

Guidance Counsellor

The person students go to about courses, university applications and the stuff they cannot tell anyone else.

TYPICAL PAY

\$85,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$48k to \$111k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

6 to 8 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

**High schools, student services
offices, colleges and universities**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Social sciences, psychology and English. Peer mentoring or a help line volunteer role is worth more than any course.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 3 to 4 years
Psychology, sociology and social work are the natural fits, but any degree works if you also qualify to teach a subject.
- 3 Bachelor of Education (B.Ed)** 1 to 2 years
Four semesters in Ontario, 1 to 2 years elsewhere. Secondary stream, since guidance lives in high schools.
- 4 Teach for a year or more** 1 to 3 years
Ontario requires at least one school year of classroom teaching before you can take the second part of the guidance qualification.
- 5 Guidance and career education qualification** 1 to 3 years, part time
A three-part course sequence. Part 1 needs only your teaching certificate. The Specialist needs two years of teaching, including a year in guidance.

Pros and cons

- + No marking and no lesson planning
- + You change the direction of someone's life a few times a year
- + Full teacher pay, pension and school holidays
- You carry students' crises home with you
- Caseloads of several hundred students are normal
- No pay raise for taking the role on

Good to know

The caseload is enormous

Canadian high schools commonly run one guidance counsellor for several hundred students. Counsellor associations have pushed for lower ratios for decades without much movement.

You have to teach before you can counsel

In Ontario the second part of the guidance qualification cannot be taken until you have a full school year of classroom teaching behind you. The province wants counsellors who know what a classroom act...

Optional boosts

Guidance Specialist qualification. Master's in counselling psychology. Mental health first aid and suicide intervention training. Special education qualification.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Guidance Counsellor, Education, wages (updated Nov 2025)
Ontario College of Teachers: Prerequisites for Additional Qualifications
Ontario College of Teachers: Requirements to teach
Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association

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/guidance-counsellor>



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