



EDUCATIONAL COUNSELOR

JOB DESCRIPTION

Educational, vocational, and school counselors provide individuals and groups with career and educational counseling. In school settings—elementary through postsecondary—they usually are called school counselors, and they work with students, including those with academic and social development problems and those with special needs. They advocate for students and work with other individuals and organizations to promote the academic, career, personal, and social development of children and youths. School counselors help students evaluate their abilities, interests, talents, and personality characteristics in order to develop realistic academic and career goals. Counselors use interviews, counseling sessions, interest and aptitude assessment tests, and other methods to evaluate and advise students. They also operate career information centers and career education programs. High school counselors advise students regarding college majors, admission requirements, entrance exams, financial aid, trade or technical schools, and apprenticeship programs.

EXPERIENCE & SKILLS

Persons interested in counseling should have a strong desire to help others and should possess the ability to inspire respect, trust, and confidence. Essential skills are:

- Advising
- Ability to communicate well
- Lead small groups
- Provide support
- Assess student needs
- Objectivity

EDUCATION & TRAINING

All States require school counselors to hold a State school counseling certification and to have completed at least some graduate course work; most require the completion of a master's degree. Some States require public school counselors to have both counseling and teaching certificates and to have had some teaching experience before receiving certification. Graduate programs in career, community, gerontological, mental health, school, student affairs, and marriage and family counseling are accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). While completion of a CACREP-accredited program is not necessary to become a counselor, it makes it easier to fulfill the requirements for State licensing. Accredited master's degree programs include a minimum of 2 years of full-time study, including 600 hours of supervised clinical internship experience.

SALARIES

Salaries vary depending on work setting, years of experience, specialty and region or state.

Entry level: \$26,260	Elem and secondary: \$51,160	Individual & family services: \$30,240
Average: \$ 34,530	Junior colleges: \$45,730	Vocational rehab services: \$27,800
Experienced: \$58,400	Colleges and universities: \$39,110	

EMPLOYMENT & ADVANCEMENT PROSPECTS

Employment of school counselors is expected to grow with increases in student enrollments at postsecondary schools and colleges and as more States require elementary schools to employ counselors. Expansion of the responsibilities of school counselors should also lead to increases in their employment. Job prospects should be more favorable in rural and inner-city schools.

RELATED OCCUPATIONS

- Human service assistants
- Social workers
- Psychologists
- Occupational Therapist

REFERENCES

American Counseling Association at <http://www.counseling.org>

Occupational Outlook Handbook, U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, www.bls.gov 2005-06