

Choosing a Mental Health Provider

Mental health providers have different training and ways of treating children and teens. It is important to find a mental health provider who has received special training and education to treat children and teens, and whose experience and training are a good fit for your child and family.

What types of mental health providers might be helpful to my child and family?

There are many types of mental health providers for children and families. Each has a specific training and license. Here are the most common ones who treat children and teens with mental health issues:

- **Psychiatrist** – Completed medical school (MD) and specialized training in psychiatry. A medical doctor who can provide diagnosis, medicine evaluations and treatment. They can prescribe medicine. If your child needs to see a psychiatrist, look for one that is board certified as a child and adolescent psychiatrist.
- **Clinical Psychologist** – Has a doctorate (Ph.D. or PsyD) degree in psychology. Are extensively trained in evaluation, diagnosis, therapy and psychological testing. They are referred to as “doctor” because they have a doctorate degree. Look for a psychologist with specialized training with children and teens.
- **Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner (ARNP)**: Registered nurse with medical training who can provide medicine evaluation, diagnosis and prescribe medicine. Look for an ARNP who has specialized training with children and teens.
- **Licensed Master’s Level Therapist**—completed graduate school at the master level. There are many types of licensed master’s level graduate programs and licenses. These include licensed mental health counselor, independent clinical social worker, mental health therapist, and marriage and family therapist. They provide diagnostic evaluation and therapy. Look for a therapist who has special training with children and teens.

How do I know what therapy is right for my child?

You are a main support and advocate for your child. We urge you to ask questions and find out more about the type of therapy offered and the training and supervision of the mental health provider you may be working with. Visit these websites to learn about types of therapy and which have been found to work well in treating mental health conditions in children and teens.

Effective Child Therapy effectivechildtherapy.org

Facts for Families Guide from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/FFF-Guide-Home.aspx

To Learn More

- Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine
206-987-2164
- Call your insurance company for names of mental health providers on your plan.
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- namiwa.org
- seattlechildrens.org

What to look for when seeking therapy

Look for these qualities and experience when looking for a mental health provider for your child.

- Specialized training in work with children and adolescents.
- Use a consistent treatment approach that has been shown to work (also called evidence-based treatment).
- Start with an evaluation to guide treatment plan.
- Include parents in treatment.
- Use standardized measures to help make diagnosis and show treatment progress.
- Have someone who can help when they are away.
- Experience in treating your child's concern or are supervised by someone with that experience.
- For anxiety treatment: Look for providers that use Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) that focuses on exposures (facing fears).
- For Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD): Look for providers that use Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP) that focuses on exposures.
- For Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorders (ADHD) and other behavior problems: Look for providers that use Parent Management Training.
- For Depression: Look for providers that use Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Interpersonal Therapy and Behavioral Activation (BA).