Mental Health Counseling

Licensed mental health counselors apply principles of mental health counseling theory and methods, use specialized knowledge gained from experience in forensic mental health settings, conduct assessments, and provide case management, advocacy, and counseling. Mental health counselors working in forensic behavioral health also have knowledge of the criminal court system and issues which exist where behavioral health and the law intersect.

About DSHS

The Department of Social and Health Services' Behavioral Health and Habilitation Administration provides information about careers in forensic behavioral health which play an important role in improving the lives of people with behavioral health conditions involved in the criminal court system. For more information about positions open within DSHS, please visit www.careers.wa.gov.

Forensic Behavioral Health

Forensic behavioral health is the intersection of behavioral health and the law. The system itself involves various entities that have a touchpoint to people who are involved with the criminal court system and may have a behavioral health condition.

Choosing a career as a practitioner in this human services field offers many diverse work environments. Examples include working with law enforcement in co-responder roles or in a corrections setting; in inpatient settings such as state psychiatric facilities and residential treatment facilities; and in community settings such as outpatient competency restoration programs, or community behavioral health agencies. Service providers in this field often interact with legal partners such as lawyers and judges, corrections officers, and first responders.

For more information

Behavioral Health and Habilitation Administration, OFMHS
www.dshs.wa.gov/bha/office-forensic-mental-health-services

Workforce Development Administrator
Leah Henley | Leah.henley1@dshs.wa.gov
https://www.dshs.wa.gov/bha/office-forensic-mental-health-services/workforce-development

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Mental Health Counselor

Forensic Behavioral Health Career Path

Behavioral Health and Habilitation Administration
Office of Forensic Mental Health Services

DSHS
WASHINGTON STATE
Department of Social and Health Services

Examples of Work Environments

Typical work environments for mental health counselors include community settings as forensic navigators, mental health counselors in state facilities or private behavioral health hospitals, discharge planners in correctional settings, crisis outreach or diversion specialists as part of a co-responder team with law enforcement, designated crisis responders, or recovery liaisons/discharge coordinators with community behavioral health organizations.

Schools in Washington

Master's Counseling Programs (CACREP accredited)

Antioch University Seattle, CWU, City University of Seattle, EWU, Gonzaga University, Seattle Pacific University, University of Puget Sound, WWUe

Additional Master's Counseling Programs

Heritage College (LMHC), Pacific Lutheran University (LMFT), St. Martins University (LMHC/LMFT), University of Washington (MSW), Walla Walla Unversity (MSW), Whitworth College (LMFT)

Education

Mental health counseling positions in Washington require a master's degree or above in Mental Health Counseling or a related behavioral health field and licensure. See WA Administrative Code 246-809-220 for more information.

CACREP-Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs

Begin

Bachelor's Degree in Mental Health Counseling or a related behavioral science field

Master's degree in Mental Health Counseling or in a related behavioral science field

Supervised post-grad experience required: 36 months full-time counseling or 3,000 hours (degree from CACREP accredited school can reduce required hours, WAC 246-809-230)

Pass either of the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) exams: National Counselor Exam (NCE) or National Clinical Mental Health Counselor Exam (NCMHCE)

Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC)

New Opportunities

This document is for illustrative purposes only for detailed information see: RCW 18.225.090, Chapter 246-809-220 WAC