

## **Behavioral Health Counselor**

Behavioral Health Counselors advise people who suffer from alcoholism, drug addiction, eating disorders, mental health issues, or other mental or behavioral problems. They provide treatment and support to help clients recover from addiction or modify problem behaviors.

*Behavioral Health Counselors typically do the following:*

- Evaluate clients' mental and physical health, addiction, or problematic behavior and assess their readiness for treatment
- Develop, recommend, and review treatment goals and plans with clients and their families
- Assist clients in developing skills and behaviors necessary to recover from their addiction or modify their behavior
- Work with clients to identify behaviors or situations that interfere with their recovery
- Teach clients' family members about addiction or behavior disorders and help them develop strategies to cope with those problems
- Refer clients to other resources and services, such as job placement services and support groups
- Conduct outreach programs to help people identify the signs of addiction and other destructive behavior, as well as steps to take to avoid such behavior

**Substance Abuse Counselors**, also called *Addiction Counselors*, work with clients individually and in group sessions. Many incorporate the principles of 12-step programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), to guide their practice. They teach clients how to cope with stress and life's problems in ways that help them recover. Furthermore, they help clients rebuild professional relationships and, if necessary, reestablish their career. They also help clients improve their personal relationships and find ways to discuss their addiction or other problems with family and friends.

Some Addiction Counselors work in facilities that employ many types of healthcare and mental health professionals. Some Counselors work with clients who have been ordered by a judge to receive treatment for addiction. Others work with specific populations, such as teenagers, veterans, or people with disabilities. Some specialize in crisis intervention; these counselors step in when someone is endangering his or her own life or the lives of others. Other counselors specialize in noncrisis interventions, which encourage a person with addictions or other issues, such as difficulty managing anger, to get help. Noncrisis interventions often are performed at the request of friends and family.

**Mental Health Counselors** provide treatment to individuals, families, couples, and groups. Some work with specific populations, such as the elderly, college students, or children. Mental Health Counselors treat clients with a variety of conditions, including anxiety, depression, grief, low self-esteem, stress, and suicidal impulses. They also help with mental and emotional health issues and relationship problems.

**Work Environment**

Behavioral Health Counselors work in a wide variety of settings, such as mental health centers, community health centers, prisons, and private practice. Most work full time.

Although rewarding, the work of Behavioral Health Counselors is often stressful. Many Counselors have to deal with large workloads. They do not always have enough resources to meet the demand for their services. Also, they may have to intervene in crisis situations or work with agitated clients, which can be difficult.

*Watch a video about being a Behavioral Health Counselor*

**Top Local Employers:** Kaiser Permanente, Telecare Corporation, BetterHelp, Almark Health Services, Maxim Staffing Solutions

**Median Pay**

\$59,333

**Job Growth (2020-2025)**

17%

**Education and Training**

Most Behavioral Health Counselor positions require at least a bachelor's degree. Workers with Psychology, Clinical Social Work, Mental Health Counseling, and similar master's degrees can provide more services to their clients, such as private one-on-one counseling sessions, and they require less supervision than those with less education. Those interested should research their state's educational requirements.

**Local Education:**

[San Francisco State University](#)

[San Jose State University](#)

**For More Information:**

[American Counseling Association](#)

[Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)