



I Want to Do What You Do

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

Published

February 1st, 2016

Often, I hear from students or community members who state that they want to become a psychologist. They are usually quite surprised to find out what they would need to do in order to obtain a license to practice. February is Psychologist Month in Alberta so I thought I would share the process with you:

1. Education - First of all you need to complete a four-year Bachelor's degree and a two-year Master's degree that each have specific coursework. Alberta is one of the few places in North America where a Doctoral degree is not a requirement although many psychologists have one. It is a good idea to have degrees from different accredited universities so that you have a wide range of training.
2. Registration - Once you have completed your educational requirements, you apply to the College of Alberta Psychologists for membership. A learning plan needs to be prepared and submitted for their approval.
3. Record check - You need to prove that you do not have a Criminal Record.
4. Supervision - It takes between one and two years to finish the number of supervised hours in your specialized area of practice.
5. Examinations - The candidate must achieve a grade of at least seventy percent in order to pass the written exam. Passing an oral exam, conducted with a panel of experienced psychologists, is the final step before you can be approved to become a Registered Psychologist.
6. Insurance - In order to operate a private practice, you need to purchase at least one million dollars coverage.
7. Ethics - You will be expected to honour the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics of the profession.
8. Renewal - Each year, you need to pay your fees, prove that you have insurance and update the College on changes in your address, legal status or situation.
9. Professional Development - You are expected to continue studying each year in order to be abreast of new scientific developments and changes in psychology.
10. Private Practice - If you are not working under the umbrella of an organization, then you are responsible for all the tasks and costs associated with operating a business.

Usually, once I have reviewed the above, the person who has asked for information is shocked. Often, I am told "But I just want to talk with people like you do".

Well, it isn't that easy! The process involves a serious commitment of time and money.

The good news is that those who seek the services of a psychologist can feel comfortable knowing that they will be seeing someone who is well educated, insured, licensed and held to ethical standards. They can share their problems in a safe and confidential setting with someone who is able to provide objective insight.