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SKILLSFUTURE JOBS-SKILLS INSIGHTS

SKILLS COMPOSITION OF COUNSELLORS
IN THE CARE ECONOMY



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SKILLSfuture SG

In Partnership with



Singapore
Association for
Counselling
FOR COUNSELLING
AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

Introduction

In recognition of the delicate nature of mental health issues and the increasing demand for mental health services, the demand for counsellors has increased over the past few years. From the analysis of job posting data, it is evident that the hiring demand of counsellors in Singapore has increased about 16 times, from about 1,000 job postings in 2012 to about 16,000 job postings in 2022. It is now more critical than ever to establish a comprehensive framework that equips counselling professionals with the necessary skills and competencies. This comprehensive framework is the new Counselling Track under the Skills Framework for Social Service. Alongside the new track, SkillsFuture Singapore analysed the skills composition of counsellors for the past five years. The skills composition sheds light on the different bundles of skills that an average counsellor in Singapore would require for his or her daily job, with counselling skills taking up 41% of the skills composition.

As the professional association representing counsellors and psychotherapists locally, the Singapore Association for Counselling (SAC) supports this timely endeavour as a strategic partner in this process. In considering the ever-evolving practice contexts, SAC firmly believes in (1) upkeeping the relevancy of counsellor competencies, (2) ensuring the scalability of counsellor outreach locally and beyond, and (3) contributing to the thought leadership of the profession in collaboration with both government and non-government bodies.



Skills required for Counsellors can be classified into 3 broad categories.

Counselling Skills

are core to the work of counsellors. These skills take up 41% of the skills composition for counsellors. Refer to page 4 for more details.

Counselling skills:

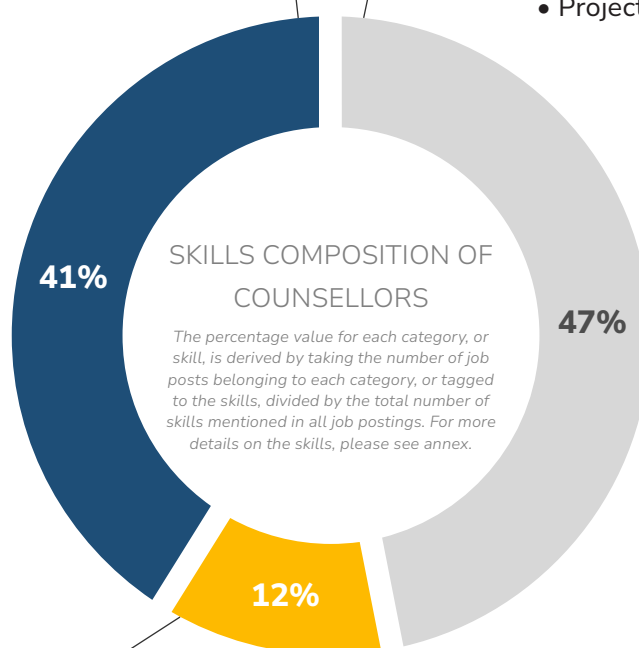
- Counselling Assessment
- Counselling Intervention
- Clinical Supervision
- Technology Application in Counselling
- Other Social Service Skills

Complementary Skills

are made up of sector-specific skills and business management skills, which enhance effective client support and practice management. For example, a counsellor working in healthcare needs have sufficient understanding of medical terminology, procedures, and regulations in order to effectively communicate with patients and other healthcare professionals.

Examples of complementary skills:

- Health Promotion
- Project Management



Critical Core Skills

are a unique set of 16 core skills identified by Singapore employers as the most critical to thrive in the future economy. They are fundamental skills to allow counsellors to effectively perform their critical work functions and key tasks; build rapport with clients, work effectively with colleagues and stakeholders, manage their professional development, and avoid burnout. These skills take up 12% of the skills composition of counsellors and can be enhanced through training and conscious practice in everyday work.

Top 3 Critical Core Skills to prioritise:

- Communication (7%)
- Collaboration (2%)
- Self Management (2%)

Counselling skills can be further segmented into 4 sub-categories of skills.

Clinical Supervision

is the main skill that supports the professional development of counsellors. Although this skill takes up only 4% of the skills composition of an average profile of counsellors today, this number is likely to increase with greater emphasis being placed on the skill via the launch of the Counselling Track under the Skills Framework for Social Service.

