



Pathways to a Career in Behavioral Health

If you have a passion for helping others, possess good listening and communication skills, and enjoy interacting with people, then this could be the field for you. With a career in behavioral health, you can help change lives for the better.

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Thinking about a career in Behavioral Health?

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Behavioral health careers involve providing services for children, adolescents and adults who may be experiencing behavioral and emotional problems, mental illness, life stresses and/or substance use disorder. A wide range of career options are available, so it can be difficult to choose a path or know where to begin. Here's some basic information to help you get started.

Licensed Behavioral Health Professions



Psychiatrist

Psychiatrists are licensed physicians who specialize in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental illnesses in children, adolescents and adults. They may work with patients on everyday problems, such as stress, or more complex issues, such as schizophrenia. Psychiatrists prescribe medications, provide talk therapy and care for patients with complex medical problems.

- **Education Requirements:** Typically a bachelor's degree with pre-medicine coursework, followed by medical school and residency with an optional fellowship for specialized skills. Expect 12 years of coursework post-high school.
- **Work Environment:** Academic health centers, private practice, hospitals, primary care clinics, community agencies, courts and prisons, long-term care/assisted living/hospice, industry, government, military settings, schools and universities, substance use programs, emergency rooms
- **Projected Growth:** 14 percent (much higher than average).

Salary Range: \$199,600 - \$237,140



Physician Assistant

Physician assistants (PAs) practice medicine under physician supervision. PAs conduct medical histories and physicals, perform psychiatric evaluations and assessments, order and interpret diagnostic studies, and establish and manage treatment plans, which includes prescribing medications and ordering referrals as needed. PA students receive a broad medical education, including classroom study and clinical rotations in psychiatry, geriatrics, family practice and more.

- **Education Requirements:** Typically a bachelor's degree, then PA graduate school, including a mix of classroom work and supervised patient care over two to three years. Expect about six years of coursework post-high school.
- **Work Environment:** Behavioral health facilities, psychiatric hospital units, private practice, psychiatric emergency departments, emergency rooms, private health clinics, prisons and jails.
- **Projected Growth:** 30 percent (much higher than average).

Salary Range: \$120,260 - \$162,600

To find more information and resources about behavioral health careers, visit BHECN's webpage at unmc.edu/bhecn/career-pathways.



Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner (APRN-NP)

Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners are advanced practice registered nurses (APRN-NP) who can diagnose and treat mental illnesses and promote the mental health of individuals and families. 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 problems than those managed by a local primary care physician. There are also opportunities for nurses (RNs, LPNs) and nursing assistants (CNAs, psychiatric technicians) to work in inpatient and outpatient psychiatric settings.

- **Education Requirements:** Typically Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) and Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) or Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degrees. Expect six to nine years of coursework post-high school.
- **Work Environment:** Offices of physicians or other health practitioners, private practice, hospitals, outpatient clinics, community agencies, colleges and universities.
- **Projected Growth:** 31 percent (much higher than average).
- **Special Note:** An APRN with a certification in a non-psychiatric specialty can return to a post-master's training program that lasts 1-2 years for specific training to sit for the PMHNP certification exam. UNMC, Creighton, and Clarkson all offer post-master's certificates in PMHNP.

Salary Range: \$110,060 - \$199,630

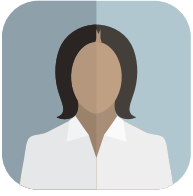


Licensed Psychologist

A psychologist is an independently licensed behavioral health professional who performs psychological assessments, provides therapy, and conducts research on mental health disorders. Licensed psychologists require a doctoral degree (Ph.D.) in an applied area of psychology, such as the following:

- **Clinical psychologists** assess, diagnose and treat mental, emotional and behavioral disorders, and help people manage problems ranging from short-term personal issues to severe mental illness, such as bipolar disorder, major depression and schizophrenia.
- **Counseling psychologists** assess and treat patients with difficulties related to social and emotional problems, including major life events at home or in the workplace (issues at work, relationship problems, loss of a loved one).
- **School psychologists** work in schools to diagnose and treat child behavioral and learning problems; design and implement treatment plans and evaluate performances; and provide therapy to students and families.
- **Education Requirements:** Bachelor's degree followed by graduate school (some graduate programs require a bachelor's in psychology). Clinical and counseling psychologists typically pursue a Ph.D. or Psy.D. School psychologists can also pursue an Ed.S. (educational specialist degree). Expect seven to 10 years of coursework post-high school.
- **Work Environment:** Human service agencies, hospitals, universities, government agencies, private mental health practices, primary care practices, rehabilitation facilities, correctional institutions, elementary and secondary schools (particularly for Ed.S. school psychologists).
- **Projected Growth:** 19 percent (higher than average).

