

# TIPS FOR FINDING A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL IN SPOKANE

This is a resource for those who are seeking counseling services outside of the Whitworth Counseling Center



## STEP ONE: THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR

People have different reasons for wanting to see a mental health professional. Think about what you are looking for and needing. Are you wanting to meet with someone whom might prescribe a medication to help treat a mental health condition? Are you hoping to meet with someone primarily to talk with? Or both?

It is not uncommon for those treating a mental health condition to meet with two separate mental health professionals, a prescribing provider, such as a psychiatrist, that can prescribe and manage medication and a counselor or therapist that focuses more on emotions, thinking patterns, what is happening relationally and behaviorally.

If you know you want to meet with a psychiatrist, please see the Frequently Asked Questions section at the bottom of this document for more information about how to find and schedule an appointment.

## STEP TWO: CHECK YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS

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A good place to start to is find out what your health insurance provides in terms of mental health benefits. For example, you will want to know the following:

1. What types of mental health services are covered (individual therapy, family therapy, couples therapy, etc.)?
2. Can you make a direct appointment with a psychiatrist, or do you need to see a primary care doctor first for a referral?
3. If you are out of state, does your insurance company provide for coverage in Washington?
4. How many sessions per year are covered (many insurance companies have a maximum of 20 sessions per calendar year)?
5. Is there a deductible associated with mental health appointments?
6. Is there a co-pay associated with mental health appointments? How do benefits differ if you go to an in-network counseling provider or an out-of-network counseling provider? (Most insurance companies require you to go to one of their preferred counseling providers, or in-network providers, in order for services to be covered.)



## STEP THREE: KNOW WHAT YOU ARE ABLE & WILLING TO PAY OUT OF POCKET

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If your insurance company does not provide mental health benefits in WA, or if you don't want to go through insurance, you will need to find out what you are able and willing to pay for counseling. Here are some things to consider:

1. Many therapists list their fees per session online. If you are unsure what it will cost to see a counselor, you can call to find out. Low cost counseling options are listed at the end of this document. Be aware that sometimes intake appointments cost more than regular appointments because they are often longer.
2. Many therapists provide a sliding-scale fee, which means their fee varies depending on your income and ability to pay. You can call to find out if they offer a sliding-scale fee.
3. In order to make the cost of counseling more manageable, you could consider spreading out your counseling sessions and going every other week or once a month. (Note: It is often recommended to attend counseling at least every other week at first.)

## STEP FOUR: FIND A COUNSELOR THAT IS A GOOD FIT FOR YOU



Counseling will be more advantageous and beneficial for you if you are working with a counselor you trust, feel comfortable with, and overall feel is a good fit for you. It's important to get a sense that you'll be able to work well together. You want to feel that this person is on your side. Here are some suggestions for finding a counselor:

1. **Get referrals.** Ask someone you know who could recommend a therapist for you. For example, you could ask your primary care doctor, friend, family member, coach, professor, advisor, or pastor or clergy member. The counseling center also keeps an updated list of mental health providers in the area that have experience working with college-aged individuals, which is available upon request.
2. **Search online.** PsychologyToday.com is one of several search engines in which you can find therapists based on filters such as location, what insurance they take, specialties, and more.
3. **Contact your insurance company.** You can get a list of in-network providers by calling your insurance company's customer service line (typically on the back of your insurance card) or by searching for providers when you are logged on to your personal account with your insurance company.

### TIP: ASSESS WHAT YOU WANT IN A COUNSELOR



It is helpful to have an idea of what you are looking for, or needing, in a counselor. Here are a few questions to consider:

1. Where are they located? Will you be able to get to and from their office without significant difficulty?
2. Are they available during hours that fit with your schedule?
3. Is the gender/ethnicity/religion of the counselor important to you?
4. Are there any specialties you want the counselor to have, such as working with depression, anxiety, OCD, eating disorders, LGBTQ+ concerns, self-esteem, couple's or family work, etc.?
5. Is there a particular mode of therapy you are seeking (such as EMDR, DBT, CBT, ACT, etc.)?

## STEP FOUR: FIND A COUNSELOR THAT IS A GOOD FIT FOR YOU (CONTINUED)



### TIP: GATHER MORE INFORMATION



Once you have the names and numbers of a few different counselors you'd be interested in meeting with, you can gather more information about them in the following ways:

