

ChooseKindness.com Career Description	
Career	Pet Loss/Grief Counselor
Your Name	Ann R. Howie, LICSW, ACSW
Business Name	Ann R. Howie, Counselor in Private Practice
Street Address	612 Carpenter Rd. SE
City	Lacey
State	WA
Zip	98503
Phone	360-493-2586
E-mail Address	HumanAnimalSolutions@comcast.net
Website Address	http://www.humananimalsolutions.com
What training is needed to work in this field?	Ethically, a person must have training as a counselor. This might be in social work, psychology, counseling, etc. Most counseling businesses require a master's degree, but some will hire a person with a bachelor's degree. However, for a person to go into private practice in the field of counseling, each state has different requirements for a person to legally call him-/herself a counselor. These requirements may be as simple as registering with the state; or they may be as complex as proving receipt of a specific degree, completing a minimum number of hours of supervised practice, and taking and passing a standardized examination. There is also an optional national Certified Thanatologist (C.T.) credential that demonstrates proficiency in bereavement issues.
What is a typical week like or what do you spend most of your time doing in your job?	Providing individual and group counseling sessions, including documentation. Reading journals and doing research to keep up with the latest information in the fields of counseling, grief/bereavement, and pet loss. Meeting with other counselors for debriefing and consultation. Making presentations to groups. Marketing my services with veterinarians, animal shelters, groomers, etc. Assuring that I have time to let go of others' pain so that I don't take it home with me.
What is the job outlook for this field?	As long as there are human beings, there will be emotional pain, which means there is a bright job outlook for counselors in general. Not every person whose animal dies or becomes ill, however, seeks the services of a counselor. And of those who seek grief counseling, not every person is willing to pay for it. As a result, most counselors who provide pet-loss counseling have a practice that includes other issues as well.
What are the benefits of working in this field?	The satisfaction of helping ease pain, bit by bit. The joy of sharing peoples' stories about their relationships with their beloved pets.
What advice or other information do you want to share with someone considering this field?	Strong counseling skills are essential. Sometimes the people who seek pet-loss counseling have deeply rooted family issues, including abuse and mental illness. Without adequate training and skills, a person who simply wants to

	“help” can be taken by surprise and can actually do emotional harm to the recipient.
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