SPECIAL COUNSELLING POPULATIONS
Counselors in nearly all settings deal with a variety of individual problems and concerns. Because increasing attention is being given to certain populations, it seems appropriate to note several of these special client populations.
1. PEOPLE WHO ABUSE DRUGS

Information about the use of alcohol and drugs and the ill effects of abusing these substances are well publicized. The foremost commonly used are nicotine caffeine alcohol and marijuana.
2. PEOPLE WHO USE TOBACCO

Until recent generations tobacco has generally been overlooked as an abused substance; on occasion, it was and still is glamorized. Now however, we are much more aware of the deadly effects of its addiction.
3. PEOPLE WHO USE ALCOHOL

In recent generations the concept of alcoholism as a disease has gained popularity; in some respects this has placed less emphasis on drinking as a weakness of willpower and more attention on treatment.

Alcoholics anonymous, the most popular self help movement, has emphasized this approach in its 12 step treatment program.
Within this concept, researchers are continuing to explore various treatment possibilities.

Counselors may be involved in preventing, intervention and crisis treatment or remediation.

However, specialized training is important for counselors who are working with substance abusers.
Because the traditional counseling approaches frequently have limited effectiveness, counselors who work extensively with the substance abusers usually acquire specialized training.
4. WOMEN

The changing role of women in the world of work has produced changes in both the lives of women and family life.

Working women are experiencing greater financial freedom and less need to get married or stay married.

This has resulted in later marriages, more living together and higher divorce rates.
Even so, the majority of women still work because of economical necessity, and they continue to work for less money than men.

Another growing and increasingly recognized outcome of women’s continuing to work after marriage is the dramatic increase in the number of dual career couples.
This has created issues regarding whose carrier takes priority, how household responsibilities will be divided, and who will take care of the children.

Another complicating factor in counseling women is the multiple role expectations held for a woman as wife, mother, and employee with increasingly greater numbers of women seeking counseling especially for carrier planning and decision making.
5. OLD ADULTS

Our population was growing older, living longer and more actively, and becoming another special population for counseling services.

Although in the past the elderly were in a sense often “out of sight, out of mind,” it is clear that in the 1990s they increasingly came into the mainstream of public thought and activity.
Counseling assistance to this population stresses:

i. Orientation to retirement with attending personal adjustment counseling

ii. Financial planning

iii. Career assessment and assistance for those desirous of some from (part time or full time) of continued employment

iv. Leisure Planning
Additionally, older adults will face other major changes in their twilight years that may be eased by counseling.

These may be include:

i. The loss of a spouse

ii. The decline of physical and often mental capacity and well being

iii. A decline in financial security
III. A decline in mobility – not just their own physical ability but also a time when they can no longer drive, which in itself may increase their isolation

IV. A decline in social contacts and increased loneliness

V. An increase in mental health problems
Counselors working with older clients must again exhibit acceptance, openness, and respect for clients and their values.

Even the oldest client must be permitted to look ahead and plan for different future if this is the client’s desire.

If the older clients are willing, counselors can help them find new meanings and roles in life.
6. BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

Business and industrial organizations and their workforces have realized that they may benefit from both cooperate and individual viewpoint, from programs of counseling assistance.

Councilors can also provide worthwhile programs to facilitate the carrier development and placement or replacement of workers and management personnel.
Personnel training, especially in human relationship and communication skills, are another area of promise.

Counselors may also work with executives and management personnel to assist them in improving their communication skills and ability to recognize and facilitate the solution of personality conflicts and interdepartmental disputes.
7. PEOPLE WITH AIDS

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) was recognized and labeled more than two decades ago.

Since that time it has become one of the most feared of diseases and health epidemics.

The rapid spread of aids, its incurability, and its fatality rate has caused worldwide alarm.
Many AIDS patients are also eager to improve their quality of life, including their psychological well-being.

As patients and their close friends and relatives increasingly seek counseling to help them cope with emotional stress resulting from AIDS.

Counselors must become more knowledgeable about the disease and the psychological reactions to that are most likely to occur.
Counselors providing assistance to clients with AIDS must recognize that they (the clients) have frequently lost social support from both friends and family, which can adversely affect their ability to cope.

Serious depression is not uncommon among this group. Many will also demonstrate anger and frustration.
Councilors can be helpful in assisting and educating the support system of patients families, friends, employers, and in helping the patients themselves focus on life and living.

8. VICTIMS OF ABUSE

Domestic violence characterized by spouse abuse or child abuse is rampant and the personal, social and economic costs are staggering.
As public awareness of the extent of the problem has increased, so have efforts to provide assistance and refuge for adult victims and frequent relocation for the children.

Spouse abuse is often associated with poverty, substance abuse and carrier disappointments.

In recent years the public has also become more aware of the nature and extent of child abuse.
Not only does child abuse destroy the joy and memories of youth, but it’s damaging after effects can cause psychological problems throughout victims’ life.

We can only assume that the extent of reported sexual abuse is minimal and that, because of guilt, stigma, and fear, many incidents continue to go unreported.
Again it is important to note the role of prevention programs. Such programs require careful planning and a coordinated effort involving school and community agency counselors, social workers, school teacher’s administrators, nurses and significant community groups.

Sexual abuse is of course, not limited to children, adolescents are also frequently victimized and rape.
Counselors functioning in settings serving abuse spouses or children need special skills in individual and group counseling as well as crisis and short time interventions, plus knowledge of marriage and family dynamics.

9. GAY MEN AND LESBIAN WOMEN

In recent generations the counseling profession has become more aware of issues relating to the counseling of lesbian women and gay men.
These include problems of:

A. Societal prejudice

B. Family conflict

C. Health fears (especially AIDS)
In counseling, then, we would assume that awareness, acceptance, and understanding would provide a basic foundation.

In working with gay and lesbian clients counselors may utilize a variety of techniques and draw on a range of theoretical approaches.

At times person-centered approach may assist the client in self examination and expression of repressed feelings.
10. PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.

Counselors as well as employers of people with disabilities must be aware to remove all barriers that have restricted people with disabilities from achieving their potential in employment and in the community.
11. PEOPLE IN POVERTY

Many individuals are born into the cycle of poverty: their parents live in poverty they will live in poverty their children will live in poverty.

Counselors must first understand the “culture of poor”. This is essential if a meaningful public information program is to be undertaken.
Group work can also be very helpful when counselors recognize the special characteristics of the poverty population and the problems of poverty.