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*Joint Commission on Accreditation
of Healthcare Organizations*

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How to Choose a Quality Behavioral Health Care Provider



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of Services to Youth and Children



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Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations

The Gold Standard for Quality in Health Care

How to Choose a Quality Behavioral Health Care Provider



The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations has prepared this information to assist you in

making your selection. Knowing what to look for and what to ask will help you choose an organization that provides quality care and best meets your needs.

Behavioral Health Care organizations may provide treatment, care or services in a variety of settings including inpatient, residential, outpatient, foster care, therapeutic foster care, day treatment, in the home, outdoors, and wilderness settings.

of Services to Youth and Children

Selecting quality behavioral health care treatment, care or services for children and youth requires special thought and attention.

Questions to ask before choosing behavioral health care

When choosing a behavioral health care provider, you might ask:

Do the treatment, care or services match the needs of the child/youth?

- What treatment, care or services do you offer?
- What are your hours?
- Will the staff use language that he/she understands?
Will there be bilingual staff or sign language interpreters if he/she needs them?
- How can your treatment, care or services help him/her?
- Have you served children or youth with the same needs or problems?
- Is he/she eligible for treatment, care or services?
- Will her/his treatment, care or services be covered by insurance or public funding?
- Does the organization offer a sliding fee schedule?
- What will the out of pocket expenses be?
- What is the organization's service philosophy?
- What treatment, care or services are provided directly, and what treatment, care or services are referred to sources outside the organization?

How do you and the child/youth feel about the organization?

Your impressions are important when you visit a provider. Even if you do not need help in making decisions about treatment, care or services for children and youth, it is wise to ask a trusted friend or family member to go with you for another opinion. Here are some things to look for:

- Do staff ask for and respect his/her preference and choice?
- Are all people treated with respect and dignity?
- Do the staff members appear to understand and respect cultural differences?
- Do the premises appear to be well maintained, clean, and safe?
- Is the building accessible? Are there features like handrails, elevators, automatic doors, and ramps for people who need them?
- Does the organization take time to explain rights and responsibilities? Does the organization provide a copy of the rights and responsibilities information?
- What is the organization's process for receiving and resolving complaints, should there be any?

treatment, care or services for children and youth

What do the staff members tell you about the treatment, care or services?

When you talk with staff members, you will have lots of questions. You might want to take notes so that you can review the answers to your questions later.

- How long will it take to begin treatment, care or services?
- How will the treatment, care or services be individualized to meet his/her needs?
- How will reasonable accommodations be provided if he/she needs them?
- How will I be involved in the planning of treatment, care or services?
- What are the opportunities for my family to participate?
- How will privacy be protected?
- If transportation is needed, how can you help?
- What, if any, behavioral emergency interventions are utilized?
- What is the organization's philosophy on the use of specified interventions?
- Does the organization develop a discharge plan to ensure appropriate care is provided after he/she leaves the program? How does the organization choose the other programs or agencies to whom they refer for the provision of such care?

How can you tell if a provider delivers quality treatment, care or services?

You will feel better about a provider that is concerned about the quality of treatment, care or services delivered and the satisfaction of the people who receive treatment, care or services. Here are some questions you might want to ask:

- What have been the results for children who have participated in your program?
- Are the people you serve or their families involved in planning for the future of your organization?
- Is the organization involved in community advocacy efforts? What advocacy and community groups are involved with your organization?
- Are your staff members licensed, certified, or credentialed for the work they do?
- Are the treatment, care or services accredited by an organization that is internationally recognized for helping providers to deliver quality treatment, care or services for children and youth?

For More Information

To learn more about the Joint Commission, see our website at www.jcaho.org.

To report information about accredited organizations: Office of Quality Monitoring, (800) 994-6610 or complaint@jcaho.org.



Where can you find a symbol of quality?

Look for the Joint Commission Gold Symbol of Quality wherever you seek behavioral health care. It is your best assurance that the provider you have chosen is committed to delivering quality treatment, care or services to you and your loved ones.

What is the Joint Commission on Accreditation for Healthcare Organizations?

Founded in 1951, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) is an independent, not-for-profit organization that evaluates and accredits nearly 18,000 health care organizations and programs, including behavioral health care organizations, ambulatory care centers, health plans, home care organizations, hospitals, laboratories, long term care facilities, and long term care pharmacies.

Established in 1972, the Joint Commission's Behavioral Health Care Accreditation program takes a psychosocial approach to accreditation of almost 1,700 behavioral health care organizations. Joint Commission's behavioral health care accredited organizations range from large complex community mental health centers to small single service agencies.

The customized standards and survey process address a range of settings, treatment, care or services, and populations throughout the life span and include mental health, addictions, child welfare treatment, care or services and treatment, care or services to persons with developmental disabilities. Foster Care accreditation standards were introduced in 2000.

As a nationally recognized leader in accreditation the JCAHO is an independent, object evaluator of care and service quality. Accreditation from the Joint Commission is a "gold seal of quality" and a mark of distinction for accredited organizations. Most importantly, Joint Commission accreditation supports the organization's efforts to provide the best quality of care, treatment, or services.

To find out if the behavioral health care organization you are considering is accredited by the Joint Commission, see Quality Check™ at www.jcaho.org. Quality Check, a comprehensive guide to all Joint Commission accredited health care organizations, includes an organization's name, address, telephone number, accreditation decision and accreditation date as well as web site and e-mail links, if available. Quality Check also provides performance reports that include information on the organization's overall performance level and how it compares to other organizations nationally in specific performance areas.