

Addictions Counsellor

Help people get out from under drugs, alcohol and gambling. A 2-year diploma gets you in; the work is heavy and the pay is middling.

TYPICAL PAY

\$71,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$48k to \$104k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Treatment centres, hospitals,
community agencies, shelters**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grade 12
Grade 12 English is the usual admission requirement. Psychology, biology and volunteering with people in crisis all help.
- 2 College diploma or degree** 2 to 4 years
A 2-year addictions or social service worker diploma, or a 4-year degree in psychology, social work or addictions studies. A 1-year graduate certificate is common for people who already have a diploma or degree.
- 3 Placement** 1 to 2 semesters
Every program includes unpaid field placement, about 400 to 700 hours, in a treatment centre, hospital or community agency.
- 4 First job** Months
Many grads start as a support worker or withdrawal management worker and move into counselling roles.
- 5 Certification** About 2 years of work
The CCAC (Canadian Certified Addiction Counsellor) credential from the CACCF (Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Federation) needs 270 hours of education, 4,000 hours of supervised work, 300 hours of supervision and a 150-question exam.

Pros and cons

- + You can start with a 2-year diploma
- + Steady demand as provinces expand addiction services
- + You see people rebuild their lives
- Emotionally heavy, and you will lose clients to overdose
- Pay in non-profit agencies is modest
- Evening, overnight and weekend shifts in residential programs

Good to know

The certification comes from work, not school

The main Canadian credential, the CCAC (Canadian Certified Addiction Counsellor), requires about 2 years of full-time supervised counselling before you can even write the exam. You are a working c...

Twelve core functions

Addiction counselling is taught and tested around twelve core functions, from screening and intake to crisis intervention, case management and referral. Certification requires at least 10 hours of s...

Optional boosts

ICADC (International Certified Alcohol and Drug Counsellor). Master's degree in counselling or social work. Problem gambling or gaming disorder specialist. Clinical supervisor certification.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Addictions counsellor, wages (updated Nov 2025)
CACCF (Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Federation): certifications
Durham College: Addictions and Mental Health graduate certificate
College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/addictions-counsellor>



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