

Psychiatrist

A medical doctor for the mind. Twelve years of training, and the only mental health job that can prescribe in every state.

TYPICAL PAY

\$281,870

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$84k to \$447k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

12 to 13 years

after high school

DEMAND

Very high

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Hospitals, community mental health clinics, private offices, vide...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Biology, chemistry, physics and math, with grades strong enough for a competitive college.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
 Any major, as long as you finish the pre-medical science courses and take the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test).
- 3 Medical school** 4 years
 Two years of science, two years of hospital rotations. You graduate as a Doctor of Medicine (MD) or a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO).
- 4 Psychiatry residency** 4 years
 Paid hospital training. The first year covers general medicine and neurology, then inpatient wards, emergency psychiatry, addiction, child work and outpatient clinic.
- 5 License and board certification** During and after residency
 A state medical license, then the certifying exam from the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.

Pros and cons

- + Among the highest paid work you can do sitting in a chair
- + More demand than there are psychiatrists, everywhere
- + You can build a practice that fits the life you want
- Twelve years and around \$200,000 of debt first
- You carry suicide risk and it does not leave you at 5pm
- Insurance paperwork and prior authorizations eat the week

Good to know

The prescription pad is the dividing line

Psychiatrists go to medical school and can prescribe medication anywhere in the country. Psychologists do not, except in a handful of states that created a special prescribing route with extra training.

Child psychiatrists barely exist

Most of the country is short of them, and families routinely wait months for a first appointment. It is two extra years of training and it makes you close to unemployable in the good sense: you will never s...

Optional boosts

Child and adolescent psychiatry. Addiction psychiatry. Forensic psychiatry. Consultation psychiatry.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Psychiatrists (29-1223.00)
 American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology
 American Psychiatric Association
 United States Medical Licensing Examination

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/psychiatrist>



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