

Parent's Guide to Finding a Counselor

Helping your teen take a step toward healing...

Where do I start?

- Call your doctor's office or ask friends if they can recommend any mental-health providers.
- Contact your human resources or personnel office work to find out if they provide mental-health services or make referrals.
- Look in the yellow pages or in the blue Government pages of a phone book.
- If you are a member of a Health Maintenance Organization (HMO), call to find out if mental-health services are available.
- Call the National Center for Victims of Crime's toll-free information and referral service at 1-800-FYI-CALL.
- The Sidran organization has a website to help find therapists (<http://www.sidran.org/>).

Helpful Tips

- Keep in mind that your teenager will benefit most from talking to a professional who has experience working with children or young people.
- Make a list of questions to ask before you contact a counselor. For example, questions about insurance and what types of treatment the counselor provides.
- Remember, it may take several phone calls to find a counselor that seems to be a good fit for your teen.

What professionals help people who have experienced a trauma, and what are their credentials?

Clinical and Counseling Psychologists

- Clinical and Counseling Psychologists have doctoral degrees from graduate programs that specialize in the study of clinical, research, and educational psychology.
- Programs that are approved by the American Psychological Association (APA) must meet specific teaching and training requirements that adhere to ethical, academic, and clinical standards.
- In addition to 4 years of course work, clinical psychologists must complete 1 year of supervised clinical training. After the fifth year of training, clinical psychologists must have another 1 to 2 years of supervised clinical experience to be eligible for licensure. Licensure is granted after passing an examination given by the American Board of Professional Psychology. Licensure allows the psychologist to practice psychotherapy without formal supervision. Although psychologists are doctors, they cannot prescribe medications.

Clinical Social Workers

- Clinical Social Workers have a master's degree or doctoral degree in social work.
- Graduate training for the masters level requires at least 2 years of schooling beyond the 4 years necessary for the undergraduate degree. To be licensed, clinical social workers must pass an exam given by the Academy of Certified Social Workers (ACSW).

Licensed Professional Counselors

- Licensed Professional Counselors are required to have a Master's Degree in clinical or counseling psychology.
- Graduate training for the masters level requires at least 2 years of schooling beyond the 4 years necessary for the undergraduate degree. To be licensed, Licensed Professional Counselors must pass a state licensing exam, comprising of both The National Counselor Examination for Licensure and Certification (NCE) as well as The National Certified Mental Health Counselor Examination (NCMHCE)

Psychiatrists

- Must attend medical school and have a medical degree (MD).
- As with other medical specialties, psychiatrists participate in a 3- to 4-year residency training in psychiatry after they complete 4 years of medical school. Child psychiatrists must complete at least 1 year of concentrated clinical experience with children. Board certified psychiatrists have also passed a written and oral examination given by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology. Psychiatrists, like medical doctors, prescribe medications. Some also provide psychotherapy.

What kind of treatments can I request to help my teen?

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

- Involves practical ways of working to change emotions, thoughts, and behaviors
- **Exposure therapy** is one form of CBT that uses careful, repeated, talking about the trauma (exposure) in a safe therapy situation to help the survivor face and gain control of the fear and distress that was overwhelming during the trauma.
- **Cognitive therapy** is another form of CBT that involves examining and rethinking the distressing beliefs about the trauma and its effects ("I'm going crazy," or "I'm to blame for what happened") that often trouble trauma survivors.
- CBT for trauma also includes learning skills for coping with anxiety (such as breathing and relaxation), managing anger, and communicating effectively with people.

Medications

- Medications can reduce the anxiety, depression, and insomnia often experienced with PTSD, and in some cases, it may help relieve the distress and emotional numbness caused by trauma memories
- Several kinds of antidepressant drugs have contributed to patient improvement in most (but not all) clinical trials, and some other classes of drugs have shown promise. At this time, no particular drug has emerged as a definitive treatment for PTSD. However, medication is clearly useful for symptom relief, which makes it possible for survivors to participate in psychotherapy.

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

- EMDR is a treatment for traumatic memories. It involves elements of exposure therapy and cognitive-behavioral therapy combined with techniques (eye movements, hand taps, sounds) that create an alternation of attention back and forth across the person's midline. It can help a survivor gain a new perspective and sense of control over a traumatic experience.

Group Treatment

- Group treatment is often helpful because trauma survivors are able to share traumatic experiences in the presence of other survivors.
- Group discussion can help group members achieve greater understanding of their trauma and gain hope and coping ideas from each other.

Brief Psychodynamic Psychotherapy

- Brief psychodynamic psychotherapy focuses on the emotional conflicts caused by the traumatic event, particularly as they relate to early life experiences.
- Through the retelling of the traumatic event to a calm, empathic, compassionate, and nonjudgmental therapist, the survivor achieves a greater sense of self-esteem, develops effective ways of thinking and coping, and learns to deal more successfully with intense emotions.