DEFINITION LIST OF ROLES IN THE MENTAL HEALTH FIELD

Please note this is not intended to be a comprehensive list of research available on this topic. The majority of these resources can be accessed through our Resource Centre or online. In some cases, you may need to contact your local or tertiary library.

**Counsellor**

Counsellors help people deal with their feelings and responses, and assist their clients to decide on action they can take to solve problems. They may specialise in relationship counselling, grief and loss, addictions, family problems or life changes.

**Psychotherapist**

Psychotherapy’s concern, in the broadest sense, is assisting individuals, couples and groups to see, think, feel or act differently. It is a collaborative process between client and the psychotherapist, based on the client’s active participation.

**Psychologist**

They assess the current emotional and lifestyle problems of clients, their social and family histories, and examine how feelings, actions, beliefs and culture interact to shape the person’s experience and difficulties. Clinical Psychologists give psychometric and neuropsychological tests to identify problems and to measure clients’ skills and abilities. They develop and implement individual client plans. They cannot prescribe medication.

What can Psychologists help with?

1. Educational psychologists help with problems of learning and growing up, from birth until 20 years. They work in local Special Education Services. This service is found among Government Departments in the phone book. Educational Psychologists are paid from our taxes. No fees are charged. There may be a waiting list.

2. Clinical psychologists often deal with issues of adult life, though they work with children as well. The majority of psychologists work in the Health Services both general and psychiatric (e.g., Community Mental Health services). They are found by ringing a nearby health district. They too are paid from taxes. There are no fees. There may be a waiting list.

3. Psychologists in private practice may be either educational or clinical. They see individuals or families. They also work for sportsmen and women and on contract for businesses, Family Courts, ACC and community organisations. They are found in the Yellow Pages under Psychologists- Registered. Most charge $60-$100 for each hour,

---

1 Careers NZ [www.careers.co.nz](http://www.careers.co.nz)
3 GMD Reference and Referral Directory [www.gmd.net.nz](http://www.gmd.net.nz)
4 The New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists [www.wbl.co.nz/faq/faq.htm](http://www.wbl.co.nz/faq/faq.htm)
but fees can be negotiated if they are too much to pay. People can usually be seen within 1-2 weeks.

4. Psychologists also work in Justice, Social Welfare and Police Departments, working in a variety of the areas listed above.

**Psychiatrist**

A psychiatrist is a qualified medical doctor who has obtained additional qualifications to become a specialist in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental illness and emotional problems. They can prescribe medication.

**Occupational Therapist**

Occupational therapy is the professional group that uses activities and occupations to enable people to recover from mental illness. Occupational therapists work with people to regain lost abilities, or to develop new skills and interests. Being involved in meaningful occupations helps people on their journey to recovery. They focus on self-care, productivity and leisure time activities. They take a client centred approach and work closely with family/whanau/fono.

**District Inspector**

They are the watchdogs of patient’s rights, ensuring the Mental Health act is correctly applied and the rights of individuals are respected and upheld. They are appointed by the Minister of Health under the 1992 Act. They are always Barristers or Solicitors and this role is conducted in addition to their usual legal practice. Their role does not include being the patients advocate or legal advisors for mental health services. Every individual subject to the act should be visited by a DI who will provide them with information on the process, explain their role, the patient’s rights and discuss options for review.

**Duly Authorised Officers**

They are the front line operators of the Act. They are appointed by DAMHS (Directors of Area Mental Health Services) and are trained health professionals. They should have identifying cards provided by the Hospital or Health Service. They can assist anyone to apply for an assessment of a person or help an individual make the application themselves. They must first be satisfied that the concern is valid and there are reasonable grounds for believing that the person may be mentally disordered. District Health Boards must keep a list of telephone numbers of DAOs that you or your family or whanau can ring if you need help or advice.

**Responsible clinician**

Is usually a psychiatrist and is the person responsible for a person’s treatment while they are under the Mental Health Act.