Salary Range: \$53,100 - \$91,780



Professional Mental Health Counselor

A professional mental health counselor creates purposeful relationships that empower diverse individuals, couples, families, children, adolescents and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education and career goals. They apply mental health, psychological, human development, or family systems principles and interventions to help clients adjust their thoughts, feelings or actions. They also diagnose and treat mental and emotional disorders, such as anxiety and depression.

- **Education Requirements:** Typically a bachelor's degree followed by a master's degree that includes a supervised practicum and internship. Expect six to seven years of coursework post-high school.
- **Work Environment:** Individual and family services; outpatient and inpatient intellectual and developmental disability, mental health, and substance use disorder centers; hospitals; state and local government.
- **Projected Growth:** 20 percent (much higher than average).

Salary Range: \$49,480 - \$78,210



Marriage and Family Therapist

Marriage and family therapists (MFTs) work with individuals, couples and families. Unlike other types of mental health professionals, they bring a family-centered perspective to treatment, even when treating individuals. They evaluate family roles and development to understand how clients' families affect their mental health. They treat the clients' relationships, not just the clients themselves, and address issues such as low self-esteem, stress, addiction and substance use disorder.

- **Education Requirements:** Typically a bachelor's degree followed by a master's degree in marriage and family therapy. Expect six years of coursework post-high school.
- **Work Environment:** Individual and family services, state and local government, outpatient care centers, offices of other health practitioners, nursing and residential care facilities.
- **Projected Growth:** 15 percent (much higher than average).

Salary Range: \$58,350 - \$68,000



Clinical Social Worker

Clinical social work is a specialty practice area of social work that focuses on the assessment, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental illness and emotional and other behavioral disturbances. Individual, group and family therapy are common treatment modalities. Clinical social workers are required to have a master's degree in social work and state licensure.

- **Education Requirements:** Typically a bachelor's degree, followed by a master's in a social work program that includes a practicum to gain experience working with people. Expect about six years of coursework post-high school.
- **Work Environment:** Hospitals; senior centers and long-term care facilities; mental health clinics; private practices; state and local governments; schools, colleges and universities; substance use disorder clinics; military bases and hospitals; correctional facilities; child welfare agencies; employee assistance programs.
- **Projected Growth:** 12 percent (higher than average).

Salary Range: \$52,660 - \$88,680



Substance Use Disorder Counselor

Substance use disorder counselors evaluate individuals for substance use disorder, assess for openness to treatment, develop treatment goals, recommend treatment options and help clients develop skills to recover from substance use disorder. They also assist and teach families about substance use disorders and refer clients to community resources.

- **Education Requirements:** There are many routes to becoming a substance use disorder counselor. Individuals can enter this field with either a high school diploma or a college degree*, as long as they have the initial substance use disorder education and the required number of supervised practice hours. Expect one to six years of coursework post-high school.

* A related associate's degree can be in addictions or chemical dependency; related bachelor's and/or master's degree can be in counseling, addictions, social work, sociology or psychology.

- **Work Environment:** Outpatient care centers; residential intellectual and developmental disability mental health, and substance use disorder facilities; individual and family services; hospitals; state and local government, including education and hospitals.
- **Projected Growth:** 22 percent (much higher than average).

Salary Range: \$49,480 - \$78,210



Licensed Behavior Analyst (LBA)

The Licensed Behavior Analyst (LBA) assesses behavior and environment to design, implement, and monitor behavior interventions to produce socially significant improvements for individuals across the lifespan. LBAs frequently work with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities including autism. The LBA may work in clinical, school, or community agencies. The LBA supervises Licensed Assistant Behavior Analysts (LABA) and Registered Behavior Technicians (RBT) in the delivery of care. The LBA provides ongoing training to others who are important in the implementation of behavioral treatment such as family members, direct service providers, educators, and other clinical staff. LBAs will typically be Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA).

- **Education Requirements:**

- LBA requires a Masters degree in behavior analysis, psychology, education, or a related field and supervised field work hours and an exam consistent with Board Certification in Behavior Analysis (BCBA) or equivalent.
- LABA requires a Bachelors degree in behavior analysis, psychology, education, or a related field and supervised field work hours and an exam consistent with Board Certification as an assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA) or equivalent.
- RBT requires a High School diploma, 40 hour training and competency exam consistent with Registered Behavior Technician content outlined by the Behavior Analysis Certification Board.

- **Work Environment:** Outpatient and inpatient clinics, community agencies, schools, and residential care facilities.
- **Projected Growth:** 40 percent (much higher than average).

Salary Range: \$49,480 - \$78,210

Certified Behavioral Health Professions



Mental Health Technician

A Mental Health Technician is a person who works with individuals who are being treated for mental health concerns to make sure their needs are met. Mental Health Technicians are certified to provide a variety of services, including administering medication, admitting new patients, and leading therapeutic activities.

