

Questions to Ask a Mental Health Provider

Choosing a mental health provider is a personal decision. Below are some suggested questions you may wish to consider as part of the process of selecting the provider who is best for your child and your family.

Background

- What is your degree and license/certification?
- What kind of training do you have?
- How long have you been in practice?
- Do you have expertise in treating the kind of problem that my child is experiencing?
- Are there other areas in which you specialize?
- What is your treatment philosophy?
- What are your core values as a practitioner?

Treatment

- What is your approach toward treatment?
- What kind of techniques do you incorporate into sessions?
- Do you give children “homework” to complete between sessions?
- Do you usually work with the child alone or do you conduct family sessions as well?
- How much parent involvement is needed?
- How often do you check in with parents about the course of treatment?
- What is your policy regarding confidentiality?
- What if my child tells you something that sounds risky or dangerous?
- How long does a typical session last?
- How many sessions might be expected overall?
- In the event of a clinical emergency, would you be available? If not, whom would we call?

Psychotropic Medication and Psychological Testing

- What is your opinion on the use of medication in treatment?
- If you did suggest medication for my child, who would prescribe/monitor this?
- Do you administer psychological testing? If not, would you be able to refer me to the appropriate professionals?

Communication with Other Professionals

- Will you be in contact with the staff at my child's school? If so, will you be attending school meetings?
- What about other professionals my child sees? For example, will you be in contact with his pediatrician? With his probation officer?
- What is your policy regarding shared information?

Payment

- Do you accept insurance? If so, which plans?
- If not, how does your payment system work? For example, do you charge a set rate or do you offer sliding scale fees based on income?
- Do rates differ for individual versus family treatment?
- Is there a charge for phone consultations while in treatment?
- What is the payment policy if I have to cancel an appointment?

After this initial conversation, ask yourself the following questions:

- Did you feel a sense of rapport with this person?
- Did you feel safe and at ease?
- Did you think this person would be a good match for your child?
- Did you understand how treatment is conducted?
- Did you understand how payment works?
- Are there other questions you want to ask before making a decision?