

## Forensic Clinical Psychology

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### DESCRIPTION

Forensic psychology makes it both a challenge and a blessing, the description of forensic psychology is very straightforward but also complex. At a very basic level, forensic psychology is the application of psychology to the legal system. However, there has been a great deal of debate about the breadth of topics that such a definition includes. Some believe that forensic psychology refers only to the clinical aspects of psychology, such as the assessment and treatment of mental illness. Others believe that forensic psychology should be interpreted more broadly and include nonclinical topics, such as eyewitness identification and jury decision making. Our focus will be on only the clinical aspects of forensic psychology, so our definition of forensic psychology is the application of the clinical practice of psychology to the legal system. You already may be saying to yourself, "For such a sexy topic, this definition does not seem very sexy to me." So, why is forensic psychology so inherently interesting?

Many students ask how they can become a forensic psychologist or work in some of the areas already mentioned. The answer to that question is as varied as the different tasks that a forensic psychologist may undertake. The one thing that is clear is that becoming a forensic psychologist involves going to graduate school, and working in these areas typically means obtaining a PhD in psychology (Huss, 2001). Although obtaining a terminal master's degree may allow you to conduct therapy and even conduct psychological evaluations in some states, in order to practice independently in many forensic contexts you need to obtain a doctorate degree in forensic psychology. However, there are numerous ways to become a practicing forensic psychologist. Read more about Clinical Forensic Psychology Education.

### FORENSIC CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Forensic psychology focuses on psychology because it relates to the criminal justice system. Those that add this field help enforcement officials, judges, lawyers, and social workers, for instance, in capacities like advocating for victims of crime, conducting psychological state evaluations for potential jurors, and assisting with research. Forensic psychology graduates may

go as victim advocates, who offer emotional support to victims of crime, connect them to resources, and help them navigate the system. They'll also work as parole officers or in corrections or welfare work, applying their knowledge of psychological state law, courtroom procedures, and sensitivity to cultural issues to profit their clients and community.

### SIMILARITIES BETWEEN FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

Forensic psychology may be a subset of psychotherapy. Both forensic psychology and psychotherapy require a deep understanding of how the human brain works. Clinical and forensic psychology graduates have in-depth knowledge of psychological state challenges, their causes and coverings, and more. These skills can serve professionals during a big selection of fields. Those that continue to become practicing psychologists can learn, through advanced degree work and hands-on experience, the way to diagnose patients.

### JOB PURPOSE

Clinical psychology's approach is therapeutic, focused on diagnosing and treating psychological state challenges by working with patients in one-on-one or group sessions. For those with a bachelor's degree, the work may involve supporting licensed psychologists, working in community centers, or entering education. Clinical psychologists can expect to spend sessions with patients, discussing the problems they're facing and developing strategies to assist them improve their well-being and psychological state.

Forensic psychology's approach, on the opposite hand, is medico-legal, seeking to use the principles of psychology to criminal justice. For those with a bachelor's degree, this might mean assisting with documentation leading up to trial, helping support crime victims, or helping those involved during a criminal act to navigate the system. Aspiring forensic psychologists who earn a PhD and licensure are liable for determining an individual's mental fitness from a legal perspective. While patients hunt down private practice clinical psychologists for help, state or government bodies hire forensic

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psychologists to gauge people or families. Their findings may come to light in court or affect sentencing at trial.

## PROFESSIONAL PATH

Upon graduation, those with undergraduate degrees in psychotherapy may begin their careers with entry-level work as psychiatric technicians, school counselors, or community service specialists. To become clinical psychologists, they need to continue to earn a minimum of a master's degree, though most positions require a PhD. During their advanced studies, aspiring clinical psychologists see patients in supervised settings under

the attention of experienced doctors. After completing their clinical training, they need to become licensed, a process that varies from state to state.

After earning a bachelor's degree, forensic psychology graduates typically step into very different entry-level positions. Postgraduate opportunities may include add welfare work as a victim advocate or with some additional training, add enforcement or corrections, often as a probation or corrections officer. Aspiring forensic psychologists must also earn a complicated degree and become licensed in their states.