

## Types of Mental Health Professionals

The most common MHPs in the United States are Psychologists, Marriage and Family Therapists, Social Workers, and Professional Counselors. Each state has its own licensing laws and standards that govern each type of professional. While all licensed MHPs can help most people with problems of living, each group has its own special training in specific areas that makes them more qualified for certain types of issues. In addition, each individual therapist has a unique set of experiences that makes him or her uniquely qualified to work with certain kinds of issues.

**Psychologists** generally have a Ph.D. or Psy.D. degree in psychology from an accredited school. They must complete a rigorous internship period and pass a state-licensing exam. In addition to their undergraduate college degree, most psychologists spend five to seven years in education and training. They study scientific methods and the science of human behavior, building skills for working with people who have real life problems.

**Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs)** generally have a master's or doctorate degree in psychology, counseling, or a related subject from an accredited school. In most states, they must complete a supervised internship period and pass a state licensing exam. Marriage and family therapists are trained to work with people, focusing on how they relate to others. While they often work with an individual client, the focus of treatment is the set of relationships that surround the client and how those relationships impact the client. MFTs are trained in psychotherapy and family systems. They are licensed to diagnose and treat mental and emotional disorders within the context of marriage, couples, and family systems. They work in a variety of settings with individuals, couples, families, children, and adolescents, providing support and a fresh viewpoint as people struggle with life's challenges.

**Social Workers** have a BSW or MSW from an accredited school. They must have completed an MSW and a supervised internship before passing a state-licensing exam. (Each state has its own licensing regulations.) The social work profession focuses on individual happiness and well being in a social context. It is also

concerned with the well being of the society that surrounds the individual. Social workers are trained to pay attention to the environmental forces that may contribute to the individual's life problems.

**Licensed Counselors** have a master's degree in psychology or a related subject from an accredited school. In most states, they must complete a supervised internship period and pass a state licensing exam.

### **When You Begin Therapy**

At this practice, initial sessions are between usually between 60-90 minutes long. This is because we really want to get to know you and gather as much information as possible. After that for individual sessions, a 45 or 60 minute appointment is usually scheduled on a weekly basis. For couples or family sessions, a 75 or 90 minute session is often scheduled. Homework may or may not be given depending on the issue you bring to therapy.