out as if they could.
- The medical/allied health routes are not specified in detail for at least two reasons. First, there are numerous disciplines within that broad field (including several not mentioned) that are relevant to mental health (e.g., 3+ years nurse practitioners and physician assistants and doctoral-level physicians). Second, training in them, starting at the undergraduate level, is generally outside the scope of psychology (e.g., undergraduate degrees in nursing, chemistry, or biology).

**UNDERGRADUATE**

Generally, the more advanced training one obtains, the higher income they can expect to make. However, this must be balanced against the costs of higher levels of education. All graduate programs within the human services entail costs to students. In general, costs increase for increasingly longer training programs. Even the one “fully funded” type of human services program (i.e., many PhD programs in health service psychology) only provide tuition waiver and a stipend in exchange for many hours of work as a research assistant each week, and the stipend is low and for many, may well not be livable without taking out supplemental student loans.

<b>Psychology</b>	<b>Counseling</b>	<b>Social work</b>	<b>Marital/couples and family therapy</b>	<b>Behavior analysis</b>	<b>Medical/allied health</b>
Could seek employment as a case manager (quasi-social worker), behavioral health technician (quasi- chaperone and monitor), etc., working with persons with a variety of needs. Could also seek employment in underappreciated positions with human services elements, such as a probation or parole officer, or an aid to certified or licensed human services professionals. In addition, could seek	—	Bachelor’s-level social worker (can lead to a certificate, a CSW) to work with persons with a variety of needs from a social work perspective.	—	—	<i>Includes, e.g., nursing, music therapy, and art therapy.</i>

employment as a full-time research assistant with an organization or researcher.					
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**GRADUATE SCHOOL**

In general, lower levels of training may ultimately qualify someone to seek a more limited legal credential to practice independently (in terms of settings, populations, and range of services one can provide without supervision) from a state (often called a *certificate*); whereas higher levels of training may qualify one to seek a fairly open credential to practice independently (often called a *license*). Training programs don't bestow these credentials; state agencies do. Programs that are accredited by legitimate professional organizations for a given field generally prepare their students well to be competitive to obtain such a legal credential from a state agency.

**Notes for BA/MA and MAPS students:** These programs are probably best aligned with seeking employment as a full-time research assistant or consultant with an organization or researcher, or applying to PhD programs in non-applied areas of psychology (toward becoming a full-time academic researcher or professor oneself). That said, the completion of a high-quality thesis, which some MA programs in health service psychology may not require, can be a good showing of research skillfulness, including for doctoral programs in health service psychology (i.e., PsyD and PhD programs in clinical psychology, counseling psychology, and school psychology). If one works hard to amass the range of experiences and accomplishments that make one competitive for admission to a doctoral program in health service psychology during their time in the BA/MA or MAPS programs (which go above and beyond the requirements of the BA/MA and MAPS programs), these programs can be a pathway toward admission to such doctoral training. For example, for both a PsyD and PhD program in health service psychology, additionally volunteering or working in a supervised or assistive clinical capacity with a human services-providing organization; and preparing a sophisticated personal statement that evidences your appreciation for the different human services disciplines, and a clear rationale for why health service psychology is the best fit for your career objectives in terms of the types of services psychologists uniquely provide relative to the other human services disciplines. As another example, for a PhD program in health service psychology, in addition to completing a thesis, volunteering in multiple research labs, presenting and publishing other research, and being able to demonstrate good fit with a potential research mentor within the PhD program (in terms of your current research skills and shared interests with that mentor's research area/program).

**Notes for MA in Clinical Psychology students:** The clinical externship track is best aligned with those who may go on to seek admission to a PsyD program in health service psychology, or continue working in a supervised capacity in a license-exempt setting. The clinical research externship track may be better aligned for those seeking admission to a PhD program in health service psychology. One could also complete a clinical externship and volunteer in at least two research labs toward increasing their competitiveness for admission to a PhD program in health service psychology. However, quantity of experiences vs. depth of experience needs to be well balanced, and such is student-dependent depending on their other work and personal obligations, the productivity of the research labs they volunteer in, etc.

<b>GRADUATE SCHOOL</b>						
	<b>Psychology</b>	<b>Counseling</b>	<b>Social work</b>	<b>Marital/couples and family therapy</b>	<b>Behavior analysis</b>	<b>Medical/ allied health</b>  <i>Includes the above in addition to, e.g., physician assistant and physician.</i>
<b>1+ years</b>	—	Drug and alcohol counselor (can lead to a certificate, a CDAC/ CADC) to provide counseling services to persons with substance use problems.	—	—	—	—

<b>GRADUATE SCHOOL</b>						
	<b>Psychology</b>	<b>Counseling</b>	<b>Social work</b>	<b>Marital/couples and family therapy</b>	<b>Behavior analysis</b>	<b>Medical/ allied health</b>
<b>2+ years</b>	<p>MA/MS in psychology (most programs are research-based and in non-applied areas of psychology); could seek employment as a full-time research assistant or consultant with an organization or researcher.</p> <p>Note that industrial/organization (I/O) psychology is known for its applied consulting element, but it is not considered as part of health service psychology. Any non-applied area of psychology</p>	<p>Mental health counselor (can lead to a license in some states, a LMHC) to provide counseling services to persons with mental health needs.</p>	<p>Master's-level social worker (can lead to a license, an LSW or LMSW) to provide social work services to persons with a variety of needs.</p>	—	<p>Behavior analyst (can lead to a certificate or license as an applied behavior analyst) to provide behavior analysis services to persons with neurodevelopmental needs.</p>	—

