



Health Workforce Projections: Clinical, Counseling, and School Psychologists

This fact sheet presents the national supply of and demand for clinical, counseling, and school psychologists for 2013 through 2025 using HRSA's Health Workforce Simulation Model (HWSM).^{1,2} While the nuances of modeling supply and demand differ for individual health professions, the basic framework remains the same. For supply modeling, the major components (beyond common labor-market factors like unemployment) include characteristics of the existing workforce in a given occupation, new entrants to the workforce (e.g., newly trained workers), and workforce decisions (e.g., retirement and hours worked patterns). For demand modeling, the major components include population demographics, health care use patterns (including the influence of the increased insurance coverage), and demand for health care providers (translated into requirements for full-time equivalents). Over the period studied, the model assumes that current national patterns of labor supply and service demand remain unchanged within each demographic group.³ These projections do not account for the geographical distribution of providers which may impact access to care in certain areas.

The following two scenarios are simulated: **Scenario One** assumed supply and demand were in equilibrium in 2013, and **Scenario Two** adjusted current and projected demand based on findings from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health^{4,5} which found that approximately 20 percent of the 2013 U.S. population that reported having a behavioral health disorder did not receive treatment.

BACKGROUND

Practicing psychologists assess, diagnose and treat mental disorders and learning disabilities, as well as cognitive, behavioral, and emotional problems. They may also be scientists researching these disorders. These providers help people deal with a range of problems, from short-term personal issues to severe,

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¹ This model uses a micro-simulation approach where supply is projected based on the simulation of career choices of individual health workers. Demand for health care services is simulated for a representative sample of the current and future U.S. population based on each person's demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, health-related behavior, and health risk factors that affect their health care utilization patterns. For more information on data and methods, please see [Health Workforce Supply and Demand Simulation Model](#).

² This fact sheet describes the workforce projections for one of nine behavioral health professions that are detailed in HRSA's "National Projections of Supply and Demand for Selected Behavioral Health Practitioners: 2013-2025."

³ Ono T, Lafortune G, Schoenstein M. "Health workforce planning in OECD countries: a review of 26 projection models from 18 countries." *OECD Health Working Papers, No. 62*. France: OECD Publishing; 2013: 8-11.

⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2014. *Results from the 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Mental Health Findings*, NSDUH Series H-49, HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4887. Rockville, MD.

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2014. *Results from the 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings*, NSDUH Series H-48, HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4863. Rockville, MD.

chronic conditions.^{6,7} A doctoral degree is typically required for clinical and counseling psychologists. School psychologists may have a masters or doctorate degree in school psychology. All states require psychologists who practice independently to be licensed.

FINDINGS

At the national level, approximately 186,710 psychologists were active in the U.S. workforce in 2013 (Exhibit 1). By 2025 the supply of psychologists is expected to increase by approximately 1 percent given the number of psychologists entering, leaving, and changing work hours. Under Scenario One, the demand for psychologists is expected to increase by 6 percent to 197,150 FTEs by 2025. Population growth, aging, and increased access to health care insurance account for the increase in demand, resulting in a shortage of 8,220 FTE psychologists. Under Scenario Two, which adjusts for the 20 percent of the population reporting lack of care, demand is projected to increase by approximately 6 percent to 246,420 FTE. Therefore, this scenario produces an estimated shortage of 57,490 FTE psychologists. However, Scenario Two assumes that all of the individuals reporting lack of care in SAMHSA’s survey actually needed or would have sought care. Therefore, Scenario Two should be viewed as an upper bound on demand.

Exhibit 1. Estimated Supply of and Demand for Clinical, Counseling, and School Psychologists in the United States, 2013-2025

	Scenario One (Assumes equilibrium)	Scenario Two (Adjusted for SAMHSA survey)
Supply		
Estimated supply, 2013	186,710	186,710
Estimated supply growth, 2013-2025:	2,220 (1%)	2,220 (1%)
<i>New entrants</i>	68,930	68,930
<i>Attrition^a</i>	-65,020	-65,020
<i>Change in average work hours^b</i>	-1,690	-1,690
Projected supply, 2025	188,930	188,930
Demand		
Estimated demand, 2013 ^c	186,710	233,390
Estimated demand growth, 2013-2025:	10,440 (6%)	13,030 (6%)
<i>Changing demographics impact</i>	6,820	8,530
<i>Insurance coverage impact^d</i>	3,600	4,500
Projected demand, 2025	197,150	246,420
Projected Supply (minus) demand	-8,220	-57,490

Notes: All numbers reflect full time equivalents. Numbers may not sum to totals due to rounding.

^aIncludes retirements and mortality.

^bThis represents the change in psychologist full time equivalents resulting from a change in the demographic composition of the future workforce and the associated effect on average number of hours worked.

^cThe baseline scenario assumes that national supply and demand are in approximate equilibrium in 2013.

^dThis model reflects expanded insurance coverage of mental health and substance use disorder services associated with Medicaid expansion and Affordable Care Act marketplaces, as well as federal parity protections.

⁶ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2014-15 Edition*, Psychologists. Accessed 5/6/2016: <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/psychologists.htm>.

⁷ American Psychological Association. 2015. What do Practicing Psychologists Do? Accessed 5/6/2016: <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/about-psychologists.aspx>.

While many health insurance plans have historically provided less coverage for behavioral health services relative to physical health, the requirement that health insurance plans must now offer a comprehensive package of behavioral health services is expected to further increase demand. This change is accounted for in the estimates shown above. Demand for psychologists in health care is also expected to increase as behavioral health is increasingly integrated with primary care, but the estimates do not account for this movement in the health care delivery system.