- **Education Requirements:** To become a Mental Health Technician you must have a high school diploma or have taken and passed a General Educational Development (GED) Test and obtained 16 credit hours of training.
- **Work Environment:** Behavioral health practices, hospitals, private clinics, human service agencies, schools, clinics and residential care facilities.
- **Projected Growth:** 26 percent (much higher than average).

Salary Range: \$36,520 - \$44,680



Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS)







A Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS) is a person who is trained to use their personal lived experience and recovery with mental health and/or substance use disorders to mentor others who want to achieve recovery.






- **Education Requirements:** To become a CPSS, you first need to have lived experience with mental health (MH) and/or substance use disorder (SUD) and have been in recovery for at least one year or be a parent or primary caregiver of someone who has been affected by MH or a SUD. Second, you need to find an approved training course in Nebraska that provides 60 hours of training. Third, once you have successfully completed a State of NE approved Peer Support Core Curriculum training course, you will need to complete the Certified Peer Support Specialist online application to take the Peer Recovery exam. You must be at least 19 years of age to obtain CPSS certification in Nebraska.
- **Work Environment:** Primary care offices; emergency rooms; inpatient facilities; outpatient care centers; residential intellectual and developmental disability facilities; mental health facilities; state and local government; and recovery centers. They may also be part of a support team of counselors that includes psychologists and social workers working in-person or virtually.
- **Projected Growth:** 21 percent (much higher than average).

Salary Range: \$47,950 - \$62,040

The Path to Licensed Behavioral Health Careers

unmc.edu/bhecn/career-pathways

CAREER	EDUCATION						PROGRAMS	REQUIRED LICENSE/CERTIFICATE
	HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA	ASSOCIATE DEGREE	BACHELOR'S DEGREE	MEDICAL/GRADUATE SCHOOL	POST-GRADUATE TRAINING	SPECIALIZATIONS		
 Psychiatrist	PRESCRIBERS		4 years	4 years of medical school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residency: 4 Years Fellowship: 1 to 2 years (optional) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addiction Child & Adolescent Forensic Geriatric Psychosomatic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNMC¹ (MD & psychiatry residency) Creighton University⁹ (MD & psychiatry residency) 	Medical License
 Physician Assistant			4 years	2-3 years (includes clerkship/rotation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fellowship: 1 year (optional) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNMC¹ (Omaha & Kearney) Creighton University⁹ College of Saint Mary⁸ Union College¹⁵ 	Physician Assistant License
 Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner			4 year bachelor's degree (BSN, RN) Or 12-month accelerated BSN if already hold bachelor's degree	2- to 3-year master's degree (MSN) Or 3- to 4-year doctorate (DNP) (Both include practicum)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child & adolescent mental health nursing Gerontological-psychiatric nursing Substance use disorders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNMC¹ (MSN, DNP) Creighton University⁹ (DNP) Clarkson College¹⁸ (MSN) 	Nurse Practitioner License
 Licensed Psychologist			4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5-6 years (PhD or PsyD professional school) School psychologists can also complete a 3-year EdS (Both include internship) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fellowship: 1 year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clinical Counseling School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNK² (school psych EdS) UNL³ (PhD in clinical, counseling, school, and EdS) UNO⁴ (psych MA, school psych EdS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychology License (required for practice of psychology) Certification with State Department of Education (required for school psychology, Ed.S.)
 Professional Mental Health Counselor			4 years	2-3 years (Includes practicum and internship)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3,000 hours of supervised practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals Families Children Couples Group 	Master's programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNK² UNO⁴ Bellevue University⁵ Chadron State⁷ Doane University¹⁰ Wayne State¹⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LMHP*/LIMHP* Optional: CPC*
 Marriage & Family Therapist			4 years	2 years (Includes Practicum)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural mental health Tele-mental health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNL³ 	Available licenses: CMFT*, LMHP*, LIMHP*

