



## If you Plan on Obtaining a Planning Career, Plan Well!

**Just about everyone has a time in their life when they need the services of a career planner or a vocational counselor. Perhaps someone is just getting out of school and doesn't know where to start to look for a job, or maybe they don't even know what they want to do. Or perhaps someone wants to change careers midstream and is not quite sure how to go about it. In all of these cases, the services of a vocational counselor can help them determine what they want to do next.**

[Career planning jobs](#) occur at high schools, colleges, and other organizations where the clientele needs some help with direction in their career planning goals. If you're interested in this type of career, get the proper education and then look for [planning job description](#) listings on the Internet and on various job sites.

What does a career planner do?

Oftentimes, career planners are called vocational, educational or school counselors. These people provide both individuals and groups like graduating seniors in high school with educational counseling and career counseling. If you work as a school counselor, for example, you're going to help students at specific levels, from the elementary to post secondary educational levels and keep an eye on what they might want to do for careers throughout their educational programs. You function as an advocate for students and work with them to make sure they meet academic and personal development goals so that they can pursue the career path they want to, as well as improving their own lives' quality.

Younger students especially may have difficulty determining what they want to do, and you as a school counselor can help them determine this. You can help them determine good career choices based upon talents, interests, abilities and their personalities. Because young people especially can be changeable, you don't want to set goals for your students in stone. Rather, you want to keep abreast of the interests they have and help them continue to nurture them; this includes changing goals as needs and desires change.

If the planning career you choose focuses on older students or adults, your focus is going to be quite different than it will be for younger students. For example, if you work in a college career planning office, these students will likely have a pretty clear career path in mind. Of course, some college students in their first year of college may not have this type of clarity, and you can help them determine what they want to do so that

they can choose the correct major for themselves.

If you're working with students who have career paths established, or if you're working with adults who may be in the midst of career changes because of the economy or simply because they are burned out on the particular career they've chosen and want to try something else, you can help them determine what they should do next. You do this by providing counseling, and sometimes a battery of psychological or aptitude tests that will help them choose where they want to go next. Of course, you also want to talk with them about what they like to do and what they might be good at.

Oftentimes, people who are changing career paths especially may be confused about what they should do next. Since they've identified themselves with a particular career path for what has often been many years having to change can be very jarring indeed. You can provide a calm focus that will help them get back on track, choose a new career path as necessary, and get going into a career they enjoy once again.

Education and background

As a vocational or career counselor, you're going to need education and training based upon your specialty. Most of the time, you'll need at least a bachelor's degree to be licensed as a counselor. In some states, you must have a master's degree for certain counseling jobs. Your education may include a bachelor's degree in psychology, for example, followed by a master's in a specific field of study like elementary or secondary school counseling, or career counseling.

Getting a job

Once you've completed your education and are ready for employment, you can find [career planning jobs](#), including [planning job description](#) listings on the Internet at various job sites. If you're just getting started, using the keywords "entry-level" along with the type of counseling job you want to find



## Planning Career Feature

will often help you find proper employment, and of course, your own career counseling office at your school can help you find work, too.

### Licensing

In addition to getting your degree, you may be required to be licensed depending on the state you are in, your occupational specialty, and where you work. If you work in a school, for example, you may be required to have certification specifically in your state's school counseling licensure, and you may have to take continuing education throughout your career to state certified. You may also need a teaching background and certification in some cases, depending on the state you practice in. Other types of counseling often require that you have some type of licensure specific to the area you

practicing, such as having a master's degree in counseling or a certain number of hours of supervised experience. If you are a career counselor and you work in private practice, you may need a license, while if you work for a college career center, you may not. Again, licensure requirements depend on the state you practice in and your particular area of employment.

### Job outlook and compensation

Job outlook for career, vocational and educational counselors is quite good for the foreseeable future. This may be especially true as certain areas of the economy shift so that fewer jobs are available in certain sectors, while others open up. On average these types of counselors earned about \$48,000 as of 2006.

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