

Mental Health Professionals



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There are many types of mental health care professionals who can help you achieve your recovery goals. Finding the right one is easier when you know about their different treatment roles. If you have insurance your plan needs to offer you the care providers you need. If one doctor does not accept insurance, they are obligated to find you another. Contact your health insurance provider for more information.

Prescribe and Monitor Medication

The following professionals are able to prescribe medication. They may also provide assessments, diagnoses and therapy.

Primary Care Physicians

Primary care physicians and pediatricians can prescribe medication but it may be wise to consider a visit to someone who specializes in mental health care. Primary care and mental health professionals should work together to determine the best treatment plan for each person. Shortages of health care professionals are not uncommon in many parts of the country. As a consequence, more primary care physicians are being trained and equipped to provide mental health care.

Psychiatrists

Psychiatrists are licensed medical doctors with medical and psychiatric training. They can diagnose mental health conditions and prescribe and monitor medications. Psychiatrists are also able to offer counseling and provide therapy. Some have special training in children and adolescent mental health, substance use disorders or geriatric psychiatry. In some states physician assistants or nurse practitioners are also qualified to prescribe medication.

Therapy and Assessment

A therapist can help someone better understand and cope with his thoughts, feelings and behaviors. They provide guidance and help improve the ability to reach recovery goals. These mental health professionals may also help assess and diagnosis mental illness.

Clinical Psychologists

Clinical psychologists with a doctoral degree in psychology are trained to make diagnoses and provide individual and group therapy. Some may have training in specific forms of therapy like cognitive behavioral therapy or dialectical behavior therapy, along with other behavioral therapy interventions.

Psychiatric or Mental Health Nurses

Psychiatric or mental health nurses may have various degrees ranging from a registered nurse with an associate's degree to a nurse with a doctorate degree as a Doctor of Nursing Practice. Depending on their education and licensing they provide a range of services including assessment and treatment of mental health conditions, case management and therapy.

School Psychologists

School psychologists with advanced degrees in psychology are trained to make diagnoses, provide individual and group therapy and work with parents, teachers and school staff to insure a healthy school environment. They may also participate in the development of individualized education plans (IEP) to help improve the school experience of the student with a mental health condition.

Counseling

Working with a counselor can lead to better ways of thinking and living. Counselors assist with developing life skills and improving relationships.

Clinical Social Workers

Clinical social workers have a master's degree in social work and are trained to make diagnoses and provide individual and group counseling, case management and advocacy. Clinical social workers often work in hospitals or clinics or in private practice. Licensed, independent social workers (LICSW) have undergone an extra certification process.

Counselors

Counselors are trained to diagnose and provide individual and group counseling. Counselors may focus on different areas: Licensed Professional Counselor, Mental Health Counselor, Certified Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselor, Martial and Family Therapist.

Pastoral Counselors

Pastoral counselors are clergy members with training in clinical pastoral education. They are trained to diagnose and provide counseling.

Peer Specialists

Peer specialists have lived experience with a mental health condition or substance use disorder. They have often received training and certification and are prepared to assist with recovery by developing strengths and setting goals.

Social Workers

Social workers (B.A. or B.S.) provide case management, inpatient discharge planning services, placement services and other services to support healthy living.

See more at: <http://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Treatment/Types-of-Mental-Health-Professionals>