

Tips on Connecting with Behavioral Health Care

Your care team has recommended you seek BH services outside of your primary care physician's (PCP) office. We acknowledge the reality of scarce providers offering affordable services. It can be a time-consuming task to identify a behavioral health (BH) provider.

This guide is meant to highlight who, how, and what to communicate to providers and agencies to ensure your child's needs are being met. Keep in mind the following points to ensure success:

- **Keep a record** of why your child's provider has recommended community BH services including your child's **diagnosis**, the **type** of treatment recommended, and any other details about your child's **clinical needs** (medications, previous treatment, etc).
- If you don't understand why the referral or recommendation was made, **ask** your provider to explain it again
- Remain **consistent with follow up** even if you are not able to connect with someone directly or are placed on a wait list. Making regular calls to check the status of your place on the waitlist or inquire about openings due to cancellations can significantly increase the chances of being seen in a timely way.
- **Pursue several providers and agencies at once** based on the needs discussed with your providers. This maximizes odds of getting connected to a particular service. You can always cancel or remove yourself from a waitlist once you establish care with a provider.
- **Accept a daytime appointment** first. Then you may ask the provider to add you to their waitlist for an after school or evening appointment after you have established care.
- **Be prepared for intake questions.** The therapist may reach out to you to find out more about your reason for referral, what your child or family's needs are, and confirm your insurance information. Some providers need this information prior to adding you to their wait list and may triage based on level of need.
- Sign a **release of information** to facilitate communication between your PCP office and community-based provider when care is established

In addition to using a list of specific BH providers, we recommend the following additional methods to be connected to a community BH provider:

- Contact the **Behavioral Health Helpline (BHHL)** at 833-733-2774. The BHHL is available 24/7 for real-time clinical assessment and connection to crisis services, mental health or substance use treatment, and referrals and connections to providers in your community.
- Contact your **insurance company** - All insurances have a dedicated phone number for BH care. Insurance companies keep lists of providers that are considered in network and can direct you to providers who have availability in most cases. Start by calling the number on your insurance card or visit their website to search providers.
- Contact **your school** – Most schools and districts have some type of social emotional support staff. Inquire with your child's teacher, guidance counselor or other school official on the availability of individual and group support they offer. A formal plan like an IEP or 504 is not always needed to access services that can benefit your child. Your school district may also have a relationship with virtual therapy programs such as Care Solace or Cartwheel to connect with a provider.

- Contact your **local board of health** – Some cities and towns may offer BH services through their health departments. Call or visit your town/city health department to inquire about services available to residents.
- Contact your **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** – Some employers contract with an EAP as a benefit to offer support around many topics. If an EAP is available to you, it is likely open to all members of your immediate family. Check with your benefits to see if you have access to EAP services, and if they can provide BH services or assist in the search for a BH provider for your family.
- Search for a community-based provider on the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Access (**MABHA**) website. MABHA lists community-based services for mental health and substance use treatment. <https://www.mabhaccess.com>
- Connect with your local **Community Behavioral Health Center**– these centers offer a variety of urgent and non-urgent care and can offer support to you in navigating the service options within your community <https://www.mass.gov/find-a-cbhc>
- Connect with your local **Family Resource Center** – these centers offer a variety of supports designed to enhance and meet the needs of the community, including access to support or skill building groups <https://www.frcma.org/>
- Connect with a **referral service** – The following agencies create and manage a network of therapists and aid families in identifying a provider and connecting. These services are highly sought after, but can be important part of the plan to identify a provider
 - <https://interface.williamjames.edu/> - William James College Interface Referral Service-
 - Note: only available to certain towns and cities. Check website for eligibility
 - therapymatcher.org - National Association of Social Worker’s Therapy Matcher
 - therapistlocator.net – Therapist Locator for Marriage and Family Therapists
- Search providers directly through the following websites. Often you can search according to filters that are most relevant, including client age, clinician specialty and types of insurances/payments accepted
 - <https://www.aacap.org> American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Finder
 - <http://www.masshelpline.com/resources/bhhresourcedirectory>
 - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us>
 - <https://www.cliniciansofcolor.org/>
 - <https://zencare.co/>
 - <https://mentalhealthmatch.com/>
 - Helloalma.com
 - Headway.co
 - Openpathwaycollective.org – affordable, out of pocket network
 - Therapyforblackgirls.com – for Black women seeking a Black female therapist
 - Therapyden.com – inclusive, progressive, and gender-affirming therapist directory
 - Mabhaccess.com – State run site that include multiple levels of care, such as inpatient and substance use programs. Discuss with your PCP/BHC on what to search when using this site