

Family Therapy Resource Guide

A guide for adoptive, guardian, relative, and other families in Washington State.

What is Family Therapy?

Family therapy is a type of psychological counseling that helps family members improve communication and recognize and resolve conflicts to improve their relationships and quality of life. Family therapists focus on understanding clients' symptoms and patterns of interactions within their existing environment. Family therapy is usually provided by a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, a licensed psychologist, licensed independent clinical social worker or licensed mental health counselor. These therapists have postgraduate degrees and may be credentialed by the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. Family Therapy may include all members of a family or only those willing to participate.

Why would my family seek Family Therapy?

Family therapy is useful in any family situation that causes stress, grief, anger or conflict. It can help you and your family members understand one another better and bring you closer together. Family therapy has been proven to be helpful independent of or in conjunction with other types of individual therapy such as substance abuse or mental health counseling and treatment. Family therapy recognizes the necessity of treating mental and emotional problems within the context of the family system.

Family therapy can help you improve troubled relationships with your spouse, children, or other family members. You may address specific issues such as conflict between parents and children, or the impact of substance abuse or a mental illness on the entire family. Seeking help through Family Therapy indicates a willingness to find ways to solve challenging problems. Finding resources outside of yourself demonstrates strength and commitment to building healthy relationships among your family members.

If my child (spouse, partner or myself) is having individual therapy why do we need Family Therapy?

Sometimes it is helpful for a therapist to see the interaction among the family members to better offer suggestions on how a family can communicate and resolve conflicts.

- To help with parenting conflicts or differences in child rearing
- To improve communication among all the family members
- To help with anger management
- To help with issues of: grief and loss, trauma, divorce or separation, depression, sex, sexual identity and sexuality, anxiety, relationship issues & stigma.

Does seeking Family Therapy mean we are deficient as a family or have mental illness?

All families need help from time to time. Rather than giving up, feeling frustrated or angry that things are not getting better, accessing Family Therapy may provide the tools that make it possible for everyone in the family to be heard and for the family to reach an agreement that benefits everyone.

How will I know it is time to seek Family Therapy?

- When a problem seems to persist and is not easily resolved
- When you feel helpless, frustrated or overwhelmed by certain situations within your family or with a particular member of your family
- When I am feeling anxious, unsure of where to turn, at "my wits end", not sure how I feel or what to do next.
- When you feel like you want to cause harm to someone in your family (physical, spiritual or emotional)
- When I am afraid that someone in my family wants to harm me, an animal or someone else.

**If you feel you are in immediate danger call 911.
Remove yourself or anyone else who is at risk. Get to safety.**

Q&A for Adoptive Families

Who pays for Family Therapy?

- Paid by some insurance plans including Medicaid
- Paid by personal or family sources of money

Does the Adoption Support Program cover Family Therapy?

Consult with your adoption support consultant to discuss your family's therapy options. You can find [Adoption Support Program Consultants](#) in your area at dshs.wa.gov.

Family Therapy is not an immediate remedy if you were recently forcibly restrained, beaten, slapped or are otherwise abused or actively being harmed. Please seek immediate help by calling 911!

Ways to Find a Therapist

- Contact your adoption agency or Adoption Support Consultant
- Contact your health insurance plan or insurance care coordinator
- Ask your doctor to make a recommendation
- Call 211 and ask for Family Counseling Referral

Resources

therapistlocator.net

Click on "[Locate a Therapist](#)"

Washington Recovery Helpline

(866) 789-1511; (206) 461-3219 (TTY)
warecoveryhelpline.org

mentalhealthaction.com

Go to *Resources* > [Regional Support Networks \(RSN\)](#)

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)

dshs.wa.gov

Search for:

[Regional Support Networks \(RSNs\) Services Information](#)

Search for:

[The Washington State Adoption Council's 2013-2014 Adoption Information Exchange](#)

In King County

King County Regional Service Network
(800) 790-8049; (206) 263-8997

Children's Crisis Outreach Response System
King County Crisis Line: (206) 461-3222

Overlake Christian Church, Orphan Ministry
Redmond, WA, (425) 702-0303

In Pierce County

Pierce County Regional Service Network
(866) 673-6256; (253) 292-4200

Crisis Line (Pierce County)
(800) 576-7764

Questions to Ask When Seeking or Interviewing a Family Therapist

- Do you have experience with trauma, attachment and adoption?
- Are you certified in any of these areas: adoption, trauma, EMDR, attachment, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome?
- Do you have experience in treating children with a known or suspected history of neglect, physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse, grief and loss?
- Do you have familiarity/experience with brain research and normal and abnormal child development?
- Do you have specialty training in family therapy?
- What is your experience with my family's type of problem?
- What is your educational and training background?
- Are you currently licensed by the state?
- Do you have current Professional Liability Insurance?
- Are you accredited by the AAMFT or other professional organizations?
- What is your philosophy about the parent's place/role in a family? What is your philosophy about the child's place/role in a family?
- What do you "do" in therapy? Or what are some examples of what I could expect to happen in a therapy session?
- How do you work with the family when the adoption is trans-racial or trans-cultural?
- Can you provide me with professional references?
- How much do you charge for each session?
- Are your services covered by my health insurance plan? Are you able to accept payment from Medicaid or Adoption Support?
- If insurance doesn't cover the full amount, do you have a sliding fee scale based on ability to pay?
- Will I need to pay the full fee upfront?
- Do you provide therapy services in a language other than English?
- Do you have any experience working with people of my cultural background, race or ethnicity?
- Where is your office?
- What are your office hours?
- Are you available in case of emergency?
- How long is each session?
- How often are sessions scheduled?
- How many sessions should I expect to have?
- What is your policy on canceled sessions?

The Post-Adoption Support Coalition is an advocacy effort led by Many Lights Foundation. For more information visit manylights.org or send an email to <mailto:info@manylights.org>.