



## Counseling for Kids

Most child victims of abuse benefit from a thorough mental health evaluation to determine his/her counseling needs. Abused children may or may not exhibit problem behaviors or signs of distress. A lack of those should not be the basis for deciding for or against counseling. A belief (actually a hope) of many caregivers is that the young child will forget about the abuse and, therefore, counseling is unnecessary. Some caregivers believe that counseling may even remind the child of memories that would normally fade away without intervention. The hope that memory of abuse will fade is common. However, some memories are stored through the senses and may not be cognitive (within the child's awareness).

Counselors treating young children often use a method known as play therapy. These specialists realize that young children communicate more easily through their play than through words. Play therapists may use art therapy or sand tray therapy to provide opportunity for the child to bring forward unconscious conflicts in a safe environment. Counselors that work with children and youth include caregivers in setting goals and determining when milestones are met. Caregivers can also expect to receive education and support from the counselor in learning how to assist their child toward healing.

In addition, caregivers often benefit from meeting with a counselor of their own to focus on grief/trauma issues. Liberty House periodically offers a caregiver information class that focuses on support and education to caregivers as they assist their child and themselves toward healing.

Children are amazingly resilient. If caregivers are able to meet their needs and give them support, they can heal and prosper. With your love and encouragement, and support from professionals, you and your child can recover from child abuse.

## How to Choose your Child's Counselor

**You know your child better than anyone else and you are the consumer. It is your funds or your insurance that will pay for the counselor's services. A good fit for you and your child really matters. It is helpful to meet alone with the counselor prior to him/her seeing your child. Plan ahead with questions or concerns so that you can ask them at the first meeting. Ask to see the playroom or the facility the counselor will be using. Continue with the counselor only if you think he or she is the right person to help your child.**

### Examples of questions to ask:

- Do you take private insurance? Am I covered to see you with my insurance policy? Do you accept Oregon Health Plan? Do you take a sliding fee if I must self-pay? Do you accept Crime Victims' Compensation?
- Are you licensed in the state of Oregon? What is your license? What is the phone number so I can check to assure you are in good standing with your licensing board?

- What kind of training and experience do you have treating children who have been sexually/physically abused/exposed to domestic violence, etc? Also ask about any additional special needs your child might have. For example: What experience do you have working with children who are hearing impaired? Developmentally delayed?
- What ages of children do you usually work with?
- How many years have you provided treatment to abused children?
- What are your methods and your approach to treating abused children?
- Do you have a special area of interest? Training? Expertise?
- How long will it take? How can you tell if my child is getting better?
- How will you involve me or us (the parents)? How about the rest of the family (like siblings)?
- Will you allow me an opportunity to express my concerns about my child without talking in front of my child?
- What if you and my child don't get along? What if we don't get along? What are the complaint procedures for you/your agency? How can I request another counselor if it seems like you are not a good fit?
- Have you had to testify in court? How many times? How do you feel about doing it, if it is necessary for the child?
- Can you see my child after school or in the early evening? (Give times and days that are convenient for you)

## **How to Set Up Counseling**

Regardless of the type of insurance or payment for counseling, it is important to request a counselor who has experience in the following areas:

- 1) With children in the age range of your child
- 2) With treating abuse or other issues specific to your child's needs

See the Liberty House handout *How To Choose Your Child's Counselor* for additional information.

### **Private Health Insurance:**

If you have insurance, call the company to get a list of preferred providers. Call these providers to find out if they have the expertise you need. If none of the preferred providers has experience in these areas, call the insurance company back to let them know that none of the providers can meet your child's needs. They may provide you with another counselor's name or allow you to choose your own counselor off-panel.

### **Oregon Health Plan:**

If your child is covered by the Oregon Health Plan (medical card), he or she is eligible for counseling at no charge to you. Make sure that the counselor has experience working with the age of your child and is a specialist in the type of issues your child has experienced.

## **Crime Victims' Compensation Program:**

This program helps pay for treatment that a victim may need as a result of a crime. If a report has been made regarding your child to police or child welfare, your child may be eligible for Crime Victim Compensation (CVC). (CVC) is a grant program, not an entitlement program, so whether or not CVC awards the grant is based upon the evidence provided by investigators. CVC is a payer of last resort; they require that you use available insurance first. CVC can reimburse you for out-of-pocket expenses such as co-payments. If your child has no insurance, CVC works like an insurance program to assist with medical and counseling needs as a result of a crime. If your child has no insurance, the program will cover a child abuse assessment at the Children's Center, regardless of whether or not there are findings of abuse. Law Enforcement or Victim Advocates with the District Attorney's office can provide you with a CVC form and assistance in filling it out. Applications may be obtained from and filed with:

### **Crime Victims' Compensation Program**

Department of Justice

1162 Court Street NE

Salem, OR 97301

Telephone: **503-378-5348**

TDD: 503-378-5938

Fax: 503-378-5738

Applications can also be downloaded from <http://www.doj.state.or.us/victims/Pages/index.aspx>

By clicking on "**Application for Crime Victim Compensation**" or download it directly from:

[http://www.doj.state.or.us/victims/pdf/oregon\\_crime\\_victim\\_compensation\\_application.pdf](http://www.doj.state.or.us/victims/pdf/oregon_crime_victim_compensation_application.pdf)

If you or your child was a victim of a crime outside of Oregon go to:

<http://www.oocities.org/enddomesticviolencenow/crimevictimcompensationprograms.html>

## **No Insurance Coverage:**

If you or your family has no health insurance, go to <https://www.coveroregon.com/> to apply for health insurance. The Affordable Care Act has made health insurance available to everyone. The guidelines have changed regarding Oregon Health Plan eligibility making this no cost insurance available to more families. Your child may additionally be eligible under the Crime Victim Compensation (CVC) program described above.

You may need to find a counselor who can work with you on a sliding scale. This means that your income is considered and the counselor works to come to an agreement with you on a payment for counseling that is less than the regular fee.