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## Mental Health Professionals: Who They Are and How to Find One

Mental health services are provided by several different professions, each of which has its own training and areas of expertise. Finding the right professional(s) for you or a loved one can be a critical ingredient in the process of diagnosis, treatment, and recovery when faced with serious mental illness.

### Types of Mental Health Professionals:

- Psychiatrist** - a psychiatrist is a physician with a doctor of medicine (M.D.) degree or osteopathic (D.O.) degree, with at least four more years of specialized study and training in psychiatry. Psychiatrists are licensed as physicians to practice medicine by individual states. "Board certified" psychiatrists have passed the national examination administered by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology. Psychiatrists provide medical and psychiatric evaluations, treat psychiatric disorders, provide psychotherapy, and prescribe and monitor medications.
- Psychologist** - some psychologists have a master's degree (M.A. or M.S.) in psychology while others have a doctoral degree (Ph.D., Psy.D., or Ed.D.) in clinical, educational, counseling, or research psychology. Most states license psychologists to practice psychology. They can provide psychological testing, evaluations, treat emotional and behavioral problems and mental disorders, and provide psychotherapy.
- Social Worker** - Social workers have either a bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., or B.S.W.), a master's degree (M.A., M.S., M.S.W., or M.S.S.W), or doctoral degree (D.S.W. or Ph.D.). In most states, social workers take an examination to be licensed to practice social work (L.C.S.W. or L.I.C.S.W.), and the type of license depends on their level of education and practice experience. Social workers provide various services including assessment and treatment of psychiatric illnesses, case management, hospital discharge planning, and psychotherapy.
- Psychiatric/Mental Health Nurse** - Psychiatric/mental health nurses may have various degrees ranging from associate's to bachelor's (B.S.N.) to master's (M.S.N. or A.P.R.N) to doctoral (D.N.Sc., Ph.D.). Depending on their level of education and licensing, they provide a broad range of psychiatric and medical services, including the assessment and treatment of psychiatric illnesses, case management, and psychotherapy. In some states, some psychiatric nurses may prescribe and monitor medication.
- Licensed Professional Counselors** - Licensed Professional Counselors have a master's degree (M.A.) in psychology, counseling or a similar discipline and

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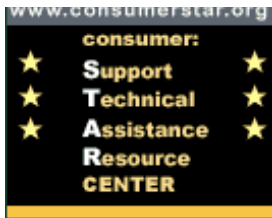
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typically have two years of post-graduate experience. They may provide services that include diagnosis and counseling (individual, family/group or both). They have a license issued in their state and may be certified by the National Academy of Certified Clinical Mental Health Counselors.

### Resources for Locating a Mental Health Professional

The following sources may help you locate a mental health professional or treatment facility to meet your needs:

- **NAMI local affiliates and support groups** - Speaking with NAMI members (consumers and family members) can be a good way to exchange information about mental health professionals in your local community.
- **Primary Care Physician (PCP)** - If you are part of an HMO or other managed care insurance plan, your primary physician can refer you to a specialist or therapist.
- **Your insurance provider** - Contact your insurance company or "behavioral health care organization" for a list of mental health care providers included in your insurance plan.
- **District Branch of the American Psychiatric Association** - The APA can give you names of APA members in your area. Find your [district branch online](#) or consult your local phone book under the headings "district branch" or "psychiatric society."
- **Psychiatry department** at local teaching hospital or medical school.
- **National Association of Social Workers (NASW)** has an online directory of clinical social workers. Visit [www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org) and click on *Resources*.
- **American Psychological Association** can refer to local psychologists by calling 1-800-964-2000.
- **The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services** has an online database of mental health services and facilities in each state. Visit [www.mentalhealth.org](http://www.mentalhealth.org) and click on *Services Locator*.

### Resources for more information about mental health providers

- The Mayo Clinic: Mental Health Providers: [Making the Right Choice](#)
- SAMHSA's publication: [Choosing the right Mental Health Therapist](#)

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