

On particularly rough days when I'm sure I can't possibly endure, I like to remind myself that my track record for getting through bad days so far is 100% and that's pretty good.
~Unknown

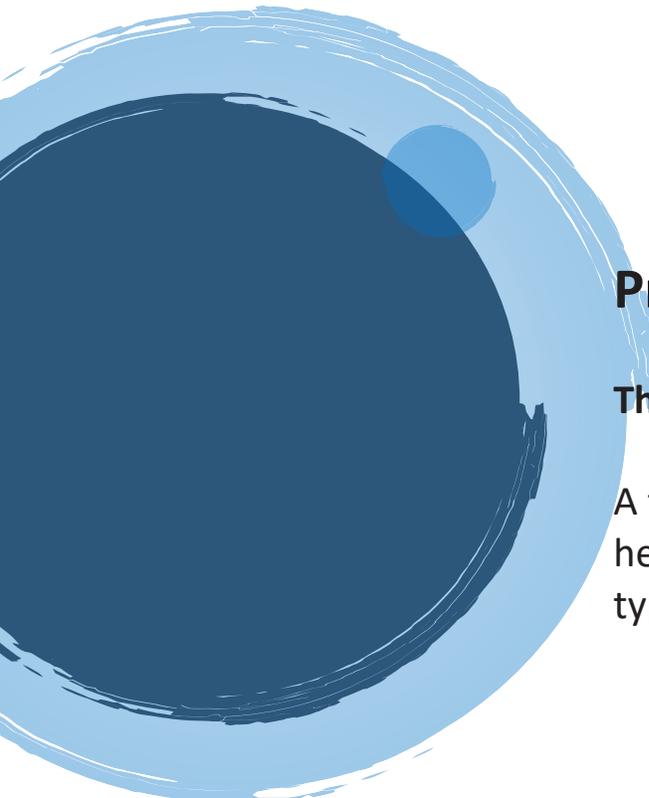
Finding Help When You Need It:

Types of mental health providers

If you are a scleroderma patient seeking to locate mental healthcare services, a good place to begin is to determine what type of a mental health provider will best meet your needs.

Since there are several different types of providers who diagnose and treat mental illness, we have created this handout to help educate you about each of them.

It is best when choosing a provider to consult with your personal medical team, your primary health provider or any of your scleroderma health team members so they can help you obtain a referral that will be in your network.



Providers who prescribe medicine

Therapist

A therapist can help diagnose and treat mental health conditions. There are many different types of therapists, including:

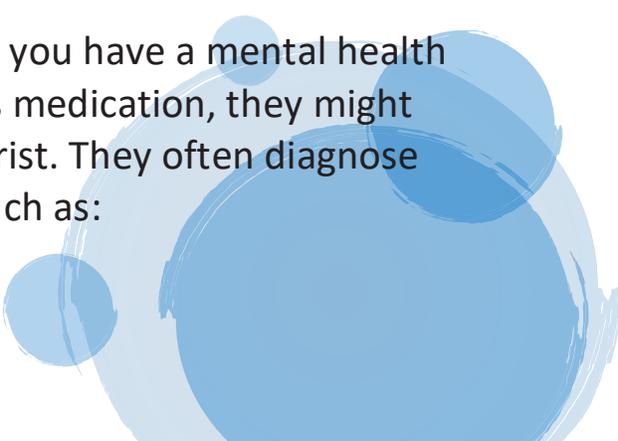
- psychiatrists
- psychologists
- psychoanalysts
- clinical counselors

