

# Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

## Treatment, referrals and cost

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### What is DBT?

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is a cognitive-behavioral treatment that is used to help people who have a hard time managing their emotions, which leads to severe problem behaviors, such as:

- Suicide attempts
- Self-injury, such as cutting or burning
- Substance abuse
- Unhealthy behaviors around weight and food

### How can DBT help my teen?

You and your teen will learn how to be more aware of your emotions and patterns of behavior (mindfulness) in order to make wise, thoughtful choices. In order to build a life worth living, you and your teen will also learn how to:

- Manage emotions (emotion regulation)
- Cope with distress (distress tolerance)
- Form positive relationships (interpersonal effectiveness)

### What is included in the DBT program?

- Weekly individual therapy with a Seattle Children's DBT therapist
- Weekly patient and multiple-family skills groups for teens and parents to learn DBT skills
- Phone coaching between sessions to learn how to use new skills during challenging moments
- All SCH DBT therapists consult weekly to provide the best possible care

### Who can take part in the DBT program?

Teens with certain medical or mental health problems may be advised to seek other treatments before or instead of DBT. To take part in the DBT program it is important that:

- Your teen is 13 to 17 when they start the program.
- You and your teen can commit to 1 year of intensive outpatient treatment.
- You are prepared to stay longer in the DBT program if recommended.
- Your teen can attend weekly 60-minute individual therapy sessions.
- Your teen and a parent(s) or caregiver(s) can attend the weekly 1½ hour patient and multiple-family skills groups.
- Psychotherapy with other providers ends when the teen and family complete initial orientation sessions and commit to DBT at SCH.
- You and your teen can speak, read and write English.

#### To Learn More

- DBT Program Coordinator  
206-987-8927
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- [seattlechildrens.org](http://seattlechildrens.org)

#### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

### How does the referral process work?

1. Your teen's referring provider will ask screening questions and submit these and other important information to our DBT Consult Team.
2. Within a week, typically, someone from the clinic will let you and your referring provider know if our program is a good match for your family at this time.
3. If our program is a match, and there is space available, you and your teen will be scheduled for 2 appointments to learn more about DBT and to decide if you would like to commit to this intensive outpatient program.

### Is there a wait for this program?

Space is limited in DBT programs for teens at Children's and in the community. Some teens are given priority over others. If there are no openings in our program for your teen, we will give you other DBT and non-DBT referrals in the community. We may put you on a waitlist for our DBT program. We will do our best to estimate how long the wait will be, but we cannot guarantee when we will have an opening.

Being placed on the waitlist does not mean DBT is the only treatment that may be helpful for your teen. You may choose to look into another type of treatment or you may want to look into other DBT programs. If you are waiting for services at Children's or in the community, please have your teen and family continue with any current mental health services they are receiving.

### Is DBT covered by insurance?

Most insurance companies cover some or most of the parts of DBT. Check with your company about coverage.

### How is DBT billed to insurance?

- Individual treatment is billed with procedure code 90834 or 90837 depending on the length of the session.
- Skills Group for patients is billed with procedure code 90853.
- Skills Group for parents is billed with procedure code 90849.
- Psychiatric medication management (if needed) is most often billed with evaluation and management codes 99211 to 99215.

### What if my insurance does not cover all of the DBT services?

Your insurance plan may not cover group treatment, which is a required part of DBT treatment.

If your insurance company denies coverage for group treatment, you can appeal the decision if that is an option. You may also apply for our financial assistance program at [seattlechildrens.org](http://seattlechildrens.org) or call 206-987-5770 to set up a payment plan.

### Questions?

If you have questions, please call the DBT Program coordinator at 206-987-8927.