

THE CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST IN CANADA

HOW CAN WE HELP?

The Section on Clinical Psychology/La Section de la Psychologie Clinique

Canadian Psychological Association/Société Canadienne de Psychologie

What is Clinical Psychology?

Psychology is a scientific discipline with many different areas of application. Clinical Psychology is a field of practice that deals with human functioning; either human problems and their solution, as well as with the promotion of physical, mental, and social well-being. Clinical Psychologists have varied training experiences and different areas of expertise.

What do Clinical Psychologists Do?

Clinical Psychologists treat many human problems, including depression, anxiety, stress, major mental disorders, learning disabilities, substance abuse and other addictions, marital/ relationship problems, difficulties coping with personal health problems, and problems stemming from physical and sexual abuse. Clinical Psychologists provide service to children and adults, including the elderly, and work with physical as well as mental health issues. Generally, Clinical Psychologists conduct psychological assessments (often employing standardized tests) and provide treatment of adults, adolescents, children, couples, families, and groups. They also provide consultation to other professionals (e.g., physicians, nurses, teachers, social workers, occupational therapists) and programs designed to serve special populations (e.g., Community Independent Living Programs, Learning/Disability Programs, Pain Clinics). Teaching and research are also common activities. Most Clinical Psychologists restrict their practice to specific populations such as children or adults. Therefore, it is important to ask individual practitioners to clarify their specific areas of training, expertise and practice.

Assessment by Clinical Psychologists involves detailed interviewing of an individual and, when appropriate, his/her family and significant others, in order to answer specific questions concerning the nature, severity and causal factors of presenting problems. Clinical Psychologists often use standardized psychological tests and measures to help provide clinically useful information. Common assessment questions involve diagnosing a psychological problem, determining the extent and nature of emotional/intellectual damage following injury or stress, or identifying

strengths and assets in individuals and their social contexts. Psychologists share the results of the assessment with the client and take the client's feedback into consideration.

Treatment by Clinical Psychologists involves a number of psychotherapy approaches, such as behavioral, cognitive, interpersonal, family, and psychodynamic. Clinical Psychologists typically conduct an assessment prior to beginning psychotherapy. Treatment may focus on reducing distress and symptoms of psychological disorders, improving coping skills and functioning, and promoting healthy lifestyles.

What are the Training Requirements for Clinical Psychologists?

Clinical Psychologists must be registered with a provincial psychological regulatory organization in order to call themselves Psychologists and to practice in that province. Each province has its own regulatory organization, often referred to as a College. In order to be registered as a Psychologist, the individual must have at least a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Psychology. Many psychologists have completed additional training and have a Doctorate Degree (e.g. Ph.D. or Psy. D.). Provincial regulatory organizations are established by Provincial Government Legislation and function to protect the public. They control entrance into the profession, set standards of practice, evaluate complaints, and discipline psychologists when necessary.

In many provinces, there is also a separate association of psychologists that serves to support psychologists and promote the profession. In addition, a Canadian Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology (CRHSPP) identifies psychologists in the country who have the training and experience to provide health services.

Clinical Psychologists are registered Psychologists who have completed specialized training from a clinical psychology program in a university graduate school. Graduate training (post B.A. or B.Sc. Degree) usually takes between 2 years (for the Master's degree) and 6 years (for the Master's and Doctoral degree combined). The program involves extensive coursework, research, and practical training. In addition, Clinical Psychology programs require a full year pre-doctoral internship, at the end of the Doctoral training program. Provincial regulatory organizations then usually require a period of supervised practice prior to full registration as a Psychologist.

How Does One Access Clinical Psychologists?

Clinical Psychologists generally function in one of two settings: public institutions, or private practice. Public institutions include hospitals, clinics, mental health centres, correctional institutions, schools, and universities.

Clinical Psychologists in public institutions are usually organized in Departments or Divisions of Psychology. By contacting the Department or Division of Psychology directly you can find out how to be seen by a Clinical Psychologist. Also, family physicians and medical specialists are often very familiar with institutional resources in Clinical Psychology and they can be contacted for referral information. Provincial associations of psychologists can often provide information on accessing Clinical Psychologists.

Clinical Psychologists in private practice may advertise their services in the Yellow Pages of the telephone directory. Often family physicians, friends, or family members can recommend Clinical Psychologists in private practice. Psychologists in private practice are not funded through the provincial health care system. In this case, the fees for seeing a private practice Clinical Psychologist must come from private insurance or be paid directly by the client. You should check your extended medical insurance plan (e.g., Blue Cross) for the extent of coverage, if any.

When accessing Clinical Psychology services, individuals are encouraged to ask questions and to choose a Psychologist to meet their own needs.

Protecting the Public

As is true for all registered Psychologists, Clinical Psychologists must accept and conform to the Code of Ethics established by their provincial regulatory organization. The Code of Ethics consists of guidelines for protecting the legal rights and personal well being of the clients served by Psychologists, and is there to protect the public. If clients receiving services from Psychologists believe that their Psychologist has behaved in an unethical or an incompetent manner, they have the right to lodge a complaint. The complaint will be investigated by the provincial regulatory organization. *In addition, not all individuals who offer therapy services are registered with or governed by a professional organization. Information about whether a specific individual is a registered psychologist can be obtained by calling the provincial regulatory association.* The names and addresses of these organizations are in the Yellow Pages of the telephone book. The telephone numbers (and web sites, where available) are provided below for your information.

Psychology Regulatory Associations in Canada

- College of Alberta Psychologists (403) 424-5070 (www.cap.ab.ca)
- College of Psychologists of British Columbia (604) 736-6164
- Psychological Association of Manitoba (204) 487-0784
- College of Psychologists of New Brunswick (506) 459-1994
- Newfoundland Board of Examiners in Psychology (709) 579-6313 (<http://pws.PRSERV.net/nbep>)
- Registrar of Psychologists, North West Territories (403) 920-8058
- Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology (902) 423-2238 (www3.ns.sympatico.ca/nbsp)
- College of Psychologists of Ontario (416) 961-8817 (www.cpo.on.ca)
- Psychologists Registration Board, Prince Edward Island (902) 566-0307
- Ordre des Psychologues du Quebec (514) 738-1881
- Saskatchewan College of Psychologists (306) 352-1699 (www.skcp.ca)
- Registration of Psychologists in the Nunavut Territory (867) 982-7668

For More Information:

CANADIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION/SOCIETE CANADIENNE DE PSYCHOLOGIE

(613) 237-2144 (www.cpa.ca)

CANADIAN REGISTER OF HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDERS IN PSYCHOLOGY/REPertoire CANADIEN DES PSYCHOLOGUES OFFRANT DES SERVICES DE SANTE.

(613) 562-0900 (www.crhsp.ca)