

Hey there,

FUTURE MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL!

It's OK not to be OK, and it's pretty amazing to be the person who wants to help others navigate their struggles with mental health. Read on to learn how to become a mental health professional.

Trust the PROCESS

While there are entry-level roles available in the mental health field with a bachelor's degree, in New York, you must earn a master's degree or higher to work in therapeutic, clinical, or counseling roles. The specific education required depends on what you want to do and where you want to work, so be sure to research what's needed for the paths that interest you.

MANY ROUTES TO CAREERS IN Mental Health

Colleges have different pathways leading to careers in mental health. Here are some popular undergraduate and graduate programs:

1 START WITH AN UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE:

The following undergraduate majors are likely to include the courses that will prepare you for the graduate programs required for therapeutic, clinical, or counseling roles.

- ➔ **B.S. in Psychology:** Psychology majors use science to better understand why people behave the way they do.
- ➔ **B.S. in Expressive Arts in Mental Health:** This major will prepare you to help people of all ages use creative expression to support well-being.
- ➔ **B.S. in Forensic Psychology:** Forensic psychology bachelor's programs like the one at Russell Sage are rare, but very appealing for anyone interested in working specifically with criminals or crime survivors.
- ➔ **B.S. in Criminal Justice, Law and Behavioral Science:** Unique to Russell Sage College, this interdisciplinary program prepares you for roles requiring an understanding of how human behavior and social systems intersect.

CLASSES YOU MAY TAKE:

- Abnormal Psychology
- Positive Psychology
- Psychology of Persuasion & Influence
- Animal Behavior
- Expressive Arts in Grief and Healing
- Victims and Their Experience
- Women and Crime

2 SECURED THE BAG?

And by "bag" we mean a bachelor's degree. Now it's time for the level up. A master's or doctorate is required for many positions in the mental health field, and even when not technically required, graduate study is an asset for career growth. Here are some popular options:

- ➔ **M.A., Mental Health Counseling:** Licensed Mental Health Counselors work with individuals, families, and groups on challenges like stress, relationships, or anxiety.
- ➔ **M.S., Professional School Counseling:** School counselors help children and young adults build academic and social skills and set education and career goals.
- ➔ **M.S., Applied Behavior Analysis and Autism:** Board Certified Behavior Analysts help individuals with emotional, behavioral, and developmental needs build skills for communication and daily living.
- ➔ Nonclinical master's programs like Russell Sage's **M.A. in Community Psychology, M.S. in Forensic Mental Health, M.S. in Criminal Justice & Community Corrections, and M.S. in Sport Science: Coaching and Mental Performance** can also add valuable credentials to your resume.



HOT TIP

Other common undergraduate backgrounds for mental health careers include education, sociology, or social work.

HOW DO YOU PREPARE in high school?

To be a strong applicant and feel prepared for college, keep these tips in mind:

- ➔ Speak with a current college student or recent grad with career goals similar to yours. Find out what worked for them, and what they wish they had known.
- ➔ Look for colleges with undergraduate-to-graduate pathways for benefits like accelerated programs, assured acceptance to grad programs, course waivers, and more.
- ➔ Wherever you apply, look into resources like clubs, opportunities to serve as a peer mentor, and special centers. At Russell Sage, for example, you'll find the Denise Taber Finard '80 Women's Institute and the Criminal Investigation Resource Center — places where you can gain experience in areas that matter to you.
- ➔ You don't have to be 100% sure about grad school before you've even started your bachelor's. Most majors prepare you well for graduate programs and college will offer plenty of resources to help you explore and decide.

CAREER opportunities

Careers in the mental health field can provide job security, stable employment prospects, and an opportunity to make a real difference. Opportunities for Licensed Mental Health Counselors look to be especially strong: According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the demand for mental health counselors is expected to increase by 19% through 2033.

* **Planning to become a New York State–licensed therapist, counselor, or clinician?** Choosing a degree program in New York can help you meet state requirements.

SO WHY PICK RUSSELL SAGE FOR THIS?



The Capital Region is home to Albany Med Health System (the largest regionally governed not-for-profit health system in northeastern New York and western New England) and dozens of agencies serving more than 19 million New Yorkers, and it's a great location for internships, post-grad job opportunities, and opportunities to get involved in public and community service.



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