

What You Need To Know About...

Navigating Mental Health in Colorado

We have heard from many people that sometimes it gets difficult trying to figure out how to get the mental health services you need, or someone you care about needs. We hope the information in this handout is helpful!

What are the types of mental health services?

We've briefly described several types of mental health services below, these are the most common but not necessarily a complete list:

Outpatient services:

- Individual counseling – one-on-one work with a counselor
- Family counseling – multiple family members work together to solve problems
- Couples counseling – partners attend together to solve relationship problems
- Group counseling – costs less, you join others dealing with same challenges, and often brings faster results than individual work
- Psychiatric care/medication management – may be a psychiatrist (MD) or a psychiatric nurse practitioner and is only to prescribe and maintain medications
- DUI/domestic violence/anger management “classes” – legally mandated classes to meet probation requirements

Less common forms of outpatient services are:

- In home counseling – usually individual or family work at your home instead of a counselor's office
- Psychological Evaluation/Assessment – various tests and an interview to determine appropriate treatment planning or contribute information for legal purposes

More intensive forms of treatment:

- Intensive outpatient services (often referred to as IOP)
- Voluntary/involuntary hospitalization/M-1 hold/72-hour hold
- Rehab (rehabilitation/addiction recovery treatment centers)
- Detox (detoxification facility – drugs and alcohol)
- Emergency room/crisis services

STARTING POINTS - Where do you even start to figure out what you need and where to go?

Crisis or Emergency

A crisis situation may mean that the first place you go is an emergency room (ER) closest to you, or law enforcement may be called to make a determination and possibly transport someone to an ER.

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You can always call 911, or, Colorado has a Crisis Line for mental health that you can call at 844-493-8255, text "TALK" to 38255, or visit their website at <https://coloradocrisisservices.org/>.

One other thing we want to note about emergency situations. If you must call law enforcement, ask if an officer or deputy is available who is trained in mental health crisis situations. Many departments refer to this as "CIT" or a "CIT officer/deputy" which stands for "Crisis Intervention Team."

Non-Emergencies

Here are a few of the challenges we have heard from people trying to find services that make it difficult to navigate:

- Very few people call me back
- How do I know if this counselor (or place) will be a good one for me?
- The brochure/website/information provided isn't clear about exactly what the services ARE
- I can't tell what this service costs, OR what it usually costs, OR if it is covered under my insurance

Understanding a bit about the services listed on the first page will help you with the times when information isn't very clear. There are some key terms above that sometimes people in the mental health industry use, but they aren't commonly known terms.

There are some things that would be good to know about when you need to look for a counselor:

"Good Fit" – In counseling, this is how we say it when you and your counselor are a good match for each other – your personalities work well together, the counselor's approach to this kind of work resonates with you, that kind of thing. Note that this is **the most important factor** in whether counseling will be a success for you! I mention this because I absolutely recommend that you talk to at least two counselors before you decide to see one, because you will get a pretty good feel for whether this person will be a good fit or not, even with a few minutes on the phone. To help you know what to ask, I have a list of questions you could pull from on my website, at: <https://www.lifepathscounseling.com/frequently-asked-questions-counseling/> (or click FAQ on the menu).

Reviews – You won't find as many reviews about counselors as you will other types of services, because for many of us, our professional ethics restrict us from asking clients to post reviews. This is often very private for people, and may mean that it is pushing a boundary to ask. So, reviews are not going to be a great indicator of whether a counselor is good or not.

Callbacks – Setting possible technology problems aside, it is a strange thing about this profession that we often hear that people have called multiple counselors and didn't receive a callback from many of them. Please don't take this personally if it happens to you! Try one more time, or try email if you feel strongly about that particular counselor. I personally have it on my website that I return every inquiry I receive and if you don't hear from us to please try again. And I do return every single one!

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Insurance/Medicaid – How do you tell if a counselor or organization takes your insurance? Most insurance companies have a way to search for a provider on their website. If you need to use health insurance, their website is the best place to start. Second way to check is by searching a counselor's website for your insurance company name, "fees," "payment methods," etc. Special note about Medicaid.: If you are a Medicaid recipient, no health care provider can receive payment from you or on your behalf. Period. None of us. We could be penalized if we do, and the recipient could lose their benefits. So you pretty much have to find a Medicaid provider.

