

Career Plan: Licensed Mental Health Counselor



Florida International University

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For many years I was perfectly content with my job as a healthcare professional, and even thought of it as a career path that was worth following. Most of my colleagues had Baccalaureate degrees in healthcare administration or psychology, but my years of experience were enough to help me move up in the field. Slowly, an inescapable feeling of restlessness built to the surface, a feeling I now attribute to lack of purpose. In my current profession, I often encounter people in distress, people who are ill or caring for ill family members, people who struggle to balance physical, financial, and psychological burdens. I've always felt a desire to help them deal with their struggles, and eventually found my purpose in that desire. I am now pursuing a career in clinical mental health counseling by first earning my bachelor's in psychology, and then master's in professional counseling psychology.

My current major has proven very interesting, aside from the social impacts that its practice will eventually have on the daily lives of others. Particularly, courses in personality theory, psychopathology, and psychotherapy have been immensely interesting. Additionally, courses heavy on statistics such as research methods and psychological testing have also been challenging and thought-provoking. Even the most challenging course, behavior analysis, was rewarding.

Current Job Salary Discussion

Pursuing a career change at this stage in my life was not motivated by financial gain, but rather by a calling. Eventually, I hope to work in an environment where direct contact with clients will help them rediscover or build the strength to deal with their life stressors appropriately, improving their quality of life. Ideally, I'd like to work for community outreach centers that service disadvantaged populations. Unsurprisingly, salaries for my aspired career are

not very high. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), the average national salary for marriage and family counselors is \$50,000 a year. In Miami, the average yearly salary for licensed mental health counselors is below the national average, at \$49,000 (Pay Scale, 2020). Salaries vary greatly by years of experience and specialty. Nationally, the lowest ten percent earns under \$31,850 a year, while the highest ten percent earns \$82,240 a year (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Additionally, wages also fluctuate from state to state and even amongst cities within the same state. For example, Miami's top earners in the field net \$72,000, while Tampa's top earners clear \$101,000 a year (Pay Scale, 2020). By comparison, licensed mental health counselors (LMHC) in New York, NY, average \$48,000 yearly, and LMHCs in San Diego, CA, average \$53,000 a year (Pay Scale, 2020).

Graduate School or Marketability

In order to practice as a LMHC, I must take the GRE, be accepted to and complete a master's program in professional counseling psychology, complete 1500 hours of direct client contact as a MHC intern, pass several post-graduation courses, and then sit for the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE) (Florida International University, 2020). The required graduate degree typically takes two years to complete, and the clinical hours of intern experience must be completed in a minimum of two years. In order to improve my marketability while in the lengthy process that precedes licensure, I plan on attending relevant conferences where I may learn and broaden my network, and also hope that I'll be able to transfer my current employment to a mental health facility. The cost of graduate school varies greatly by institution. At FIU, the approximate total cost of the program is \$28,560 (Florida International University, 2020). Albizu University offers a masters in mental health counseling at an approximate cost of \$39,752 (Albizu University, 2020). Other private institutions have

prohibitive program costs, such as Nova Southeastern University's \$55,000 MS in counseling (Nova Southeastern University, 2020). Given the expected yearly salary, I aim to gain acceptance at FIU or Albizu University. FIU's program in professional counseling psychology is my first choice not only because of the cost and quality, but also because students graduate with 1,000 clinical hours under their belt, making the goal of licensure attainable a year sooner than in comparable programs.

