

Switzerland

The Situation of Psychotherapy in Switzerland

Legislation

On April 1, 2013, the Federal Law about Psychology Professions (Psychologieberufegesetz, PsyG) has been introduced in Switzerland. According to this new law, all students who want to follow postgradual training in psychotherapy have to pass a master degree in psychology at an accredited Swiss high school or university. As a consequence of this law, all institutions licensed to offer postgradual training have to undergo accreditation of their curricula which have to fulfil the quality standards set down in the PsyG. This accreditation process has been finalised in 2018/2019. The accreditation process has to be repeated every seven years.

Situation of psychotherapists

Psychotherapists – whether independent or employed – are only allowed to treatment by prescription or by delegation, mandated by a medical doctor.

Only psychotherapists who have completed the above training are licensed to use the title Federally Approved Psychotherapist. And only this title allows them to practice independently; permission has to be issued by the cantonal departments of health.

Training

Basically, the training of psychotherapists follows three phases: basic training (master in psychology), postgradual training (psychotherapy) and further training.

Postgradual training takes roughly four years and has to be completed within six years, consisting of:
500 units of theory of the chosen method

150 units of self-awareness training

150 units of supervision (single- and group setting)

2 years at 100 % of hands-on training at an institution offering psychosocial provision.

Further training has to be followed continuously and should add up to 500 hours over four years.

Candidates with a degree in medicine wanting to follow postgradual training in psychotherapy are under supervision of the Swiss Association for Psychiatry and Psychotherapy (SGPP).

Postgradual training institutes on psychotherapy

Institutes offering postgradual training in psychotherapy are licensed by the Federal Office for Public Health. All training institutes – there are approx. 40 recognised institutes in Switzerland – are privately financed; they receive no subsidies from the public hand. No institute has so far been integrated in an institution of higher education. For graduates with a medical degree who specialise in Psychiatry and Psychotherapy the Federal Law on the university medical professions (MedBG) applies.

Health insurance

Psychotherapy treatments are not yet included in the general public insurance. This will change however on July 1, 2022, as the Federal Council has agreed to the adoption of the “prescription model” which will replace the “delegation model”. Preparations are currently under way. In the meantime, voluntary supplement insurance can partly include psychotherapy treatment.

Psychotherapy modalities are accepted as long as they are executed by a psychotherapist listed on the general register of health insurances (PsyReg). To be included on that list, psychotherapists have to fulfil strict criteria.

Facts and figures

- There are approx. 5'700 (1450 independent, 1000, delegated, 1270 independent and delegated) psychotherapists practicing in Switzerland, whereof approx. 25% trainees (ref. BASS survey 2012).
- The average activity level of psychotherapists: 54%
- There are approx. 40 licensed training institutes on psychotherapy in Switzerland.
- Cost of psychotherapy treatment: CHF 140 to 170 per setting of 50 minutes are recommended.