... a Psychiatrist.

What they do:
A psychiatrist is a licensed physician who specializes in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental illnesses. They may work with their clients on everyday problems like stress or more complex issues like schizophrenia. Psychiatrists prescribe medications, provide talk therapy, and care for patients with complex medical problems. They may work primarily in an office, in a hospital, or some combination of the two. Subspecialties include child and adolescent psychiatry, geriatric (over 65 years old) psychiatry, addictions, forensic psychiatry, and consultation/liaison psychiatry.

How much they make:
$205,990 average salary¹

What education they need:
Typically a bachelor’s degree with pre-medicine coursework followed by medical school and residency

How long it takes:
4 years for bachelor’s degree 4 years of medical school 4-6 years of Residency/Fellowship depending on specialty

Where to go in Nebraska:
MD at Creighton University or University of Nebraska Medical Center Psychiatry Residency is a joint program between Creighton & UNMC

... a Psychologist.

What they do:
A psychologist is an independently licensed behavioral health professional who performs psychological assessments, provides therapy, and conducts research for a variety of mental health disorders. Licensed psychologists require a doctoral degree in an applied area of psychology (i.e., clinical, counseling, or school psychology). Typical academic requirements involve four years of graduate school and a clinical internship.

How much they make:
$98,000 average salary²

What education they need:
Typically a PhD (Bachelor’s degree in Psychology is required for admission to PhD program)

How long it takes:
4 years for bachelor’s degree 4 years of graduate work, plus 1 year internship for PhD 1 year supervised post-doctoral professional experience for licensure

Where to go in Nebraska:
PhD programs in Clinical, Counseling, or School Psychology at University of Nebraska-Lincoln

... a Physician Assistant.

What they do:
Physician assistants (PAs) practice medicine under physician supervision. PAs conduct histories and physicals, perform psychiatric evaluations and assessments, order and interpret diagnostic studies, establish and manage treatment plans and order referrals as needed. A broad medical education — which includes classroom study and clinical rotations in psychiatry, emergency medicine, internal medicine, geriatrics and family practice — provides PAs with a solid foundation from which to address the diverse medical needs of mental health patients.

How much they make:
$91,040 average salary¹

What education they need:
Typically a bachelor’s degree, then PA graduate school including a mix of classroom work and supervised patient care over 2-3 years

How long it takes:
4 years for bachelor’s degree 2-3 years for Master’s PA degree

Where to go in Nebraska:
Master’s programs at UNMC and Union College Master’s program at UNK starting in Fall 2015

... a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner.

What they do:
Nurse practitioners are advanced practice registered nurses (APRN-NP) who can diagnose and treat mental illnesses. This is an advanced practice license beyond that held by registered nurses. Psychiatric nurse practitioners offer psychiatric/mental health assessments, order laboratory tests, conduct psychotherapy, and manage medications. They specialize in treating those who have more serious mental health and illness problems than those managed by a local primary care physician, including major depression and serious mental illnesses.

How much they make:
$90,240 average salary¹

What education they need:
Typically a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) and Master of Science in Nursing (MSN). Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners choose a specialty track in their master’s coursework.

How long it takes:
4 years for bachelor’s degree 2 years of graduate work for MSN

Where to go in Nebraska:
MSN program at UNMC in Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing

The Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska (BHECN, pronounced “beacon”) was created by the Legislature to address the shortage of behavioral health professionals in rural and underserved areas. BHECN recruits & educates students in behavioral health and trains & retains professionals in the workforce.

By increasing the number of behavioral health professionals, improving accessibility of behavioral health care, and building competence of the workforce, we are improving the health of all Nebraskans.

So you’re thinking about a career in behavioral health? There are as many different paths to a rewarding career in the field as there are professionals.

With so many options, it can be hard to pick a path or know where to go to get started. Here is basic information you need to get started on any one of 7 career paths.

**... Peer Support Specialist.**

**What they do:**
Assist individuals with behavioral health issues by listening, sharing one’s own experiences, advocating, educating and assisting with service navigation.

**How much they make:** $32,292 average salary

**What education they need:**
Most peers are current or former consumers of behavioral health services or are a parent of someone who has received these services. Training to become a Certified Peer Support and Wellness Specialist (CPSWS) takes 40 hours and is offered by various organizations in Nebraska.

**Where to go in Nebraska:**
Contact BHECN for more details on how to get started.

**... Substance Abuse Counselor.**

**What they do:**
Evaluates for substance use disorder, recommends treatment options, and helps clients develop skills to recover from substance use disorders.

**How much they make:** $40,650 average salary

**What education they need:**
High school diploma plus additional classroom and clinical training hours.

**How long it takes:**
6,300 hours of supervised clinical training required for licensure; associate, bachelor’s or master’s degree in related field can be substituted for part of the clinical training required

**Where to go in Nebraska:**
Associate degrees or certificates in Drug/Alcohol Counseling at Central, Metropolitan, and Southeast Community Colleges

**... a Mental Health Practitioner.**

**What they do:**
Provides assessment, psychotherapy, or counseling to individuals, couples, families, or groups for behavioral disorders. Mental health practitioners include social workers, professional counselors, and marriage and family therapists.

**How much they make:**
$38,740-58,880 average salary, depending on specialty and degree

**What education they need:**
Master’s degree in social work, counseling, or marriage and family therapy

**How long it takes:**
4 years for bachelor’s
1-3 years for Master’s (depending on advanced standing and/or degree program)
3,000 hours of experience required for full licensure

**Where to go in Nebraska:**
Social work: MSW at University of Nebraska at Omaha or through UNO’s distance program in Kearney
Counseling: MSEd at UNK; MA, MS programs at UNO
Marriage and Family Therapy: MS at UNL

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**Pathways to a Behavioral Health Career**

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