



Careers

Marriage and Family Therapist

As one of the 50 best careers of 2010, this should have strong growth over the next decade

By U.S. News Staff

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The rundown:

While some counselors focus on the behavior of an individual, marriage and family therapists go a step further, addressing mental-health issues within the context of the family. By counseling couples, families, or individuals, marriage and family therapists can tackle a host of problems: adult schizophrenia, substance abuse, anorexia, and marital conflict. Today, marriage and family therapy is considered a "core" mental-health profession, alongside social work, psychiatric nursing, psychology, and psychiatry. More than 1.8 million people are currently receiving treatment from a marriage and family therapist.

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The outlook:

As the field matures, the number of marriage and family therapists has surged. And demand is expected to increase in the future, with employment in this profession rising 14 percent from 2008 to 2018. Fueling part of the growth is a more widespread acceptance of the field, which makes people in need more willing to seek out such counseling.

Upward mobility:

Marriage and family therapists with doctorates are in better position to advance in the field. The advanced degree makes it easier to assume managerial positions or become teachers or researchers.

Activity level:

Marriage and family therapists work in prisons, universities, inpatient facilities, and private practices, as well as other settings. Flexible hours can be important because working families

often need to make appointments during the evening or on the weekends. Counseling is often conducted in a private office.

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Stress level:

The stress level will vary depending on the specialty and the patients, but it can be quite high.

Education and preparation:

To enter the field, candidates can obtain a master's degree, a doctorate, or complete a postgraduate clinical training program. Two years of supervised clinical work is typically required before a therapist takes a licensing exam.

Money:

Marriage and family therapists' median annual earnings were \$45,000 in 2008. The best-paid 10 percent made more than \$71,000 a year, while the lowest-paid 10 percent earned less than \$28,000 annually.

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