

Health Care CAREERS



Mental Health Care Trends

A trio of counseling fields will grow faster than all other occupations combined

More than 40,000 new openings are projected in the field of counseling for behavioral disorders, substance abuse and general mental health over the decade ending in 2030. Here's a look at how these hot career tracks are broken down.

PSYCHIATRISTS/NURSE PRACTITIONERS

Licensed medical doctors with psychiatric training who can diagnose special conditions, prescribe and monitor medications and provide personalized therapy are called psychiatrists. Nurse practitioners in psychiatry or mental health are licensed nurses who provide assessment, diagnosis and therapy, and in some cases may prescribe and monitor medicines.

PSYCHOLOGISTS/COUNSELORS

These are professionals with doctoral-level degrees who make mental-health evaluations and diagnoses, while providing group and individual therapy. Counselors, on the other hand, join clinicians and therapists as professionals with a master's degree who evaluate mental health situations and provide personal therapy. Pastoral counselors are clergy with training in clinical



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education, and can diagnose conditions and provide counseling.

SOCIAL WORKERS/PEER SPECIALISTS

Clinical social workers are

master's degree holders who evaluate mental health cases while providing therapy through specific training programs. Social workers also have masters degrees, but only provide placement services,

case management and support for patients. Certified peer specialists have lived experience with substance-abuse disorders and mental health conditions. They offer mentoring, support and guidance.

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Becoming a Case Worker

Need access to community health services? They're here to help.

These programs help with recovery from substance abuse and mental illness, but are sometimes difficult to navigate because of complicated rules and paperwork. In many cases, clients simply don't know what support is available. Here's how to become part of the solution as a case worker.

Some 13 million of the 52 million Americans who experience mental illness find everyday tasks difficult to manage, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Those dealing with substance abuse, psychiatric illnesses or other social and personal challenges can be particularly vulnerable to these challenges. Mental-health case managers connect clients like these to critical resources, then monitor the outcomes to make sure patients are receiving the care they need.

WHAT THEY DO

To make sure the process unfolds seamlessly, the role of mental health case manager has been broken up into some helpful subcategories. For instance, psychiatric case managers employ research to best aid patients as they reenter society, with a special focus on self reliance. Other case managers may focus on



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older or young adults, the unhoused, reintegrating prisoners, substance abusers or other outreach programs. You'll find case workers in health care facilities and clinics, but also home-care programs, prisons and detention facilities, homeless centers and churches.

GETTING INVOLVED

A bachelor's degree is required for most mental

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health case manager jobs, though some require a master's degree in fields like sociology, psychology, human resources or social work. Board approval is provided by

the Commission for Case Manager Certification, with both experience and educational requirements. Those who earn the designation then must rectify every few years.

NEEDED SKILLS

Important skills that you'll need to become a case worker include being flexible, intelligent and, above all, observant. You'll need a deep understanding of psychiatric assess-

ment and mental health, and that will sometimes involved watching closely for non-verbal cues. The best case workers are very involved into their community, so that they have a comprehensive grasp on the support and services available in case of a variety of possible emergencies. An abiding sense of compassion and the ability to maintain strict client confidentiality are also a must.

Which Doctors Are Needed Most?

Look to one of these specialties when making a career choice

The most in-demand fields in health care are pediatricians, anesthesiologists and psychiatrists, along with physicians with a focus on family.

PEDIATRICIANS

Specializing in caring for children, pediatricians diagnose and treat injuries, diseases or conditions suffered by infants, toddlers and adolescents. As with other doctors, they manage their patients' physical, behavioral and mental health, but only after additional knowledge and skills relating to the special needs of younger people. They'll handle regular checkups, immunizations and other everyday health care needs until their patient transitions to an adult general practice physician.

PSYCHIATRISTS

These medical doctors specialize in mental health conditions like substance abuse disorders or emotional issues after receiving dedicating training on how psychological problems impact parents both mentally and physically. They will diagnose patients by ordering lab or psychological tests after extensive personal conversations. Then they create treatment plans which include prescription medication, therapy or other treatments.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST

Anesthesiologists are involved with patients throughout a surgery, evaluating them before administering pain medication by discussing medical history and administering a physical exam. They then share this information with the surgical team and develop a pain management plan. Finally, the anesthesiologist helps monitor post-operative recovery, and may be involved with deciding when discharge can be approved.