	<p>can involve consulting in addition to research.</p> <p>There are a few MA programs in psychology that are in applied areas, such as clinical psychology (however, unlike other human service disciplines, they do not directly lead to any certificate nor license). Some are research-based and others are not. They should be viewed only as a stepping stone for those who wish to pursue doctoral training in health service psychology, and who may not be competitive for</p>					
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	<p>admission to a doctoral program in health service psychology right out of undergrad. If one is unable to be admitted to a doctoral program in health service psychology, they will be well-qualified for what are otherwise bachelor's level positions within psychology described above, or they could pivot to a different human service discipline, which tend to be somewhat less competitive with respect to admission (not uncompetitive, but just less competitive).</p>					
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**MONTCLAIR**  
STATE UNIVERSITY

<b>GRADUATE SCHOOL</b>						
	<b>Psychology</b>	<b>Counseling</b>	<b>Social work</b>	<b>Marital/couples and family therapy</b>	<b>Behavior analysis</b>	<b>Medical/ allied health</b>
<b>3+ years</b>	School psychologist (can lead to a certificate in some states, a CSP) to provide psychology services to youth in schools.	Professional counselor (can lead to a license, a LPC) to provide counseling services to persons with a variety of needs.	Clinical social worker (can lead to a license, an LCSW) to provide both social work and clinical services to persons with a variety of needs.	Marital and family therapist (can lead to a license, an LMFT) to provide marital and family therapy services to couples and families.	—	<i>E.g., nurse practitioner and physician assistant (can often prescribe psychiatric medications).</i>

GRADUATE SCHOOL						
	Psychology	Counseling	Social work	Marital/couples and family therapy	Behavior analysis	Medical/ allied health
<b>5+ years</b>	<p>PhD in a non-applied area of psychology (prepares one to be a researcher/academic/professor).</p> <p>PsyD (practitioner-scholar model) in health service psychology.</p> <p>PhD (scientist-practitioner or clinical-science models) in health service psychology.</p> <p>Both types of doctoral programs in health service psychology can lead to a license, a licensed psychologist, to</p>	<p>PhD in counseling (prepares one to be a researcher/academic/professor).</p>	<p>PhD in counseling (prepares one to be a researcher/academic/professor).</p>	<p>PhD in marital/couples and family therapy (prepares one to be a researcher/academic/professor).</p>	—	<p><i>E.g., physician (including the subspecialty of psychiatry).</i></p>

	<p>provide psychological services to persons with a variety of needs in any setting. Both types of programs also have both research and clinical expectations. The difference is that PsyD programs stress clinical more than research, whereas PhD programs are either balanced in their expectations or stress research over clinical. Some PsyD programs admit larger class sizes than PhD programs, such that they are less competitive (but not uncompetitive) for that reason. Not every PhD</p>					
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	<p>program is “fully funded,” although most are. However, even “full funding” is not necessarily high enough for students to avoid student loans for living and related expenses, and funding increases the competitiveness of these programs for admission.</p>					
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- The Hamilton Lab at Rutgers University and Science Simplified Network. (n.d.). *What are the steps to a clinical psychology PhD?* <https://cudcp.org/resources/Documents/Overall%20Guide%20for%20Clinical%20Psychology%20PhD.pdf>

**Other areas of psychology**

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). *Finding and applying to grad school*.  
<https://www.apa.org/education-career/grad>

**Examples of accreditors of certain human services disciplines**

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). *APA accreditation*. <https://accreditation.apa.org/>

Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education. (n.d.).  
<https://www.coamfte.org/coamfte/>

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (n.d.).  
<https://www.cacrep.org/>

Council on Social Work Education. (n.d.). <https://www.cswe.org/>

**Examples of graduate programs in different human services disciplines:**

***Health service psychology:***

<https://www.montclair.edu/psychology/graduate-programs/ma-in-clinical-psychology/>

<https://www.montclair.edu/psychology/graduate-programs/school-psychology-certification/>

<https://gsapp.rutgers.edu/centers-clinical-services/clinical-psyd>

<https://www.montclair.edu/psychology/graduate-programs/phd-in-clinical-psychology/>

***Counseling:***

<https://www.montclair.edu/counseling/licensure-programs/>

***Social work:***

<https://www.montclair.edu/social-work-and-child-advocacy/programs-of-study/msw/>

<https://socialwork.rutgers.edu/academics/master-social-work-msw>

***Marital and family therapy:***

<https://www.kean.edu/academics/college-liberal-arts/marriage-and-family-therapy-ma>

*Behavior analysis:*

<https://gsapp.rutgers.edu/academic-programs/applied-department/applied-behavior-analysis-aba>

<https://global.rowan.edu/programs/ma-in-applied-behavior-analysis.html>