

## Marriage and Family Therapists

### Summary



Marriage and family therapists help people manage problems with their family and relationships.

#### Quick Facts: Marriage and Family Therapists

<b>2017 Median Pay</b>	\$48,790 per year \$23.45 per hour
<b>Typical Entry-Level Education</b>	Master's degree
<b>Work Experience in a Related Occupation</b>	None
<b>On-the-job Training</b>	Internship/residency
<b>Number of Jobs, 2016</b>	41,500
<b>Job Outlook, 2016-26</b>	23% (Much faster than average)
<b>Employment Change, 2016-26</b>	9,700

#### [What Marriage and Family Therapists Do](#)

Marriage and family therapists help people manage and overcome problems with family and other relationships.

#### [Work Environment](#)

Marriage and family therapists work in a variety of settings, such as private practice and mental health centers. Most work full time.

#### [How to Become a Marriage and Family Therapist](#)

Marriage and family therapists are required to have a master's degree and a license to practice.

#### [Pay](#)

The median annual wage for marriage and family therapists was \$48,790 in May 2017.

#### [Job Outlook](#)

Employment of marriage and family therapists is projected to grow 23 percent from 2016 to 2026, much faster than the average for all occupations. Growth is expected due to the increasing use of integrated care.

#### [State & Area Data](#)

Explore resources for employment and wages by state and area for marriage and family therapists.

### [Similar Occupations](#)

Compare the job duties, education, job growth, and pay of marriage and family therapists with similar occupations.

### [More Information, Including Links to O\\*NET](#)

Learn more about marriage and family therapists by visiting additional resources, including O\*NET, a source on key characteristics of workers and occupations.

## What Marriage and Family Therapists Do

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Marriage and family therapists encourage clients to discuss their emotions and experiences.

Marriage and family therapists help people manage problems with their family and other relationships.

### **Duties**

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Marriage and family therapists typically do the following:

- Encourage clients to discuss their emotions and experiences
- Help clients process their reactions and adjust to difficult changes in their life, such as divorce and layoffs
- Guide clients through the process of making decisions about their future
- Help clients develop strategies and skills to change their behavior and to cope with difficult situations
- Refer clients to other resources or services in the community, such as support groups or inpatient treatment facilities
- Complete and maintain confidential files and mandated records

Marriage and family therapists use a variety of techniques and tools to help their clients. Many apply cognitive behavioral therapy, a goal-oriented approach that helps clients understand harmful thoughts, feelings, and beliefs and teaches how to replace them with positive, life-enhancing ones.

Many marriage and family therapists work in private practice. They must market their practice to prospective clients and work with insurance companies and clients to get payment for their services.

Marriage and family therapists work with individuals, couples, and families. They bring a family-centered perspective to treatment, even when treating individuals. They evaluate family roles and development, to understand how clients' families affect their mental health. They treat the clients' relationships, not just the clients themselves. They address issues, such as low self-esteem, stress, addiction, and substance abuse.

Marriage and family therapists coordinate patient treatment with other professionals, such as [psychologists](#) and [social workers](#).

### **Work Environment**

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Many marriage and family therapists work in private practice.

Marriage and family therapists held about 41,500 jobs in 2016. The largest employers of marriage and family therapists were as follows:

Individual and family services	28%
Outpatient care centers	15
Offices of other health practitioners	14
State government, excluding education and hospitals	13
Self-employed workers	8

Marriage and family therapists work in a variety of settings, such as mental health centers, substance abuse treatment centers, and hospitals. They also work in private practice and in Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), which are mental health programs that some employers provide to help employees deal with personal problems.

### **Work Schedules**

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Marriage and family therapists generally work full time. Some therapists work evenings and weekends to accommodate their clients' schedules.

### **How to Become a Marriage and Family Therapist**

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Master's programs in marriage and family therapy prepare students to provide counseling to couples, individuals, and groups.

Marriage and family therapists are required to have a master's degree and a license to practice.

## Education

To become a marriage and family therapist, applicants need a master's degree in psychology, marriage and family therapy, or a related mental health field. A bachelor's degree in most fields is acceptable to enter one of these master's degree programs.

Marriage and family therapy programs teach students about how marriages, families, and relationships function and how these relationships can affect mental and emotional disorders.

There are several organizations that accredit counseling programs, including the [Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs](#) (CACREP), the [Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education](#) (COAMFTE), and the [Masters in Psychology and Counseling Accreditation Council](#) (MPCAC).

## Training

Candidates gain hands-on experience through postdegree supervised clinical work, sometimes referred to as an internship or residency. In training, they learn to provide family therapy, group therapy, psychotherapy, and other therapeutic interventions, under the supervision of a licensed counselor.