FAMILY PHYSICIANS

Family physicians are general practitioners who work with a broad spectrum of patients as a point of first contact before recommending any needed specialists. More typically, they help with everyday checkups, recovery from mishaps and health maintenance. Prospects must graduate from an accredited school, complete a residency for a minimum of three years and then get a state-approved license in the state where they

intend to practice.

OTHER NEEDS FOR PHYSICIANS

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, doctors are also needed in gynecology and women's health, cardiology and gastroenterology. Each position has its own distinctive responsibilities: Ob-gyns provide care related to female reproductive systems. Most are general practitioners who treat common medical conditions while

also performing surgeries and delivering babies.

Cardiologists specialize in cardiovascular-system elements like the heart and blood vessels. They're trained to diagnose and treat high blood pressure, heart attacks, arrhythmia and heart failure. Gastroenterologists diagnose and treat gastrointestinal tract diseases of the stomach, esophagus, small intestine, rectum and colon, pancreas and gallbladder, liver and bile duct.



The Hot Medical Sales Market

Selling health-related devices and pharmaceuticals remains an industry-leading field

Incentive-focused performance bonuses for top employees are among the factors which led to a steady influx of sales people from the consumer goods, services and technology sectors.

Here's how to position yourself for a similar transition as an expert in selling these critical but occasionally niche products.

RESUME TWEAKS

Selling pharmaceuticals or medical devices requires a unique skillset which you might already have — but it might not be properly highlighted on your resume. Best to tweak things in order to attract specific employers in this field. It's particularly important if they use applicant-tracking systems when tracking new resumes. These programs scan for relevance, using keywords searches.

Focus on adding key terms like “pharmaceutical sales,” “health care industry” and “medical device sales.” Then re-write your summary making clear that you would like to transition to this exciting sales sector, highlighting any additional transferable skills as you go. These may include developing leads, building relationships, developing new busi-



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ness, managing pipelines and workflow, revenue acceleration, major-account management, contract negotiation and executive relationships.

SPOTLIGHT RESULTS

In sales, results mean everything. So if you have a lengthy

and impressive record of sales, potential hiring managers and recruiters will take notice — even if it's in non-related consumer goods. Play up those accomplishments, both on your resume and on professional sites like LinkedIn. Create a “signature achievements” section to attract more

attention. Make each talking point and bulleted item for easy browsing.

INCREASED NETWORKING

Return to the connections you've made in your current job, and in jobs from the past. Mine these relationships for

recommendations in your job search, for tips on openings you may not have heard about, and on ways to better position yourself as a candidate. Then connect with trade or industry figures through groups and social media. Being proactive can open previously unknown doors.

No Experience? No Problem

Starting from scratch isn't easy — but it's also not impossible

Degrees in higher education can be a daunting task for anyone who has been away from the classroom for a long time. Some jobs also may initially be out of reach for workers still in an entry-level position, or those who've become firmly entrenched in another field.

The good news is that not all jobs in the health care industry require degrees, and there are a number of roles that require little or even no experience. Reach out to a local community college, professional organizations or universities to find out more about these opportunities. You could be working in an exciting new field before you know it.

MEDICAL ASSISTANT

This clerical role is critically important to health care facilities on any scale both large and small. Medical assistants perform a range of office-related tasks, schedule appointments and update medical records. In some cases, they may also take blood pressure, assist with preparing or organizing after a procedure, and potentially prep patients for examinations.

NURSING ASSISTANTS

These employees escort patients to their respective rooms, set up equipment and may assist with certain procedures under the supervision of medical and nursing staffs.



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Becoming certified through a state-approved exam-based educational program is required, but the courses are often on a flexible schedule to accommodate those with other work or family obligations.

