



MiResource

Finding the Right Care

**FAQs for Blue Cross and Blue Shield
of Kansas Members**

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Welcome to MiResource!

Making the choice to seek therapy is a brave first step. We are here to help guide you through the process of finding the right care for you. Using our searchable database is easy!



We are always here to help

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How do I know if I need to see someone for my mental health?

Every person struggles with their mental health at some point in their lives. Using coping strategies that you've developed over time or talking with people you trust can often help you get over the hurdles you face in life. At times these just may not feel like enough.

Many people seek out the help of a professional when their ability to cope has been overwhelmed or they want a fresh perspective. If you are spending a lot of time dealing with an issue or it's significantly interfering with some part of your life, it may be time to seek out help.

Should I start with therapy or medication first?

Both medication and therapy have been proven effective for treating mental health concerns. Some concerns respond better to medications so you will need to talk with a mental health provider to determine if medication is the best option. If you have taken medication in the past, and it has been helpful, you may decide to start medication again.

Many concerns also respond well to therapy only. Many people prefer therapy because they like understanding why they've developed certain patterns and want to learn lifelong coping skills. Whether you try one or both depends on your unique situation and your comfort. We encourage making this decision in consultation with a mental health professional.

Who should I go to if I am looking for talk therapy?

Talk therapy, also known as psychotherapy, is a collaboration between you and a mental health provider based in dialogue. There are many approaches to psychotherapy and many types of providers that can help you learn the skills you need to overcome your challenges. Mental health providers that are trained to provide psychotherapy include marriage and family therapists, counselors, psychologists, social workers, and psychiatrists.

Who can prescribe medications?

Providers who are licensed to prescribe medicine often include psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, clinical nurse specialists, primary care physicians, and physician assistants. Depending on which state you live in, different providers may be allowed to prescribe.

Do I need a diagnosis to receive care?

No. A diagnosis is not necessary to receive mental health care. People struggle with mental health concerns along a continuum. Some have a diagnosis for what they are experiencing and others don't. If you want to know if your concerns meet the criteria for a diagnosis, you can talk about this with any licensed mental health provider.

I'm under the age of 18, do I need parental consent to receive therapy?

You may or may not need to seek consent depending on your state's laws. Here's a review of state laws regarding parental consent for mental health treatment:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4393016/>

Should I do in-person or remote care?

In-person care might be a better option for you if... picking up on body language or other nonverbal cues is important for you when interacting with others. You are comfortable in and prefer an office setting. You like to set aside a separate time and place for therapy.

Remote care might be right for you if... you are nervous about meeting with someone in person and would feel more comfortable meeting with the provider in your location of choice. You have a busy schedule and need to save transportation time. You do not live close to care and do not have an easy way to travel to sessions.

Other things to consider:

- Online therapy can be supplemental to in-person therapy when in-person is the recommended treatment.
- Some forms of therapy are best in person, such as art therapy, expressive arts therapy, animal-assisted psychotherapy, etc.

Is remote therapy just as effective as face-to-face therapy?

Studies have shown that there are no major differences in therapist-client interactions between online and face-to-face therapy. However, the success of any therapeutic intervention is largely individualized and depends on the relationship between you and your therapist, regardless of whether it is remote or in person.

If I decided to use remote therapy, are the sites or apps secure?

Remote therapy should always ensure client confidentiality because they are receiving personal information. You should only use sites and apps that are HIPAA-compliant and you should be able to verify your therapist's identity.

While the specifics vary within each site or app, you generally should be able to exchange secure messages/text, speak on the phone, and video conference with them.

How do I know if a provider is the right fit for me?

A good place to start is to consider your specific needs and priorities. Think about what you hope to get out of your experience? Here are a few questions to ask yourself.