CAREER	EDUCATION						PROGRAMS	REQUIRED LICENSE/ CERTIFICATE
	HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA	ASSOCIATE DEGREE	BACHELOR'S DEGREE	MEDICAL/ GRADUATE SCHOOL	POST-GRADUATE TRAINING	SPECIALIZATIONS		
 Clinical Social Worker			4 years	2-3 years (includes practicum)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micro - individuals, families, children, couples, group, etc. • Macro - policy, administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNO⁴ (MSW) with divisions at UNO⁴ & UNK² • Nebraska Wesleyan¹⁹ 	LMHP* Optional: LCSW*, LADC*, LIMHP*
 Substance Use Disorder Counselor	All of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school diploma • 270 hrs. substance disorder education • 6,000 hrs. supervised practice 	Or all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate Degree • 270 hrs substance disorder education • 5,000 hrs. supervised practice 	Or all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree • 270 hrs substance disorder education • 4,000 hrs. supervised practice 	Or all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's degree • 270 hrs substance disorder education • 2,000 hrs. supervised practice 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual disorder (if also hold LIMHP*/LMHP*) 	Substance disorder education programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNMC¹ • UNK² • UNL³ • UNO⁴ • Bellevue Univ.⁵ • CCC⁶ • MCC¹¹ • NCC¹² • PSC¹³ • SCC¹⁴ • CSC⁷ • Doane Univ.¹⁰ • WNCC¹⁷ 	LADC*
 Licensed Behavior Analyst	RBT* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school diploma • 40 hrs. training • Competency exam (consistent with Behavior Analysis Certification Board) 		LABA* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 years • Supervised fieldwork hours • Exam from Behavior Analysis Certification Board or equivalent 	LBA* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's Degree • Supervised fieldwork hours • Exam from Behavior Analysis Certification Board or equivalent 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNMC¹ • UNO⁴ • Midland Univ.²⁰ (has coursework for BCaBA* which will lead to LABA) 	BCBA* Certificate
 Mental Health Technician	All of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school diploma or GED • 16 credit hours of training 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bellevue Univ.⁵ • MCC¹¹ 	MHTC*
 Certified Peer Support Specialist	To become a Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First, you must be at least 19 years of age to obtain CPSS certification in Nebraska. • Second, you need to have lived experience with mental health (MH) and/or substance use disorder (SUD) and have been in recovery for at least one year or be a parent or primary caregiver of someone who has been affected by MH or a SUD. • Third, you need to complete an State of Nebraska approved Peer Support Core Curriculum training course that provides 60 hours of training. (https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Peer-Support-Approved-Core-Curriculum.aspx) • Fourth, apply to take the exam by completing the Certified Peer Support Specialist online application. (https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Peer-Support-Training-Completed-after-January-1-2019.aspx) • Fifth, take the Peer Recovery exam. For more information visit: https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Peer-Support-Training-Certification.aspx						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Alliance Peer Support Specialist Training • SCC¹⁴ Peer Support Specialist Training 	CPSS

Abbreviations:

- * BCaBA: Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst
- * BCBA: Board Certified Behavior Analyst
- * CMFT: Certified Marriage & Family Therapist
- * CPC: Certified Professional Counselor
- * CPSS: Certified Peer Support Specialist
- * LABA: Licensed Assistant Behavior Analyst
- * LADC: Licensed Alcohol & Drug Counselor
- * LBA: Licensed Behavior Analyst
- * LCSW: Licensed Clinical Social Worker
- * LIMHP: Licensed Independent Mental Health Practitioner
- * LMHP: Licensed Mental Health Practitioner
- * MHTC: Mental Health Technician Certificate
- * RBT: Registered Behavior Technician

List of Nebraska behavioral health programs and contact information:

- 1 University of Nebraska Medical Center | 402.559.4000 | www.unmc.edu
- 2 University of Nebraska at Kearney | 308.865.8441 | www.unk.edu
- 3 University of Nebraska-Lincoln | 402.472.7211 | www.unl.edu
- 4 University of Nebraska at Omaha | 402.554.2800 | www.unomaha.edu
- 5 Bellevue University | Bellevue | 402.293.2000 | www.bellevue.edu
- 6 Central Community College | Columbus | Grand Island | Hastings | 308.398.4222 | www.cccneb.edu
- 7 Chadron State College | Chadron | 308.432.6000 | www.csc.edu
- 8 College of Saint Mary | Omaha | 402.399.2400 | www.csm.edu
- 9 Creighton University | Omaha | 402.280.2700 | www.creighton.edu
- 10 Doane University | Crete | Lincoln | 402.826.2161 | www.doane.edu
- 11 Metropolitan Community College | Omaha | 800.228.9553 | www.mccneb.edu
- 12 Northeast Community College | Norfolk | O'Neill | Sioux City | West Point | 402.371.2020 | www.northeast.edu
- 13 Peru State College | Peru | 402.872.3815 | www.peru.edu
- 14 Southeast Community College | Beatrice | Lincoln | Milford | Online 402.471.3333
- 15 Union College | Lincoln | 402.486.2600 | www.southeast.edu
- 16 Wayne State College | Wayne | 866.972.2287 | www.wsc.edu
- 17 Western Nebraska Community College | Alliance | Scottsbluff | Sidney | 308.635.3606 | www.wncc.edu
- 18 Clarkson College | Omaha | 800.647.5500 | www.clarksoncollege.edu
- 19 Nebraska Wesleyan | Lincoln | 402.466.2371 | www.nebrwesleyan.edu
- 20 Midland University | Fremont | 800.642.8382 | www.midlandu.edu