WHAT CAN I DO WITH A MAJOR IN … COUNSELING

OCCUPATIONAL OVERVIEW:
Work with individuals and groups to promote optimum mental health. Counselors assist people with personal, family, educational, mental health, and career decisions and problems. Their duties vary greatly depending on the individuals they serve and on the settings in which they work.

EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS:
For counselors based outside of schools, 49 States and the District of Columbia have some form of counselor licensure that governs their practice of counseling. Requirements typically include the completion of a master's degree in counseling, the accumulation of 2 years or 3,000 hours of supervised clinical experience beyond the master's degree level, the passage of a State-recognized exam, adherence to ethical codes and standards, and the completion of annual continuing education requirements. However, counselors working in certain settings or in a particular specialty may face different licensure requirements. All States require school counselors to hold a State school counseling certification and to have completed at least some graduate course work; most require the completion of a master's degree. Some States require public school counselors to have both counseling and teaching certificates and to have had some teaching experience before receiving certification.

EMPLOYERS/INDUSTRIES
Please ask your Career Advisor (CDF) for identifying employers or additional resources for your occupation of choice

Mental Health Counselor: Mental health counselors emphasize the need for people to work toward optimum mental health by helping individuals and groups deal with a variety of issues, including but not limited to addiction, substance abuse, suicidal tendencies, aging issues, job stress, and self-esteem issues. According to The Occupational Information Network (O*Net), in 2006, the national median annual income for mental health counselors was $34,400. In New Mexico, the median annual income, in 2006, was $40,600.

School Counselor: School counselors assist students of all levels, from elementary school to postsecondary education. Counselors interact with students individually, in small groups, or as an entire class. They consult and collaborate with parents, teachers, school administrators, school psychologists, medical professionals, and social workers to develop and implement strategies to promote the academic, career, personal, and social development of children and youth. School counselors perform a variety of different functions depending on a grade level. All states require school counselors to be certified by the state as a school counselor. Depending on the state, certification may require a Master's degree, a teaching license, and/or two to five years of teaching experience. According to O*Net, in 2006, the national median annual earnings of educational and vocational counselors was $47,500, but these salaries ranged depending on a variety of factors, including the degrees required for the position, the level of educational setting (elementary, secondary, or college), the stringency of state certification requirements, and the geographic location. In New Mexico, the report median annual income, in 2006, was $44,200.

Vocational (Career) Counselor: Because of the diverse demand for career counseling, counselors can work either within or outside of an educational setting. Either way, career counselors help people make possibly life-changing career choices by evaluating their interests, skills, and experience, including those at the academic, professional, and volunteer levels. They also help people find employment opportunities and develop their job searching skills by teaching them techniques for interviewing and writing a resume. In addition, career counselors provide support to people experiencing job loss, job stress, or other career transition issues. Although career counselors may be able to find employment with only a bachelor's degree in vocational counseling, a Master's degree is typically required, especially within an educational setting.
Substance Abuse or Behavioral Disorder Counselor: The specialty of a substance abuse counselor or behavioral disorder counselor is to help people overcome destructive behavior patterns, such as drug or gambling addictions, substance abuse problems, or eating disorders. Substance abuse counselors may sometimes be allowed to practice with as little as an associate's degree, but national certification as a Master Addictions Counselor (MAC) still requires a Master's degree in counseling, certification as an NCC, and three years of clinical experience. According to O*Net, in 2006, nationally substance abuse and behavioral disorder counselors earned a median annual income of $34,000. In New Mexico the median annual income, in 2006, is reported to be $33,100. In addition, substance abuse and behavior disorder counselors are generally governed by a different State agency or board than other counselors. The criteria for their licensure vary greatly and in some cases, these counselors may only need a high school diploma and certification. Those interested in entering the field must research State and specialty requirements to determine what qualifications they must have.

Counseling Psychologist: Counseling Psychologist use a variety of techniques, including tests and personal interviews. Counseling psychologists work in a variety of venues, including universities, hospitals, and private practices, although most states require a doctoral degree (PsyD. Or PhD.) in Psychology for private practice. Prospective students of this field should look closely at all state licensure requirements before committing to a particular program of study. According to O*Net, in 2006, Counseling psychologists nationally earned a median annual salary of $59,400. In New Mexico the median annual income, in 2006, was $46,000.

Rehabilitation Counselor: Rehabilitation counselors help people deal with the personal, social, and vocational effects of disabilities while working towards increasing the client's capacity to live. They counsel people with disabilities resulting from birth defects, illness or disease, accidents, or other causes. Rehabilitation counselors work with both individuals with disabilities and their families to determine the capabilities and skills of the individual. Professionals who obtain Master's degrees in rehabilitation counseling can be employed in a variety of settings, including private rehabilitation agencies, hospitals, and departments of social services. According to O*Net, in 2006, the national median annual income for rehabilitation counselors was $29,200. In New Mexico the median annual income, in 2006, was $27,300.

Marriage and Family Therapist: Marriage and family counselors work to help people with sensitive issues that evolve within the home. Marriage and family counselors participate in pre-marital or couple's counseling, conflict resolution, divorce mediation, sexual counseling, and child or spousal abuse counseling. A Master's degree in marriage and family counseling is required for national certification, but not all states require certification to practice. According to O*Net, in 2006, the national median annual income for marriage and family counselors was $43,200. In New Mexico the median annual income, in 2006, was $41,100.

Additional Areas of Practice: Other counseling specialties include gerontological, multicultural, and genetic counseling.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS & RESOURCES:

American Counseling Association http://www.counseling.org
American School Counseling Association http://www.schoolcounselor.org
American Marriage and Family Therapy Association http://www.aamft.org
American Mental Health Counselor Association http://www.amhca.org
National Career Development Association http://www.ncda.org/
National Board for Certified Counselors http://www.nbcc.org
National Organization for Human Services http://www.nationalhumanservices.org
NM School Counselor Association http://www.nmsca.org/
NM Counseling Association http://www.nmca-nm.org/
NM Regulation & Licensing Department http://www.rld.state.nm.us/Counseling/index.html
Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs http://www.cacrep.org

OTHER INFORMATIONAL WEBSITES:

http://online.onetcenter.org http://www.bls.gov/oco/