A GUIDE FROM THE PRACTICE OF SHARIFUL A. SYED, MD

How to find a child psychiatrist, and what to ask

Child psychiatrists are medical doctors with extra years of training with children and teens, and there are too few of them. Many families see several other professionals first. Dr. Syed's advice: start looking before things are at their worst. It's better to meet a doctor in an office when things are okay than for the first time in a hospital.

If anyone may be in danger, call 911. For the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, call or text 988.

Where to look

- Ask your pediatrician for names, and ask the school psychologist and other parents too.
- Search directories like Psychology Today and look for child and adolescent psychiatry.
- One way that works now: write a short paragraph about what's going on (leave out names) and ask an AI assistant to find child psychiatrists near you. Then check each name yourself.
- Ask your insurance about out-of-network benefits. Many families use them to see a doctor who isn't in their plan.

Questions for the first call

- Are you a medical doctor, and did you train in child and adolescent psychiatry?
- Do you see children with autism, and children with more than one diagnosis?
- How long is the first visit, and how much of it is listening to my child and to us?
- Will you look at school reports, and talk with the school if it helps?
- What does it cost, and do you help with insurance claims?

What to bring

- One page: what's hardest right now, when it started, and what you've tried.
- Every report and school evaluation, newest first.
- Examples: a note from the teacher, a log of good and bad days.
- Your child's own words. What do they say is hard?
- The one question you most want answered by the end of the visit.

When to call a doctor

- You've been waiting a long time and things are getting worse.
- School has become a daily battle, or your child is out of school.
- Different professionals have told you different things.
- Anyone may be in danger: call 911. In a crisis, call or text 988.

Talk with Dr. Syed for 30 minutes, free, by video or phone: **(516) 522-0410** or sharifulsyedmd.com/autism.

General education for families, not medical or legal advice and not a diagnosis. Every child is different; talk with your child's doctor about yours.