

How to Find Behavioral Health Services

Behavioral health services can help parents learn new ways to improve their child's behavior. Therapists can help families find better ways to work together. They can also help children learn ways to manage anxiety, depression, or other symptoms. We know that families want to find the best person to help their child.

Step 1: Know what type of services your child needs.

- A *clinical psychologist* or a *licensed social worker* can provide individual or family therapy. They can't prescribe medicines.
- A *psychiatrist* is a physician who can prescribe medicine for behavior. Some psychiatrists also provide therapy.
- A *psychiatric nurse practitioner* can prescribe medicines and provide therapy.

Step 2: Learn what your insurance plan covers. You may find this on benefits web page of your employer. You might need to call your insurance company.

Step 3: Learn the names of therapists covered by your insurance. Call member services or go to the insurance plan's website. Search for child psychologists, social workers, nurse practitioners, or child/adolescent psychiatrists.

Step 4. Review the names and look at the information provided. Look for the following and narrow the list:

- What is the provider's specialty?
- What age child do they see?
- Is the provider male or female? (If that matters to you and your child.)
- How far is their office from your home or school?

Step 5. Select 3 - 4 names, then call for more information. You may ask the following questions:

1. Are you taking new patients?
2. Do you see children that are ____ years old?
3. Do you specialize or have experience in _____ (anxiety, autism, behaviors, opposition, Asperger's Disorder, social skills, life skills, depression, etc.)?
4. What is your approach to treating this type of problem?
5. Do you work with the child, the family, or both?
6. What type of therapy do you do? (play, talk, cognitive behavioral, art, etc.)
7. Can I meet with you for a consult before you meet my child?
8. Do you work with a psychiatrist or nurse practitioner if medication is needed?
9. How often do you usually see patients?
10. Do you have evening or after school hours?

Step 6: Compare the information from the therapists you talk to. Consider how easy or hard it was to contact him or her. Consider whether the conversation felt comfortable. Arrange the appointment when you have decided on a therapist. You may ask to be on the wait list for sooner appointments if the wait is long.