



AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION  
PRACTICE ORGANIZATION

## Psychologists: Who We Are and What We Do

Psychologists are the nation's leading providers of mental and behavioral health care services, and diagnose and treat mental and substance abuse disorders in a wide range of treatment facilities.

There are more than 100,000 clinical psychologists in the U.S., licensed in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

**Licensed psychologists complete a 4 to 6 year-long psychology doctoral degree (Ph.D., Psy.D., or Ed.D.),**

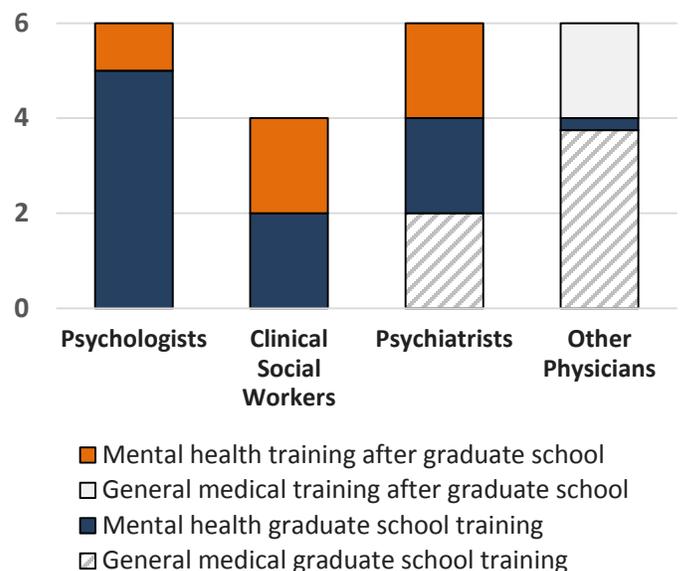
including coursework and training in:

- biological, cognitive, and social bases of behavior
- assessment and diagnosis
- personality and intellectual assessment
- psychotherapy
- psychopathology and dysfunction
- data analysis and research methodology
- clinical consultation and supervision.

Before licensure, psychologists complete **2 years of supervised direct clinical experience, including an internship.**

The depth and breadth of this education and training is unique among behavioral health professionals.

***Mental Health Service Providers:  
Years of Education and Training***



### **Psychologists work with all kinds of patients in a wide range of settings, by...**

- Providing psychotherapy to patients with schizophrenia in their office or an inpatient psychiatric hospital;
- Supervising patient treatment as the director of a partial hospitalization program or outpatient rehabilitation facility;
- Conducting neuropsychological evaluations and behavioral assessments of patients with dementia or Alzheimer's disease within a skilled nursing facility;
- Seeing patients with different types of psychopathology as part of a group practice;
- Researching behavioral interventions to help patients with post-traumatic stress disorder;
- Coordinating the integration of behavioral health services with general medical services within a general hospital or primary care clinic.



Please Recycle

*An affiliate of the American Psychological Association*

**Psychotherapy, the most common service provided by psychologists, is usually the preferred form of treatment for individuals with mental disorders.** In most cases psychotherapy is as—or more—effective than treatment with drugs. Psychotherapy also does not cause unfortunate and unwanted side effects (such as agitation, weight gain, drowsiness, nausea, restlessness, and others) that usually occur with use of psychotropic drugs.

*Ratio of patients preferring psychotherapy to psychotropic drugs for mental health treatment:*

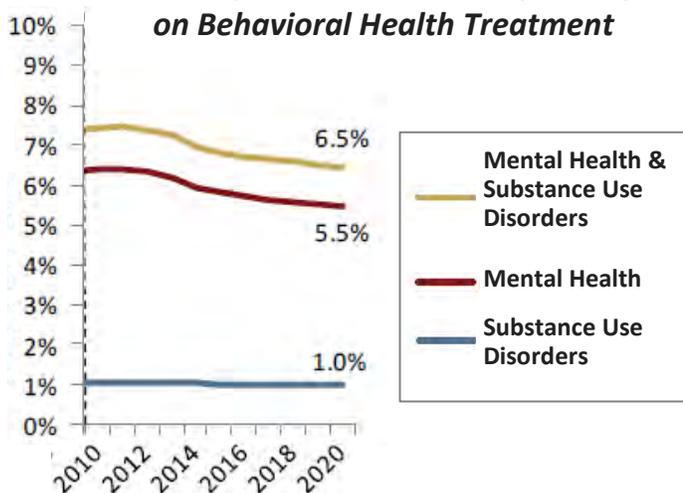
**3 to 1**



**Although roughly 44 million Americans are diagnosed with a mental illness each year, less than half get mental health treatment.** Of those getting outpatient mental health care, most are treated only with drugs, yet only 23% of prescriptions for psychotropic drugs are written by a psychiatrist.

- Mental disorders are the single leading cause of disability in the U.S. Major depressive disorder alone costs us more than **\$52 billion a year** in lost productivity and suicide-related costs.
- Mental disorders worsen general medical conditions and increase treatment costs. For patients with a chronic condition like diabetes or heart failure, **depression doubles the rate** of hospitalization and emergency medical services use.

**Share of Total U.S. Health Spending on Behavioral Health Treatment**



*“The majority of adults who have mental health or substance use disorders do not get corresponding treatment. Furthermore, less than one-third of adults get minimally adequate care.”*

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

**Congress must increase Americans’ access to psychological services.**

**This will save lives and improve outcomes for individuals with mental health and substance use disorders, and reduce overall health care costs for individuals with a chronic general medical condition and a co-occurring behavioral health disorder.**