

# Finding a Mental Health Provider for Your Child and Teen with IBD

**Mental health providers can assist your child as he/she deals with IBD**

Your child with IBD may experience many changes to their life, including incorporating regular visits to the GI clinic, recurrent symptoms, and distress about their condition.

## How Can a Mental Health Provider Help You and Your Child?

- Assist with coping and adjusting to a long-term medical condition
- Change behaviors to help minimize the impact of the illness and maximize treatment protocol
- Promote health behaviors, such as life-style changes, good sleep habits, and regular school attendance
- Follow through on medical recommendations, including medicine, procedures, and therapies
- Assist with parenting and sibling adjustment

## Why Is Mental Health Important?

- When a child has a chronic medical condition, the emotional adjustment is as important as the medical care.
- Intervention services for children, teens, young adults, and their families assist in learning positive coping skills and ways to manage their condition.

## Types of Mental Health Providers

### Therapy (Individual, Group)

- Psychologist
- Clinical Social Worker
- Counselor
- Pastoral Counselor

### Medication Prescription & Monitoring

- Psychiatrist
- Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner
- Mental Health Practitioner

# Finding a Mental Health Provider: Steps to Take



**Talk with  
Your  
Child**

- It is important that your child is “on board” with pursuing mental health services and what sort of provider they would prefer to see.
- For example, some children may be more comfortable seeing a psychologist in a traditional office setting, while others may be more comfortable with a peer specialist or group/therapy setting.
- Your child will plan an important role in the ultimate decision in who he/she would like to see for their mental health.




**Visit with  
Your  
GI Physician**

- Discuss your concerns with your pediatrician.
- Your pediatrician may be able to conduct assessments of what sort of mental health service is needed and/or provide recommendations for local mental health providers.
- He/She may also be able to provide a referral for mental health services, which may or may not be required by your insurance company.



**Contact  
Insurance  
Company**

- Ask whether your insurance plan will cover mental health services and how much coverage is available.
- Ask for a list of all the mental health providers in your area that are covered by your insurance.
- If you do not have insurance, you can choose to pay out-of-pocket or contact your local community health center to find services available.



**Find a  
Provider  
in Your  
Area**

- Research online, in the phone book, or from a list provided by your insurance company to find mental health providers in your area, or visit: <http://locator.apa.org/>
- If the wait for your top choice is too long, go ahead and make the appointment anyway. You can always cancel it later.
- Try your next provider of choice. Sometimes finding the right provider can take a little time. But it is important find a provider who can form a strong bond and relationship with your child to optimize treatment effectiveness.

# Finding a Mental Health Provider for Your Child and Teen with IBD

## Questions to Ask Before the 1st Visit

- What experience do you have working with children/adolescents?
- What experience do you have working with children with IBD or chronic medical conditions?
- What are your credentials? How long have you been doing this work?
- What kinds of treatment do you use to help people with their condition and concerns? Have they been proven effective for dealing with my child's condition and concerns?
- What is your appointment availability? Do you have after work or early morning appointments?
- What are your fees? Is there a sliding scale fee policy?
- What types of insurance do you accept? Will you accept direct billing to or payment from my insurance company? Do you accept Medicare/Medicaid?

It is okay to ask questions before and during the first appointment. Providers know that you are “shopping” for the best fit and are willing to help you find it.

## What Happens in Therapy?

- Your mental health provider will ask you and your child about his/her feelings, thoughts, friendships, school, and other important parts of their lives.
- During your first session, the mental health provider will ask a lot of questions in order to learn about your child and better understand what concerns you and you child have.
- After a few sessions, you can expect the mental health provider to share with you and your child their understanding of the problem, how therapy can help, and what will happen in therapy room.
- You and your child may also be asked to help set goals for treatment.

## Questions to Ask During the 1st Visit

- Will you coordinate my child's care with other providers? If yes, how so?
- What does successful therapy look like to you?
- How often will you meet with my child and/or me? How long will each session be?
- What will be the goals of treatment?
- What communication methods are preferred? Are emails or phone calls between appointments acceptable?

# Finding a Mental Health Provider: Financial Considerations

Financing mental health services for your child is an important part of the process. You will want to check with your insurance provider and your potential mental health provider to determine what will be both the best relational fit for your child and the best financial fit for you.

## No Health Insurance Coverage

- If your insurance does not cover mental health services or you do not have health coverage, you may choose to pay for these services out-of-pocket.
- Many mental health providers offer their services on a sliding scale fee policy, where the amount you pay depends on your income.

## Private Insurance

- Contact your insurance company to see if mental health services are covered and, if so, how you may obtain these benefits.
- Depending on your insurance policy there may be out-of-pocket costs you will need to cover (i.e. co-pay, deductible, co-insurance). Ask for an explanation about these costs.
- There are often restrictions as to which providers are covered under different insurance plans. You'll want to double check that your selected provider is covered by your insurance.

## Government-Sponsored Insurance

- Medicare and Medicaid may provide for mental health services from some providers.
- You will want to contact them to determine which providers in your area are covered by your insurance.

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Sources: American Psychological Association; National Alliance on Mental Illness; KidsHealth.com