HOME-HEALTH AIDES

Looking to get out of the

house, but not necessarily interested in office work? Home health aides visit the disabled or elderly at their personal residences or at assisted-living facilities to help with chores like cleaning, cooking and laundry. Depending on the patient and their needs, home health aides may also serve as

a critical sounding board, helpmate and friendly advisor. Employers typically require a high school diploma or equivalent degree in order to qualify for this position.

OTHER ROLES

There are a host of other health care positions that don't

require experience, making them particularly attractive to those who are just starting out. They include pharmacy technician, patient-service representative, medical coder or biller, medical receptionist, patient care or health information technician, and environmental services or lab technician.

Recreational Therapy

Ready to help someone discover creative new methods of healing?

The exciting field of recreational therapy looks for new ways to treat patients by incorporating non-traditional elements like music, games or movement.

These methods have been useful across for broad range of patients, including those with physical disabilities as well as emotional or mental issues. Sports, animal companionship and even small theater projects have also been incorporated in order to help reduce anxiety or stress, address depression and recover some mental function and motor skills, experts say. Recreational therapists also connect their patients with critical community resources, which can expand their opportunities to heal.

JOINING THE FIELD

Potential recreation therapists begin by pursuing a degree in recreation and fitness, or through more specialized courses associated with therapeutic recreation. You'll learn how to access patients and administer treatment, as well as intervention strategies and program planning. Classes in human anatomy are typically part of these degree programs, along with courses in psychiatric and medical terminology, and the use of various assistive devices.

KEY SKILLS

You'll need to possess certain key skills to excel in this field, including compassion, the ability to listen, patience and being resourceful. Each patient, and their needs, can be quite different — so they must be evaluated and treated on a case-by-case basis. What works for one might not work for another. A smart way to learn more is to pursue the standard credentials afforded by the National Council for

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Therapeutic Recreation certification, which follows completion of a supervised 480-hour internship and written exam. Note that this certification is not always mandatory, but it

could be useful either way.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

As the U.S. population continues to age, recreational therapists will be needed to help with related illnesses, conditions or injuries including common situations like Alzheimer's and mobility-reducing falls. Chronic conditions like obesity and diabetes are also on the rise, as are incidents or post-traumatic

stress among military and non-military alike, and these caregivers will provide important alternative care opportunities along the way. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a 4% growth among recreational therapist positions through the decade ending in 2031, which is roughly average for all other occupations. Some 1,500 positions will open annually, with most the result of transfers or retirement.



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Starting Your Own Practice?

Working for yourself can be quite rewarding, and also pretty scary

Consider these key elements before deciding to hang up your own personal shingle. With proper preparation and careful planning, you can eliminate much of the worry.

TOUGH QUESTIONS

There are years of training, of course, involved with becoming a doctor. But often-times this coursework includes few business-focused classes. Doctors may actually emerge from school and their internship with almost no working knowledge of how to manage an office, its staff and various budgeting considerations. Each of these elements presents a huge challenge for any new business owner, and doctors are no different.

Ask yourself these questions before making the leap: Am I ready to recruit my own team of medical professionals, hire them and then lead them? How much of the operational process do I really grasp, including human resources, payroll, and inventory and facility management? How will my practice stand out from others?

If you're unhappy with your answers, or uncertain about them, you'll need to hire a consultant or a business manager. But first, consider taking some related classes or participating in local programs like a small-business incubator so



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that you have a working knowledge of what you're asking others to accomplish.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Getting a one- or two-doctor practice off the ground typically begins with an expensive ramp up. Starting costs will include contracting with a small business attorney, since

they can help you create a business plan while providing important legal counsel regarding initial compliancy. Health care legislation and ever-changing insurance company reimbursements and regulations will have to be dealt with, and every decision has to work at scale. You may end up needing a small business loan or other form of

outside capital, so be prepared to research those options.

These funds can provide an important financial bridges as you get started, or help with covering the typically very large equipment outlays. Among the most critical are electronic health record systems, also known as EMR — or electronic medical records — systems. Digitized records of

things like patient histories, communications and lab reports are essential to modern health care operations. These systems can also provide needed information on your new practice's revenue cycle. Check out loans backed by the government's Small Business Administration, which can feature locked-in rates that are sometimes lower.