

Job title

Career Counsellor

General overview

Career counsellors assist individuals in finding a suitable career path. They can help you figure out what career path you would be suited for, what marketable skills you have for the career you want, and even what to do to move up in your organization (Human Resource and Skills Development Canada, 2013b). They offer various services including vocational tests, interviews, and even referrals to more appropriate counsellors when necessary (Career Cruising, 2013). Overall a career counsellor helps individuals realize and achieve their career goals.

Job duties and responsibilities

Specific tasks consist of prioritizing a caseload, administrative duties like filing and making case notes, conducting interviews and counselling clients, conducting workshops, collecting information and applications, administering assessments, and keeping up to date on labour market trends (Career Cruising, 2013; Human Resource and Skills Development Canada, 2012; Pickerell & Neault, 2012). If you move up to a management position more responsibilities may be added, such as managing the whole department, overseeing clients' service, setting goals for the department, and planning the budget and activities.

Typical workday

A typical work day would be 9am to 5pm, from Monday to Friday, working with fellow career counsellors and managers (Career Cruising, 2013). It will generally consist of working one-on-one with clients, but may also involve working with colleagues doing presentations, learning new skills, or learning from coworkers (Human Resource and Skills Development Canada, 2012). The majority of time may be spent in an office setting, but occasionally meeting clients off-site in schools, workplaces, or other locations. Computers and assessment tools will be used on a regular basis (ONET OnLine, 2012).

Educational requirements and other qualifications

A Master's degree or a PhD in counselling or educational psychology may be beneficial, but often a postgraduate diploma or a certificate in career counselling will suffice (Career Cruising, 2013; Human Resource and Skills Development Canada, 2013b). Certification is necessary in Quebec, voluntary in Alberta, and British Columbia, and being developed in Nova Scotia, Ontario, and New Brunswick (Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, 2013). Volunteer experience such as being a mentor would help in developing the skills necessary to assisting someone.

Related skills, interests, and abilities

For this job it is beneficial to have skills such as problem solving abilities, communication skills, listening skills, and emotional intelligence (Career Cruising, 2013; Human Resource and Skills Development Canada, 2012; Pickerell & Neault, 2012). These skills help when dealing with clients in order to get the most out of interviews, and to bring clients to the point in their career they want to be at. It is also beneficial to have presentation skills and computer abilities when dealing with general office tasks or conducting a workshop. Compassion, flexibility, creativity, motivation, and a positive attitude are also valued as a career

counsellor because the job is to help others and find different ways to solve different problems. Career counsellors need to be able to recognize the personal strengths of others and build these to encourage self-confidence and self-esteem. The most important of these skills include oral communication and critical thinking skills.

Relevance of psychology undergraduate degree

An undergraduate degree in psychology provides you with many beneficial transferable skills including written and oral communication skills, critical thinking skills, and interpersonal skills. All of which will help in working with colleagues, assisting clients, making case notes, conducting interviews, and prioritizing caseloads (Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, 2013; Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2012). As a career counsellor with an undergraduate degree in psychology you might draw on your knowledge of human behaviour and performance to assist in doing interviews, and knowledge of individual differences to assist in making case notes. Your knowledge of psychological research methods may help when collecting information. As well, your knowledge of psychological assessments may help when administering assessments.

Many classes would contribute to this job, although some classes are more relevant to the job, such as, Organizational psychology, and Personality Psychology. Organizational psychology teaches you about applying psychological theories to the work environment which could assist in applying the skills you learn at university to a career as a career counsellor (Mantler, 2013). Personality psychology teaches you about individuals differences which could assist in tailoring feedback for clients in assisting them with their career decisions (Motz, 2013).

Salary potential

The salary range for career counsellors consists of making \$25,000 to \$80,000 a year, with starting salaries at the lower end, and experienced managers at the higher end, with the average being about \$42,000 (Career Cruising, 2013). Starting salaries can be expected to be somewhere around \$25,000 to \$45,000 based on current job advertisements, although most advertisements merely state that salary is to be discussed (Government of Canada, 2013).

Job outlook

Figure 1. Employment level projections for therapy and assessment professionals, including more than just career counsellors, based on statistics from Statistics Canada (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2013a).



To apply

You can apply for this job through networking with professionals, or various job boards such as http://www.workingincanada.gc.ca/job_search.do

To know more

Check out the Canadian Council for Career Development website at <http://ccda.org/ccda/>

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