

Pursuing a Career in Rehabilitation Psychology

ALL ABOUT REHABILITATION

Every life has challenges, but for people living with a disability or chronic illness, everyday tasks can be burdensome.

Rehabilitation psychologists support these individuals as they cope with the mental and physical challenges their conditions present and will often teach them how to adapt and make lifestyle choices that promote good health.

After assessing and diagnosing a patient, a rehabilitation psychologist is usually responsible for determining a proper treatment plan, which may include various forms of therapy. In addition, rehabilitation psychologists will often help an individual establish a support network, including family, friends and paraprofessionals to further assist with his or her treatment.

A person's need for rehabilitation services isn't always physical; individuals living with mental or emotional issues such as depression, anxiety, developmental disabilities or learning disabilities may also seek care from rehabilitation psychologists. These psychologists also help those who have substance use or chronic pain issues.

Rehabilitation psychologists are concerned with all of the factors in peoples' lives that contribute to their wellness and recovery, from the support they receive from family and friends to the relationships they have with their team of treatment providers.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Rehabilitation psychologists work in a variety of settings and specialty areas.

These may include acute care hospitals and health care centers, inpatient and outpatient physical rehabilitation centers, assisted living and long-term care facilities, and Veterans Administration hospitals. Some rehabilitation psychologists treat a broad range of individuals who experience varying disabilities and illnesses; others specialize in a particular patient group.

Rehabilitation psychologists who specialize may work in pain and sports injury centers or cardiac rehabilitation facilities. In addition, they serve in community agencies assisting individuals with specific disabilities or chronic illnesses like cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, brain injury or deafness.

Rehabilitation psychologists also work in academic settings as professors and researchers. Others provide expert legal testimony or conduct assessments and evaluations for insurance agencies.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Individuals interested in a career as a rehabilitation psychologist will need to obtain a doctoral degree in psychology, in addition to having predoctoral and postdoctoral training in health care settings. In addition, rehabilitation psychologists providing clinical services will need to obtain a state license.

Rehabilitation psychologists study and work with individuals with disabilities and chronic health conditions to help them overcome challenges and improve their quality of life.

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Pursuing a Career in Rehabilitation Psychology, continued

WHAT YOU CAN EARN

Salaries for rehabilitation psychologists vary based on their work setting, with salaries ranging between \$33,530 and \$56,970 annually according to 2012 figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Rehabilitation psychologists working in private vocational services made \$33,530 on average annually. Average annual salaries for rehabilitation psychologists working in local and state government ranged between \$43,410 and \$45,700. Those employed by insurance carriers made an average annual salary of \$56,970.

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