

## Community and Social Services

### Substance Abuse and Behavioral Disorder Counselors

**Substance Abuse and Behavioral Disorder Counselors** help people who have problems with drugs or alcohol, eating disorders, or other forms of addiction, such as gambling or sex addictions. Counseling involves:

- helping people to identify “triggers”, meaning feelings, relationships or activities which motivate addictive behavior,
- identifying underlying problems which motivate an addiction,
- developing a personalized recovery program, and
- providing mental health treatment to address those underlying problems.

Counseling may be done in individual and group settings, and most clients will use both forms, whether with the same counselor, or with a whole treatment team. Counselors often work with family members or loved ones as well. Some counselors also engage in public education or outreach activities related to addictions, or eating disorders.

Although work in this area can be very rewarding, it also can be very emotionally draining. Counselors in this area need to plan for and develop supports for their own stress management and emotional well-being. Working conditions vary from clean, well lit and comfortable clinics to homeless shelters. Their work week is generally 40 hours although longer hours may be required if there is a shortage of counselors in a particular workplace.

### Education/Training

#### *How to Obtain:*

A bachelor's degree is usually the minimum requirement for entry into the occupation. Some positions require an advanced degree, typically a Master's in Social Work (MSW). New York and all other states also have licensing boards.

Licenses are not necessarily required for all positions, or for entry and training, but are typically required for advancement. License requirements in most states commonly include: written examination, continuing education, or 1-3 years of experience.

The requirements for a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) in New York include:

- statement of moral character
- 21 years of age

- A Masters in Social Work
- 12 hours of clinical coursework
- 3 years of supervised experience
- A written examination.

In addition or instead (depending on the position), social workers in the area of substance abuse may pursue certification as an Alcohol or Other Drug Abuse Counselor (AODAC) through the International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium (ICRC).

Requirements for Alcohol or Other Drug Abuse Counselor certification include:

- Prior hours of supervised experience (numbers vary based on educational degree)
- at least 270 hours of education
- signing a code of ethics
- A written examination.

In New York State, the AODAC examination is offered through the Office of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Services (OASAS).

Some counselors working in Rehabilitation Centers also pursue voluntary certification through the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC), which requires a Masters Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling through an accredited program, internship or supervised work hours, and passage of a written examination.

Some more specialized credentials involving continuing education, though not necessarily mandatory, may be helpful for advancement after initial licensing, and are available through the National Association of Social Workers (NASW).

*More Information on Licensing:*

- Directory of state licensing boards:  
<https://www.datapathdesign.com/ASWB/Laws/Prod/cgi-bin/LawBoardWebsitedll/EXEC/0/0yqtpd30za0u3g1eyif1b115x868>
- New York State licensing information: <http://www.op.nysed.gov/prof/sw/>
- International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium:  
<http://www.icrcaoda.org/AODAstardards.asp>
- Office of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Services:  
<http://www.oasas.state.ny.us/sqa/credentialing/index.cfm>
- Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification:  
[http://www.crccertification.com/pages/about\\_crc\\_certification/46.php](http://www.crccertification.com/pages/about_crc_certification/46.php)

- National Association of Social Workers:  
<http://www.socialworkers.org/credentials/default.asp>

*Average Costs:*

Tuition and fees for a master's degree earned at an accredited public university in the social behavior sciences, such as a Master's in Social Work (MSW) costs an average of \$10,900\* per year. Completion time is generally two years.

Licensure and certification occurs at the state level: Costs vary by state, ranging from \$40-\$500

The cost in New York state is approximately \$300, plus the cost of any exam study aids.

For the Alcohol or Other Drug Abuse Counselor (AODAC) examination in New York, the cost is approximately \$300, plus the cost of any exam study aids.

For the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) examination, the cost is \$385, plus the cost of any exam study aids.

Costs of continuing education vary.

\*Note: This figure does not include federal, state, or university financial aid resources such as grants, fellowships, scholarships or work study. It also does not include vocational rehabilitation or other state resources available specifically to people with disabilities. The out-of-pocket expense may be significantly less.