A Career in Marriage and Family Therapy

For more information visit www.aamft.org or email us at central@aamft.org
The Difference That Makes a Difference!

Marriage and family therapists (MFTs) are highly-trained mental health professionals who bring a family-oriented perspective to mental health care. Trained in psychotherapy and family systems, marriage and family therapists focus on understanding their clients’ symptoms and interaction patterns within their existing environment. MFTs treat predominantly individuals, but also provide couples, family and group therapy. Whomever the client, Family Therapists treat from a relationship perspective that incorporates family systems. Marriage and family therapy is one of the core mental health disciplines and is based on the research and theory that mental illness and family problems are best treated in a family context. For more information about MFTs, click here.

MFT Voted as one of the 50 Best Careers!

Did you know that a career as a marriage and family therapist ranks in the top 50? As this field matures, the number of marriage and family therapists has surged. Demand is expected to increase in the future, with employment in this profession expected to rise 14 percent from 2008 to 2018, according to the Labor Department. Fueling part of the growth is a more widespread acceptance of the field, which makes people in need more willing to seek out such counseling. (US News and World Report, December 2010).

Where do Family Therapists Practice?

Family Therapists provide services in all segments of the health care arena, with the majority offering direct health care delivery. MFTs also provide services to specialty populations;

- minority populations make up 25% of their clientele;
- 25% work in faith-based settings;
- 17% work in rural settings; and
- 9% are in elementary or secondary schools.

What Disorders are commonly treated by Family Therapists?

Marriage and Family Therapists treat an array of disorders, the most common of which are:
- Depression and other Affective Disorders
- Anxiety
- Childhood Behavioral and Emotional Disorders
- Marital and Relationship Problems
- Conduct Disorder and Delinquency
- Substance Abuse
- Alcoholism
- Domestic Violence
- Severe Mental Illness

For a more expansive list of the types of disorders treated by MFTs, click here.

What Services are provided by Family Therapists?

Marriage and family therapists (commonly referred to as MFTs or family therapists) are trained and licensed to:
- Diagnose and treat mental and emotional disorders
- Provide individual psychotherapy
- Provide couples, family, and group therapy
- Create treatment plans
- Provide marriage and relationship therapy
- Offer premarital education and marital enrichment
- Offer life coaching
Educational Information

All licensed MFTs must have a minimum of a master’s degree from an accredited program and at least two years of post-graduate supervised clinical experience. Thirty percent of all MFTs have a doctoral degree.

Graduates from COAMFTE accredited marriage and family therapy programs are trained to be clinical mental health practitioners. COAMFTE adopts the Standard Occupational Classification of the Bureau of Labor and Statistics which states that MFTs are qualified to “[d]iagnose and treat mental and emotional disorders, whether cognitive, affective, or behavioral, within the context of marriage and family systems”.

Useful Links:

- COAMFTE Accreditation Standards
- COAMFTE Commissioners
- Directory of COAMFTE Programs
- Minority Fellowship Program
- AAMFT Code of Ethics
- AAMFT Approved Supervisors
- AAMFT Membership Qualifications
- AAMFT Divisions

Based on the 2011 AAMFT Member Survey the following was reported related to professional identity:

- Marriage and Family Therapist: 79%
- Psychologist: 4%
- Clergy/Pastoral Counselor: 4%
- Counselor: 3%
- Social Worker: 3%
- Other: 7%

Based on the 2011 AAMFT Member Survey the following was reported related to annual earnings in the profession:

- $25,000 or Less: 9%
- $25,000 - $50,000: 22%
- $51,000 - $75,000: 28%
- $76,000 - $100,000: 23%
- $101,000 - $150,000: 12%
- $150,000 - $200,000: 1%
- $200,000 - $250,000: 1%
- $250,000 - $300,000: 1%
- $300,000 +: 1%
- Other Values: 1%
- $25,000 or Less: 9%

Of those responding to the question about yearly gross income 52.36% reported that they earn between $51,000 to $100,000 per year.
The AAMFT Job Connection and Career Center offers employment opportunities in a wide variety of fields including clinical, administrative, and academic settings. There are several enhancements and features for job seekers such as enhanced exposure to employers, professional profiles, programmable job agents, searchable portfolios, Google maps, and job application preview.

The AAMFT Job Connection and Career Center not only provides you with access to current job listings, it provides myriad resources to help jump start your career:

- resume writing tips
- standing out in an interview
- networking locally and nationally
- creating a strong social media presence
- information about the National Exam
- locating an Approved Supervisor

The State of the Profession

Family Therapists are recognized by the federal government as qualified mental health providers. The Public Health Service Act recognizes Marriage and Family Therapy as a core mental health profession under the Health Professional Shortage Area and the National Health Service Corps programs administered by the Health Resources Services Administration. Additionally, Family Therapists are eligible to participate in various programs or receive grants, loans, or compensation for services provided through the following federal departments or agencies:

- Department of Defense
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Department of Transportation
- Indian Health Service

Licensure

Marriage and Family Therapy is a licensed profession with independent oversight in all fifty states, click here to find contact information for your state board. Many states also license associate MFTs who have graduated with a degree in MFT, but are in the process of completing their supervised experience. Some states do not require a license for associates.

Click through on the following to learn more about MFTs as it relates to job classification, and recognition of the profession:

- Medicaid
- State Employee Health Plan
- State Job Classification for MFTS
- MFTs in the Private Payer Recognition
- State Licensure Boards