

PROFESSIONALS DELIVERING BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE in ALASKA

There are 10 main categories of rendering qualified behavioral health providers in Alaska:

- **Behavioral Health Clinical Associate** – This category generally allows for entry into the behavioral health workforce (requiring neither a high degree of experience or academic credential).
- **Mental Health Professional Clinician** – The category Mental Health Professional Clinician includes perhaps the widest variety of occupations. By definition, professionals are considered a Mental Health Professional Clinician if, among other requirements, they have attained at least a Master’s degree in psychology, counseling, child guidance, community mental health, marriage and family therapy, social work, or nursing. Professionals providing a scope of services that would require licensure under A.S. 08 are not included in the definition of Mental Health Professional Clinician aside from the following which are explicitly included: Nurses (licensed under A.S. 08.68), Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (licensed under A.S. 08.63), Licensed Professional Clinicians (licensed under A.S. 08.29), Licensed Clinical Social Workers (licensed under A.S. 08.95), and Psychologist or Psychological Associate (licensed under A.S. 08.86).
- **Substance Use Disorder Counselor** – This category generally emphasizes experience and certification over academic credentialing.

General requirements included in behavioral health regulation at 7 AAC 70 and 7 AAC 135 allows for more specific occupational titles based on education, experience, and knowledge within these three broader categories. Governing Integrated Behavioral Health Regulations also allow for certain behavioral health services to be delivered by the following providers:

- Physician
- Physician’s Assistant
- Advanced Nurse Practitioner
- Registered Nurse (with the supervision of a Physician or Advanced Nurse Practitioner)
- Licensed Practical Nurse (with the supervision of a Physician or Advanced Nurse Practitioner)
- Pharmacist (limited to the preparation and administration of methadone under the direction of an Opioid Treatment Program Physician)
- Applied Behavioral Analyst (this is a new provider type, regulation still needs to be developed)

Education Requirements:

Generally, the Behavioral Health Clinical Associate category of professionals requires less than a Master’s degree and the Mental Health Professional Clinician category requires at least a Master’s degree in select fields. Regulations defining the Substance Use Disorder Counselor category of professionals do not include any threshold educational requirement aside from education relevant to the scope of services. All treatment services require staff performing the service as “a regular duty within the scope of that staff member’s knowledge, experience, and education.”

Directing Clinician:

In addition to these three main categories of rendering qualified behavioral health providers, regulation defines the additional responsibilities assigned to a “Directing Clinician.” Regulation at 7 AAC 135.990(13) defines “Directing Clinician” as: “a substance use disorder counselor or a mental health professional clinician who, by virtue of that individual's education, training, and experience, and with respect to the recipient's behavioral health treatment plan, (A) develops or oversees the development of the plan; (B) periodically reviews and revises the plan as needed; (C) signs the plan each time a change is made to the plan; and (D) monitors and directs the delivery of all services identified in the plan.”

Behavioral Health Clinical Associates (BHCA)

What is a Behavioral Health Clinical Associate? [7 AAC 70.990\(3\)](#) defines a “Behavioral Health Clinical Associate” as:
“an individual (A) who may have less than a master's degree in psychology, social work, counseling, or a related field with specialization or experience in providing rehabilitation services to recipients with severe behavioral health conditions; (B) whose responsibilities may include provision of psychosocial evaluation, education related to a recipient's behavioral health condition, encouraging and coaching, counseling, and teaching of needed life skills; and (C) who works within the scope of the individual's training, experience, and education.”

Other Titles: Assessment Specialist, Assistant Counselor, Behavioral Health Aide, Behavioral Health Case Manager, Behavioral Health Clinical Assistant, Behavioral Health Technician, Care Coordinator, Case Manager, Community Mental Health Professional, Counselor Technician, Direct Care Provider, Direct Care Service Provider, Direct Care Service Worker, Healthcare Social Worker, Healthcare Technician, Licensed Psychiatric Technician, Mental Health Associate, Mental Health Care Coordinator, Mental Health Technician, Mental Health Worker, Patient Care Specialist, Psychiatric Technician, Social Services Aide, Social Worker, Peer Support Specialist (ref: 7 AAC 135.210(b)).

What does a behavioral health clinical associate do? (supervision may be explicitly required)

Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral for Treatment (SBIRT)
Alcohol and/or Drug Assessment
Daily Behavioral Rehabilitation Services
Peer Support Services - Individual
Peer Support Services - Individual
Peer Support Services - Family (with patient present)
Peer Support Services - Family (w/o patient present)
Client Status Review
Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment - Clinically Managed; Low Intensity
Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment - Clinically Managed; Medium Intensity
Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment - Clinically Managed; High Intensity
Short-term Crisis Stabilization Service
Day Treatment for Children (combined mental health & school district resources)
Comprehensive Community Support Services - Individual
Comprehensive Community Support Services - Group
Recipient Support Services
Therapeutic BH Services - Individual
Therapeutic BH Services - Group
Therapeutic BH Services - Family (with patient present)
Therapeutic BH Services - Family (w/o patient present)
Facilitation of Telemedicine
Case Management
Behavioral Health Screen - AK Screen Tool

