Contacting a Mental Health Provider

When selecting a provider, it helps to get as much information as possible. Below are some questions you may want to ask when making your first appointment:

1. Do you have any openings available?
2. How long will I need to wait before I can be seen?
3. Have you treated others with similar concerns?
4. How long (how many sessions) do you typically see someone for this issue?
5. What is your policy if I miss an appointment?
6. If I have an emergency, who do I contact?

If you have insurance

Questions for your provider:

1. Do you accept ____________ (my insurance company)?
2. Do you handle the paperwork for my insurance?
   - Pre-certification (or pre-authorization) is sometimes required for mental health services—this is permission from your insurance company before your first appointment.
   - Some counselors will bill your insurance company directly; with others you may have to pay up front and then get reimbursed from your insurance company later.

If you do not have insurance

Questions for your provider:

1. How much do you charge per session?
2. Do you offer a sliding scale fee?
   - If yes, what documentation do I need to provide for a reduced fee?
3. Do I need to pay for each session the same day, or will you bill me?

It is important to be as open as possible about why you are seeking services. It is equally important that you feel comfortable sharing personal information with the provider you have chosen. Do not feel obligated to schedule an appointment with the first person you contact. You may want to speak to several providers before selecting someone.