

# How to Choose a Mental Health Provider

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Selecting a provider that your child will be comfortable with is key to successful treatment. Begin your search by getting recommendations from family, friends, school professionals, your physician, or your insurance company. Look for providers who have experience working with individuals with similar concerns. Some providers share information about themselves and services available on their website, and that can be helpful, however you will want to talk to them each briefly on the phone to get a clearer sense of their experience and ask questions. Below are some other suggestions to keep in mind.

## Prepare Yourself

**Before calling a potential provider, make a list of questions, such as:**

- *Briefly explain your situation and ask if the provider has experience treating this kind of problem?*
- *Do you have a particular area of specialty?*  
*What approach would you use?*
- *How long have you been practicing?*
- *How much will treatment cost? Am I responsible for a co-payment?*
- *Do you deal directly with my insurance plan or do I need to?*

**Make a list of questions to ask at the first appointment.** Feel free to ask many questions. Typically, during the initial appointment you and your child will share more details about your struggles, and the provider will ask for other relevant information. This process will let them gain a better understanding of the problem and how to help you. It will also help you assess whether you trust and connect with the provider. You should come away with a sense of how the provider hopes to help you. Do not feel bad about ruling out providers based on the criteria you have identified. The comfort level of you and your child are most important, and play a role in how well you establish a relationship with your provider.

Some examples of first appointment questions include:

- *Are you willing to communicate with other doctors or school personnel to coordinate care?*
- *What can I expect during a typical appointment? How long will appointments last?*
- *What happens if I need to cancel or change an appointment? Is there a late cancellation fee?*

**If you or your child do not feel comfortable** with the professional after the first, or even several visits, talk about these feelings at your next session. Do not be afraid to contact another counselor or ask for a

transfer within the practice. Feeling comfortable with the professional you choose is very important to the success of your treatment. No matter how experienced or renowned they are, the success of treatment will be very much affected by your connection with the provider.

## **Things to Consider When Choosing a Provider**

Before you begin your search for a provider, you might want to take a look at the questions on this page. While there is no way to guarantee that you will be one hundred percent satisfied with the provider that you choose, taking the time to consider what factors are most important to you when it comes to your care may help you in making the best decision.

### **Type of Provider/Preferences**

- Do you have any preference about the gender?
- The age of a provider?
- Is it important to you that your provider is bilingual or has a specific background or specialty area?
- What are the three most important qualities you or your child think would be most helpful in a provider (location, ease of appointment, comfort with staff, etc.)?
- What are three qualities you or your child think would be the least helpful?

### **Appointments**

- How hard is it to schedule an appointment with the provider when you need one?
- How hard is it to contact your provider outside of regular office hours?
- Do you think you need someone who will always be accessible?

### **Office/Appointment Environment**

- How comfortable are you with the office environment?
- Are you comfortable in the office?
- Does the practice offer comprehensive care? Psychiatrist? Nutritionist? Is this important to you?
- Is it located in an area that makes you feel safe and comfortable?