

## What may be required

Working in mental health involves working with vulnerable people. You may be working with people who not only have mental health problems but learning difficulties, disabilities, addictions, are young offenders or struggling with relationships.

Depending on the role or job, you may:

- Support patients with the practical or emotional aspects of their lives
- Provide assessments
- Provide interventions, medication
- Provide specialist care for patients
- Collaborate with health professionals
- Advocate for individual patients
- Listen to and talk with patients and their families
- Provide expert opinion to the community on mental health issues
- Conduct research
- Write reports

## Personal Qualities

A person working in mental health needs to:

- Have a positive outlook
- Be flexible
- Be compassionate and tolerant
- Be a problem solver
- Enjoy working with people
- Have a non-judgemental attitude
- Have good communication skills
- Be able to work in a team
- Be resilient
- Have a sense of humour

Information collated by NZIRH  
Where to go for more information:

[www.careers.govt.nz](http://www.careers.govt.nz)  
[www.kiaorahauora.co.nz](http://www.kiaorahauora.co.nz)

NEW ZEALAND INSTITUTE OF RURAL HEALTH  
PO Box 834, CAMBRIDGE 3450



p: 07 8239274  
email: [admin@nzirh.org.nz](mailto:admin@nzirh.org.nz)  
[www.nzirh.org.nz](http://www.nzirh.org.nz)

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## Mental Health



## Jobs in Mental Health

People who work in mental health may be in one of many occupations. For instance, you may become a nurse but want to work in the mental health sector. This may require additional training. There are some jobs, however, that focus only on mental wellbeing or treating and supporting patients with mental illness. These include:

- Psychiatrist
- Clinical Psychologist or Psychotherapist
- Counsellor
- Mental health support worker

It can be confusing as to the different roles since there is some cross-over. Often, these people work as a team, along with doctors, nurses, social workers and occupational therapists who may also specialise in mental health.

## What do they do?

**Psychiatry** is a medical specialty devoted to the diagnosis and treatment of mental health disorders. The main form of treatment used is medication which is often combined with psychotherapy.

**Psychotherapy** is based on talk between a patient and a psychologist. In a supportive environment, the patient can talk openly with someone who is objective, neutral and nonjudgmental. The patient and clinical psychologist/psychotherapist will work together to identify and change thought and behaviour patterns.

**Counselling** helps patients with their feelings and responses, and decisions on actions to resolve problems and promote positive change in their lives. It offers an opportunity to talk with someone who will listen without judgement or criticism, and who will keep the conversation confidential.

**Mental health support workers** help people with mental illness to cope with their daily life. This role comes under a number of other labels such as Community support worker.

## Where they work

- Hospitals
- Residential care institutions
- In the community
- Private practice

## Qualifications

**Psychiatrist** - this requires a 6 year medical degree, working for 2 years as a junior doctor, then studying psychiatry for 5 years while working at a hospital.

**Psychologist/ Psychotherapist** - this requires a Master's degree or higher so at least 5 years of study. There are various pathways.

**Counsellor** - usually a Bachelor's degree is required, so the minimum training is 3 years.

**Mental health support worker** - there are a number of certificates and diplomas available at various institutions for 1-2 years.

## Pros and Cons

- Making a difference to people with mental health needs can be very rewarding.
- This work can be very challenging.