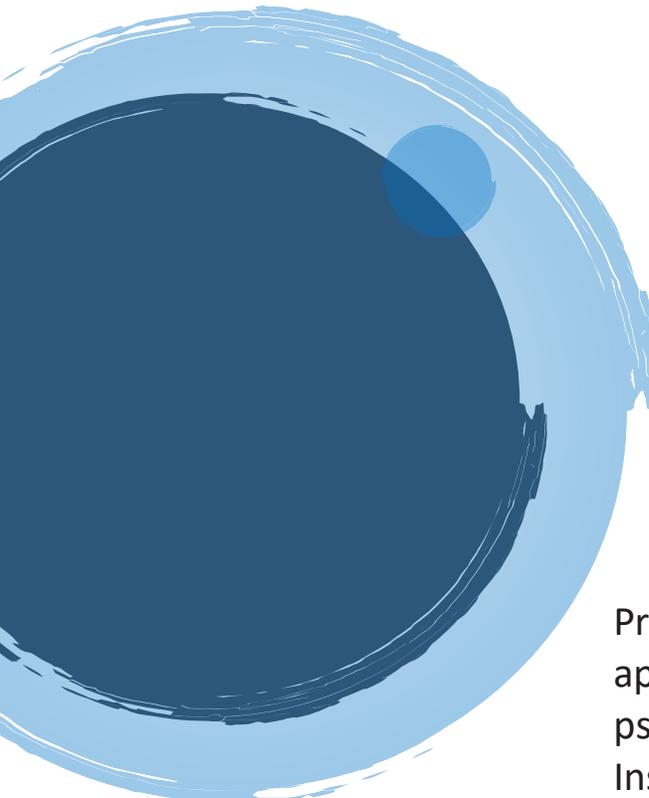
Therapists often specialize in certain areas, such as addiction or child behavioral issues.

Only some types of therapists prescribe medications. To prescribe medications, they need to be either a physician or nurse practitioner. In some cases, you may also see a physician's assistant or a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine.

Psychiatrist

If your doctor suspects you have a mental health condition that requires medication, they might refer you to a psychiatrist. They often diagnose and treat conditions such as:





- depression
- anxiety disorders
- obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
- bipolar disorder
- schizophrenia

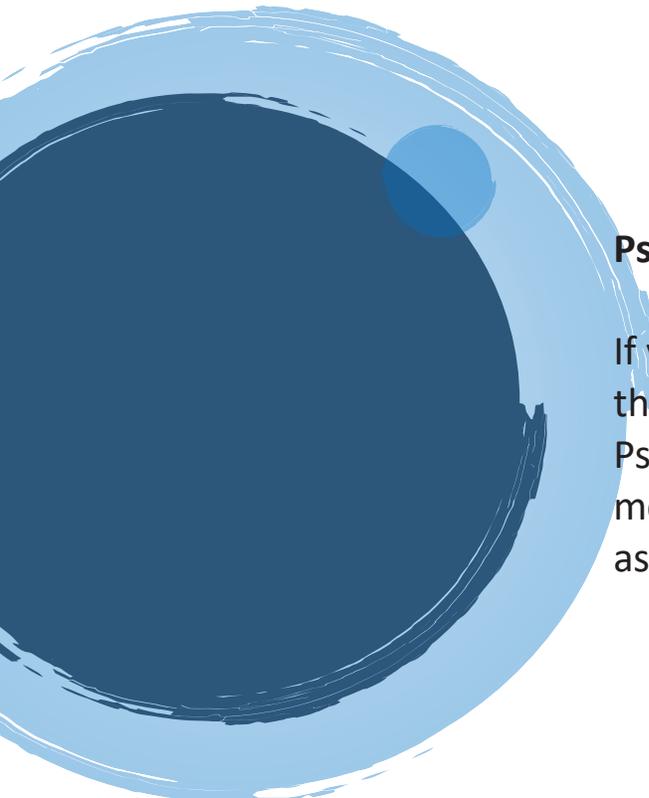
Prescribing medications is often their primary approach to providing treatment. Many psychiatrists don't offer counseling themselves. Instead, many work with a psychologist or other mental health profession who can provide counseling.

Nurse psychotherapist

Nurse psychotherapists generally diagnose and treat psychiatric disorders. They may also treat other health conditions.

Nurse psychotherapists have an advanced nursing degree. They are trained as clinical nurse specialists or nurse practitioners. Clinical nurse specialists cannot prescribe medications in most states. However, nurse practitioners can. They often use a combination of medications and counseling to treat patients.