---

5 The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatry [www.ranzcp.org](http://www.ranzcp.org)

6 NZAOT Position Statement [http://www.nzaot.com](http://www.nzaot.com)

7 Guidelines for district inspectors appointed under the Mental Health (Compulsory Assessment and Treatment) Act 1992 [www.moh.govt.nz](http://www.moh.govt.nz)

8 Guidelines for duly authorised officers appointed under the Mental Health (Compulsory Assessment and Treatment) Act 1992 [www.moh.govt.nz](http://www.moh.govt.nz)

9 Mental Health & the Law: a legal resources for people who experience mental illness by Wellington Community Law Centre

10 Oranga Ngakau: Getting the most out of mental health services, Mental Health Commission, pg 34.
Mental Health Nurses / Psychiatric Nurse

A mental health nurse provides treatment, care and support for people with emotional, mental and behavioural problems. Mental health nurses are increasingly working in a community setting, but the majority work in hospital outpatient or outpatient settings. They are skilled in the specialised use of communication, counselling, psychopharmacology, applying speciality knowledge in the provision of clinical assessment, monitoring, therapeutic interventions, treatment, and referral to other health professionals. Some mental health nurses have special responsibilities under the Mental Health Act 1992 as duly authorised officers.

Mental Health Support Workers

The mental health support workforce is mainly employed in the non-government community support services sector. They provide support and practical assistance and deliver rehabilitation services or programmes that facilitate the recovery process for people experiencing serious mental illness or emotional distress.

Social Workers

Look after social and practical needs such as family assistance, welfare benefits, housing, jobs and so on.

Mental Health Services

These numbers are listed in your local phone book under ‘Hospitals and other health services’ around page 70. Or check out the Family and Community Directory – http://www.familyservices.govt.nz/

Clinical services

Your first contact will be with a clinical service where people will assess and treat your mental health problem, usually with medication and sometimes with psychotherapy. The main clinical services are:

- **Crisis services** [CATT or community assessment & treatment team] – sometimes called psychiatric emergency services, are a round the clock assessment service for people who are in a crisis. The crisis team will usually visit you and refer you to other clinical services for treatment.
- **Community mental health centres** – where you visit psychiatrists, nurses, psychologists or other professionals as needed. Sometimes they may visit you in your own home.
- **In-patient units** – where you live with other people with mental health problems in a hospital setting for a short time during a crisis. Some centres also run longer-term in-patient rehabilitation units.

Support services

- **Respite services** – mental health workers will support you during a crisis, either in your own home, or in a non-hospital setting.

---

12 Abid
13 Oranga Ngakau: Getting the most out of mental health services, Mental Health Commission, pg 16.
14 Mental Health Commission website www.mhc.govt.nz
• **Supported accommodation** – a house with other people with mental health problems and who are supported by in-house or on-call staff.
• **Support or rehabilitation services** to support you to problem solve, to set goals, to learn skills, get and keep jobs, find housing and so on. The service may be provided in your own home or in a service or community setting.

**Services for different population groups**

• **Services for people of different ages** – many towns have services for mothers and babies, children and young people and for older people, as well as the usual services for adults.
• **Services for Maori** – in many communities, kaupapa Maori services or services for Maori are available. These services offer a whanau-based service run according to traditional Maori values in a hospital setting or the community.
• **Services for Pacific People** – some centres also have services run by and for Pacific people according to their cultural values.

**Specialist services for people with different problems**

• **Alcohol and other drug services** for people with addictions. Some mental health services run ‘dual-diagnosis’ services for people with a mental illness and addictions.
• **Eating disorders services** in major centres.

**Forensic services**

In-patient or community based services for people who have committed a crime and the court decides they need treatment, not punishment.

**Consumer Advisors**

Give advice to the management of mental health services from the perspective of service users.

**Pacific / Maori Cultural Workers**

Help mainstream services provide culturally respectful services for Maori / Pacific Island peoples.

---

15 Oranga Ngakau: Getting the most out of mental health services, Mental Health Commission, pg 16.

16 Ibid.