## Licenses, Certifications, and Registrations

All states require marriage and family therapists to be licensed. Licensure requires a master's degree and 2,000 to 4,000 hours of postdegree supervised clinical experience, sometimes referred to as an internship or residency. In addition, therapists must pass a state-recognized exam and complete annual continuing education classes.

Contact and licensing information for marriage and family therapists is available through the [Association of Marital and Family Therapy Regulatory Boards](#).

## Important Qualities

**Compassion.** Marriage and family therapists often work with people who are dealing with stressful and difficult situations, so they must be compassionate and empathize with their clients.

**Interpersonal skills.** Marriage and family therapists work with different types of people. They spend most of their time working directly with clients and other professionals and must be able to encourage good relationships.

**Listening skills.** Marriage and family therapists need to give their full attention to their clients to understand their problems, values, and goals.

**Organizational skills.** Marriage and family therapists in private practice must keep track of payments and work with insurance companies.

**Speaking skills.** Marriage and family therapists need to be able to communicate with clients effectively. They must express information in a way that clients can understand easily.

## Pay



**Total, all occupations**

**\$37,690**

Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.  
 Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics

The median annual wage for marriage and family therapists was \$48,790 in May 2017. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$31,390, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$81,760.

In May 2017, the median annual wages for marriage and family therapists in the top industries in which they worked were as follows:

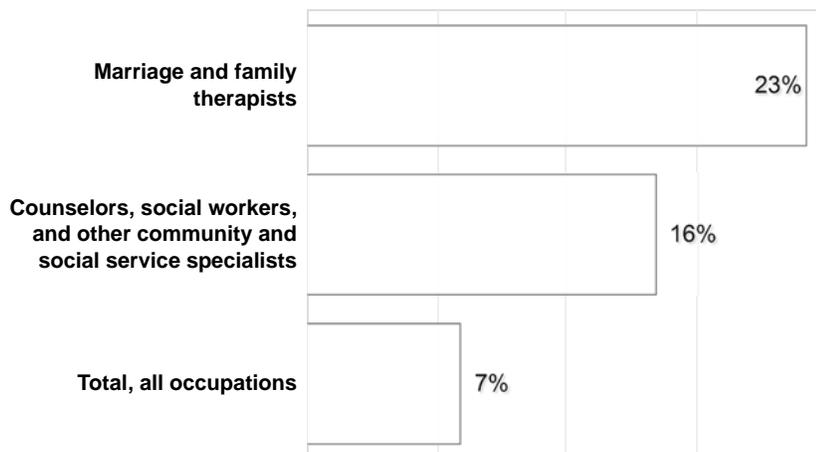
State government, excluding education and hospitals	\$72,580
Outpatient care centers	48,390
Offices of other health practitioners	45,980
Individual and family services	44,760

Marriage and family therapists generally work full time. Some therapists work evenings and weekends to accommodate their clients' schedules.

## Job Outlook

### Marriage and Family Therapists

Percent change in employment, projected 2016-26



Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.  
 Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

Employment of marriage and family therapists is projected to grow 23 percent from 2016 to 2026, much faster than the average for all occupations. Growth is expected due to the increasing use of integrated care, which is a treatment of multiple problems at one time by a group of specialists. In providing integrated care, marriage and family therapists are working with counselors such as substance abuse, behavior disorder, or mental health counselors, to address patients' issues as a team.

## Job Prospects

Job prospects are expected to be good for marriage and family therapists because of a combination of the projected increase in number of jobs over the next ten years and the expected need to fill jobs vacated by separating employees.

### Employment projections data for marriage and family therapists, 2016-26

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2016	Projected Employment, 2026	Change, 2016-26		Employment by Industry
				Percent	Numeric	
Marriage and family therapists	21-1013	41,500	51,200	23	9,700	 <a href="#">xlsx</a>

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

## State & Area Data

### Occupational Employment Statistics (OES)

The [Occupational Employment Statistics](#) (OES) program produces employment and wage estimates annually for over 800 occupations. These estimates are available for the nation as a whole, for individual states, and for metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. The link(s) below go to OES data maps for employment and wages by state and area.

- [Marriage and family therapists](#)

### Projections Central

Occupational employment projections are developed for all states by Labor Market Information (LMI) or individual state Employment Projections offices. All state projections data are available at [www.projectionscentral.com](http://www.projectionscentral.com). Information on this site allows projected employment growth for an occupation to be compared among states or to be compared within one state. In addition, states may produce projections for areas; there are links to each state's websites where these data may be retrieved.