Psychologist

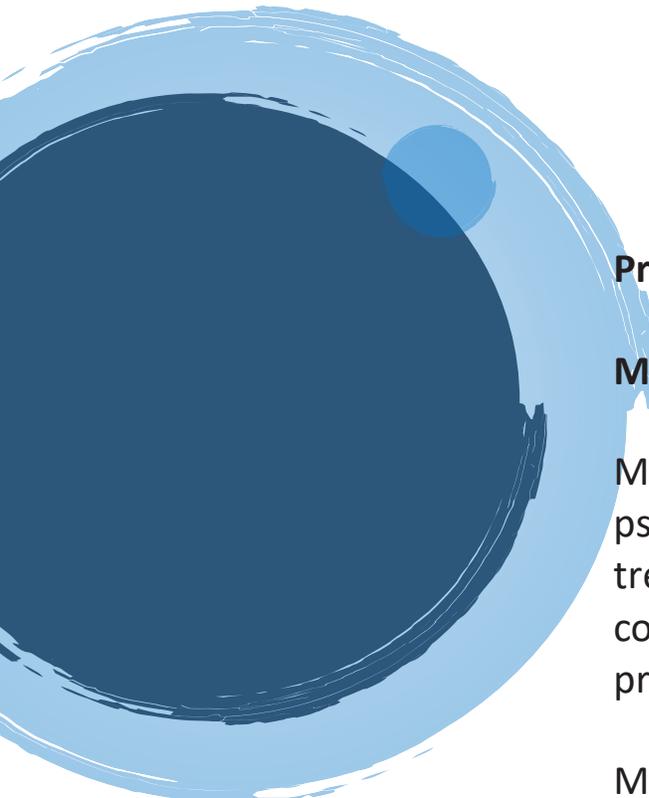
If your doctor thinks you might benefit from therapy, they might refer you to a psychologist. Psychologists are trained to diagnose and treat mental health conditions and challenges, such as:

- depression
- anxiety disorders
- eating disorders
- learning difficulties
- relationship problems
- substance abuse

Psychologists are also trained to give psychological tests. For example, they might administer an IQ test or personality test.

A psychologist can potentially help you learn to manage your symptoms through counseling or other forms of therapy. In some states (Illinois, Louisiana, and New Mexico), they can prescribe medicine. However, when they cannot, psychologists can work with other healthcare providers who can prescribe medications.





Providers who cannot prescribe medicine

Marital and family therapist

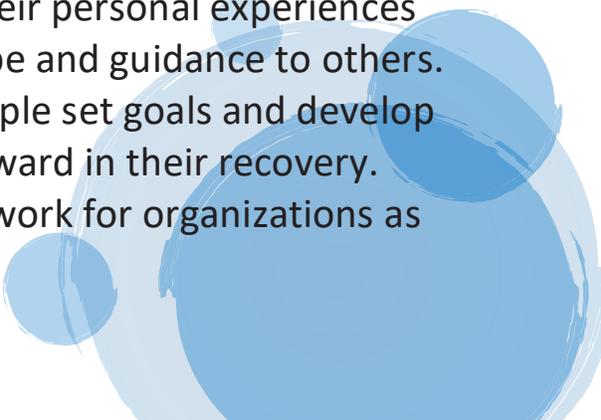
Marital and family therapists are trained in psychotherapy and family systems. They often treat individuals, couples, and families who are coping with marital problems or child-parent problems.

