

The MAPS Committee- Mentorship Among Psychology Students

Association for Graduate Students in Psychology (AGSP)
Department of Psychology
Concordia University

How to Gain Clinical Experience

Prepared by Andrew Switzer

- “*Clinical Psychology*” is a field of practice that deals with human functioning; [including] the promotion of physical, mental, and social well-being.” (Canadian Psychological Association, 2020).
- Clinical psychologists often work as part of *interdisciplinary teams* with clients of all ages and gender identities to treat a broad array of psychological issues (e.g., mood and anxiety, learning disabilities and delays, grief and trauma, etc.).
- The key qualities of a clinical psychologist include strong communication, critical-thinking, and problem-solving skills. Clinical practice also requires openness, honesty, compassion, and empathy.
- Getting early clinical experience can shape your career and academic goals, help you develop the relevant skills and qualities to achieve those goals, build your CV, and build a better community.



Good places to start looking for volunteer work:

- <http://www.concordia.ca/students/volunteering/opportunities.html>
- <http://cabm.net/en>
- <https://www.211qc.ca/en/topics>

Great ways to develop clinical experience include:

- Volunteering in **research** (in a research lab, you might screen participants over the phone, conduct semi-structured interviews, or interact with vulnerable populations in different ways).
- Providing **active listening support** (active listening is about providing a kind, non-judgemental, empathetic, and authentic ear to an individual in need; it is not about giving advice or counselling).
- Volunteering on a **crisis line** (crisis lines aim to provide support to individuals affected by a crisis, either personally, or through someone they know and care for).
- **Mentoring** a member of the **community** (meeting 1-on-1 with vulnerable members of the community to support their autonomy, well-being, or re-integration, and reduce stigmatization and distress.)
- **Teaching** or **tutoring** (working or volunteering with individuals to support their academic achievement.)

TIPS

- **Do not neglect academics** (Clinical Psychology programs require strong academic standing and research experience, 3.7 GPA minimum).
- **Be resourceful:** Find organizations that interest you and inquire about volunteer or work opportunities.
- Think about the kind of clinical work that **is most interesting** to you, consider the most relevant experience, qualities, or skills required in that work, and try to develop those through volunteering!
- Think about any **social injustice or inequality** - there is probably a volunteering opportunity for that!
- **Work hard** to make the most out of every experience (there is so much to learn from getting involved)!