

## Ways to Find a Psychologist Outside of the DFW Area

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We are complimented to be asked for help for a possible referral in specific areas of the country. Many times I don't have actual names of people to recommend. Nevertheless, I do have a suggestion of the best way to find someone for therapy services like we provide.

I would suggest that you call a family doctor's office, a pediatrician's office, an OB/GYN's office, an internist's office, and any other kind of MD you can think of and ask them one question. Ask the person who answers the phone, *"Who do you refer to for psychological services?"* They typically won't ask you if you are a patient. They will more than likely tell you on the name and phone number of the person they refer to. They may even give you a website to go to. There are still many people in our profession who do not have their own website. We believe those things are important while there are many providers that do not think it is important. If the provider does not have a website, don't hold that against him or her.

After calling around to a few doctor's offices, you will hear one name come up over and over. That is how a lot of people get to us. They will tell us that they first got our name from their doctor. Then they asked their OB/GYN and our name was given. Then they asked someone else and our name came up yet again. That gives the therapy provider creditability because all those professionals would not give out that same name if the person was not good at what he or she does. It is the reputation of the physician on the line when a referral is given out. Believe me, most physician's and their office staff know who is good and who is not. They are told by their patients. They are very unlikely to refer to people who are bad at what they do. It makes them look bad.

So make it easier on you by benefitting from the "screening" that has already been done by physician's offices in your community. I do have a bias. I believe a Ph.D. (a person with a Ph.D. who is licensed at the Ph.D. level) is the best person to see because he or she has the best training and typically the most experience. There are a lot of LPCs out there who do a good job when they have more experience and seek additional training. In Texas, an LPC is someone who has earned a master's or Ph.D degree who is licensed at the master's level rather than the Ph.D. level. Only a Ph.D. who is has met the criteria and earned licensure at the Ph.D. level can call himself or herself a "Psychologist" in the state of Texas. A Ph.D. who is licensed at the master's level, but has not become licensed at the Ph.D. level cannot call himself or herself a "Psychologist". The degree (master's or Ph.D.) does not determine whether a person is a "Psychologist". Having a graduate degree from any university is totally separate from earning licensure in each state. You earn your degree and then you do what you need to do in your

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state to become licensed. Whether they have earned the license at the Ph.D. level is what determines whether the person can refer to him or herself as a "Psychologist". Pretty confusing for the consumer don't you think?

By the way, when you ask about experience, ask "post licensure". We have a former associate who use to work in our office who quotes that she has 10 years of experience but she includes the time while she was a student. If you begin to count the years of experience after she took the test and got all the supervised experience to earn her license she has 2.5. That is an important distinction.

Also, many times, the best person isn't going to be on your insurance plan. Most of the seasoned, experienced providers have gotten off of plans that are low paying and restricting. They don't need managed care for marketing or for their income. Many, but not all, of the providers on panels are new to the profession or need to be on managed care panels for marketing purposes because "word of mouth" marketing isn't working well. This isn't true for everyone listed on an insurance panel but it is for many. If you must use someone from your insurance panel, ask a lot of questions. Here are a few:

1. How long have you had your license to practice?
2. What is your specialty? (Some people will do marital counseling but they have no training or experience in it)
3. What hours do you see patients?
4. What is your fee for the first appointment and every appointment after that?
5. Do you take credit cards?
6. What other credentials do you have to support your specialty?
7. How long are the sessions?
8. What is your policy if I cancel within 24 hours? Do you charge a cancellation fee?

I hope this is helpful and that it helps you make the best choice for you.