

Psychology Day (Fall 2009)

Training for a Career in the Helping Professions

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Some Types of Helping Professions

- Psychiatrists (MD degree)
- Psychologists (PhD, PsyD, EdD – doctoral level)
 - Clinical
 - Counseling
- Therapists/psychotherapists (master's degree or higher)
 - Social Work – counseling certification (MSW-C)
 - Mental Health Counselor
 - Psychiatric Nurse
- Working in Schools (master's degree or higher)
 - School Psychology
 - School Counseling

Regulating Practice

- In the US, each state regulates applied practice
- To become certified or licensed, your training program should be accredited by a NATIONAL organization (suggests minimal training standards are met)
 - Find the relevant national organization (Google!) and their list of accredited programs. Some examples:
 - Clinical psychology programs should be APA accredited
 - Counseling psych programs should be ACA accredited
 - School psychology programs should be NASP accredited
 - Marriage and family therapy programs should be AAMFT accredited
 - For master's degrees in education/counseling, programs should be CACREP (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs) accredited

Regulating Practice

- A graduate degree is not sufficient for practice!
- Plan for fees, exams, supervised practice AFTER you graduate (specifics vary across states).
- Experience requirements: often several years post-grad and may involve paying for supervision
- See this website for specific NYS Regulations:
www.op.nysesd.gov/proflist/htm

Some examples of POST GRADUATION requirements:

- Psychologists need 2 yrs supervised full time practice
- Mental health counselors need 3 yrs of supervised full time practice (not earned within one's own private practice!)

Responsible Practice

- Practice is a huge responsibility. Ethically, you should be as well-trained as possible before you practice
- Choose an accredited training program with
 - **A small faculty/student ratio** (how much time, attention will you get in learning to work with clients?)
 - **Faculty and training sites that match your specific interests and career goals**
 - Not all psychologists/helping professionals are trained to work with all clients. Pick programs with
 - faculty supervisors trained in your areas of interest
 - placements working with the clients you want to help
 - Different programs vary in terms of academic focus, helping orientation (e.g., problem versus process focus, psychodynamic versus cognitive behavioral)

Applying to Graduate School

- A **broad** undergraduate course selection is valued (not just those in the social sciences!) Grad school is when you specialize.
- Most programs have GPA cutoffs (3.0 for many programs, 3.5 for clinical psych)
- Most reputable programs require the general GRE (see ETS website for info about test dates)
- Helpful to have some “clinical” experiences (crisis line, co-ops, volunteering, internships, Resident Assistant positions), even better if related to your interests

Applying to Graduate School

- Professionally-focused personal statement
 - Personalize to show the match between your interests/career goals and the specific training offered by that specific program
 - Be honest but selective; revealing sensitive personal info to strangers suggests poor boundaries
- Strong letters of recommendation
 - Waive your rights to view (or not taken seriously)
 - Emphasis on interpersonal and communication skills, intelligence, reliability (so be sure to give writers enough time & info to write the letter!)

Some Graduate School Resources

- Insider's Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical & Counseling Psychology
 - Publisher: Guilford Press - 800-365-7006 - www.guilford.com
- Getting In: A Step-by-Step Plan for Gaining Admission to Graduate School in Psychology
 - Publisher: American Psychological Association - 800-374-2721 – www.apa.org
- The Complete Guide to Graduate School Admission: Psychology & Related Fields
 - Publisher: Lawrence Erlbaum - 800-926-6579 – www.earlbaum.com