Licenses/Certifications/Registered Psychotherapists – There are a LOT of different types of licenses, certifications and other designations for mental health providers, in Colorado and beyond. Here are the common ones you'll see and what they mean:

- MD, DO – these indicate medical degrees and are designations for Psychiatrists (medication only).
- Psy.D. or Ph.D. – these indicate a doctorate degree and they are Psychologists.
- LPC, LCSW, LMFT – these are master's level clinicians (Licensed Professional Counselor, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist; also some slight variations of these may be pre-licensure candidates such as LPCC)
- LAC, CAC/CACI, CACII, CACIII – these are addiction clinicians (Licensed Addiction Counselor, Certified Addiction Counselors levels I, II, III)
- Registered Psychotherapist – You can register with the State of Colorado as a Registered Psychotherapist without any degree or training in counseling. None. Be cautious. There are some very good clinicians with this designation but caution and checking credentials, approach, etc. is appropriate to be certain you are getting good care.

Support groups – There are support groups for many different topics/issues and probably the best known are for addiction. Very briefly, finding support groups on other topics is easiest by going to either a website dedicated to that topic, or to the National Alliance on Mental Illness website at <https://www.nami.org>. For addiction issues, the most well-known addiction support group is "AA" or a "12 step program" such as Alcoholics Anonymous. The 12 steps in these programs guide support groups when they meet and provide a framework to work towards recovery. Most of the time in these there is a religious component.

There are other support groups or "formats" for support such as:

SMART Recovery (SMART = Self Management and Recovery Training)
 Celebrate Recovery
 Moderation Management
 Secular Organizations for Sobriety (SOS)
 Women for Sobriety
 LifeRing Secular Recovery

At least 12 step programs and SMART Recovery both have resources for family and friends of someone who is dealing with addiction. In the various 12 step programs, there are support group

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meetings that you will find as “Al-Anon,” (alcohol) “Nar-Anon,” (narcotics) etc. based on the type of addiction. SMART Recovery has lots of resources on their website (<https://www.smartrecovery.org>).

Searching – I’m going to offer a few ideas here on ways to search for a counselor:

- The easiest is to ask a friend, family member, or your doctor!
- Search your insurance company website “Find a Provider” directory
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com> - Psychology Today has a pretty robust directory of counselors and it is the most popular place that people like me list themselves. You can search based on location and then add in parameters such as your insurance company, a particular issue, a type of therapy if you have something specific you want, etc.
- Other therapist directories – a popular one is <https://www.goodtherapy.org> .
- A good ol’ Google search! (this is probably the hardest way though)
- Ask me! Seriously, I don’t mind helping people find the right person and I am part of a couple of therapist networks and know a lot of colleagues nearby and their specialty areas.

Low Cost Counseling

Lower cost counseling is really difficult to find, especially in our area. I know of a few places that routinely offer lower cost counseling:

Shepherd’s Gate – Counseling center at Denver Seminary (near Santa Fe and Bowles), student interns provide counseling under supervision of staff. <https://denverseminary.edu/resources/shepherds-gate-counseling/>

People House – Counseling center in Denver that offers counseling, groups, classes at lower costs than usual (near Federal and 26th). <https://www.peoplehouse.org/>

Jefferson Center for Mental Health – Mental health agency for Jefferson county with several locations. <https://www.jcmh.org>.

Open Path Collective – Therapists on this site are advertising that they will provide lower cost counseling. <https://openpathcollective.org> .

Give An Hour – If you are active military or a veteran, you may be eligible to receive free counseling through one of the providers on this site. <https://www.giveanhour.org> .

Also, sometimes you will find that local clinicians are able to offer what we call a “sliding scale rate” or “reduced rate” for counseling. This may be for a limited time, and usually each of us has a limited number of people we can see at a reduced rate.

Best wishes to you!!

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