So, you want to be a mental health professional?

Jim Graham
Mental health professionals provide services intended to treat mental illness or improve the mental health of individuals.

- Individual treatment of adults and children
- Group treatments
- Treatment of family and couples
- Assessment and diagnosis
Mental health services fall within the scope of practice of several licensures

Licensure types and requirements vary by state.

- Check the laws for the state you’d like to practice
- Usually, graduating from an “accredited” program keeps your license portable
- Washington Department of Health
- Psychologist
- Clinical Mental Health Counselor
- Marriage and Family Therapist
- (Licensed Clinical Social Worker)
- (Psychiatrist)
Psychiatry

- Psychiatrists are medical doctors, and are first trained as physicians
  - Complete medical school
  - Complete a rotating internship
  - Complete a residency in psychiatry

- Psychiatrists have prescription privileges and many focus on medication management.
- Psychologist
- Clinical Mental Health Counselor
- Marriage and Family Therapist
- *(Licensed Clinical Social Worker)*
- *(Psychiatrist)*
Licensed Clinical Social Work

- This is not a specialty I know much about
- Most states require a Masters degree in Social Work.
- While many Licensed Clinical Social Workers engage in individual treatment, they also enact change through public policy and interacting with clients’ environments.
Psychologist
Clinical Mental Health Counselor
Marriage and Family Therapist
(Licensed Clinical Social Worker)
(Psychiatrist)
Clinical Mental Health Counselors

- **Education**: Masters in Counseling or related field.
  - Licensed at the Masters level (though you can get a doctorate in Counseling Education)

- **Accrediting Body**: Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP); [http://www.cacrep.org/directory/](http://www.cacrep.org/directory/)

- **Program Length**: 2 years of graduate school, typically followed by a year of supervised experience.
Clinical Mental Health Counselors

- **Scope of practice includes:**
  - Provide mental health services to children, individuals, couples, families, and groups.
  - While some testing is within the scope of counseling, formal psychological assessment is generally not
Marriage and Family Therapists

- **Education**: Masters or doctorate in Marriage and Family Therapy
  - Licensed at the Masters level

- **Accrediting Body**: Commission on Accreditation of Marriage and Family Therapy Education - COAMFTE

- **Program Length**: 2 years of graduate school, typically followed by a year of supervised experience.
Marriage and Family Therapists

- Scope of practice includes:
  - More involved training in family and couple’s therapy
  - Can still provide mental health services to children, individuals, and groups.
  - While some testing is within the scope of MFT, formal psychological assessment is generally not
Psychologist

- **Education:** Doctorate (Ph.D., Psy.D., or Ed.D.) in Clinical Psychology, Counseling Psychology, or School Psychology
  - Licensed at the Doctoral level


- **Program Length:** 6 or more years of graduate school (including a full time internship), typically followed by a year of supervised experience.
Psychologists

- **Scope of practice includes:**
  - Provide mental health services to children, individuals, couples, families, and groups.
  - Administering and interpreting psychological tests (personality, IQ, achievement, etc.)
  - In some states, limited prescription privileges are available with additional training
Types of Degrees for Psychologists

- Clinical vs. Counseling Psychology
- Ph.D. vs. Psy.D.
Clinical Psychology

- Traditionally:
  - Based on the medical model
  - Treats the seriously mentally ill
- Often
  - Accept a higher % of folks with Bachelor degrees
  - Housed in Psychology Departments

Counseling Psychology

- Traditionally:
  - Based on the developmental model
  - Treats phase-of-life and adjustment disorders
- Often
  - Accepts a higher % of folks with Masters degrees
  - Housed in Education Departments

Anymore, Clinical and Counseling programs are relatively indistinguishable
### Ph.D.

- **Boulder Model, Scientist-Practitioner**
  - Trains students to be practitioners and **creators** of research
  - **Often**
    - Clinical or Counseling
    - Have small cohort sizes (2 to 12 students)
    - Housed in public and private schools
    - Cheaper, more competitive

### Psy.D.

- **Vail Model, Practitioner-Scholar**
  - Trains students to be practitioners and **consumers** of research
  - **Often**
    - Clinical Only
    - Have medium to large cohort sizes (8 to 60+)
    - Housed in private and free-standing professional schools
    - More expensive, less competitive
Good reasons to go for your doctorate:

- You want to be trained extensively in research
- You want to become a faculty member at a university
- In psychology: you want to make formal psychological assessment part of your career

Bad reasons to go for a doctorate:

- Ego
Median Salaries by License

- CMHC: 42k
- MFT: 48k (but fewer jobs available)
- Psychologist in professional service setting: 85k (mean 100k, n=60,000)

Still want to be a mental health professional?

- Consider the costs
  - Finances, relocation, disruption of employment
- Consider the benefits
  - Salary, quality of life, specific work
- Remember, priorities change, and the reality of something doesn’t always match our expectations
  - 6+ years can be a big commitment
  - If you get a Masters, you can always return for a doctorate later
Further Information

- For those interested in doctoral programs in Clinical or Counseling Psychology, the best resource is:

  https://www.amazon.com/Insiders-Graduate-Programs-Counseling-Psychology/dp/1462525725
“Eye on Psy Chi” has some great articles on issues pertaining to graduate school: http://www.psichi.org/?page=eye_main#.Wgt9Y1tSxOQ