



Questions for Adoptive Parents to Ask When Interviewing a Prospective Mental Health Professional

The questions below were compiled from a number of information resources for adoptive families of children with special needs. If your family is currently working with a mental health professional, consider his/her “adoption competence” in light of these questions. If interviewing potential therapists, you might ask them these questions to determine if they have the experience and training necessary to work effectively with your adoptive family.

- ❖ What are the mental health professional’s credentials? Ask specifically about:
 - Education and degree(s);
 - Licensure or certification;
 - Training and experience.

 - ❖ Does the mental health professional have experience in treating children with a history (either known or suspected) of physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse or trauma? Ask specifically about:
 - training and experience in treating grief and loss, attachment, identity issues, anxiety, and delayed development.

 - ❖ What is the mental health professional’s experience with adoption in general? Ask specifically about:
 - number of adopted children and adoptive family clients;
 - experience with open adoptions;
 - experience in addressing infertility and other potential adoptive parent issues;
 - titles of books on the topic of adoption s/he has read;
 - adoption-related organizations to which s/he belongs;
 - the role s/he thinks adoption plays in the individual and family behavior of triad members; and
 - success stories with former adoptive family clients.

 - ❖ Is the mental health professional’s definition of adoption compatible with yours? For instance, s/he might indicate that adoption involves a legal transfer of parental responsibility that creates a new kinship network linking two (or more) families together through the child they share. The child’s kin network may include birth parents, former foster families and other caretakers.

 - ❖ If the mental health professional is not a medical doctor or nurse practitioner, does he or she have an affiliation with someone who can prescribe medication, if necessary?

 - ❖ Does the mental health professional have a commitment to a particular “school” or method of treatment? What approach does the mental health professional use when working with children who have demonstrated behaviors such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)?
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- ❖ How does the mental health professional involve parents in the treatment process? Ask specifically about:
 - What can parents expect in terms of training and guidance in parenting their child?
 - What homework might the mental health professional ask parents to do?
 - Does the mental health professional have an observation room for the infrequent times when parents are not direct participants in therapy?

- ❖ How does the mental health professional work with families when the adoption is transracial or transcultural?

- ❖ Is the mental health professional willing to work with other professionals involved with the family's adoption, such as social workers, teachers and other mental health professionals?

- ❖ Can the therapist estimate a timeframe for the course of therapy?

- ❖ What are the mental health professional's policies about reimbursement and scheduling? Ask specifically about:
 - How much does the mental health professional charge?
 - Does s/he accept the Oregon Health Plan card?
 - Is there a sliding scale if the mental health professional is not an approved provider on the OHP card or the adoptive family's health insurance policy?
 - When is payment expected (for instance, after each session, at the end of the month, or after reimbursement by the family's insurer)?
 - What is the mental health professional's arrangement for coverage when s/he is not available, especially in an emergency?
 - Are daytime, evening or weekend appointments available? What about after-school appointments?

Compiled by ORPARC Staff, May 5, 2003

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