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The Mental Health Professions

2024

This is a primer to help you understand the different professionals you may meet when you come for psychotherapy or substance abuse counseling.

We hope this page can help reduce confusion about the profession. You can be assured that the amount of clinical training for all these professions is about the same and all are trained in the same basic methods and ethics for helping our clients.

Shorehaven Behavioral Health, Inc., has high standards for its licensed staff, higher than is required under state law.

1. The Mental Health Professionals – Shorehaven employs the special, advanced skills of several kinds of mental health professionals.

Psychiatrist – an MD with a residency in psychiatry, whose role is often primarily to prescribe medications to help with psychiatric symptoms

Psychologist – usually a doctorate level professional with PhD or PsyD whose expertise is in assessment and behavioral therapies, but who may be trained in a variety of methods of treatment

Clinical Social Workers – Licensed CSWs are licensed masters-level professionals who may use a variety of methods of treatment, and who often have expertise in linking clients to various services and programs in the community

Professional Counselors – Licensed PCs are licensed masters-level professionals who are trained in the techniques of counseling to help clients probe feelings and emotions, thoughts and ideas, in order to achieve greater understanding

Art Therapists – Registered Art Therapists are licensed masters-level professionals who help clients use art to express emotions and inner experiences and trauma

Marriage and Family Therapists – Licensed MFTs are licensed masters-level professionals trained to understand how the interactions and roles in our relationships shape our feelings, thoughts, self-image, and behavior, and how to make changes in our patterns of interaction in order to bring about change

Substance Abuse Counselors – Certified SACs can be at any level of the educational spectrum, and they have spent at least 3-5 years working extensively with the clients who suffer the problems of substance abuse and dependence and other compulsive, addictive behaviors, and SACs have techniques to help achieve recovery

Below, we detail the nature of Licensing and Certification in the mental health professions.

2. Licenses — In Wisconsin, all of the professions place the public trust as a number one priority. Protection of the public is the main reason for licensing of professions. Licensing establishes the minimum requirements for being a mental health professional. All of these professionals completed a 4-year bachelor's degree and a 2-year master's degree. Some have completed additional studies and research for a PhD degree. All have had the experience of "clinical supervision," which includes BOTH a 5-10 month course of study during graduate school and a 2-year course of training under the eye of a highly experienced professional.

In addition, all of our professionals continue to meet on a regular basis for their entire careers to become more skilled and achieve better OUTCOMES for our clients.

The licenses for Mental Health in Wisconsin include:

- Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW) – completion of a Masters of Social Work (MSW), an internship during the masters, plus two full years of post-masters clinical supervision, completion of a challenging national examination and a Wisconsin examination. Some LCSW holders also completed a course of research to become a PhD. UWM also has a course of study so that an MSW could study an extra 6 months to take coursework in marriage and family therapy.

- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFT) – completion of a Masters in Marriage and Family Therapy (MMFT) or one of the other degrees plus a year or two of extra coursework just in marriage and family therapy. The LMFT also completed an internship during the master's degree, two full years of post-masters clinical supervision, completion of a difficult national examination and a Wisconsin examination. Some LMFT holders have also completed a course of research to become a PhD. The LMFT has the same learning in mental health studies as the other professionals, and in addition has completed an

additional course of study in couples and family therapy.

- Licensed Professional Counselors (LCP) – completion of a Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MS), or Master of Education (M.Ed.), an internship during the masters, plus two full years of post-masters clinical supervision, completion of a difficult national examination and a Wisconsin examination. Some have also completed a course of study and research to become a PhD.
- Licensed Psychologists (LP) – completion of a doctorate (PhD), a year-long internship, a year of clinical supervision after the PhD, a very challenging national examination, and a Wisconsin examination. Psychologists all have a "Scope of Practice," meaning a range of clientele for whom they are licensed to help. So, some psychologists only work with children, some only with adults. Therefore, some may not work with couples or substance abuse, while others may have those specializations within their scope of practice.
- Art Therapists (ATR) – completed a Master of Arts (MA) in art therapy, an internship, and post-masters clinical supervision. Some art therapists also completed studies for the LCP license.
- There are other professionals who work with mental health patients, among them being Occupational Therapists, Rehabilitation Therapists, Psychiatric Nurses (RN), and Advanced Practice Nurse Practitioners (APNP).