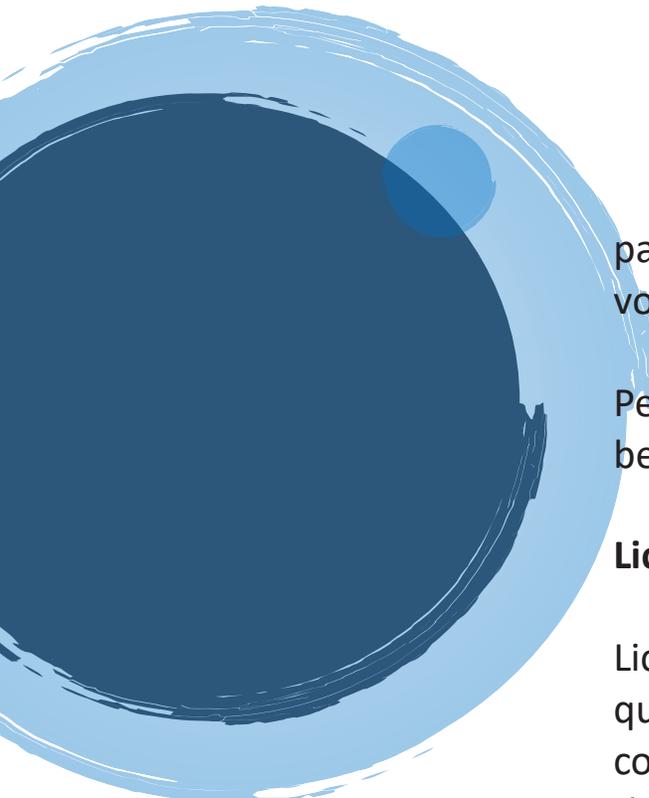
Marital and family therapists are not licensed to prescribe medication. However, they often work with healthcare providers who can prescribe medications.

Peer specialist

Peer specialists are people who've personally experienced and recovered from mental health challenges. They provide support to others who are going through similar experiences. For example, they may help people recover from substance abuse, psychological trauma, or other mental health challenges.

Peer specialists act as role models and sources of support. They share their personal experiences of recovery to give hope and guidance to others. They can also help people set goals and develop strategies to move forward in their recovery. Some peer specialists work for organizations as





paid employees. Others offer their services as volunteers.

Peer specialists cannot prescribe medications because they aren't clinical professionals.

Licensed professional counselor

Licensed professional counselors (LPCs) are qualified to provide individual and group counseling. They can have many titles, based on the particular areas they focus on. For example, some LPCs provide marriage and family therapy.

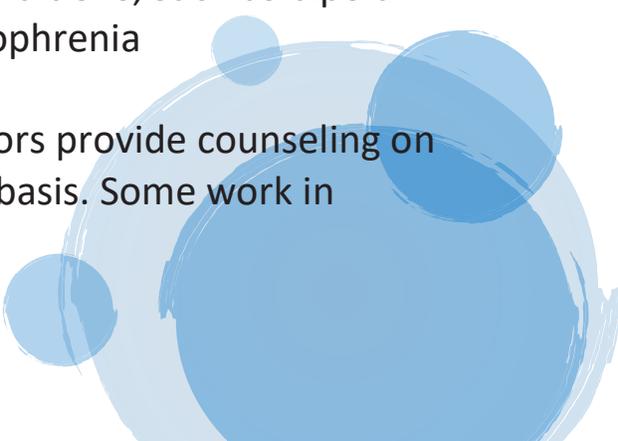
LPCs cannot prescribe medication because they're not licensed to do so.

