

How to Find a Therapist for Children and Families

Pediatrics
Behavioral Health

UW Medicine

VALLEY
MEDICAL CENTER

Remarkable things happen here.™

Your primary care provider or pediatrician is a great starting point for finding a therapist. He or she may be able to refer you to local providers or other available community resources. You also may check with your insurance provider to look for therapists in your area and understand your benefit coverage. Friends and family members may also be able to recommend specific providers they have visited.

When looking for a therapist, it's important to consider both experience and how comfortable your child will be meeting with and talking to that person. The relationship between your child and his or her therapist is an important factor in treatment. You may need to meet with a few different therapists before you make a final decision.

Always ask for a brief initial consult, in-person or via telephone. At this visit, you can discuss the therapist's practice and evaluate whether he or she may be a good match for your child's needs and temperament. Some therapists provide the first consultation free of charge, while others may ask for a consultation fee.

Questions to consider when searching for a therapist

- Will your insurance cover some or all of the costs for your appointments? How many appointments are covered in a calendar year? Do you need prior authorization for behavioral health services?
- Is the therapist licensed in Washington state?
- What are the therapist's credentials?
 - MD—Doctoral professional degree with clinical training—can provide psychotherapy and medication management
 - PhD—Doctoral graduate degree with study of psychological research and clinical psychology—can provide psychotherapy
 - PsyD—Doctoral graduate degree with focus of studying clinical psychology—can provide psychotherapy
 - LCSW—Masters graduate degree in social work with further training in psychotherapy—can provide psychotherapy
 - LMFT—Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist with masters or doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy or behavioral science equivalent
 - MedFT—Medical Family Therapist with masters or doctoral degree in family therapy or behavioral science equivalent
 - LMHC—Licensed Mental Health Counselor with masters or doctoral graduate degree in mental health counseling or a behavioral science in a related field
- Does the therapist have experience working with children and adolescents?
- What kinds or style of therapy does the therapist practice and will it suit your child's needs? Talk-based? Play-based? Other?
- Does the therapist prefer to treat specific diagnoses (such as depression, anxiety or disruptive behaviors)? If so, what is his or her experience in treating these diagnoses?
- Will the therapist work with parents and families or meet with them to gather information and coordinate care? Will the therapist meet with parents to gather information during treatment? How frequent is parent/family involvement? Will parents or families meet with the therapist at every appointment? How are parents and families included as part of treatment?
- Does the therapist provide group therapy for children or adolescents? If so, would this be a good option for your child? Does the therapist provide educational groups for families to attend?



400 South 43rd Street, Renton, WA 98055 valleymed.org/pediatrics