3. TRAINING LICENSES

For three of these licenses, LCSW, LMFT, and LPC, there are also levels called TRAINING LICENSES. These are for professionals who have completed the Master's degree, but have not completed the other requirements. You may see professionals who have these training level credentials:

CSW — Bachelor's degree in Social Work, may be in graduate school as well.

APSW — Completed a Masters in Social Work. May be completing clinical supervision in order to work towards the LCSW.

LMFT-IT— Completed a Masters degree and is getting clinical supervision in order to become a full LMFT.

LPC-IT — Completed a Masters degree and is getting clinical supervision in order to become an LPC.

Shorehaven Behavioral Health, Inc., has high standards for its licensed staff. We require and provide an additional year of clinical supervision over and above the requirements of the state. Shorehaven's professionals who work under a training license also receive more supervision than the state requires.

4. Certifications — Certification signifies advanced study in a specialized field. There are two types of certification.

A) These are specialized fields for which the state has not yet decided to create a level of licensure, but the state has created legislation which protects the title for that profession. So no one can use the title unless they have attained all the training needed for that field. Substance abuse counseling is such a field. Only a person with rather extensive classroom training (360 hours, the equivalent of 8 or 9 college courses) and clinical supervision (2-4 years) may use the title Substance Abuse Counselor or may tell patients he or she specializes in substance abuse.

B) Sometimes the study of the field requires basic licensure and some additional studies and supervision, but there is no special protection for the title. Certified Sex Therapist is such a title; the practitioner has had a course of advanced study and clinical supervision. The title is governed by rules of the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists. But it is not regulated by the state.

A. State Regulated Mental Health and Substance Abuse Certifications

- SAC — Substance Abuse Counselor – Practitioners have completed 360 hours (the equivalent of 8-9 advanced courses) of classroom work and the equivalent of 4 years of full time practice under clinical supervision.
- CSAC — Clinical Substance Abuse Counselor – Practitioners have completed another two years of clinical supervision beyond the SAC level.
- SAC–IT — Substance Abuse Counselor in Training – Practitioners have completed at least 100 hours of classroom (3 advanced courses) and are working on the requirements for the SAC.
- CCS — Certified Clinical Supervisor – After achieving the significant requirements to become a CSAC, plus 5 years of experience, some professionals take a course in supervision and begin a two-year program of supervision in order to become certified as supervisors.
- CICS — Certified Independent Clinical Supervisor – The highest level of attainment in the

field of drug and alcohol counseling, this requires extensive experience in the field of substance abuse counseling plus several years as a certified supervisor.

B. These certifications are granted by professional associations, in essence, by professional colleagues, after a Licensed professional completes an additional course of study and supervision. We will just detail a handful of such certifications.

- Certified EMDR Counselor — licensed professional with advanced seminars and supervision in EMDR (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing), certified by the EMDR International Association
- Nationally Certified Gambling Counselor — counselor who has taken extra seminars and supervision in the field of gambling addictions, certified by the National Council on Problem Gambling
- Certified Sex Therapist — counselor with advanced coursework and supervision in the treatment of sexual disorders, certified by the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists
- AAMFT-Approved Supervisor — LMFT with 5 years of experience at minimum, who has taken a post-graduate course in supervision and a year of supervision of his or her work with trainees
- SAP [Substance Abuse Professional — a licensed professional, with skills in substance abuse treatment, who has taken a two-day course and a rigorous exam on the federal regulations which govern how to evaluate persons who work in industries regulated by the federal Department of Transportation. These professionals work to ensure the safety of the public.
- SAE [Substance Abuse Expert] — a licensed professional, with skills in substance abuse treatment, who has taken a 2 & 1/2 day course and rigorous exam to evaluate persons who work in industries regulated by the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission.
- Play Therapist — a licensed professional who has taken extra studies in the use of play to help children express inner emotional problems and to change through guided play

We hope this survey helps you to understand the different professionals you may meet in the mental health and substance abuse field.

Shorehaven Behavioral Health is a mental health clinic and training center with therapy offices in Brown Deer, Greenfield, and Mt. Pleasant, and also offering telehealth throughout Wisconsin. We specialize in challenging cases and rapid access to services. In addition to depression, anxiety, behavioral problems, and most other psychological problems, we work extensively with children & families and with substance use problems. Our DBT program has three groups – for younger adolescents, older adolescents, and adults – and has openings. We also accept referrals for substance abuse care from clinicians who are not comfortable with that population. Call 414-540-2170.

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