

Finding a Therapist: What's in This Guide?

RISD
CAPS

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therapist

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WANT SOME MORE SUPPORT CONNECTING TO A
COMMUNITY PROVIDER?

Call CAPS at 401-454-6637 to set up an
appointment with our case manager

Databases and Search Engines for Finding a Therapist

★ Psychology Today.

★ ZenCare

★ Thriving Campus

★ Therapy Den

★ American Psychological Association

★ Check your insurance plan's database

★ Ask your primary care provider for a list of referrals

★ Set up a case management appointment with CAPS

Where to Start Your Search

Before you start looking up therapists, think about the answer to these questions...

What kind of therapy am I looking for?

Examples:

- Talk therapy
- Creative therapy
 - Art therapy
 - Movement therapy
- Body work
 - Reiki
 - Yoga
 - Integrative wellness
- Group therapy
- Animal-assisted therapy
 - Canine therapy
 - Equine therapy

- How will you pay for therapy?
 - Utilize insurance
 - Sliding scale
 - Out-of-pocket
- Am I looking for therapy, medication, or both?
- How often do I want to go to therapy?
- Where do I want to see a therapist? Do I want to do telehealth?
- Do I want to talk to my family about seeing a therapist?

What issues or communities would I like my therapist to have expertise working with?

Examples:

- LGBTQIA+ communities
- BIPOC communities
- Athletes
- Veterans
- Immigrants/children of immigrants
- Neurodiverse/disabled communities
- Artists

What identities are important for my therapist to hold?

Examples:

- Race
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Sexuality
- Gender
- Faith
- Ability-level

Different Kinds of Therapists

You may come across therapists who have different credentials and wonder what those letters stand for. Here are several common credentials you might see...

Cannot prescribe medication

**LPC/
LMHC**

Licensed Professional Counselor/
Licensed Mental Health Counselor

2 years of graduate school + 2 years of experience pre-licensure

Can do assessments, case management, diagnose, and provide therapy

**LMSW/
LCSW**

Licensed Masters Social Worker/
Licensed Clinical Social Worker

2 years of graduate school + 2 years of experience pre-licensure

Can do assessments, case management, diagnose, and provide therapy

LMFT

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

2 years of graduate school + 1 year of experience pre-licensure

Can do assessments, case management, diagnose, and provide therapy. Specialty in working with couples and families.

**Psy.D./
Ph.D.**

Clinical Psychologist

4-5 years of graduate school + 1 year of experience pre-licensure

Can do assessments, case management, diagnose, and provide therapy

Can prescribe medication

M.D.

Psychiatrist

4 years of medical school + 4 years of residency

Can do psychiatric assessments and diagnose

APRN

Advanced Practice Registered Nurse

2-4 years of graduate school + licensing exam

Can do physical exams and psychiatric assessments, as well as diagnose

Contacting a Therapist and Setting Up an Appointment

There are several ways you can contact a therapist to set up an initial consultation or your first appointment.

Email: Therapists typically have an email listed on their websites, which may be linked to a database or come up in a Google search. These can be found at the bottom of a website page or under contact information. Be sure to leave contact information (name, phone number, email) for this person to return your request.

Phone: Therapists typically have a phone number listed on their websites under their contact information and on databases. It's not unusual to leave a voicemail for therapists if you call during business hours, as they may be seeing clients. Be sure to leave contact information (name, phone number, email) for this person to return your request.

Database Contact Tab: Search engines and databases may have a 'Contact' or 'Email Me' tab that will send a message through a third-party platform. You will input your contact information as well as a brief message.

Online Booking: Some therapists have an online booking system on their websites that allow you to choose a time and date for an appointment. You will input your contact information as well as a brief message.

Template for a Brief Message to a Therapist

"Hi [therapist's name],
My name is [your name] and I am a college student at [university name] . I am hoping to connect with a therapist (if emailing an agency directly, refer to the therapist – ex. I am hoping to connect with Dr. X). I'm hoping to work on [brief summary of concerns]. As of now, here is my availability. I have [insert health insurance]. If possible, I would love to set up a phone consultation to speak with you further and ask some questions. Please let me know your thoughts, I look forward to hearing from you!

Thanks,

[your name]"

What to Ask During an Initial Consultation

Check to see if a provider offers a free 10-15 minute initial consultation before choosing a therapist. Consultations are a way to get to know if someone is a good fit!

Here are some common questions that you may want to ask:

The Basics

- I want to work on this issue. What expertise do you have in treating this concern?
- What are your fees?
- Do you take my insurance? What is the copay?
- Do you offer a sliding scale approach?
- What is your availability?
- How often do you see clients?
- What's your style of therapy?
- What are your specialties?
- What is your policy on contact between sessions?
- Do you provide telehealth? Will this continue in the future?

Additional Info

- How do you create a safe and respectful space for all clients?
- Do you have expertise or experience working with clients with this specific identity?
- What training have you done to stay culturally relevant on different topics?
- What accommodations do you provide to make therapy more affordable for everyone?
- How do you address difference with clients?
- How have you made your office more accessible?
- Are there clients you don't work with?
- To what extent do you share about your own personal experiences?
- How will we monitor progress?

*It's not unusual for students to schedule consultations with several providers before making a decision about who they want to see. Sometimes students have to "try on" different therapists before finding the right one.

*If they feel like a good fit after the consultation, you can schedule an appointment! If they don't, you should feel free to let them know you'll be continuing your search.

Paying for Therapy: Using Your Health Insurance

If you decide to use your insurance...

