

Sorting It Out...How do I become a therapist?

Licensure

A license is a form of quality control, a credential issued by the state that ensures a minimum level of competence for professionals in the behavioral health field. This handout gives a quick overview of ways to become a counselor or psychotherapist in Alaska. For complete and up to date requirements, refer to the appropriate websites.

Psychologist

The term psychologist is regulated by state licensure. Licensing laws vary by state but generally require a doctorate in psychology, completion of an approved internship, and 1-2 years of professional experience. Some states also require applicants to pass a standardized exam.

A doctorate allows you to practice psychology without supervision. A doctorate usually takes 5-7 years to earn. An additional year of supervised practice is required for licensure. There are two types of doctorates in psychology. The PhD in either clinical or counseling psychology trains people for research, teaching, writing, and clinical practice. The PsyD emphasizes training for practitioners. Some schools offer an EdD (Doctor of Education) that can lead to licensure.

Licensed Psychological Associate (LPA)

Requires a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology, Counseling Psychology, or a related field, and 2 years of supervised practice (80% of which must be by a licensed psychologist).

www.dcde.state.ak.us/occ/ppsy.htm

Board of Psychologist and Psychological Associate Examiners

Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)

Requires a Master or Doctorate in Counseling or Related Field from an accredited school followed by 2 years of supervised practice (3,000 hours with Master's and 1,000 hours with Doctorate) from a licensed provider.

www.dced.state.ak.us/ppco2.htm

Board of Professional Counselors

Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)

Master of Social Work plus two years (3,000 hours) practice supervised by a licensed social worker, psychologist or psychiatrist.

www.dced.state.ak.us/occ/pcsw

Board of Social Work Examiners

Licensed Marital and Family Therapist (LMFT)

Master's Degree with specific course work in marital and family therapy, marital and family studies, human development, professional ethics, and research and one year supervised clinical practice (780 hours).

www.commerce.state.ak.us/occ/pmft.htm

Board of Marital and Family Therapy

Chemical Dependency Certification

The Tanana Valley Campus Human Services program offers most of the courses you need to become certified for entry level positions in the field of substance abuse.

Contact Bob Parr, Coordinator Human Services Program at ffrgp@uaf.edu. Some employers will provide training for their employees.

Counselor Technician (CT) This is an entry-level certification. The certificate holder is limited to a scope of practice requiring supervision by a certified chemical dependency counselor. 96 training hours. no practicum

Chemical Dependency Counselor Level I (CDCI) Two (2) years full time work experience with increasingly specialized experience in chemical dependency treatment. A Bachelor's degree in a relevant field (BS/BA, BSW, social sciences, nursing, psychology, sociology, etc) may be submitted for consideration as a substitute for one (1) year of the two (2) years of required experience **and** 150 hour practicum **and** 270 training hours.

Chemical Dependency Counselor Level II (CDC II) Three (3) years full time work experience with increasingly specialized experience in chemical dependency treatment. Each Bachelor of Arts or Science (or higher degree) may be submitted as consideration for one year substitution of requirement experience for up to two (2) years of the three (3) years of required experience **and** 300 hours practicum **and** 270 hours of training.

Alaska Commission for Behavioral Health Certification

www.akcertification.org/

Note: Master's program typically take one and a half to three years to complete. Some Master's programs are structured for part-time students.