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**There is NO health
without mental health!**

Mental Illness and the Family: Finding the Right Mental Health Care For You

If you or someone you know may benefit from a counselor or mental health center, here are some questions and guidelines to help you find the right care.

Where Can I Go For Help?

Where you go for help will depend on who has the problem (an adult or child) and the nature of the problem and/or symptoms. Often, the best place to start is your local Mental Health Association. Check your Yellow Pages for a listing or calling Mental Health America.

Other suggested resources:

- **Your local health department's Mental Health Division.** These services are state funded and are obligated to first serve individuals who meet "priority population criteria" as defined by the state Mental Health Department. There may be waiting lists and not all individuals may be eligible for services. In some jurisdictions local funding is provided for additional services.
- **Other mental health organizations**
- **Family physician**
- **Clergyperson**
- **Family services agencies**, such as Catholic Charities, Family Services, or Jewish Social Services
- **Educational consultants or school counselors**
- **Marriage and family counselors**
- **Child guidance counselors**
- **Psychiatric hospitals** accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations
- **Hotlines, crisis centers, and emergency rooms (call 411 for Directory Assistance)**

Which Mental Health Professional Is Right For Me?

There are many types of mental health professionals. Finding the right one for you may require some research. Often it is a good idea to first describe the symptoms and/or problems to your family physician or clergy. He or she can suggest the type of mental health professional you should call.

Types of Mental Health Professionals

- **Psychiatrist** - medical doctor with special training in the diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional illnesses. Like other doctors, psychiatrists are qualified to prescribe medication.
Qualifications: should have a state license and be board eligible or certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.

- **Child/Adolescent Psychiatrist** - medical doctor with special training in the diagnosis and treatment of emotional and behavioral problems in children. Child/Adolescent psychiatrists are qualified to prescribe medication.
Qualifications: should have a state license and be board eligible or certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.
- **Psychologist** - Psychologist with a doctoral degree in psychology from an accredited/designated doctoral program in psychology and two years of supervised professional experience, including a year long internship from an approved internship. Trained to make diagnoses and provide individual and group therapy.
Qualifications: and for some psychologists, credentialing as a health service provider in psychology.
- **Clinical Social Worker** - Counselor with a masters degree in social work from an accredited graduate program. Trained to make diagnoses and provide individual and group counseling.
Qualifications: state license; may be member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers.
- **Licensed Professional Counselor** - Counselor with a masters degree in psychology, counseling or a related field. Trained to diagnose and provide individual and group counseling.
Qualifications: state license
- **Mental Health Counselor** - Counselor with a masters degree and several years of supervised clinical work experience. Trained to diagnose and provide individual and group counseling.
Qualifications: certification by the National Academy of Certified Clinical Mental Health Counselors.
- **Certified Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselor** - Counselor with specific clinical training in alcohol and drug abuse. Trained to diagnose and provide individual and group counseling.
Qualifications: state license
- **Nurse Psychotherapist** - A registered nurse who is trained in the practice of psychiatric and mental health nursing. Trained to diagnose and provide individual and group counseling.
Qualifications: certification, state license.
- **Marital and Family Therapist** - A counselor with a masters degree, with special education and training in marital and family therapy. Trained to diagnose and provide individual and group counseling.
Qualifications: state license
- **Pastoral Counselor** - Clergy with training in clinical pastoral education Trained to diagnose and provide individual and group counseling.
Qualifications: Certification from American Association of Pastoral Counselors.

You Make The Call To The Mental Health Professional...Now What Do You Do?

Spend a few minutes talking with him or her on the phone, ask about their approach to working with patients, their philosophy, whether or not they have a specialty or concentration (some psychologists for instance specialize in family counseling, or child counseling, while others specialize in divorce or coping with the loss of a loved one.) If you feel comfortable talking to the counselor or doctor, the next step is to make an appointment.

On your first visit, the counselor or the doctor, will want to get to know you and why you called him or her. The counselor will want to know-- what you think the problem is, about your life, what you do, where you live, with whom you live. It is also common to be asked about your family and friends. This information helps the professional to assess your situation and develop a plan for treatment.

If you don't feel comfortable with the professional after the first, or even several visits, talk about your feelings at your next meeting; Don't be afraid to contact another counselor. Feeling comfortable with the professional you choose is very important to the success of your treatment.

Types Of Treatment

Psychotherapy is a method of talking face-to-face with a therapist. The following are a few of the types of available therapy:

- **Behavior Therapy** - Includes stress management, biofeedback and relaxation training to change thinking patterns and behavior.
- **Psychoanalysis** - Long-term therapy meant to "uncover" unconscious motivations and early patterns to resolve issues and to become aware of how those motivations influence present actions and feelings.
- **Cognitive Therapy** - Seeks to identify and correct thinking patterns that can lead to troublesome feelings and behavior.
- **Family Therapy** - Includes discussion and problem-solving sessions with every member of the family.
- **Movement/Art/Music Therapy** - These methods include the use of movement, art or music to express emotions. Effective for persons who cannot otherwise express feelings.
- **Group Therapy** - Includes a small group of people who, with the guidance of a trained therapist, discuss individual issues and help each other with problems.

Drug Therapy--Drugs can be beneficial to some persons with mental or emotional disorders. The patient should ask about risk, possible side-effects and interaction with certain foods, alcohol and other medications. Medication should be taken in the prescribed dosage and at prescribed intervals and should be monitored daily.

Electric Convulsive Treatment (ECT) -- Used to treat some cases of major depression, delusions, and hallucinations, or life-threatening sleep and eating disorders that can not be effectively treated with drugs and/or psychotherapy. Discuss with your physician about the risks and side effects of ECT.

Am I Getting The Care I Need?

As you progress through the therapeutic process, you should begin to feel gradual relief from your distress, to develop self assurance, and have a greater ability to make decisions and increased comfort in your relationship with others. Therapy may be painful and uncomfortable at times but episodes of discomfort occur during the most successful therapy sessions. Mental health treatment should help you cope with your feelings more effectively.

If you feel you are not getting results, it may be because the treatment you are receiving is not the one best suited to your specific needs. If you feel there are problems, discuss them with your therapist. A competent therapist will be eager to discuss your reactions to therapy and respond to your feeling about the process. If you are still dissatisfied, a consultation with another therapist may help you and your therapist evaluate your work together.

What About Self-Help/Support Groups?

Self-help support groups bring together people with common experiences. Participants share experiences, provide understanding and support and help each other find new ways to cope with problems.

There are support groups for almost any concern including alcoholism, overeating, the loss of a child, co-dependency, grandparenting, various mental illnesses, cancer, parenting, and many, many others.

Thank you to Mental Health Association of Maryland and The Mental Health Association in Beaumont and Jefferson County for allowing us to use as sources "5 Easy Steps to Finding Help" and "Guidelines for Seeking Mental Health Services."