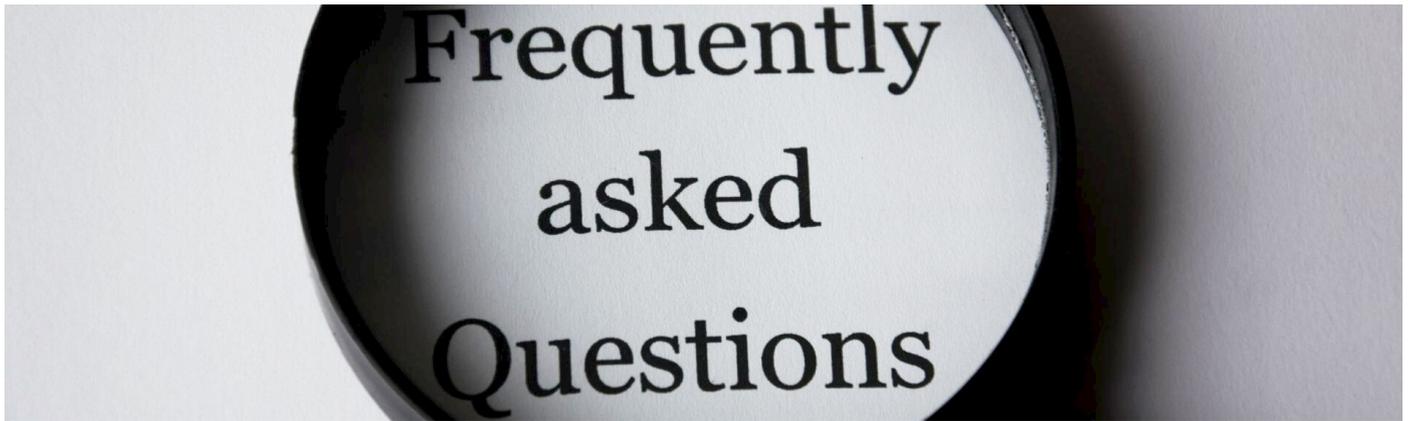
1. Reviewing the counselor's website.
2. Calling the counselor to verify if he or she accepts your type of insurance. You can also call your insurance company directly to verify if the counselor is covered.
3. Calling the counselor and ask any questions you might have. It is reasonable to ask questions to see if he or she might be a good counseling fit for you.
4. Checking the status of the counselor's license to see if any legal action has been taken against their counseling practice (IMPORTANT!).
  - Go to the Washington State Department of Health website ([www.doh.wa.gov](http://www.doh.wa.gov)), click on Licenses, Permits, and Certificates, click on Provider Credential Search, and then click on "open data portal" in the gray box at the top of the page. Search for the provider by first and last name and look under "Action." If it says "Yes," click on the provider's credential number to see the charges made against the provider.

It is normal for trust and rapport to take time to be established between a counselor and a client. Even though counseling is helpful, there are times it feels challenging and uncomfortable. However, if you overall do not feel comfortable with a counselor and do not feel he or she is a good fit, you can address this in the following ways:

1. Be open with your counselor about your concerns. It is possible for you and the counselor to work through your concerns and grow as a result.
2. If you are sure he or she is not a good fit for you, you can get referrals from him or her for other counselors that would be a better fit for you. You can also find another counselor on your own.
3. Continue to do counseling with another counselor. It is okay to "shop around" for counselors until you find one that is a good fit for you.

### TIP: IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING CHANGING COUNSELORS





### QUESTION 1: WHAT CREDENTIALS DO MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS HAVE?



There are several different types of mental health professionals, each with differing levels of training and expertise. There are psychiatrists (M.D, D.O), psychologists (Ph.D., Psy.D), marriage & family therapists (LMFT), mental health counselors (LMHC), clinical social workers (LCSW), and more. If you want to find out more about how these differ from one another, please visit this article (<https://www.nami.org/learn-more/treatment/types-of-mental-health-professionals>) on the National Alliance for Mental Health website.

There are several reasons you might want or need to schedule an appointment with a psychiatrist. You may have been referred to do so by a counselor, doctor, or other health professional. You may have a previous diagnosis and medication that needs to be reassessed. Whatever the reason may be, having an appointment with a psychiatrist might be a part of your overall mental health treatment.

### QUESTION 2: WHAT IF I WANT, OR NEED, TO MEET WITH A PSYCHIATRIST?



The counseling center keeps an updated list of local psychiatric providers, which is available upon request. It is your responsibility to check with your health insurance to see which providers are covered. It can often take weeks, if not months, to be seen by a psychiatrist. If you are considering scheduling an appointment, it is better to schedule an appointment initially and if plans, or needs, change you can cancel the appointment. Clinics typically require you to cancel an appointment no later than 24 hours prior to the appointment start time to avoid a cancellation fee.

**QUESTION 3:  
ARE THERE LOW  
COST COUNSELING  
SERVICES IN  
SPOKANE?**



There are several low cost counseling services available in Spokane that are good options for those seeking counseling with limited financial resources.

**Catholic Charities**

1960 N Holy Names Court  
Spokane, WA 99224  
509.242.2308  
[www.catholiccharitiesspokane.org/counseling](http://www.catholiccharitiesspokane.org/counseling)

**Frontier Behavioral Health**

101 S. Division  
Spokane, WA 99204  
509.838.4651  
[fbhwa.org](http://fbhwa.org)

**Lutheran Community Services**

210 W. Sprague  
Spokane, WA 99201  
509.747.8224  
[lcsnw.org/our-impact/behavioral-health](http://lcsnw.org/our-impact/behavioral-health)

**Whitworth MFT Center**

**\*free unlimited counseling for Whitworth students\***

825 W Hawthorne Rd  
Spokane, WA 99251  
509.777.3411  
[whitworth.edu](http://whitworth.edu)