### CareerOneStop

CareerOneStop includes hundreds of [occupational profiles](#) with data available by state and metro area. There are links in the left-hand side menu to compare occupational employment by state and occupational wages by local area or metro area. There is also a [salary info tool](#) to search for wages by zip code.

## Similar Occupations

This table shows a list of occupations with job duties that are similar to those of marriage and family therapists.

	OCCUPATION	JOB DUTIES	ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION	2017 MEDIAN PAY
	<a href="#">Physicians and Surgeons</a>	Physicians and surgeons diagnose and treat injuries or illnesses. Physicians examine patients; take medical histories; prescribe medications; and order, perform, and interpret diagnostic tests. They counsel patients on diet, hygiene, and preventive healthcare. Surgeons operate on patients to treat injuries, such as broken bones; diseases, such as cancerous tumors; and	Doctoral or professional degree	This wage is equal to or greater than \$208,000 per year.

	OCCUPATION	JOB DUTIES	ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION	2017 MEDIAN PAY
	<p><b><u><a href="#">Psychologists</a></u></b></p>	<p>deformities, such as cleft palates.</p> <p>Psychologists study cognitive, emotional, and social processes and behavior by observing, interpreting, and recording how individuals relate to one another and to their environments. They use their findings to help improve processes and behaviors.</p>	<p><u><a href="#">See How to Become One</a></u></p>	<p>\$77,030</p>
	<p><b><u><a href="#">Rehabilitation Counselors</a></u></b></p>	<p>Rehabilitation counselors help people with physical, mental, developmental, or emotional disabilities live independently. They work with clients to overcome or manage the personal, social, or psychological effects of disabilities on employment or independent living.</p>	<p>Master's degree</p>	<p>\$34,860</p>
	<p><b><u><a href="#">School and Career Counselors</a></u></b></p>	<p>School counselors help students develop the academic and social skills needed to succeed in school. Career counselors help people choose careers and follow a path to employment.</p>	<p>Master's degree</p>	<p>\$55,410</p>
	<p><b><u><a href="#">Social and Community Service Managers</a></u></b></p>	<p>Social and community service managers coordinate and supervise social service programs and community organizations. They manage workers who provide social services to the public.</p>	<p>Bachelor's degree</p>	<p>\$64,100</p>
	<p><b><u><a href="#">Social and Human Service Assistants</a></u></b></p>	<p>Social and human service assistants provide client services, including support for families, in a wide variety of fields, such as psychology, rehabilitation, and social work. They assist other workers, such as <a href="#">social workers</a>, and they help clients find benefits or community services.</p>	<p>High school diploma or equivalent</p>	<p>\$33,120</p>
	<p><b><u><a href="#">Social Workers</a></u></b></p>	<p>Social workers help people solve and cope with problems in their everyday lives. Clinical social workers also diagnose and treat mental, behavioral,</p>	<p><u><a href="#">See How to Become One</a></u></p>	<p>\$47,980</p>

	OCCUPATION	JOB DUTIES	ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION	2017 MEDIAN PAY
	<p><b><u><a href="#">Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors</a></u></b></p>	<p>and emotional issues.</p> <p>Substance abuse, behavioral disorder, and mental health counselors advise people who suffer from alcoholism, drug addiction, eating disorders, mental health issues, or other mental or behavioral problems. They provide treatment and support to help clients recover from addiction or modify problem behaviors.</p>	<p><a href="#">See How to Become One</a></p>	<p>\$43,300</p>
	<p><b><u><a href="#">Health Educators and Community Health Workers</a></u></b></p>	<p>Health educators teach people about behaviors that promote wellness. They develop and implement strategies to improve the health of individuals and communities. Community health workers collect data and discuss health concerns with members of specific populations or communities.</p>	<p><a href="#">See How to Become One</a></p>	<p>\$45,360</p>
	<p><b><u><a href="#">Genetic Counselors</a></u></b></p>	<p>Genetic counselors assess individual or family risk for a variety of inherited conditions, such as genetic disorders and birth defects. They provide information and support to other healthcare providers, or to individuals and families concerned with the risk of inherited conditions.</p>	<p>Master's degree</p>	<p>\$77,480</p>

## Contacts for More Information

For more information about accredited programs, visit

[Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education](#)

[Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs](#)

[Masters in Psychology and Counseling Accreditation Council](#)

For more information about marriage and family therapists, visit

[American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy](#)

[Association of Marital and Family Therapy Regulatory Boards](#)

For general information about counseling and for information about counseling specialties, visit

[American Counseling Association](#)

For information about contacting state regulating boards, visit

[National Board for Certified Counselors](#)

## O\*NET

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### [Marriage and Family Therapists](#)

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