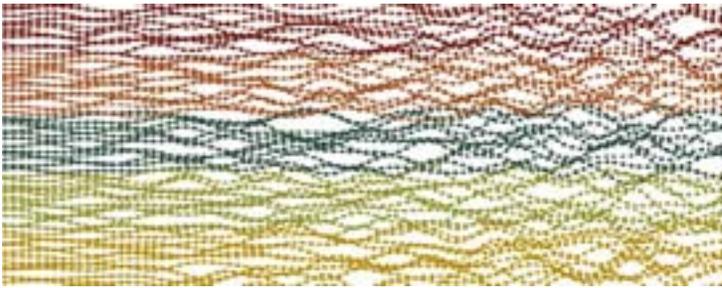


What is a Therapist?

A therapist is someone who is trained to understand and help children with social-emotional and/or behavioral issues. They can help the families of these children, too. There are many different job titles that are included under the word “therapist.” Here are some examples of who you might contact when looking for a therapist:

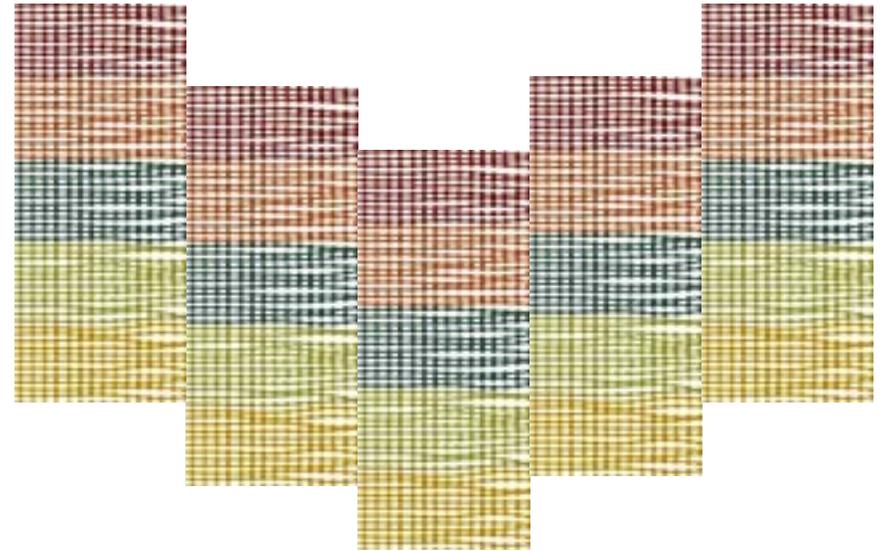
- A social worker (LCSW, LICSW)
- A licensed mental health clinician (LMHC)
- A child psychologist (Ph.D.)
- A child psychiatrist (M.D.)
- An early intervention program (from birth until child turns 3)
- A special education department in the public schools (for children over 3)
- A counseling center



How does therapy work?

All of the people who work in these roles or programs are trained to understand children’s feelings and behaviors. You are an expert about your child and will probably want to work with the therapist as a partner to support changes in your child’s behavior. Research shows that a good relationship between parents and therapist is important for children’s progress.

The therapist will probably want to meet with you first to learn about your child and family. Together you and the therapist will develop goals about your child and build a confidential, trusting relationship. The therapist may want to meet with you and your child together, meet with the child alone, and/or meet with you alone and ask you questions about your child’s life at home.



What types of therapy might someone provide?

There are many different types of therapy that can be used to help your child. A therapist may use one type or may combine several types. Some of the most common tools or strategies are:

- Spending time playing with your child to better understand your child’s interaction style and interests
- Coaching parents about how to handle the child’s behavior
- Exploring the past and how that may be affecting what is happening now
- Offering guidance about ways to respond in different ways to things that are happening with the whole family at home

You and the therapist can decide what strategies might work best for you and your child. Strategies are designed to understand your child better and can be used separately or in combination to help your child build and practice skills, get along better with others, offer support with difficult situations, and manage difficult feelings.

How will I decide what will work best for me and my child?

In order to understand what a particular therapist can offer, there are some questions that you can ask to figure out who might be the best fit for you and your child.

- Does the therapist have experience with children of the same age?
- Specifics about cost: What insurance does the therapist take? Does the therapist have a sliding fee scale?
- Does the therapist use a specific type of therapy? Does the therapist describe it in a way that you understand? Does it feel like a good fit?
- Location: Where are services offered? Does the therapist do home visits? If there are challenges at school or in the child care setting, will the therapist go to observe or meet with staff?
- Time: When are appointments available? Are evening or weekend times a possibility?
- Family involvement: What role do parents and other family members play in the therapy?
- Communication: How are important issues shared with parents/ caregivers and others involved in my child's daily life?
- Medication: What is the therapist's view on using medication with children? Does it fit with your family's perspective?
- Information gathering: How will the therapist get important information about my child? Is there interest in hearing from classroom teachers or child care providers? Does the therapist use checklists or forms that can be filled out. What are the therapist's ideas about how to balance the focus between a child's challenges and strengths?

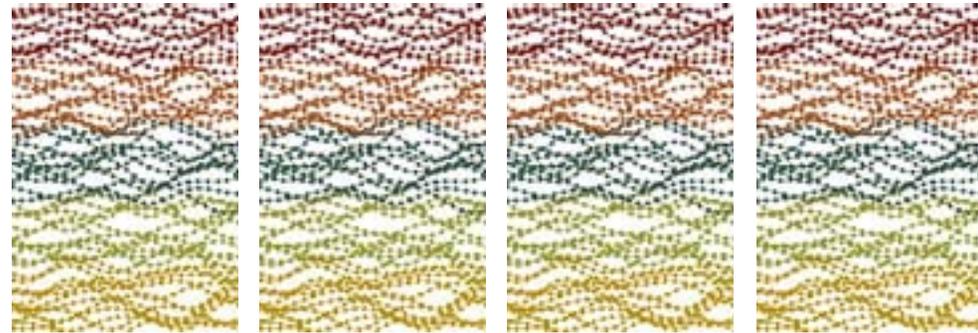
You may have more ideas about information that you want to ask about. Remember, you can ask all of the questions that you have. In fact, it is important that you get all the information you need to make a decision that feels right to you.

And a final reminder of the importance of the relationship! Pay attention to how it feels for you when you are meeting with any therapist. The value of the work comes from feeling comfortable and trusting that you are a team.

For more information, contact Fran Roznowski, 617-349-6485 or froznowski@cpsd.us
or Amy Bamforth, 617-625-6600 x6966 or slc@k12.somerville.ma.us .

Nothing We Tried is Working: What Do We Do Now?

Information about Therapy for Families with Young Children



When young children are struggling with behavior and feelings there are many people who work with families who can help. Teachers, family child care providers, and program directors at preschools have strategies and resources to help families and to try interventions in classrooms.

In spite of the best efforts of families and child care providers however, sometimes more is needed. It may be time to get outside help from a therapist.

This handout was created by the Mental Health/Special Education Subcommittee of the Cambridge 0-8 Council and the Somerville Early Childhood Advisory Council.