In this case, you would find a provider who is **in-network** with your insurance and accepts your healthcare plan.

- You will pay the full cost of the session until you meet your **deductible**, if it has not already been met. Once you meet your deductible, you will pay a **co-pay** for each session.

If you have questions about what is covered by your health insurance, you can do the following to get in touch with your insurance company:

1. You will need either a physical or photo copy of the front and back of your insurance card.
2. Locate the customer service/member benefits number, typically on the back of the card.
3. Locate the member/group/subscriber ID number, typically on the front of the card.
4. Make sure you know the subscriber's (parent/guardian/you) name and date of birth.
5. Call the service line and select the option to learn more about benefits, or ask to speak to a representative.

Questions to ask your health insurance company:

- What are my/the member's outpatient mental health/behavioral health benefits?
- Is there a deductible? How much is it?
- Do outpatient mental health benefits have a copay? How much is it?
- Does this service require a referral/pre-authorization?
- Is this plan region-specific or nationwide?
- Is there a list of providers that I/this student can access online? Does this need to be emailed to me/the student?
- Is there a limit on counseling sessions?

*Benefit coverage may vary for inpatient and psychiatric service.

*You may find the answer to some of these questions online on the insurance company's website, or you can ask whoever holds the insurance policy (parents/guardians) for this information.

Common Terms You Might Come Across in Your Search

Therapy Terms:

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** - focuses on how our thoughts and feelings impact our behaviors; identifying patterns in negative thoughts and behaviors
- **Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)** - focuses on developing coping skills and practicing emotional regulation
- **Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)** - a type of therapy used to treat trauma using specific eye movement patterns
- **Psychodynamic Therapy** - focuses on finding patterns in past and current thoughts and behaviors and making meaning of these patterns
- **Inpatient treatment** - short- or long-term treatment during which patients stay at the hospital for 24/7 care
- **Outpatient treatment** - short- or long-term treatment during which patients live at home and attend group and individual therapy several times a week

Insurance Terms:

- **Co-pay** - a flat fee paid for each appointment when the insurance company covers the remaining amount
- **Deductible** - the amount of money that must be spent before insurance covers any costs
- **Sliding Scale** - different price points for sessions based on income level and determined by that therapist
- **Pro-Bono** - free therapy sessions offered by a therapist at their discretion
- **Out-Of-Network (OON)** - a therapist who does not accept your healthcare plans as a form of payment
- **In-Network** - a therapist who accepts your healthcare plan

*If you have any questions about insurance benefits and what services are covered, you can always ask a therapist to confirm your benefits and explain any costs you may incur.

Free/Low-Cost Options

- OpenPath Collective - insurance is not required to use these services; you pay a one-time fee of \$70 and session costs range from \$30-\$60
- Subscription-based online service like BetterHelp, 7 Cups, and TalkSpace - virtual counseling available in talk- or text-based formats
- Community support groups, often offered through community health centers
- Free substance use recovery groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Al-Anon, and SMART recovery - these can be found by looking up groups in your area
- If you receive health insurance benefits from your place of work, inquire about an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Email therapists to inquire about low-cost or pro-bono sessions - often not advertised on their websites

Resources for Affinity Groups

Databases for finding therapists:

- Melanin & Mental Health
- Inclusive Therapists
- Ayana Therapy – this is also an app you can download!
- Therapy for Latinx
- Therapy for Black Girls
- National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network
- Asian Mental Health Collective
- South Asian Therapists

Support options:

- The Loveland Foundation - fund for therapy for Black women; application required
- Youth Pride Inc. - free drop-in space for LGBTQIA+ young adults seeking social services in Connecticut
- Sista Ayfa - free/low-cost therapy options in Illinois for Black women, free nationwide support groups
- Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective (BEAM) - free online resources
- Trans Yoga Project - low cost (\$2/month) virtual yoga classes for trans, non-binary, and BIPOC folks
- Liberate Meditation - daily meditation app designed for and by Black practitioners
- Steve Fund - resources for students of color; text 741741 for crisis line

Social Media

*not a substitute for therapy

Instagram

@healingwhileblack
@melanatedsocialwork
@therapyforblackgirls
@thebodyisnotanapology
@fatsextherapist
@queersextherapy

TikTok

@theshaniproject
@drnortontherapy
@drhanren
@dr.kojosarfo

Twitter

@shrinkrapping
@kameelahrashad
@healingwhileblk
@_ItsMeCeleste_

Podcasts

Therapy for Black Girls
Melanated Social Work
Affirm
Between Sessions
Homecoming Podcast

Articles

6 Steps to Finding a Great Therapist of Color - ZenCare
Therapists for Women of Color and Queer People: How to Find One - TeenVogue
The Psychology of Radical Healing - PsychologyToday

Emergency Resources

If you're on campus...

- Call RISD Public Safety: (401)-454-6666

If you're off campus...

- Call 911 for emergency first responders
- Call BH Link for mobile crisis support at (401)-414-5465

Local emergency rooms

- Butler Hospital: (401)-455-6200
345 Blackstone Blvd, Providence RI
- Rhode Island Hospital: (401)-444-4000
593 Eddy Street, Providence RI
- Miriam Hospital: (401)-793-4300
164 Summit Ave, West Hartford CT

Hotlines

- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: (800)-273-8255 or text 988
- Trevor Project TrevorLine: (866)-488-7386
- Good Samaritans: (877) 870-4673
- Crisis TextLine: text "HOME" to 741741