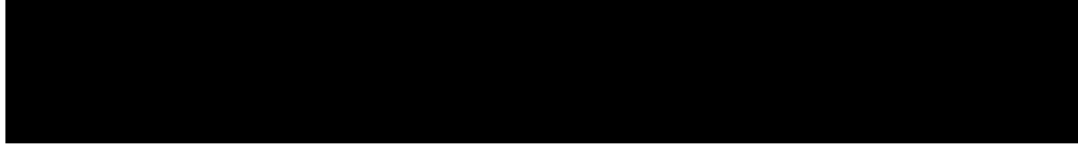
Parallel Plan Discussion

If some unforeseen life event prevents me from ever becoming a clinical mental health counselor, I'd focus on a career that would still fulfill my purpose of assisting people in need. Licensed clinical social workers serve the public in similar ways, and would thus be my next choice in career path. However, assignment instructions recommend that we look outside of our current major for alternate career paths. I feel that nursing would also fulfill my desire to live a purposeful life that enriches or improves the lives of others. None of my upper division psychology courses are applicable to nursing, but having a double bachelor's can assist me in securing a nursing position at a mental health facility. Fortunately, my associates in science degree had a pre-nursing concentration, so I would not need to take the nursing school prerequisites. I would still have to take the entrance examinations, HESI or TEAS, in order to apply. It would take two to three years to obtain a BSN, an endeavor I'd be willing to take on if graduate school acceptance becomes unattainable. The cost of a BS ranges from program to program. The most affordable local program is available at Miami Dade College for \$16,237 (Miami Dade College, 2020). Private institutions offer nursing degrees at a much higher cost, for example, NSU's 81 credit program runs for approximately \$65,000 (Nova Southeastern University, 2020). Salaries for nurses with a BSN are considerably higher than salaries for

LMHCs. National average yearly salaries range from \$50,800 to \$106,500, with a median of \$71,730 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Locally, annual wages in Miami range from \$48,200 to \$83,500, but are much higher in other areas of the country such as San Diego, where they range from \$59,800 to \$112,00 (Pay Scale, 2020). Compiling a resume for entry level nursing positions would still include my relevant healthcare experience and direct patient contact, it would just reflect a different degree.

"I declare that this assignment is my own work and that I have correctly acknowledged the work of others. This assignment is in accordance with University and School guidance on good academic conduct (and how to avoid plagiarism and other assessment irregularities)."

Resume



SUMMARY

Healthcare professional with ten years of experience in patient advocacy and direct patient contact, including 1,000 of clinical experience as a registered MHC intern. Well-versed in uncompensated programs available for uninsured patients: county, state, and federal.

SKILLS

LMHC in the state of Florida
MH#7200
Bilingual (English & Spanish)
HIPPA & Privacy Laws
Software: Cerner, AdvocatePro, Availity, Emdeon, Microsoft Office, Siemens Invision & EDM
Effective communicator

EDUCATION

MS • Professional Counseling
Psychology • Florida
International University

BA • Psychology • Florida
International University

AS • Miami Dade College

EXPERIENCE

RESOLUTION SPECIALIST • CHANGE HEALTHCARE • 2019 - PRESENT

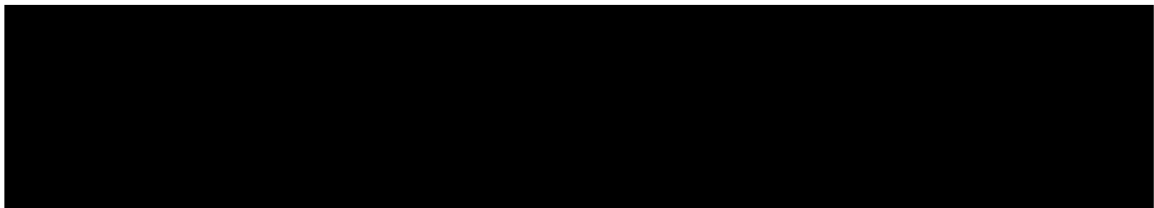
- Contact clients to obtain documentation necessary for approval of benefits.
- Contact county, state, and federal agencies (including, but not limited to, SSA, DDS, DCF, State Attorney's Office, County Human/Social Services) to facilitate submission of documentation and coordinate any necessary compliance.
- Confirm benefits approval via Emdeon and FLMMIS, status accounts to be billed.
- Maintain or exceed production metrics set by hospital contract regarding billed accounts and age of applications.

HEALTHCARE REPRESENTATIVE • CHANGE HEALTHCARE • 2012 - 2019

- Received hospital referrals of uncompensated care accounts and screened patients for eligibility to county, state, and federal programs.
- Completed applications for relevant programs, reviewed medical records, and took appropriate action to expedite benefit approval.
- Adhered to company and legal standards regarding Protected Health Information (PHI), Personal Identifiable Information (PII) and Personnel Transaction Identifier (PTI).

MEDICAL OFFICE CLERK • DR. CHARLENE CANALI, DC • 2009 – 2012

- Scheduled appointments, confirmed insurance enrollment and benefits, collected amounts due at time of visit.
- Entered procedure and diagnostic codes in Medisoft.
- Reviewed and filed EOBs, sent patient invoice at physician's request.



References

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[Job=Licensed_Mental_Health_Counselor/Salary/5be5d110/Miami-FL](https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Licensed_Mental_Health_Counselor/Salary/5be5d110/Miami-FL)