

Career Development for Mental Health Counselors

What is a professional association and how can it help me?

Professional associations such as the American Counseling Association and the American Psychological Association are always eager to have new members, so they usually offer free information to non-members. They provide services such as journals and other periodicals, conferences, and sales of relevant products. Many have online tools to help you find jobs, get licensure information, ask questions of other professionals, share information, and network. (You will need to join in order to use all of their services.)

For example, the Massachusetts Mental Health Counselors Association lists the following as its purposes on its website <http://www.mamhca.org/>

- To provide a system of information exchange for Mental Health Counselors through a newsletter and other professional materials
- To provide professional development training that maintains the high standards of the profession
- To provide a forum that enables counselors to address the needs of their clients
- To provide an alliance with mental health clinicians in various work settings through a coalition of mental health professions
- To promote licensing and certification for mental health counselors nationally and to support the Massachusetts licensing standards
- To support legislation and programs favorable to mental health counseling and better health care
- To support the efforts of Mental Health Counselors to provide services attendant to their expertise in the marketplace
- To promote and advance the profession of mental health counseling

Many professional associations have websites. Here are some to explore:

<http://www.apa.org> is the **American Psychological Association (the APA)**.

<http://psyccareers.apa.org/> is the APA's PsycCareers section.

<http://www.counseling.org> is the **American Counseling Association**. Their site has ethics and licensing issues and much more more.

<http://www.counseling.org/CareerCenter/> is the Career Center of ACA and includes an online job finding service.

<http://www.counseling.org/Resources/> has ACA resources including state licensing info.

<http://www.naswdc.org/> is the **National Association of Social Workers**. It includes info on credentialing and a JobLink.

<http://www.schoolcounselor.org> is the **American School Counselors Association**.

How can I learn the skills for getting a job, such as writing cover letters and resumes; preparing for interviews; networking, and so on?

Cambridge College Online Library (CCOL) has a Career Development section, with help for all of these skills and much more. To use CCOL, go to <http://www.cambridgecollege.edu/library/>

There are many books to help you. Find the most current and most relevant by going to <http://www.amazon.com> which has a great search engine for books. Most listings include published reviews and opinions of other readers, as well as excerpts and sample pages. Put these entries into the Amazon search box:

“mental health careers”

“Psychology Vocational guidance Career Planning (General) Mental Health”

Instead of buying from Amazon, please first try a local independent bookstore. If you don't mind a used copy, you can often get the book online and for less money from <http://www.bookfinder.com>

Recommended, although possibly outdated, is *The Insider's Guide to Mental Health Resources Online* by John M. Grohol (2003).

<http://www.socialservice.com/> helps people find mental health sector jobs. It doesn't seem to be part of a professional association, so please be cautious in using it.