

WHICH MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL IS RIGHT FOR ME?

There are many types of mental health professionals. Below is a list of the kinds of mental health treatment professionals to help you understand the difference between them and the services they provide.

The following mental health professionals can provide psychological testing and assessments, and psychotherapy.

Clinical Psychologist	A doctoral degree in psychology.	Can diagnose and can provide individual, marital, family, and group therapy. Can do full-scale psychological testing.	PsyD – Doctorate Degree PhD – Doctorate Degree In Idaho, can do limited prescribing once a postdoctoral master's degree is received in clinical psychopharmacology from an accredited program, completion of a supervised practicum, and passing a national exam.
Neuropsychologist	A doctoral degree in psychology.	Can diagnose. A psychologist specializing in the relationship between brain function and behavior. Their understanding of brain-behavior relationships allows them to assess, diagnose, and treat individuals with neurological conditions, including brain injuries and related cognitive and behavioral challenges	PsyD – Doctorate Degree PhD – Doctorate Degree Specialized postdoctoral training in neuropsychology is essential. Further specialization may involve focusing on specific neurological conditions like Alzheimer's, stroke, and epilepsy. In Idaho, can do limited prescribing once a postdoctoral master's degree is received in clinical psychopharmacology from an accredited

			program, completion of a supervised practicum, and passing a national exam.
School Psychologist	Typically, involves a bachelor's degree in psychology or a related field, followed by a specialist-level graduate degree in school psychology.	Can diagnose in a school setting, assess students for Individual Education Plans (IEP) and 504 Plans, and work with school staff to maximize efficiency in the school setting.	School psychologists need a Pupil Personal Services Certificate with a School Psychologist Endorsement from the Idaho State Department of Education. They can also be certified as a National Certified School Psychologist (NCSP).

The following mental health professionals can provide traditional psychotherapy and supportive counseling. They cannot prescribe medications:

Social Worker	A bachelor's, master's, or doctorate in social work.	Master's and doctoral levels can diagnose, provide individual, marital, family, and group therapy. Bachelor's level provides case management and advocacy.	LCSW – Licensed Clinical Social Worker LMSW – Licensed Master Social Worker LSW – Licensed Social Worker
Counselor	A master's or doctoral degree in counseling.	Can diagnose, provide individual, marital, family, and group therapy.	LCPC - Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor LPC - Licensed Professional Counselor NCC – National Certified Counselor
Marriage and Family Therapist	A counselor with a master's degree with specialized education and training in marital and family therapy.	Can diagnose, provide individual, marital, family, and group therapy.	LMFT – Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
Drug and Alcohol Counselor	A bachelor's or master's degree in counseling.	A master's degree in a behavioral science field with specific training in drug use/misuse, alcohol use, and addictions. A clinical component is required, or a bachelor's level with	Advanced Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor (ACADC). Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CADC) certification requires a bachelor's degree in

		supervised work experience.	substance abuse counseling along with supervised work experience.
Pastoral Counselor	Pastoral counselors generally need at least a master's degree in a human services field such as counseling, social work, or marriage and family therapy.	Clergy can conduct pastoral counseling within church settings without state licensure. Can provide support and guidance to individuals, couples, and families by integrating spiritual and psychological principles. They address a wide range of issues, including personal conflicts, marriage and family problems, grief and loss, and spiritual struggles.	Can become an LPC or LCPC.
Other therapists	Has received a master's degree in a human service field such as counseling.	Will have various specialty areas, including art and music.	Can be an LPC or LCPC.
School Counselor	Must have a master's degree in counseling or a closely related field with an emphasis in school counseling.	School counselors play a vital role in supporting students' academic, social-emotional, and career development in the school setting. They provide a range of services, including academic advising and career planning. They also collaborate with parents, teachers, and administrators to create a supportive learning environment for all students. They do not typically provide traditional psychotherapy.	School counselors need a Pupil Personal Services Certificate with a School Counselor Endorsement from the Idaho State Department of Education. They can also be certified as a National Certified School Counselor (NCSC). They can be an LPC, LCPC, LMSW, LCSW, or LMFT.
Peer Support Specialist	A peer support specialist is a person, typically with lived experience from mental health or substance use challenges, who uses their personal journey	They provide hope, encouragement, and practical assistance to individuals navigating the mental health and substance use systems. Peer specialists are not	CPSS - Certified Peer Support Specialist - 40-hour training.

	to support others in their recovery.	clinicians and cannot provide psychotherapy or a diagnosis. They assist clients with their recovery by recognizing and developing their strengths and providing support	
Psychiatric Nurse	A bachelor-level nurse with additional training and work experience in psychiatric and mental health nursing.	Provides direct care services such as nursing groups in psychiatric facilities, and supports the patient, the patient's family, and the treatment team.	Registered Nurse (RN/BSN) Can receive certification as a PMH-BC (Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse – Board Certified).

The following mental health professionals can prescribe medication and provide psychotherapy with appropriate training.

Psychiatrist	A medical doctor who went to medical school and has specialized training in the diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional disorders and illnesses.	Can prescribe medication; May provide traditional psychotherapy if they have received formal training, but often do not provide psychotherapy. Can identify, diagnose, and treat all mental health conditions. Can receive Board certifications, including Child and Adolescent, Adult, and Geriatric.	MD – Doctorate in Medicine DO – Doctorate in Osteopathic Medicine
Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner	Master's degree or doctorate in nursing.	A psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner (PMHNP) in Idaho is an advanced practice registered nurse who specializes in the diagnosis, treatment, and management of mental health conditions across the lifespan. They can prescribe medications, provide psychotherapy if they have received	DNP - Doctorate of Nursing Practice NP - Nurse Practitioner PMHNP - Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Also known as an Advanced Practitioner.

		the proper training, and offer counseling services to individuals experiencing a range of mental health issues.	
Physician Assistant	Received a Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) degree, is licensed by the Idaho State Board of Medicine, and can specialize in psychiatry and mental health.	They are trained to perform many of the same tasks as a physician, including conducting physical exams, diagnosing and treating illnesses, ordering labs, interpreting tests, and prescribing medicine. PAs in Idaho have broad autonomy, but they have to have a collaborative practice agreement with a supervising physician.	PA – Physician Assistant Also known as an Advanced Practitioner.

To find a mental health provider, you can:

- Ask your health insurance company for a list of covered providers.
- Seek a referral or recommendation from your primary care provider.
- Ask trusted friends, family, or someone from your faith community for a referral.
- Check to see if your employer offers an employee assistance program (EAP).
- Contact a local or national mental health organization such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

When choosing a mental health provider, consider these points:

- What is the education, training, licensure, and years of experience of a provider. Remember, licensing requirements vary by state.
- Areas a provider specializes in and all services they offer.
- What is their treatment approach and philosophy.
- Which insurance providers can be used.
- What are their office hours, fees, and length of sessions.

Finding the right match is key to setting up a good relationship and getting the most out of your treatment.