

What to Expect in Behavioral Health Therapy

It is not always an easy decision to see a therapist for your child or family's concerns. The following information can help in the decision making process and prepare you for a positive experience:

- ❖ **Therapy is successful when your child/family are willing to be there:** It is not uncommon to not “want” to go, yet willingness to experience the benefits of therapy is necessary.
- ❖ **Therapy will not fix someone, rather support them to solve their own concerns:** Therapists help you to help yourself. They will be a guide and consultant, offer assessment, insightful questions, proven skills, and clinical recommendations to aid your child/family. A quality therapist will support self-sufficiency rather than dependence on therapy.
- ❖ **Therapy often results in progress towards life goals, while the process can be challenging at times:** Discussing memories and experiences, changing a behavior, or understanding ourselves can be uncomfortable at times. Therapy will help bring more lasting joy and relief in life as we do our part, much like working out physically.
- ❖ **Therapist training:** Therapists have masters and doctorate degrees. They have spent years studying how people change, relationships, work/school/social environments, managing conflict, and communication. Therapists use listening skills, theory, and techniques designed to help people overcome challenges. It is important to ensure your therapist provides proven interventions and you have a good connection with him/her.
- ❖ **Preparing for therapy:** Have an idea of goals to achieve, expectations, and preferences for how therapy might work best for your child/family. Discuss these matters with the therapist in the first session or in a pre-intake consultation if offered. Tell your therapist what works and does not work for your family. We have the most success when beginning therapy prepared and being open to new ideas.
 - **Questions you may want to ask a potential agency or therapist include:** how will the therapist approach your given concerns, how will they build a connection with your family, what is their expertise and training, what is their role when working with your family?
- ❖ **Health Insurance:** Please be sure to verify coverage and if your chosen therapist is on your insurance panel.
- ❖ **What to expect at the first session:** The therapist will begin by getting to know your child/family and reviewing paperwork/confidentiality/individual responsibilities. They then obtain detailed information about strengths and challenges, discuss potential diagnosis, and develop a plan for therapy. Many will also discuss goals and interventions to begin overcoming concerns if time allows. The first session typically lasts from 1 to 1-1/2 hours.
- ❖ **What to expect at the second session:** Many therapists take time during the second session to develop a care or treatment plan. This is an important time to make sure goals, expectations, and preferences are relayed to the therapist. This process is therapeutic in itself and often key to effective therapy. Setting goals can also help guide the path to long term success. Digging in and working on therapy goals will follow.
- ❖ **Remember that you CAN reach your goals and recovery from social/emotional/behavioral concerns is possible!**