

Dear Colleague,

As you may know, this past fall we undertook a historic project on behalf of counselors - the first ever Counselor Compensation Study.

Nearly 9,000 counselors from across the nation participated in what we expect will become an annual survey of the counselor workforce. We asked nearly 50 questions regarding salary and benefits from health care to parental leave. We asked about education, work history, certification, work setting, and many other factors as well.

Although, these types of surveys exist for other professions such as psychology and social work, nothing of this kind exists for counselors. Our goal is to provide the profession with a comprehensive look at compensation and benefits, broken down by specialty, geography, work setting and many other factors.

We all know that counselors aren't in this profession for the money. But we did find that counselors can be well-compensated in many ways besides salary. Benefits such as health care coverage for counselors exceed the norm for the U.S. Many counselors also have the opportunity to set their own career path through private practice.

I believe the level of participation in this study indicates that counselors are very excited about receiving this information. We expect to publish this study in book format in late spring. In addition, the results of this study have spurred us to begin development of new benefits that can aid counselors, particularly those just beginning their careers.

In the meantime, please take a moment to read through the scope of this study, enclosed in this executive summary.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts about this landmark work from ACA!

Sincerely,

Richard Yep, CAE, FASAE



Chief Executive Officer
American Counseling Association



STATE OF THE
PROFESSION

2014 COUNSELOR
COMPENSATION

The American Counseling Association (ACA) undertook an effort to define the compensation and benefits typical of the counseling profession.

Because of the diverse nature of counseling, this study attempts to quantify the impacts of certain factors such as specialty and geography, without diluting the study sample to such an extent that no valuable information can be gleaned.

To that end, we defined the initial scope of this study to encompass 4 major specialties:

- Mental Health Counselors
- Rehabilitation Counselors
- School Counselors
- Counselor Educators

CRCC offered its membership list as a source of Rehabilitation Counselors, in exchange for the opportunity to learn specific information regarding the compensation of Rehabilitation Counselors. This executive summary provides some of that information.

The specific objectives of this study included:

- Understanding differences in compensation between major counseling specialties
- Determining how geography impacts compensation
- Understanding the role of advanced education in compensation
- Understanding the impact of other experiential factors such as length of service and work setting
- Drawing a clearer picture of how counselors work through part-time work and private practice
- Defining the benefits typically offered as part of a compensation package to counselors

METHODOLOGY

ACA developed and deployed a 46 question web survey for this study.

E-mail invitations were sent to all ACA members, as well as a sample of the four major specialties selected for study from outside of ACA membership. We selected samples from both within and outside of membership in order to ensure that no bias was presented by selecting only ACA members. In addition, certain specialties are under-represented in ACA membership. Sourcing a portion of the sample from outside of ACA membership ensured the sample size would be significant within each specialty selected for study.

The four specialties selected for the study included:

- Mental Health Counselors
- Rehabilitation Counselors
- School Counselors
- Counselor Educators

The sample sources for each specialty outside of ACA membership included:

- State Licensure Lists
- Self-Identified School Counselors
- Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification List
- Database of Counselor Educators

Some specialties are over- or under-represented in the final sample due to response rates or constraints on the number of messages ACA was allowed to send to each list. Therefore, findings are presented by specialty rather than in aggregate.

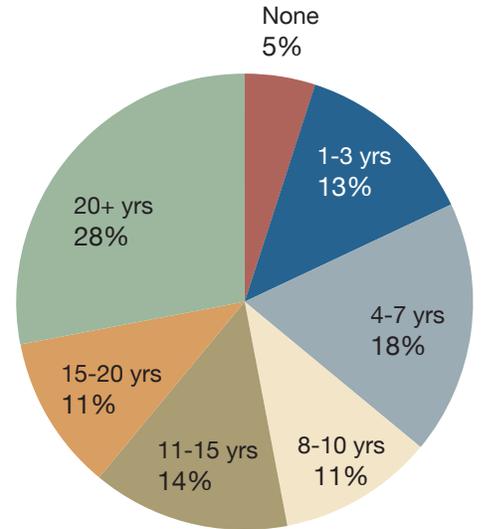
SPECIALTY	RESPONSES	MARGIN OF ERROR
Mental Health	5,045	1.40%
Rehabilitation	581	3.96%
School Counselors	1,663	2.30%
Counselor Educators	576	3.70%
Other	1,084	3.00%

*Margin of Error is calculated at 95% confidence

EXPERIENCE

The survey attracted a range of responders based on experience.

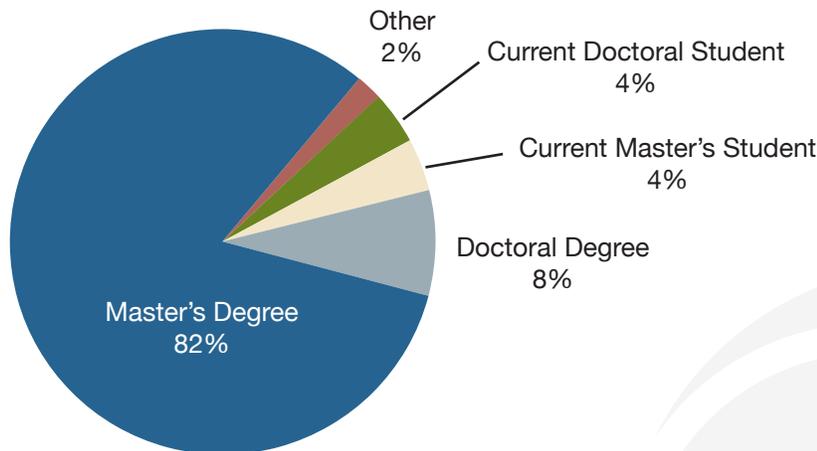
Approximately 5% of Rehabilitation Counselor respondents indicated that they had no years of experience. Some of these represented newly minted counselors, however a small group of current Master’s students responded to the survey. Those who indicated they are currently a Master’s student have been removed from the sample in all analyses presented here.