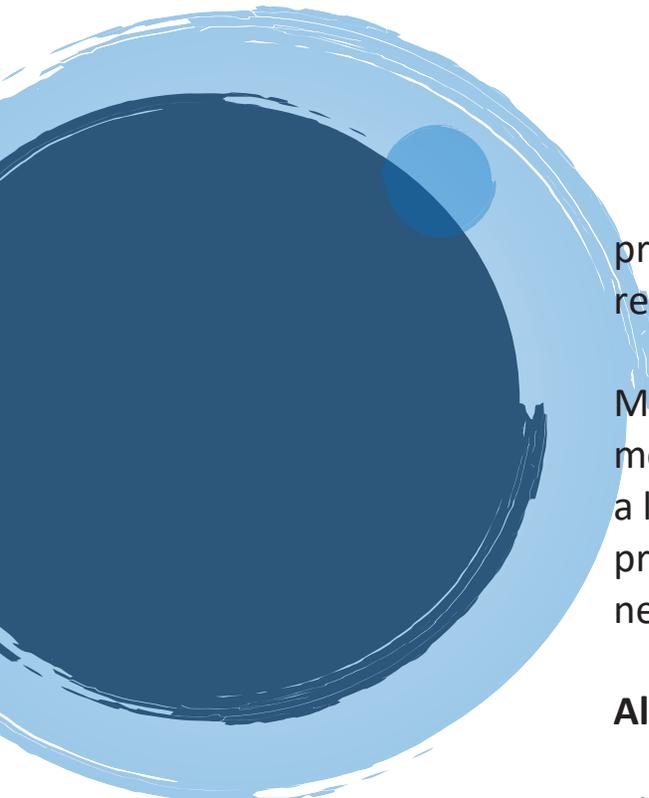
Mental health counselor

A mental health counselor is trained to diagnose and treat people coping with difficult life experiences, such as:

- grief
- relationship problems
- mental health conditions, such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia

Mental health counselors provide counseling on an individual or group basis. Some work in





private practice. Others work for hospitals, residential treatment centers, or other agencies.

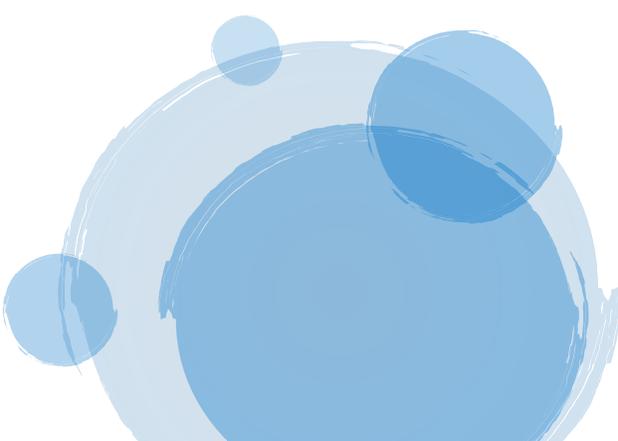
Mental health counselors can't provide medications because they're not equipped with a license. However, many work with healthcare providers who can prescribe medications when needed.

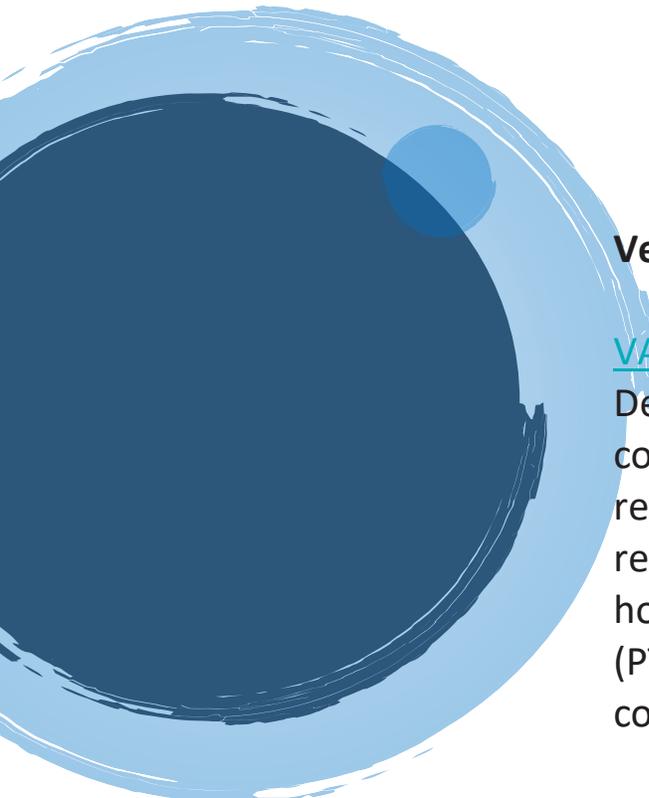
Alcohol and drug abuse counselor

Alcohol and drug abuse counselors are trained to treat people with alcohol and drug addictions. If you have been abusing alcohol or drugs, they can help guide you on the path of sobriety. For example, they can potentially help you learn to:

- modify your behavior
- avoid triggers
- manage withdrawal symptoms

Alcohol and drug abuse counselors cannot prescribe medications. If they think you might benefit from medications, they might advise you to talk to your family doctor or nurse practitioner.





