

# Accessing your mental health benefits

Your Blue Shield of California health plan provides coverage for inpatient and outpatient mental health and substance abuse care through an agreement with Blue Shield's mental health service administrator (MHSA).

Whenever you need non-emergency mental health or substance abuse care, you can call (877) 263-9952 for immediate assistance or help finding a network provider. You can also find a provider online by going to the *Find a Doctor* section of [blueshieldca.com](https://www.blueshieldca.com).  
Note: If you believe you need emergency care, call 911.

# Choosing the right clinician for you

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## Know your clinician options

**Master's-level clinicians** have a master's degree in one of the following mental health disciplines: social work, nursing, professional counseling, marriage and family therapy, or education. These individuals are independently licensed in the state in which they practice. Master's-level clinicians provide therapy for many basic needs to address concerns and root causes. They can see you alone, as part of a couple, or with your entire family. In some cases, they may recommend that you consult with a psychiatrist or nurse practitioner to evaluate whether medication could contribute to the best outcome.

**Psychologists** generally have doctoral degrees in the area of educational, child, clinical or counseling psychology. These individuals are independently licensed in the state in which they practice. Psychologists provide a variety of services, including assessments, psychological testing, therapy and other psychotherapeutic interventions. Some psychologists have specialties in the area of treating children and adolescents. Psychologists offer testing that can help answer questions about what may be causing certain symptoms; often, a master's-level clinician or psychiatrist will refer to a psychologist for such testing if they believe it is right for a particular patient.

**Psychiatrists** are medical doctors (MDs) specializing in psychiatry. They provide psychiatric evaluations and prescribe psychotropic medications, therapy and other psychotherapeutic interventions. They are licensed by the state in which they practice, and most are board-certified in their specialty. Some psychiatrists have sub-specialties in the area of child psychiatry, adolescent psychiatry, addictions or geriatrics. If you are interested in a psychiatrist who evaluates and treats children, be sure to inquire as to whether he or she is trained in child psychiatry.

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One of the most important factors in addressing your mental health concern is finding a clinician you trust. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to ensure the clinician you select is right for you.

### Consider qualities that are important to you

What type of background or areas of expertise would you like your clinician to have? Would you prefer a male or female clinician? Would you be more comfortable with a clinician who shares your cultural background? Should your clinician be close to your home or close to work?

### Take into account the clinician's background

What are the clinician's credentials? What is the clinician's philosophy or approach? Rest assured that the background and practice of each clinician is reviewed before admitting them into the network.

### Use an MHSA network clinician

Except for emergencies, benefits are covered only when pre-authorized by the MHSA. Remember, if you are facing an emergency, you should call 911 or go to the nearest emergency facility immediately.

# Locating clinicians

You have two options for locating a clinician that is right for you – online or by referral.

### Finding a clinician online

Locating a clinician online is as easy as these steps:

1. Go to [blueshieldca.com/find-a-doctor](https://blueshieldca.com/find-a-doctor) – you can either log in or continue searching as a "guest." Select *Mental Health* and answer the questions about your plan and location to find the right network of mental health providers.
2. At the search page, search by city, ZIP code or clinician name. You can narrow your search further by selecting a clinician type, gender, specialty and location.
3. On the results page, you have the option to learn more about a clinician's background, as well as availability.

### Calling for a referral or pre-authorization

If you are unable to find a clinician that is right for you through [blueshieldca.com](https://blueshieldca.com) or would simply like some assistance, call (877) 263-9952, and an MHSA representative will help you find someone whose training, background and expertise fit your preferences and needs. If you feel that the clinician we referred you to is not right for you, call us back and we'll help you find another clinician who meets your needs. It is important that you call to get pre-authorization before treatment to ensure that your benefits are covered.

# Accessing care

Whenever you need non-emergency mental health or substance abuse care, you can call the MHSA at (877) 263-9952.

**Press 1** if you need immediate assistance.

**Press 4** for help finding a provider or to receive authorization for services. Once the MHSA has provided authorization for services, you can make an appointment with the network clinician you have selected.

During the call, you will be asked for your subscriber ID number, which is on your Blue Shield member ID card, and also asked a few questions to help identify your needs.

**Note:** If you believe you need emergency care, call 911.

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## **LifeReferrals 24/7 – experts to help you handle life**

LifeReferrals 24/7<sup>SM</sup> offers convenient support to help you meet life's challenges. A simple phone call connects you with a team of experienced professionals ready to assist you with personal, family and work issues. Get help with financial, legal and mediation questions, even identity theft assistance. You can call LifeReferrals 24/7 toll-free, anytime, at (800) 985-2405.

## **NurseHelp 24/7 – assistance when you need it**

NurseHelp 24/7<sup>SM</sup> is a comprehensive program that provides you access to phone consultations and online chat with registered nurses – 24 hours a day, every day. Whether you have health concerns, personal concerns such as stress or depression, or would like a referral to a mental health clinician, simply pick up the phone and dial toll-free. Nurses are waiting to assist at no extra cost to you. Contact a nurse anytime day or night at (877) 304-0504.

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## **We're here to help**

If you have any questions, call the Member Services number located on the back of your member ID card.