REHABILITATION COUNSELORS EXPERIENCE LEVEL

EDUCATION

While nearly three-quarters of all respondents possess a Master’s Degree, the minimum to practice as a counselor, 82% of all Rehabilitation Counselors possess a Master’s Degree.



REHABILITATION COUNSELORS EDUCATION LEVEL

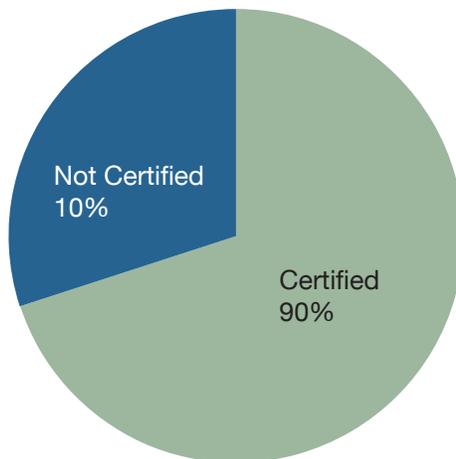


CERTIFICATION

Not every counselor must be certified.

ACA wanted to be able to assess the impact of certification on compensation. Respondents were asked about certification based upon their answers to questions regarding specialty.

Rehabilitation Counselors received a question regarding their status as Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. Only 10% of rehabilitation counselors are uncertified.



REHABILITATION COUNSELORS WITH CERTIFICATION

WORK SETTING

Counselors work in a variety of settings. Different work settings typically offer different types of compensation packages. Not all work settings are appropriate for all specialties.

Rehabilitation counselors are most likely to work for state and local governments, which offer some of the best benefits packages to counselors. This is significantly higher than in other counseling specialties.

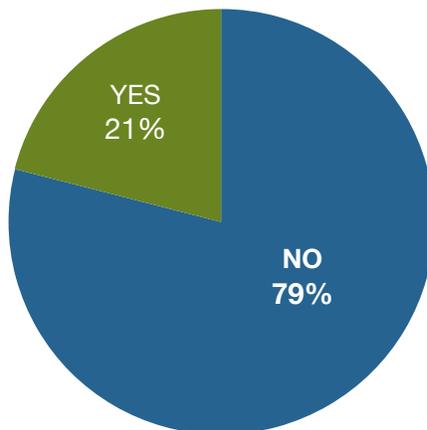
No Response	0%
Business/Industry - Including private for-profit rehabilitation company	6%
College/University	8%
Correctional Facility	0%
Counseling/Rehabilitation Agency - Private	10%
Government - Federal	9%
Government - State/County/City	44%
Hospital	3%
Insurance Company	4%
K-12 School	1%
Other	8%
Pastoral/Religious	0%
Self-employed/Private Practice	7%

WORKING CONDITIONS

The survey indicates that many counselors work in more than one position, often pursuing a private practice or other such secondary position in addition to their current position. A significant number of counselors also work a single counseling position part time.

For purposes of this study, we defined a part-time position as less than 25 hours per week. In addition, we asked respondents to answer questions related to compensation and benefits for their primary counseling position only. A second line of questioning related to income was asked of those respondents who indicated they have more than one counseling-related position, such as a private practice or adjunct faculty position in order to understand the impact of second positions on total income.

34% of counselors hold a second position outside of their primary counseling position. Rehabilitation Counselors are less likely to hold a second position, with only 21% indicating that they do so.



REHABILITATION COUNSELORS WITH A SECOND POSITION

STATE OF THE
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2014 COUNSELOR
COMPENSATION

COMPENSATION

Many inter-related factors influence salary, among them geography, length of experience, work setting, education, certification, and job description. The average salary figures below are influenced by all of these factors and should only be used as a rough estimate.

Outside of Counselor Educators, Rehabilitation Counselors are the most highly paid counseling specialty on average. This is true across most geographies.

Work setting and number of hours worked are the primary contributing factors to this figure. Government positions are somewhat more highly compensated than other work settings (with the exception of insurance companies and universities).

In addition, Rehabilitation Counselors are less likely to work in part-time positions.

SPECIALTY	AVERAGE PRIMARY SALARY
Clinical Mental Health/Mental Health/Community Counseling	\$40,421
Counselor Educator	\$66,405
Rehabilitation Counselor	\$53,561
School Counselor	\$53,299
Other	\$51,074

EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Counselors who are not self-employed (i.e. not in private practice) receive excellent benefits on the whole. In most cases, the benefits available to counselors exceed the national standard for all other professions.

Rehabilitation Counselors fare particularly well in terms of available benefits.

The line of questioning regarding benefits was only asked of those who indicated a work setting other than “self-employed.”

% of respondents indicating coverage is available:
Counselors (n=7,282) 2013 National Coverage*

BENEFIT	ALL RESPONDERS (7,282)	REHABILITATION COUNSELORS (581)	NATIONAL COVERAGE (2013)
Employee Retirement Plan	73%	86%	68%
Medical Coverage	81%	90%	72%
Dental	58%	63%	47%
Vision	45%	51%	27%
Short Term Disability	65%	73%	37%
Long Term Disability	56%	70%	33%

*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics National Compensation Survey; Statistics for Civilian Workers Nationwide

The American Counseling Association (ACA) thanks the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) for its assistance and cooperation in this effort.