

## Clinical Psychology Careers Handout

There is a wide range of career options in clinical psychology. Most involve pursuing some type of graduate-level work, whether that be a masters or doctorate. Masters programs generally take about 2 years to complete, while doctorate degrees typically take 5-6 years. Here are some of the most common paths:

- **MSW (Masters in Social Work)** – Social work is a broad profession that encompasses many different types of work. Some social workers focus on advocacy work; some work in schools; others become licensed to work as therapists in counseling centers, hospitals, or other healthcare settings. To learn more about different types of social work, see <https://www.socialworkers.org/News/Facts/Types-of-Social-Work>. If you think you would like to provide psychotherapy and counseling, you could become a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW). The exact requirements vary by state, but you would first complete a MSW from a CSWE-accredited school (2 years full-time; <https://www.cswe.org/accreditation/directory/>), obtain fieldwork experience, then apply for licensure and pass a licensing exam. The MSW degree is a great option if you are interested in getting into the workforce quickly.
- **Masters in Counseling** – Counseling programs prepare students to provide counseling and psychotherapy for various issues depending on their areas of specialty. After obtaining a master's degree, you must obtain fieldwork experience under a licensed supervisor then pass a licensing exam in order to become a licensed professional counselor (LPC) who can then practice independently (meaning not under the supervision of a licensed counselor). LPCs can work in a variety of settings, including residential treatment facilities, community agencies, private practice, or other healthcare settings. To learn more about counseling, see <https://www.cacrep.org/for-students/>. To learn more about the difference between a counseling and social work degree, see <https://www.umassglobal.edu/news-and-events/blog/social-work-vs-counseling>.
- **Masters in MFT (Marriage and Family Therapy)** – Marriage and family therapists typically conduct short-term therapy with families and couples. After obtaining an MFT, you must complete two years of supervised work then pass a licensing exam to become a licensed marriage and family therapist (LMFT). To learn more about marriage and family therapists, see the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (<https://www.aamft.org/>) .
- **Masters in School Psychology** – School psychologists focus on helping children succeed in school settings. They may work directly with children and families; help teachers design programs to build social-emotional skills; or conduct assessments of children's academic and social-emotional functioning. To become a school psychologist, you must complete a masters in school psychology plus a year-long internship. Masters-level school psychologists do not practice independently but typically work within a school system. It is also possible to get a doctorate in School Psychology, which trains students

to become practitioners as well as researchers within the field of school psychology. To learn more about school psychology, see <https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology>. UMass Amherst offers graduate programs in School Psychology in the College of Education (to learn more about these programs, see <https://www.umass.edu/education/programs>).

- **Ph.D. or Psy.D. in Clinical Psychology** – Both the Ph.D. and Psy.D. are doctorate degrees and are pathways to becoming a clinical psychologist. Clinical psychologists with a Ph.D. can go on to work in many different settings, including as professors conducting research or teaching, as clinicians in various mental health settings, as supervisors of other mental health professionals, and more. Clinical psychologists with a Psy.D. can also work in a broad range of settings, though research is typically not a primary focus for Psy.D. psychologists. Ph.D. programs emphasize training in both research and clinical work, and require students to complete a dissertation (a capstone research project) in order to graduate. Psy.D. programs emphasize training in clinical work, and while many require a dissertation, the expectation is usually quite different from the Ph.D. dissertation. When searching for programs, you will typically want to look for APA-accredited programs (<https://www.accreditation.apa.org/accredited-programs>), though PCSAS is another increasingly common accreditation body (<https://www.pcsas.org/accreditation/accredited-programs/>). Additional resources:
  - Helpful article describing differences between a Master's, Psy.D., and a Ph.D.: <https://psychology.pitt.edu/undergraduate/post-graduation-planning/masters-vs-psyd-vs-phd-clinical-or-counseling-psychology>
  - An *excellent* resource about getting a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology: <https://mitch.web.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4922/2017/02/MitchGradSchoolAdvice.pdf>
- **M.D. in Psychiatry** – Psychiatrists attend medical school and specialize in psychiatry. Psychiatrists are less likely to conduct talk therapy; their primary role is usually medication management in the treatment of psychiatric disorders. If you are interested in psychiatry, you should get in touch with Pre-Med/Pre-Health advising (<https://www.cns.umass.edu/advising/pre-med-pre-health>).

### ***What can I do now (as an undergrad) if I am interested in one of these career paths?***

- Take related courses, for example: Psych 380, Psych 383, Psych 384
- Do an [internship](#)! This type of experience is especially relevant for more practice-focused career paths.
- Get research experience as an [RA](#)! Research experience is especially important if you are interested in pursuing a Ph.D.
- Get experience as a [TA](#)
- Look into the [social work certificate](#), especially if interested in the social work field.