

# 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 Administration (transforms lives by supporting sustainable recovery, independence and wellness. Within BHA, the Office of Forensic Mental Health Services), provides information about careers in forensic behavioral health which play an important role in improving the lives of individuals with behavioral health conditions involved in the criminal court system. For more information about positions open within DSHS, please visit [www.careers.wa.gov](http://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 Administration, OFMHS

[www.dshs.wa.gov/bha/  
office-forensic-mental-health-services](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/bha/office-forensic-mental-health-services)

#### Workforce Development

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[www.dshs.wa.gov/bha/workforce-development](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/bha/workforce-development)

## Mental Health Counselor



## Forensic Behavioral Health Career Path

Office of Forensic Mental Health Services



# Pathway to Forensic Behavioral Health Mental Health Counselor

## 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)

CWU, City University of Seattle, EWU, Gonzaga University, WWU, Seattle University, Antioch University Seattle,

### Additional Master's Counseling Programs

University of Puget Sound- seeking CACREP accreditation, St. Martins University, Northwest University

### 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**

