

INFORMED CHOICES ABOUT

DEPRESSION

Who provides counseling or therapy?

Key Points:

- Therapy or counseling is provided by a range of professionals including family doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and trained counselors.
- To find out about services in your community check with your family doctor, the Canadian Mental Health Association or the Mood Disorders Association, or professional associations
- Some medical clinics have their own counselors.
- If you are a student at a college or university, you can ask a school counselor.
- Be sure to ask whether there is a cost for treatment. Some counselors or therapists specialize in certain areas (e.g., treating depression or treating anxiety) or work with specific groups of people (such as younger or older adults).

Types of Professionals who Provide Counseling or Therapy

Family doctors typically have a bachelor's degree, plus four years training in medicine and two years of training in family medicine. (Qualification: MD and Fellowship in Family Medicine, CCFP). Some family doctors have training in counseling and a few of them practice therapy as a major part of their work. The amount of training they have in these areas varies. This work is usually covered by provincial health plans, so there is no cost to the patient.

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Nurses have two to four years of training in nursing through a college or university. (Qualification: R.N. or B.N. or R.P.N. for registered psychiatric nurse). Some have additional training in counseling or therapy or more advanced university training. Services by nurses are provided with no charge by some hospitals or community health services.

Psychiatrists usually have a bachelor's degree, plus four years of training as a medical doctor. After this, they take five years of specialized training in psychiatry, covering treatment of a range of different health and mental health problems with medicine and therapy. (Qualification: MD and Fellowship in Psychiatry, FRCPC). Their work is covered by provincial health plans so there is no cost for these services. Many psychiatrists focus on assessment and consultation, where they see a patient for one or two sessions, then make recommendations for treatment to the family doctor.

Psychologists have a bachelor's degree plus six or seven years of graduate university training in psychology. (Qualification: Ph.D. (doctorate) in Psychology or masters degree in a few provinces; and registration as a psychologist (C.Psych.). Specialized training in clinical, counseling, applied or educational psychology covers treatment of a range of different health and mental health problems with therapy. Services by psychologists are provided with no charge by some hospitals or community health services. Some psychologists work in a private practice where there is a charge for the service. Psychology services are partially covered by most extended health insurance plans.

Social workers have four years (bachelor's level) or six years (master's level) of training in social work and related fields. (Qualification: B.S.W., R.S.W. or M.S.W.) Training may cover counseling or therapy with individuals, families, and groups with a range of health and mental health problems. Social work services are provided by some hospitals and many community agencies with no or minimal charge. Private social work services are partially covered by some extended health insurance plans.

Therapists or counselors. This term is not regulated in most Canadian provinces so people with different kinds of backgrounds may use this term. Many have training in education, psychology, social work, marriage and family therapy, occupational therapy, or the clergy. Services by counselors are provided with no charge by some hospitals, medical clinics, or community health services. Ask about the person's training and experience when arranging to see a counselor or therapist. Ontario is developing a College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists that will register and regulate these professionals in Ontario.

Disclaimer: Information in this pamphlet is provided for educational purposes only. Always consult a qualified health care professional for your specific care.



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Caution: A small number of people practicing as counselors have inadequate training. Ask about the training of the person you will be seeing.

For more fact sheets and information about depression and its treatment please visit: <http://depression.informedchoices.ca>

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Source: This summary provides scientifically accurate information. It was prepared in a research review by researchers and young adults with the Mobilizing Minds Research Group. The researchers are based at six universities: Manitoba, York, McMaster, Brock, Brandon, and Université Laval. Our core community partner is mindyourmind.ca located in London, Ontario. Our young adult team members are located all across the country. Last revised: 12 March 2013.

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