Mental Health Professional Clinician (MHPC)

What is a Mental Health Professional Clinician? [7 AAC 70.990\(28\)](#) defines a “Mental Health Professional Clinician” as:
“(A) an individual who (i) is working for a community behavioral health services provider; (ii) is performing limited behavioral health services that are within that individual's field of expertise; (iii) is not working in a capacity that requires the individual to be licensed under AS 08; and (iv) has a master's degree or more advanced degree in psychology, counseling, child guidance, community mental health, marriage and family therapy, social work, or nursing; (B) a nurse who (i) has a master's degree in nursing; (ii) has received special training or experience in mental health; (iii) has an active license to practice nursing under AS 08.68; and (iv) is working in the individual's field of expertise; (C) a marital and family therapist who (i) has an active license to practice marital and family therapy under AS 08.63; and (ii) is working in the individual's field of expertise; (D) a professional counselor who (i) has an active license to practice as a professional counselor under AS 08.29; and (ii) is working in the individual's field of expertise; (E) a social worker who (i) has a master's degree in social work; (ii) has an active license to practice as a social worker under AS 08.95; and (iii) is working in the individual's field of expertise; or (F) a psychologist or psychological associate who (i) has an active license to practice as a psychologist or psychological associate under AS 08.86; and (ii) is working in the individual's field of expertise.”

Other Titles: The regulatory definition of Mental Health Professional Clinician includes certain nurses (with at least a Master’s degree), licensed marital and family therapists (LMFT), licensed professional counselors (LPC), licensed clinical social workers (LCSW), licensed psychologists and licensed psychological associates. Additional titles may include: Behavioral Health Clinician, Behavioral Health Counselor, Behavioral Health Manager, Behavioral Health Supervisor, Care Coordinator, Clinic Director, Clinical Counselor, Clinical Social Worker, Clinical Supervisor, Clinical Therapist, College Counselor, Counseling Services Director, Counselor, Counselor Supervisor, Family Therapist, Marriage and Family Counselor, Marriage and Family Therapist, Marriage Counselor, Mental Health Counselor, Mental Health Director, Out-Patient Therapist, Psychotherapist, Therapist. May also be a “Directing Clinician” as defined at [7 AAC 135.990\(13\)](#).

What kind of training/education is required? (initially/continued)? Regulation at [7 AAC 70.990](#) requires that a Mental Health Professional Clinician have at least a Master’s degree in psychology, counseling, child guidance, community mental health, marriage and family therapy, social work, or nursing.

What does a clinician do? (supervision may be explicitly required)

Psychotherapy, Family (w/o patient present)
Psychotherapy, Family (with patient present)
Psychotherapy, Multi-family group
Psychotherapy, Group
Psychological Testing
Neuropsychological Testing
Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral for Treatment (SBIRT)
Psychotherapy, Family (w/o patient present)
Psychotherapy, Family (with patient present)
Psychotherapy, Multi-family group
Psychotherapy, Group
Psychological Testing
Neuropsychological Testing
Mental Health Intake Assessment
Integrated Mental Health & Substance Use Intake Assessment
Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment - Clinically Managed; Low Intensity
Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment - Clinically Managed; Medium Intensity
Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment - Clinically Managed; High Intensity
Facilitation of Telemedicine
Short-term Crisis Intervention Service
Short-term Crisis Intervention Service
Behavioral Health Screen - AK Screen Tool

Substance Use Disorder Counselor (SUDC)

What is a Substance Use Disorder Counselor? [7 AAC 70.990\(32\)](#) defines a “Substance Use Disorder Counselor” as:
“an individual who, subject to the limits of the individual's education, training and experience, provides behavioral health rehabilitation services with a focus on the treatment of substance use disorders, while working for a community behavioral health services provider.”

Other Titles: Addictions Counselor, Assistant Counselor, Behavioral Health Case Manager, Behavioral Health Technician, Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor, Chemical Dependency Counselor (includes CDC I, CDC II, CDC-Supervisor), Chemical Dependency Professional, Chemical Dependency Therapist, Counselor, Direct Care Provider, Direct Care Service Provider, Direct Care Service Worker, Drug and Alcohol Treatment Specialist, Social Services Aide, Substance Abuse Assistant Counselor, Substance Abuse Counselor. May also be a “Directing Clinician” as defined at 7 AAC 135.990(13).

What does a substance use disorder counselor do? (supervision may be explicitly required)

Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral for Treatment (SBIRT)
Alcohol and/or Drug Assessment
Daily Behavioral Rehabilitation Services
Peer Support Services - Individual
Peer Support Services - Individual
Peer Support Services - Family (with patient present)
Peer Support Services - Family (w/o patient present)
Client Status Review
Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment - Clinically Managed; Low Intensity
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Therapeutic BH Services - Individual
Therapeutic BH Services - Group
Therapeutic BH Services - Family (with patient present)
Therapeutic BH Services - Family (w/o patient present)
Facilitation of Telemedicine
Treatment Plan Review for Methadone Recipient
Case Management
Behavioral Health Screen - AK Screen Tool