Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance professionals at Lawley

SELECTING A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

For the many Americans that seek help from mental health professionals, selecting a provider is an important decision that should be made carefully. Credentials, competence and your comfort level with the provider are worth considering.

Psychiatrists

Have medical degrees, can prescribe medication and have completed three years of residency training (beyond medical school) in mental health care.

Psychologists

Have a doctorate in psychology and, generally, complete one or two years of internship prior to licensure.

Professional Counselors

Have a minimum of a master's degree in a mental health discipline, and at least two years of post-graduate supervised experience.

Marriage and Family Therapists

Typically have a master's degree or doctorate in marriage and family therapy, and at least one year of supervised practice.

Social Workers

Have a minimum of a master's degree in social work and at least two years of post-graduate supervised experience.

Who's the Best Fit?

Finding the right mental health professional requires a bit of work. If you are depressed or have another serious mental illness, it can be difficult to do that work on your own. If you are in this situation, ask family, friends or your primary physician for assistance. Here are some dependable ways to locate a provider:

- Through referrals by physician, friends or family members
- Ask your health insurance company for a list of providers
- Check your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at work for a referral

Also take into account factors that are important to you like age, race, gender, religion and cultural background. It is not wrong to rule out certain providers because they don't meet the criteria; you will be establishing a long-term relationship with this person, and you need to feel as comfortable with him or her as possible.

Questions to Ask

- What types of treatment do you provide?
- What is your training or experience with my problem area?
- How will we determine treatment goals?

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- How will we measure my progress?
- What do you expect from me?
- What are your office hours?
- How do you handle emergencies?
- Do you charge for missed appointments?
- Are you in my health plan's provider network?