

# Psychiatrist

## **Professional Activities**

Psychiatrists are the primary mental healthcare givers. They assess and treat mental illnesses through a combination of psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, hospitalization, and medication. Psychotherapy involves regular discussions with patients about their problems; the psychiatrist helps them find solutions through changes in their behavioral patterns, the exploration of their past experiences, or group and family therapy sessions. Psychoanalysis involves long-term psychotherapy and counseling for patients. In many cases, medications are administered to correct chemical imbalances that cause emotional problems.

Psychiatrists review and evaluate treatment procedures and outcomes of other psychiatrists and medical professionals and advise and inform guardians, relatives, and significant others of patients' condition and treatment. They prepare case reports and summaries for government agencies. Some psychiatrists teach, conduct research, and publish findings to increase understanding of mental, emotional, and behavioral states and disorders.

Psychiatrists work in small private offices or clinics, often assisted by a small staff of nurses and other administrative personnel. They also collaborate with physicians, psychologists, social workers, psychiatric nurses, or other professionals to discuss treatment plans and progress. Psychiatrists design individualized care plans, using a variety of treatments.

## **Educational Requirements**

As undergraduate students, many future psychiatrists earn a bachelor's degree in biology or psychology. These 4-year degree programs provide the basis for future studies in medical areas. Students planning to enter graduate medical programs should strive for a high GPA. Common courses include:

- Biology
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Advanced Mathematics

All students who seek to enter medical school must pass the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT). The Association of American Medical Colleges ([www.aamc.org](http://www.aamc.org)) puts together this standardized test for potential medical school applicants. The test provides four separate scores for the various reading, writing and multiple-choice questions. Scoring well on the MCAT is helpful in determining a student's potential entry into the best programs.

Aspiring psychiatrists must complete four years of medical school where they take classes on histology, human anatomy, immunology and pharmacology. After medical school, graduates complete a residency program, in which they receive training in mental health care by working directly with patients in clinics and hospitals. Under the supervision of licensed doctors, residents diagnose patient illnesses and create treatment plans.

Psychiatrists must hold medical licenses from the state in which they practice. To become licensed, students must pass a multi-step exam that begins during medical school. People earning the M.D. degree (Doctor of Medicine) take the U.S. Medical Licensing Examination, or USMLE ([www.usmle.org](http://www.usmle.org)). Students earning the D.O. degree (Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine) take the COMLEX (Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination), a similar multi-part test. Either type of medical degree may lead to a career as a psychiatrist.

Licensed psychiatrists are periodically required to renew their licenses by their state board of medicine. Requirements for renewal may include completing continuing medical education coursework. Psychiatrists may check with their state board for more specific information.

Psychiatrists must obtain certification from the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology (ABPN) in order to legally practice. All psychiatry certification candidates need a medical license. Board certification shows patients and employers that the psychiatrist has appropriate knowledge from their completed specialty-specific training. The certification verifies this competence. The ABPN also offers subspecialty certifications in:

- Addiction psychiatry
- Adolescent and child psychiatry
- Pain medicine
- Sleep medicine
- Forensic psychiatry

### **Academic Programs**

[Loyola University Chicago](#)

[Northwestern University](#)

### **Employment/Salary Outlook**

#### **State and National Wages**

Location	Pay Period	2021		
		Low	Median	High
United States	Hourly	\$30.96	\$100.00+	\$100.00+
	Annual	\$64,400	\$208,000+	\$208,000+
Illinois	Hourly	\$28.93	\$100.00+	\$100.000+
	Annual	\$60,180	\$208,000+	\$208,000+

#### **State and National Trend**

United States	Employment		Percent Change	<a href="#">Job Openings</a> <sup>1</sup>
	2021	2031		
Psychiatrists	27,900	30,300	9%	1,100
Illinois	Employment		Percent Change	<a href="#">Job Openings</a> <sup>1</sup>
	2020	2030		
Psychiatrists	890	960	8%	30

### **Professional Organizations**

American Psychiatric Association ([psych.org](http://psych.org))

American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology ([abpn.com](http://abpn.com))

### **References**

Psychiatrist Education Requirements (<http://education-portal.com/psychiatrist.html>)

O\*NET OnLine (<http://online.onetcenter.org/link/summary/29-1066.00>)

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