

# **G**ENERAL DESCRIPTION OF PROVIDERS

---

*See also "Providers Licensed in Virginia" section.*

## **Psychiatrist**

A medical doctor whose education includes a medical degree and at least four additional years of study and training. Psychiatrists are licensed as physicians by their states. Psychiatrists who pass the national examination administered by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology become board certified in psychiatry. Psychiatrists provide medical/psychiatric evaluation and treatment for emotional and behavioral problems and psychiatric disorders. As physicians, psychiatrists can prescribe and monitor medications.

## **Child Psychiatrist**

A licensed physician who is a fully trained psychiatrist and who has two additional years of advanced training beyond general psychiatry in work with children, adolescents, and families. Child and adolescent psychiatrists who pass the national examination administered by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology become board certified in child and adolescent psychiatry. Child and adolescent psychiatrists provide medical/psychiatric evaluation and a full range of treatment interventions for emotional and behavioral problems and psychiatric disorders. As physicians, child and adolescent psychiatrists can prescribe and monitor medications.

## **Psychologist**

A mental health professional with an advanced degree in psychology. Some psychologists possess a Master's Degree (M.S.) in psychology while others have a Doctoral Degree (Ph.D., Psy.D., or Ed.D.) in clinical, educational, counseling, developmental or research psychology. Psychologists are licensed in most states. Psychologists can provide psychological evaluation and treatment for emotional and behavioral problems and disorders. Psychologists can also provide psychological testing and assessments, but are unable to prescribe medications.

## **Child Psychologist**

A licensed psychologist who specializes in providing psychological services to infants, toddlers, children, and adolescents. A child psychologist is specifically trained to diagnose and treat the psychological, cognitive, emotional, developmental, behavioral, and family problems of children.

## **Primary Care Physician**

A physician, such as a family physician or internist, who has completed medical school, is licensed by a medical board, and is able to prescribe medications. Although a primary care physician is trained to spot mental health problems and often prescribes medications, the primary care physician does not specialize in mental health treatment.

## **Pediatrician**

A primary care physician who focuses on the care of children from birth to 21 years of age and who specializes in preventive health maintenance for healthy children and medical care for those who are seriously or chronically ill. Pediatricians are also increasingly involved with the prevention, early detection, and management of behavioral, developmental, and functional social problems that affect children and adolescents.

### **Psychiatric Clinical Nurse Specialist**

A registered nurse with a Master's Degree in psychiatric mental health nursing who is licensed by the state to provide care, counseling, and therapy to persons with psychological, emotional, and behavioral needs. An accreditation as an Advanced Practicing Registered Nurse (APRN) by an appropriate credentialing body in order for third party reimbursement to be received.

### **Physician Assistant**

A professional who is licensed to practice under the supervision of a physician and who may perform physical examinations, diagnose illnesses and, in most states, write prescriptions. The education program required for licensure is shorter in duration than medical school.

### **Nurse Practitioner**

A nurse who has completed advanced training and who may perform physical examinations, take medical histories, counsel patients, and prescribe certain medications. Nurse practitioners hold national certification in an area of specialty (family practice, psychiatry, pediatrics, etc.), and are licensed through nursing boards. In Virginia, nurse practitioners work under the supervision of licensed physicians.

### **Occupational Therapist**

A professional who has received training in helping people recover and gain or regain skills to promote normal growth and development.

### **Licensed Clinical Social Worker (L.C.S.W.)**

A professional who has earned a degree in social work and has been licensed to provide counseling/therapy to individuals with emotional, psychological, and/or behavioral needs. Some social workers have a bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S.W., or B.S.); however most social workers have earned a Master's Degree (M.S. or M.S.W.). In most states, social workers can take an examination to be licensed as clinical social workers. Social workers provide counseling/therapy to individuals with emotional, psychological, and/or behavioral needs.

### **Licensed Professional Counselor (L.P.C.)**

A professional with a Master's (M.A. or M.S.) or Doctoral Degree who has been licensed to provide counseling to individuals with psychological, emotional, and behavioral needs. L.P.C.'s must obtain supervised clinical experience and must pass a state licensing exam. L.P.C.'s are regulated by federal and state laws, as well as their own code of ethics as developed by various national organizations such as the American Counseling Association. The L.P.C. can be found in private practice, counseling centers, group practices, family service centers, health maintenance organizations (HMOs), hospitals, and government agencies.

### **Sources**

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP). (2004). *Where to Find Help for Your Child*. [Online]. Available: [http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts\\_for\\_families/where\\_to\\_find\\_help\\_for\\_your\\_child](http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/where_to_find_help_for_your_child). [April 2013].

National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse, Technical Assistance Guide Systems Advocacy. [Online]. Available: [http://www.mhselfhelp.org/tehasst/view.php?tehasst\\_id=13](http://www.mhselfhelp.org/tehasst/view.php?tehasst_id=13). [September 2010]. *Not Available April 2013*.