- Does the provider have experience working with issues like mine?
- Is it important that the provider share similar cultural identities to me, such as race, gender, or spirituality?
- Can the provider accommodate my mobility needs, such as having an elevator or first-floor access with no-step entry?
- Does the provider speak the language(s) I feel most comfortable speaking when I express my emotions?
- Is the provider available when I am?

You can use our filters to find providers who match your answers to the above questions. Ultimately, the provider who is right for you is someone who feels trustworthy and who is well-equipped to help you meet your goals. Just like with any relationship, some providers are a good fit for some clients, and some aren't.

One way to assess fit is to see how you feel during your first contact with the provider. Many providers require an initial consultation call before you can schedule an appointment with them. This way you can see if they are a good fit before you start working together. It's a good idea to be prepared with a list of questions you want to ask so that you can make an informed decision.

Many providers check in with their clients to see how therapy is going so that you can adjust accordingly. If they don't ask, we encourage you to give your provider feedback about what's working and not working along the way. At any point, if you decide you aren't getting your needs met, you are welcome to search MiResource for someone else who will be a better fit. In the end, you meeting your goals is what is important. We are here to support you!

What if I want a provider with a specific identities?

Sometimes meeting with a provider with certain identities can make us feel more comfortable, such as you might find a female-identified provider easier to talk to because you are used to talking with your mom about your problems. You may also feel more comfortable speaking to someone who shares your religious background because your religious values are very important to you.

Other times, your decision to meet with a particular type of provider may be based on a need to feel safe and comfortable after an experience of gendered trauma, such as wanting to meet with a man provider after being sexually abused by a woman. You may also prefer to meet with a provider who speaks your primary language because it is easier to process emotions without translating them at the same time.

Based on your own identities, you may have encountered discrimination, stereotyping, or identity-related trauma (e.g., racism, transphobia, homophobia). These lived experiences can have serious, negative consequences on your mental health. Meeting with someone who shares your identities may help you feel more secure that you can avoid explaining how you have been impacted.

What should I write when contacting a provider by email?

When you email a provider, here are some helpful details to include:

1. Your name
2. How you plan to pay for care
3. Your phone number

Note: Remember, email is not confidential. Anything that you prefer to keep confidential is best communicated by phone.

Sample email:

Hello, My name is [Name].

I found your profile on MiResource and I am interested in learning more about your practice. I plan to pay with [preferred method of payment (e.g., health insurance plan)]. I'd like to find a time to connect to see if I might be a good fit for your practice. You can reach me at this email or by phone at [phone number] on [day] around [time] or [day] at [time.]

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,
[Name]

Congratulations! You have started your journey to better mental health!

What should I say when contacting a provider by phone?

When you call a provider, you will likely need to leave a voicemail. Here are some helpful details to include:

1. Your name
2. How you plan to pay for care
3. Your phone number (make sure to say it slowly and clearly so they have time to write it down. To be safe, say it twice.)
4. Give them some convenient times to call you back and let them know if you are OK with them leaving you a voicemail. If you are comfortable, you can leave your email address as well.

Sample voicemail:

"Hi my name is [Name]. I found your profile on MiResource and am interested in learning more about your practice.

I plan to pay with [preferred method of payment, (e.g., health insurance plan)].
You can reach me by phone at [phone number] on [day] around [time].
Again, my name is [Name] and you can reach me at [phone number].

Feel free to leave a voicemail if I don't answer.
Also, you can email me at [email]. That email again is [email].
Thank you very much. I look forward to hearing back from you."

You did it! Taking the first step is always the hardest.

What should I expect in my first session?

During your first therapy session, your provider will typically start out by going over several forms with you. The forms include things like confidentiality, what to do if you need to miss a session, expectations for payment, and your mental health history. Don't worry, not all visits are like this. They just want to make sure you know how to proceed as a client.

Because the first session involves getting to know you, the provider typically asks a lot of questions, many more than usual. Here are some you might expect:

- What made you seek treatment?
- What symptoms are you experiencing?
- What is your history of mental health concerns?
- What do you hope to get out of therapy?
- What are your strengths and who is in your support system?