Veterans counselor

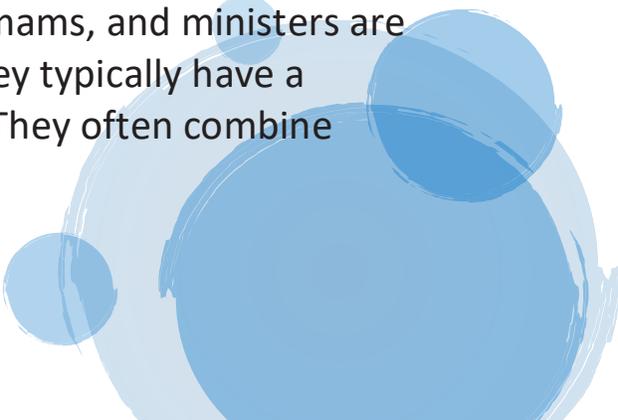
[VA-certified counselors](#) have been trained by the Department of Veterans Affairs. They offer counseling to military veterans. Many veterans return from service with injuries or stress-related illnesses. For example, you might come home with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). If you are a veteran, a VA-certified counselor can help you:

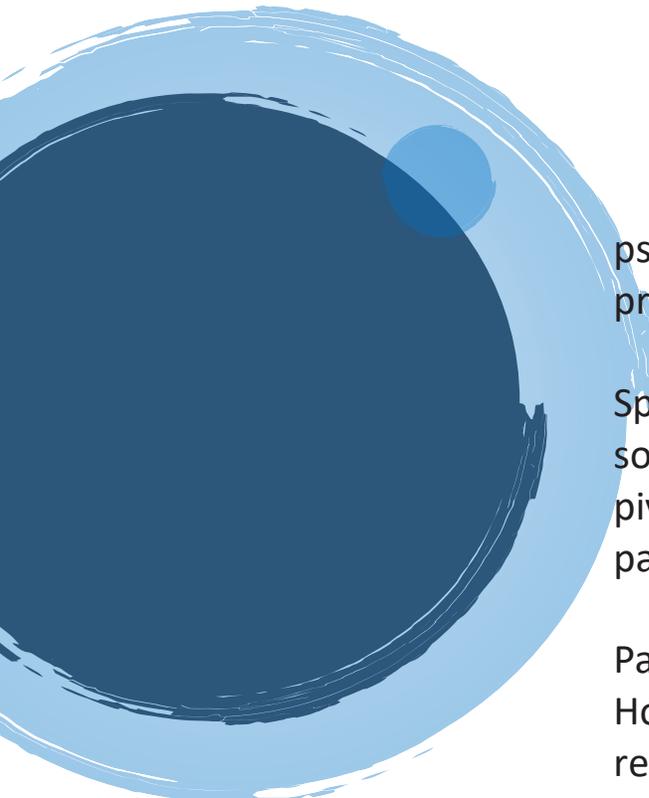
- learn to manage mental health conditions
- transition from military life to civilian life
- cope with negative emotions, such as grief or guilt

VA-certified counselors cannot prescribe medication. If they think you might need medication, they may encourage you to talk to your family doctor, nurse practitioner, or psychiatrist.

Pastoral counselor

A pastoral counselor is a religious counselor who is trained to provide counseling. For example, some priests, rabbis, imams, and ministers are trained counselors. They typically have a postgraduate degree. They often combine





psychological methods with religious training to promote psycho-spiritual healing.

Spirituality is an important part of recovery for some people. If your religious beliefs are a pivotal part of your identity, you might find pastoral counseling helpful.

Pastoral counselors can't prescribe medication. However, some develop professional relationships with healthcare providers who can prescribe medications when needed.

Social worker

Clinical social workers are professional therapists who hold a master's degree in social work. They're trained to provide individual and group counseling. They often work in hospitals, private practices, or clinics. Sometimes they work with people in their homes or schools.

Clinical social workers cannot prescribe medication.

<https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health-resources#finding-therapy>

