

How to find a mental health provider

Mental health care is a team effort between you and your provider, so building trust, feeling safe, and being comfortable are key starting points. The goal is to find someone who makes you feel at ease and has the skills and experience to help you reach your goals.

Think about what you want help with:

- It's helpful if you can describe what's bothering you or what you'd like to improve. For example: getting better sleep, reducing stress or anxiety, coping with loss, feeling less lonely, building stronger relationships, or cutting back on alcohol.
- Consider whether you want to vent, better understand yourself, or learn skills to cope and make positive changes in your life.
- It's okay if you're not sure what you need. A good provider can help you figure out what's going on and what steps might help.

Think about your preferences:

- Do you need evening or weekend appointments, or do you have a flexible schedule?
- Would you prefer in-person care, telehealth, or a mix of both?
- Do have preferences for your provider, such as gender, culture, age, religion, or anything else?
- Some people feel more comfortable with a provider who shares or understands their background or community. This could mean someone from a similar background or someone with the training and experience to understand your perspective.

How to start your search:

- **Ask for recommendations:** Talk to friends, family, or a trusted medical provider. Your primary care provider may offer be able to give you some suggestions.
- **Check your insurance:** Ask your insurance company or look at their website for a list of in-network providers.
 - If you have Apple Health (Medicaid), you can refer to the [Washington Health Care Authorities website](#) for guidance.

- **Use online tools:** Many websites allow you to filter results based on your insurance, concerns, and preferences such as:
 - Insurance accepted
 - Type of provider (e.g., psychiatrist, psychologist, licensed counselor, etc.)
 - Age groups served
 - Issues addressed (e.g., anxiety, depression, trauma, substance abuse, etc.)
 - Ethnicity, faith, or language
- Some larger online groups may link to a provider's own site, where you can learn more about their services, experience, and approach. A few examples to consider:

[Asian Mental Health Collective](http://www.asianmhc.org)

www.asianmhc.org

[Multicultural Counselors](http://www.multiculturalcounselors.org)

www.multiculturalcounselors.org

[Therapy for Black Girls](http://www.goodtherapy.org)

www.goodtherapy.org

[Open Path Collective](http://www.openpathcollective.org)

www.openpathcollective.org

[Inclusive Therapists](http://www.inclusivetherapists.com)

www.inclusivetherapists.com

[Psychology Today](http://www.psychologytoday.com)

www.psychologytoday.com

[Ingersoll Gender Center](http://www.ingersollgendercenter.org/ingersoll-directory)

www.ingersollgendercenter.org/ingersoll-directory

[Therapy Den](http://www.therapyden.com)

www.therapyden.com

[LatinX Therapy](http://www.latinxtherapy.com)

www.latinxtherapy.com

[Good Therapy](http://www.goodtherapy.org)

www.goodtherapy.org

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Contact and interview potential providers:

- **Prepare a summary:** Mental health care is in high demand, so you may need to reach out to several providers before finding the right person. It may help to write a summary about yourself and what you're looking for which you can also use if you decide to email or use online contact forms to reach multiple providers.
- When contacting a provider, briefly explain why you're seeking care, your scheduling needs, insurance information, and any specific preferences.

- **Initial conversation:** Many providers offer a free 15–30-minute phone consultation to see if you're a good match. Be prepared to share your story a few times, but this effort can help you find the right fit.
 - During this first call, it's okay to keep the conversation high-level and not dive into your deepest concerns.
 - **Questions to ask:**
 - What experience do you have with people experiencing similar issues?
 - How would you approach treatment with me?
 - How do you determine if you're a good fit for a client?
 - How do you measure progress during treatment?
 - Pay attention to whether the provider feels like someone you could trust, be honest with, and feel comfortable opening up to.
- **Trial sessions:** Sometimes, it takes a few sessions to know if the provider is a good fit. It's okay to take your time and switch if needed.
- **Waitlists:** If a provider you like doesn't have current openings, ask if they have a waitlist you can join.

Understand and confirm your insurance coverage before starting treatment

- **Double-check coverage:** Information on therapist and insurance websites might not be up-to-date. Confirm your benefits and coverage for a specific therapist before starting care to avoid unexpected costs.
- **Out-of-network benefits:** If you find a provider who says they are "out of network" with your insurance:
 - Ask your insurance company if your plan includes "out-of-network benefits." If so, find out what percentage of the cost they'll cover and how much you'll need to pay.
 - **Reimbursement process:** Most out-of-network providers require you to pay the full cost upfront and then submit a reimbursement claim to your insurance. Ask both your insurance company and the provider for details on how this process works.