



Research Assistant

SALARY RANGE (2017): \$42,000–\$52,000

I work in a university-affiliated medical centre that supports children and youth with mental health issues. Our centre is involved with all kinds of research projects, and so my work is always changing. Depending on the centre's priorities, I will dive into the literature and summarize articles, manage research databases, perform analyses or prepare reports. I assist with the preparation of posters and public presentations and I have a lot of contact with external stakeholders. I've been involved with some published manuscripts for an academic audience, but it's the client-focused publications that I enjoy most. Behind the scenes, my work helps to ensure that our centre's decisions are based on valid research findings and not mere anecdotes. I've created evidence-based learning resources including e-modules and toolkits that our clinicians use with their patients. I manage information requests and I've created an online library of client-centered resources. Being part of a multi-disciplinary team means I'm always learning something new. This work is the perfect blend of statistician, researcher, librarian, support worker and lifelong learner.

The Tip: Sometimes actually going to the physical library is better than searching online. I've found useful resources during random searches on the shelf and librarians often have great suggestions, which makes finding sources a breeze.

PRIORITY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

Evidence-based Decision Making

- Create teaching materials based on sound research
- Ability to set priorities
- Ethical practice in human research

Advanced Research & Analysis Skills

- Critically analyze research reports
- Synthesize information from multiple sources
- Experience with statistical analysis programs and database management

Contextual Knowledge

- Develop client-centered materials for specific issues
- Create materials that fit a diverse clientele
- Apply understanding of developmental stages to create appropriate materials for

Advanced Communication Skills

- Strong writing skills
- Present complex information to a wide variety of audiences (public, professional, clients, conferences)
- Depict research findings through infographics & visual design

Interpersonal Skills

- Work with diverse populations
- Work within a multidisciplinary team
- Value relationships
- Strong organizational skills

Intrapersonal Skills

- Able to manage stress
- Efficient, self-directed
- Curious
- Conscientious of biases

BUILDING BLOCK EXPERIENCES:

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| <p>Education & Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Arts (Psychology–Honours) with a minor in English. My thesis looked at how sexual harassment is portrayed in the media. | <p>I enjoyed my undergrad, but I knew that I didn't want to go on to graduate school (at least, not right away). Because I love to write, I blended psychology with a minor in English. I think that helped get my foot in the door here.</p> |
| <p>Employment Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistant manager at a restaurant where my job included some market research and creation of menus, signs and promotional materials • Wrote an advice column for the school paper during my undergrad where I partnered with one of the counsellors to answer students' questions about relationships • Worked as a research assistant for a psych professor where I did some SPSS analysis and helped to write up the results. This resulted in a journal publication and one conference presentation. | <p>I have always really loved to write, and when I had the chance to be involved with our campus paper, I jumped at it! Writing a "Dear Abby" kind of column was a bit intimidating at first, but with the support of the counsellor who supervised my work, it became a really positive experience.</p> |
| <p>Community Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing for the campus newspaper was a volunteer experience, and a good one at that • Coach for a community soccer team • I've done a bit of blogging, but really only my friends have seen it. I'm not sure if I'm ready to release it to the community at large yet, but it sure is a great outlet for me. | <p>It's been fun to write with the intention of helping people—and in many ways, coaching soccer has felt equally rewarding. Doing something physical gets me out of my head and hanging around kids keeps me feeling young.</p> |
| <p>Contextual Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My dad was a mathematical kind of guy, and I think his geeky number games gave me a good foundation for statistical analysis. We read a lot in my house too, and I'm sure that influenced my interest in research. | <p>My family talked a lot about ideas, current events and innovations in science. My mom is a psychiatrist and she often had medical journals delivered to our home (back in the day when they were all in print). Research was just a part of our regular conversations.</p> |
| <p>Relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I give props to my high school English teacher who made us free-write for 10 minutes at the start of every class. It wasn't always the best experience, but it did teach me that writing was a great outlet and one worth developing. | <p>I don't know if I've had an actual "mentor," but that English teacher really shaped me. The counsellor who edited my column was interesting to debrief with, and I like the director I work with now.</p> |