Your responses to these questions will help you set realistic goals together, identify how often you might meet, and how long your therapy will last.

We encourage you to be patient. The first few sessions may not feel helpful right away because there are not any quick fixes to the complicated issues we face. The focus is on finding long-term solutions that will serve you the rest of your life, which is worth the wait. If you are feeling frustrated, talk to your provider about it. They understand and have these conversations with clients every day.

How does confidentiality work?

Confidentiality between a mental health provider and a client means that whatever you tell your provider stays between you and your provider. Even the fact that you are meeting with a provider is confidential. If you want anyone to be able to communicate with your provider about your treatment or for your provider to share your records, you will need to sign a release of information first. Your provider will have this document and can help you fill it out.

There are very few exceptions for when a provider is legally obligated to break confidentiality. Providers are obligated to share these at the outset of treatment. They vary by state, but most commonly include:

- **Imminent danger to self or others:** If a provider believes that you are in imminent danger of harming yourself or someone else, they will contact the police or other authorities to ensure that you and others are safe.
- **Abuse of a child or vulnerable adult:** If a provider believes that a child or an adult who is unable to care for themselves is being abused, they will call your local child and family protective agencies.
- **Records are court ordered:** If your records are court ordered, your provider will do what they can to continue to protect your confidentiality, and often negotiate with the court to only release certain information. In some cases, they may not have a choice except to release your entire record or to testify. These cases are rare and you will typically know before you seek treatment if a court order may be issued (e.g., child custody case).

How do I know if I should change providers?

Making a great connection with a provider is exciting. We trust their approach, feel safe opening up to them, and make progress toward our goals. Not all providers and clients are a good fit though.

If you are not feeling a connection with your provider and it's getting in the way of you meeting your goals, here are a few questions to ask yourself:

- Do I feel supported? A good provider will challenge you, yet will do so with compassion and understanding.
- Does my provider listen to me and understand what I say?
- Is my provider reliable?
- Does my provider push their own values on me?
- Am I making progress toward my goals?
- Does my therapist just tell me what to do rather than teaching me the skills to find my own solutions?
- Does my provider have the expertise to treat my issues?
- Is my provider crossing any boundaries that make me feel uncomfortable?

Change doesn't happen overnight, but you should feel a change after a few months, not years. If your provider is saying it will take a few years, then you should be able to discuss this openly with your provider and come up with a better solution. If not, you should consider seeing a different provider.

When you are ready to search for another provider, we are here for you. Our filters will help you narrow down your search and make a better match.

When should I expect to feel better?

When you will feel better will be different for everyone. Some people feel better right away because getting started and having support instills hope. Having someone validate your concerns can feel like you are less alone.

For some, starting the process to can be hard and sometimes you may feel worse before you feel better. Please don't let this scare you away from therapy. It just means that talking about things you don't typically talk about can bring up uncomfortable feelings. It's a process, and if you stick with it, you will feel better.

Also, we're not very good at remembering how we used to feel, so it can be hard to compare how we feel today with how we felt yesterday. One way to track how you feel is to chart your progress on a scale. Your provider can help you do this during your visits. Some people like to journal about their feelings so they can look back and read about how they used to feel and compare it to the present.

If many weeks go by and you are not feeling better, it's a good time to talk with your provider. The two of you can figure out if another approach is needed.

How long will I be in treatment?

Every person has different needs when it comes to their mental health, so the length of treatment is different for everyone. Ultimately, how long you stay in treatment is up to you. Factors that may impact your length of treatment include the severity of your concerns, how long it takes for you to feel comfortable and to open up with your provider, how frequently you meet, and other life events are going on outside of treatment.

Having a conversation about how long treatment may take is a good one to have with your provider. The goal is always to feel better so you can "graduate" from care. Once you are finished, you can always return for a "tune up" when needed.