



MARRIAGE & FAMILY THERAPIST

JOB DESCRIPTION

Marriage and family therapists apply principles, methods, and therapeutic techniques to individuals, families, couples, or organizations in order to resolve emotional conflicts. In doing so, they modify people's perceptions and behaviors, enhance communication and understanding among family members, and help to prevent family and individual crises. Marriage and family therapists also may engage in psychotherapy of a nonmedical nature, make appropriate referrals to psychiatric resources, perform research, and teach courses about human development and interpersonal relationships.

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. Counselors must follow the code of ethics associated with their respective certifications and licenses. Essential skills are:

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

EDUCATION & TRAINING

A master's degree is typically required to be licensed as a counselor. 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. Some counselors elect to be nationally certified by the National Board for Certified Counselors, Inc. (NBCC), which grants the general practice credential "National Certified Counselor."

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 mental health counselors and marriage and family therapists will grow as more people become comfortable with seeking professional help for a variety of health, personal, and family problems. Employers are also increasingly offering employee assistance programs that provide mental health and alcohol and drug abuse counseling. More people are expected to use these services as society focuses on ways of developing mental well-being, such as controlling stress associated with job and family responsibilities.

RELATED OCCUPATIONS

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

REFERENCES

American Association for *Marriage and family therapy*, 112 South Alfred Street Alexandria, VA 22314-3061
Phone: (703) 838-9808 Fax: (703) 838-9805 http://www.aamft.org/index_nm.asp

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