



Australian Government

Department of Health  
and Aged Care



## FACT SHEET

# DIFFERENT PATHWAYS TO BECOMING A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

**Whether you're just beginning your education or looking to advance your career, there are lots of different ways to get started in the mental health sector.**

**Whether you're just beginning your education or looking to advance your career, there are lots of different ways to get started in the mental health sector.**

Different mental health professionals use different skills to support people with mental ill-health.

Some have undergone years of study and training, where some other professionals might have lived experience of mental health, including caring for someone with mental ill-health.

Some mental health professionals can diagnose mental health conditions, some can treat mental ill-health using different types of psychotherapy and counselling, and some are able to prescribe medications.

Some are involved in education or in organising care for people who have complex mental health needs.

You may not require a university degree to become a mental health worker.

There are multiple study pathways available to a career in the sector, including:

University

Technical and Further Education institution (TAFE)

Paid Training

Volunteering

Registered Training Organisation (RTO)

# Here are some of the many different education pathways you can take to start your career in the mental health workforce:



## Becoming a psychiatrist

**You need to complete a medical degree and specialise in psychiatry to become a psychiatrist.**

This usually involves an internship, residency and 5 or more years of specialist training.



## Becoming a mental health occupational therapist

**You will need to complete a Bachelor of Occupational Therapy through a university to become a qualified occupational therapist.**



## Becoming a psychologist

**You need to complete a minimum of 6 years of education and training.**

This typically includes years of undergraduate study, followed by 2 years of study in a specialised area of psychology.



## Becoming a community mental health worker

**You will usually need to complete a Certificate IV in Mental Health or similar through a TAFE or university to become a qualified community health worker.**



## Becoming a counsellor

**Counsellors usually require a Diploma of Counselling through a university or TAFE.**

Many counsellors will choose to complete further qualifications, including an undergraduate degree or Masters degree through a university.



## Becoming an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health worker

**You may not require training but may choose to undertake training in mental health and psychological therapies.**

There are a number of training courses offered by tertiary institutions, government organisations and community-controlled organisations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health workers, including a Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care which can be completed through a TAFE.



## Becoming a nurse in mental health

**You need to complete an undergraduate degree in nursing through a university to become a registered nurse, or complete a diploma through university or Technical and Further Education institution (TAFE) or Registered Training Organisation (RTO) to become an enrolled nurse.**

Registered nurses may choose to complete further postgraduate study through a university to specialise in mental health. Enrolled nurses can continue their education with an Advanced Diploma of Nursing.



## Becoming a mental health social worker

**You will typically need a Bachelor of Social Work undergraduate degree from a university to become a mental health social worker.**



## Becoming a lived experience (peer) worker

**You will usually need to complete a Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work to become a lived experience (peer) worker.**

Are you ready to make a difference? Take the next step and visit [health.gov.au/mental-health-careers](https://health.gov.au/mental-health-careers) or scan the QR code to learn more about pursuing a career in mental health today!



Careers in **MENTAL HEALTH**  
Visit [health.gov.au/mental-health-careers](https://health.gov.au/mental-health-careers)