

8 Types of Mental Health Professionals for Children

It can be challenging to know who to turn to for help. Here's a quick overview of 8 different types of mental health professionals who work with children and families.

Therapist

- "Therapist" is a general term for someone who provides therapy or other therapeutic services.
- Sometimes people use the word "counselor" to refer to people who provide therapy.
- The term "therapist" doesn't tell you about a person's training or expertise.

Little Otter Parent Coach

- Trained in childhood development, education, or mental health, and provides practical tips and support to parents and children.
- Understands each family's treatment goals and is part of the Little Otter care team, building a care plan that works for the family.
- Offers ongoing support between therapy sessions, helping to navigate and coordinate teachers, pediatricians, and therapists to provide the best care for your family.

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT)

- A licensed mental health professional who specializes in the diagnosis and psychological treatment of mental health disorders.
- Conducts assessments, makes diagnoses and plans, and provides therapy.
- Holds a doctorate degree (PhD, PsyD, or EdD) in a mental health field.
- Is not a medical doctor and cannot provide medication.

Mental Health Counselor

- A licensed mental health professional trained in counselling, therapy, and support.
- Has a masters degree in mental health counselling (LHMC, LPC, or LCPC).
- Not a medical professional and cannot prescribe medication.

Child Psychiatrist

- A licensed medical doctor who specializes in the mental health care of children, adolescents, and families, and consider how physical illnesses might impact mental health.
- Has a medical degree (MD or DO) and has completed training in adult psychiatry, as well as in child and adolescent psychiatry.
- Can prescribe medication and offer medication management services.
- May provide therapy and may collaborate with counselors, therapists, or psychologists to facilitate wrap-around care.

Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner (NP)

- A licensed mental health professional trained to evaluate and treat mental health disorders.
- Has a masters or doctoral degree in nursing, specializing in mental health.
- Is a medical professional and can prescribe medications. Some states require collaboration with a physician for prescribing.

Social Worker

- A licensed mental health professional trained in counselling, therapy, and support.
- Has a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree and is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker.
- Not a medical professional and cannot prescribe medication.

Clinical Psychologist

- A licensed mental health professional who specializes in the diagnosis and psychological treatment of mental health disorders.
- Conducts assessments, makes diagnoses and plans, and provides therapy.
- Holds a doctorate degree (PhD, PsyD, or EdD) in a mental health field.
- Is not a medical doctor and cannot provide medication.

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