

Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors

SOC: 21-1018 • Career Profile Report

■ Key Facts

\$59,190

Median Salary

483,500

Employment

+17.0%

Growth Rate

■ Requirements & Salary Range

Education: Master's degree

■ Automation Risk Assessment

Low Risk - 6.0% probability of being automated in the next 10-20 years.

This job is relatively safe from automation due to its creative, social, or complex problem-solving requirements.

■ Work-Life Balance

7.4/10 - Good work-life balance

■ Personality Fit (RIASEC)

Higher scores indicate better personality fit for this career type.

Realistic	4.0/10	Investigative	5.8/10
Artistic	7.0/10	Social	9.2/10
Enterprising	5.0/10	Conventional	5.8/10

■ Top Skills Required

Communication skills, Compassion, Interpersonal skills, Listening skills, Patience

✓ Strengths

- High Demand
- Flexible Work
- Continuous Learning

■ Challenges

- Burnout Risk
- Rapid Technological Change

■ What They Do

Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors help individuals **overcome addiction, behavioral challenges, and mental health issues**. They provide guidance, support, and coping strategies to promote recovery, emotional well-being, and healthier lifestyles. Their work is critical in rehabilitation, healthcare, and social services.

This career is well suited for individuals who enjoy helping others, problem-solving, and supporting personal growth and mental health.

What Do Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors Do?

These professionals assess client needs, develop treatment plans, and provide counseling and support to address mental health and behavioral challenges.

Common responsibilities include:

- Conducting interviews and assessments to identify issues
- Developing individualized treatment plans and therapeutic goals
- Leading individual or group counseling sessions
- Teaching coping strategies, life skills, and relapse prevention techniques
- Monitoring client progress and adjusting treatment approaches
- Maintaining confidential client records and documentation
- Collaborating with healthcare professionals, social workers, and support networks

Key Areas of Counseling Practice

Counselors may focus on specific client populations, conditions, or therapeutic approaches:

- Substance Abuse Counseling: Helping clients overcome drug or alcohol addiction
- Behavioral Disorder Counseling: Supporting clients with conduct, emotional, or behavioral challenges
- Mental Health Counseling: Addressing anxiety, depression, or other mental health conditions
- Crisis Intervention: Providing immediate support during emergencies or relapses
- Client Education and Support: Teaching coping strategies, wellness, and life skills

Skills and Abilities Needed

These professionals combine clinical, interpersonal, and analytical skills.

Core Professional Skills

Personal Qualities That Matter

Education and Career Pathway

This role typically requires formal education, supervised experience, and licensure:

- Bachelor's or Master's Degree: Counseling, psychology, social work, or related fields
- Clinical Internship or Practicum: Supervised hands-on experience in counseling settings
- State Licensure or Certification: Required to practice independently as a counselor
- Continuing Education: Maintaining licensure and staying current with therapy techniques and research
- Specialized Training (optional): Certifications in substance abuse, behavioral disorders, or mental health

Where Do Counselors Work?

They are employed in organizations providing mental health, addiction recovery, or social services:

- Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers
- Hospitals and Mental Health Clinics
- Community and Social Service Organizations
- Schools, Colleges, and Universities
- Government and Public Health Agencies

Work environments include offices, clinics, community centers, and educational facilities.

Is This Career Difficult?

This career requires emotional resilience, patience, and strong interpersonal skills. Counselors must handle sensitive issues, manage crises, and provide effective support while maintaining professional boundaries.

Who Should Consider This Career?

This career may be a strong fit if you:

- Enjoy helping individuals, families, or groups
- Have strong communication and listening skills
- Are patient, empathetic, and emotionally resilient
- Are interested in psychology, mental health, or addiction recovery
- Want a career supporting personal growth, wellness, and behavioral change

How to Prepare Early

- Take courses in psychology, social sciences, or counseling
- Volunteer or intern in mental health, social work, or rehabilitation settings
- Develop communication, empathy, and problem-solving skills
- Explore graduate programs or certifications in counseling or behavioral health
- Gain experience in supervised counseling or therapy programs

Substance abuse, behavioral disorder, and mental health counselors support recovery, improve well-being, and help clients navigate challenges, fostering healthier, more balanced lives.

*Generated by StartRight • Data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics & O*NET*

Source: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/community-and-social-service/substance-abuse-behavioral-disorder-and-mental-health-counselors.htm>