



Understanding Mental Health Credentials

There are many ways that a professional can enter the field of mental health, which can lead to a wide array of letters behind a person's name. This guide is meant to be a brief introduction to some of the letters (called credentials) that you may come across. Some are related to the state of Colorado licensing system, while others signify a level of schooling or national credentialing through professional organizations.

DEGREES

There are different types of master's degrees that a counselor may earn in order to enter the field of mental health. The master's degree is generally in the field of psychology or a related field and reflects two to three years of post-bachelor's study.

- MA: Master of Arts
- MS: Master of Science
- MC: Master's Degree in Counseling
- MEd: Master's Degree in Education

Similarly, there are different types of doctorate degrees that may be earned in the area of psychology. A doctoral degree reflects at least four to five years of post-bachelor study.

- PhD: Doctorate in Philosophy
- PsyD: Doctorate in Psychology

LICENSURE

A license is issued by the state after (1) a professional has completed a series of requirements around education (master's degree or higher); (2) completion of a required number of post-degree training hours under a licensed supervisor; and (3) a passing score on a licensure exam.

- LPC: Licensed Professional Counselor
- LCSW: Licensed Clinical Social Worker
- LAC: Licensed Addiction Counselor
- LP: Licensed Psychologies

ADDICTIONS CERTIFICATIONS

This demonstrates some level of training in the area specific to dynamics of addiction. There are different educational requirements around each one and the requirements also vary by state.

- CAC I: Certified Addictions Counselor I
- CAC II: Certified Addictions Counselor II
- CAC III: Certified Addictions Counselor III

NATIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

A counselor who has completed a master's degree, post-degree supervision, and the national counselor examination may apply for this national credential through the National Board for Certified Counselors.

- NCC: National Certified Counselor

If you would like to learn more, please visit the following sites:

- National Board for Certified Counselors: <https://www.nbcc.org/>
- Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies: <https://www.colorado.gov/dora>