

Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists: Experts in Children's Mental Health



Who is a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist?

Child and adolescent psychiatrists are physicians uniquely trained to identify and treat complex relationships between physical illness and mental and behavioral health disorders over the lifespan of a patient and across diverse care delivery settings.

They often work closely with a team of healthcare providers that may include pediatricians, psychotherapists, care coordinators and other partners in the system of care, as well as parents/caregivers in a supportive and accessible environment.

How Do You Become a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist?

Child and adolescent psychiatrists attend four years of medical school, after an undergraduate degree, followed by a three-year general psychiatry residency, and a two-year child and adolescent psychiatry fellowship.

After training, child and adolescent psychiatrists take a nationally certified adult psychiatry board certification exam and many take an additional nationally certified child and adolescent psychiatry certification exam. Both exams are from the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.

Between medical school, residency, and fellowship, it takes over 9 years of training and supervised patient care to become fully trained in the medical and behavioral aspects of child and adolescent psychiatry.

Where Do Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists Work?

Child and adolescent psychiatrists practice in a wide range of settings including private practice, group practice, hospitals, academic research institutions, community-based healthcare settings, and via telepsychiatry. They may also specialize in certain patient populations like infants or transitional-aged youth or in certain areas of work including psychotherapy, forensic work, psychopharmacology, and research.

Most of them engage in multiple areas of employment, which may include school consultations, community mental health-based centers, hospital systems, courts, and foster care systems.

How Many Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists Are There?

There are 10,000 child and adolescent psychiatrists in the U.S., approximately fourteen child and adolescent psychiatrist for every 100,000 children.

What Is the Difference Between a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist and a Psychologist?

The pediatric behavioral health workforce includes many different types of professionals, with varying degrees of training and diagnoses/treatment competency. Child and adolescent psychiatrists are medical doctors and are the most highly trained of all other pediatric behavioral health providers.

A psychologist often has extensive training in research or clinical practice, and often provides psychotherapy or psychological testing and evaluation, but does not graduate from medical school and does not necessarily have specialized training in children's mental health.

Child and adolescent psychiatrist:

- 4 years of medical school
- 5 years of post-medical school residency training
- 12,000-16,000 hours of total direct, supervised patient care through training

Psychologist:

- 3-5 years of graduate psychology training
- 1 year of doctoral internship
- 1 year (1,920 hours) of total patient care through training

Learn More about Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

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