



## Helping Students Decide What Career They Want as a Career Counselor

**Career counselors meet with clients to help them realize their vocational aspirations. These counselors often work with college students who are yet unsure of their careers. They also work with people who want to transition to new careers. To help both these types of clients, career counselors have knowledge of virtually all careers in all types of industries. Their job counseling also requires the latest knowledge of job trends, in order to advise clients about the growth rate and earning potential of their desired careers.**

When career counselors first meet with clients, they often initially administer personality tests to assess their client's personal traits, interests, and personal goals. Many of these personality tests include the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and the Birkman Personality Assessment. Career counselors also administer vocational exams to help screen out the careers that align with clients' interests and strengths. After viewing the results of these exams, counselors do research on the careers that best match their client's personality. While doing research, they look at each career's responsibilities, earnings, chief employers, advancement opportunities, job growth, and work environment.

When they next meet with their clients, career counselors show them the list of careers the exams generated. They ask their clients which careers most appeal to them and supply them with information about each career. If the client is a student, the counselor will advise him on how to prepare himself academically for the projected career. These preparations may include taking more courses in a certain subject, as well as declaring a certain major. Career counselors also advise the client to pursue internships and other hands-on work opportunities throughout college. Taking these preparatory steps well before seeking entry-level jobs will give the student a huge edge over other applicants following graduation.

For people undergoing a career transition, career counselors do much of the same process. They provide personality tests, vocational exams, and receive feedback from the client on what they want in a new career. Moreover, the counselor critically examines the client's resume and obtains a work history. This input allows the counselor to identify skills that transfer well to other jobs, such as strong writing skills or computer skills. The counselor also informs the client about any further education that is necessary for the job, such as software training. Since these clients are undergoing a major career change, counselors often advise them to seek out certification in the skills they lack. Doing this builds up their

employability, to reassure employers that they are well-trained for their new career despite being relatively inexperienced.

Many career counselors also recommend that their clients do informational interviews with people who work in the jobs that interest them. These interviews consist of meeting for at least a half-hour with a professional and asking him questions about his job. Counselors usually advise clients to ask their interviewees what a typical work day is like for them. It also helps to ask them what aspects of the job they most like and most dislike, as well as what recruiters look for in job candidates. Many informational interviews also help clients build a network for their new career, allowing them to stay abreast of new job opportunities that may not be advertised. Furthermore, informational interview contacts who personally liked the client may advise recruiters to hire the client for an opening.

When the time comes to apply for jobs, many clients still rely on career counselors to coach them through that grueling period. The counselor may critique their resume, as well as direct them to effective job-search tools. Counselors can also help clients navigate the more delicate aspects of job interviewing, such as pay negotiation.

While [career counseling jobs](#) are fairly new to the market, many of them do require at least a bachelor's degree in counseling. A master's degree is even more valuable because it trains the counselor in objective psychological strategies and effective client interaction. In addition, career counseling does not require state licensure. Nonetheless, most counselors recommend obtaining a master's degree plus certification to gain the expertise needed for career counseling. Most career counselors gain certification in their state's National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) career-counseling program.

Career counselors most often work at high schools (in [guidance counseling jobs](#)) and colleges. At high schools, they are familiar with a wide variety of colleges and other higher



## Counseling Career Feature

education programs that may complement a student's job prospects. At colleges, they are knowledgeable in directing students to courses and majors that best train them for their chosen career. Other career counselors have their own practices, especially if they are seasoned and reputable. Career counselors who work for corporate environments often visit career fairs and other recruitment events to employ or "head hunt" new workers.

Career counselors generally earn \$31,000-\$37,000 during their first five years of work. After working as counselors for a decade, they earn about \$43,000. Seasoned counselors,

especially those who have their own practice, may earn as much as \$52,000. Furthermore, counselors who work for educational institutions often enjoy comfortable benefits such as a medical insurance package and a retirement fund.

Job growth for career counselors is projected to expand, especially since whole new types of careers are on the rise and people feel unsure on how to prepare for them. Many people are also reconsidering their careers and deciding to switch to new fields. That said, counselors who have a master's degree and certification will likely assume the highest paying [counseling jobs](#).

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