Technology Application in Counselling

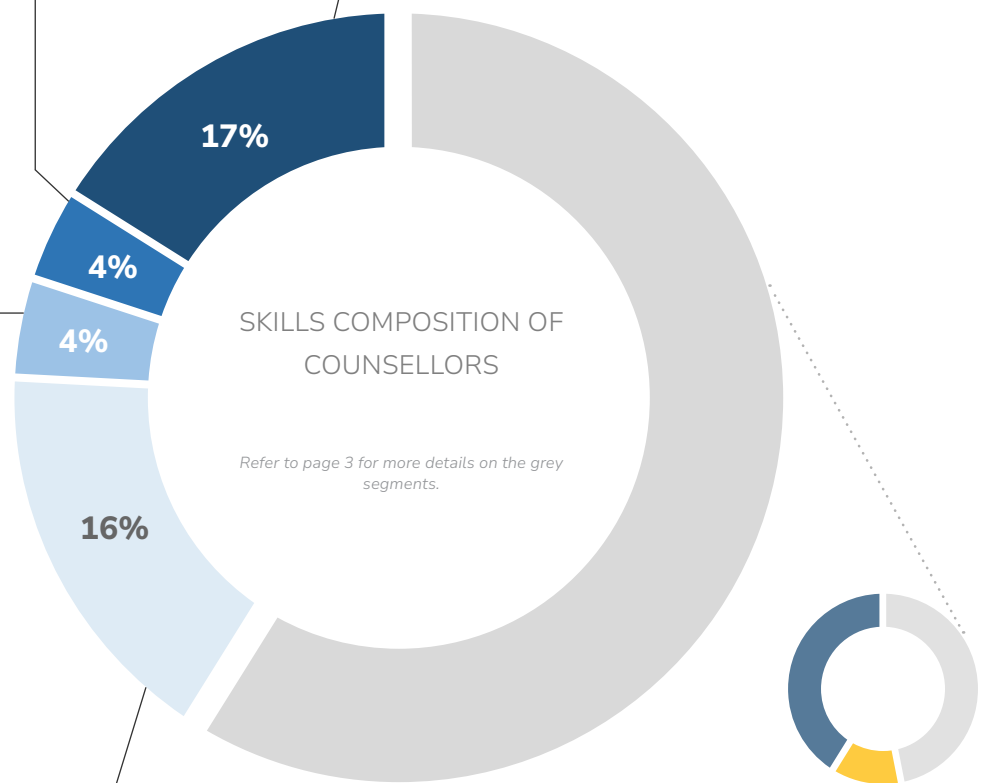
is a skill where counsellors adopt technology in delivering counselling services. This skill takes up 4% of the skills composition of average counsellors. While this skill has a relatively small value in the skills composition, more emphasis has been placed on digitalisation of counselling services due to the experience of COVID-19. Examples of Apps & Tools that have grown in importance are Microsoft Excel and CRM Systems.

Other Social Service Skills

are also required by counsellors as they mainly work in Social Service settings. These skills take up 16% of the skills composition of counsellors. Examples include Social Service Programme Implementation, Casework Intervention, and Emergency Response and Crisis Management.

Counselling Assessment and Counselling Intervention

are the main skills used to deliver counselling services for clients. These two skills take up 17% of the skills composition of counsellors and are the most important skills that counsellors need to master.





“I gained the most out of the additional years of clinical supervision that strengthened my learning and practice in counselling”

Tony Ong
Clinical Director
Counselling and Care Centre

I began counselling while I was a social worker after I completed a course in marital and family therapy in 1996 in Singapore. Back then, there was limited public awareness on counselling. There was also little information and opportunities for one to be trained professionally as a counsellor.

In order to upskill myself further, I took additional counselling courses followed by about two additional years of clinical supervision to hone my skills in the specific modality to work with my clients. I gained the most out of the additional years of clinical supervision that strengthened my learning and practice in counselling. I also caught on and learned supervisory skills in the process of being supervised.

As I became more confident in my practice, I began to share my experiences with social workers and counsellors by conducting training and providing clinical supervision. As a result of my training and development, I had opportunities to train and work with clinical supervisors in training. My current level of practice also accords me with opportunities to explore and advocate for service development in new areas of counselling in relation to emerging needs of clients. While I have received training to be able to do a good enough job in counselling, I am still fascinated by and staying abreast of the emerging knowledge and skills as the field of counselling continues to mature locally and internationally. I also still hold a strong belief in the need for clinical supervision; as such, I still provide and am provided with support from my peers in clinical supervision on a regular basis via live supervision, taped supervision and occasionally, case discussion.

In recent times, there is also a greater need to acquire skills in technology application in counselling. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the pace of digitalisation where counselling services had to pivot to include delivering counselling via email, phone, Zoom and MSTeams across many services. As counselling services go online, counsellors need to acquire new knowledge and skills, for example, in the application of PDPA regulations and management of conflicts and crises in families and groups during counselling sessions. Using couple counselling as an example, I will now have to set up prior agreements with the couple on how to de-escalate conflicts in my physical absence if it arises during the online counselling session. While it had been challenging to learn to deliver online counselling, I realised this mode of counselling reaches out to new groups of clients.

Apart from working with clients in counselling, technology also helps in case administration. Technology such as Salesforce have also been used for case documentation, auditing of work processes and even generating data for trend analysis. On top of that, such tools enable the automation of counselling work processes such as case intakes, freeing up manpower for other forms of work such as trend analysis of cases. The output of these analyses can then be used to shape policies and re-prioritise resource allocation.

Unlike where I had to figure out my developmental pathway as a counsellor through trial and error, the Counselling Track under the Skills Framework for Social Service will provide a developmental pathway for those who desire to embark on and grow in the counselling career. The Counselling Track will benefit counsellors, social service agencies and especially clients. For counsellors, these documents accord them with a clearer work identity and gives clarity on pathways for professional development. For social service agencies, they will gain better clarity on how to support counsellors to deliver a holistic service for clients. For clients, they will benefit from a greater degree of professionalisation of counselling services as the competency framework will ensure counsellors are adequately trained at different levels to work with them ethically and competently.



“My passion to help families propelled me to make a career switch from a management job to family counselling”

Timothy Thong
Counsellor
Fei Yue Community Services

I graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering degree and started my career in the IT industry. I worked in various technical roles and acquired a Master of Science in Electronic Communications before moving to management roles. My last job before becoming a counsellor was with an American multinational company.

However, I always wanted to invest more time in helping people in need. This eventually led me to taking up a Master in Counselling. During my counselling practicum in a youth centre, I met young people who struggled in school with low sense of self due to adverse family situations such as divorce, poverty, family violence, and incarceration. This experience gave me motivation to help them, but I also realised that I need to also help the parents through family counselling. Coupled with my firsthand experience of knowing how some of my relatives and friends ended their marriages, I decided to leave my corporate life and transit to pursue family counselling.

Today, I believe that when families are a haven and a secure base for its members, each family member will then function well, and the next generation will flourish. I am currently working in Fei Yue Community Services as a Counsellor to support transnational and minor (18 – 21 years) couples in marriage preparation. As a family counsellor, I hope to work with couples facing marital difficulties to rebuild their marriages, youth struggling with self-worth and relationship issues to gain confidence and grit, and families in conflict to restore order and love. I am also providing counselling support to couples and families in need under FAM@FSC (Fei Yue – Choa Chu Kang).

To equip myself with the necessary skills in family counselling, I got myself certified with the MSF-SUSS Family Counselling Certification Programme. I am also a certified facilitator for both the Prepare/Enrich and PREP marriage programmes. Besides counselling skills, Collaboration and Self Management are two Critical Core Skills that help me succeed in my role as a counsellor. For Collaboration, I use this skill to build therapeutic relationships with clients and work with other counselling professionals to ensure that the service standards are met. For Self Management, I use this skill to deepen my capacity in self-awareness and self-evaluation. This will help me manage my emotions better to avoid compassion fatigue and give me the ability to take on more complex cases.

Call to Action

Courses



[Counselling programmes](#) recognised by Singapore Association for Counselling.



[Courses](#) for other Social Service skills on MySkillsFuture portal.



[Courses](#) for Critical Core Skills on MySkillsFuture portal.

Other resources



To find out more about the Care Economy, which is relevant to Counsellors, you can download the report on [Skills Demand for the Future Economy 2022](#).



Visit our website to find out more about other [SkillsFuture Jobs-Skills Insights](#) publications.



Visit our website to find out more about [Skills Framework](#).

Feedback



You are an important stakeholder and your invaluable feedback will help us develop more useful insights for you in the future. We ask that you spare 5 minutes to let us know how this report has helped you via this [link](#).



Annex

Skill Title	Skill Description
Casework Intervention	Provide systematic approaches to casework interventions
Clinical Supervision	Support the professional development of counsellors in advancing therapeutic, casework and counselling skills, and maintaining high standards of professional practice through a myriad of supervisory modalities and models by providing a supportive learning environment for supervisees
Collaboration	Manage relationships and work collaboratively and effectively with others to achieve goals
Communication	Convey and exchange thoughts, ideas and information effectively through various mediums and approaches
Counselling Assessment	Use appropriate counselling assessment methods and tools to identify client issues and to propose appropriate counselling methods and modalities to address the issues, including effective intake, defining of issues and goals, as well as building rapport
Counselling Intervention	Conduct counselling interventions to address socioemotional, mental, and social challenges
Emergency Response and Crisis Management	Develop and implement emergency response and crisis management plans and policies, provide guidance on policies and plan development
Health Promotion	Raise awareness to maintain and optimise health and well-being of clients
Project Management	Execute projects by managing stakeholder engagement, resources, budgets and resolving problems
Self Management	Take ownership of managing one's personal effectiveness, personal brand and holistic physical, mental, emotional and social well-being
Social Service Programme Implementation	Implement effective social service programmes that serve the needs of the clients and community
Technology Application in Counselling	Adopt technologies to deliver counselling virtually using video or tele-conferencing applications, or AI-based applications, to facilitate client therapy when appropriate, ensuring session effectiveness through active listening and non-verbal cues

Contributors

SkillsFuture Singapore

Dr. Gog Soon Joo

Chief Skills Officer
Skills Development Group

Yeo Wee Siong

Director
Jobs-Skills Insights Division

Lalithaa Maniam

Deputy Director
Jobs-Skills Insights Division

Loh Man Yong

Jobs-Skills Analyst
Jobs-Skills Insights Division

Jeremy Liu

Jobs-Skills Analyst
Jobs-Skills Insights Division

Singapore Association for Counselling

Andy Lam

Vice President
Singapore Association for Counselling

Individual Contributors

Tony Ong

Clinical Director
Counselling and Care Centre

Timothy Thong

Counsellor
Fei Yue Community Services

References

SkillsFuture Singapore uses labour market data and collaborates with industry partners to curate insights on jobs and skills matters.