

How to Start or Transition Mental Health Treatment



Going to a new school is a stressful transition for all students and can be really hard for those experiencing mental health challenges. School-based mental health therapists support students through these transitions by helping them prepare for change and manage emotional or behavioral concerns.

Starting Therapy Services

How Do I Know if Mental Health Therapy Is Needed?

A child may benefit from therapy if you notice:

- Significant changes in behavior or appearance/hygiene
- Withdrawal from activities or loss of interest
- Excessive sadness, worry, anxiety, guilt, or hopelessness
- Increased outbursts, crying, or emotional dysregulation

How Can Students Access School-Based Mental Health Care?

Students Not Currently Receiving Therapy

- Begin by contacting the school counselor or social worker to discuss concerns. They can help connect your child with school-based or community resources.
- Additional resources are available at www.MindPeaceCincinnati.com or by calling MindPeace at (513) 803-0844.

Students Currently Receiving Therapy at School

- Schedule a meeting with your child's current therapist before the end of the school year to discuss transition planning.
- Transitions typically begin in the spring and involve at least one planning meeting.
- With your written consent, the current therapist may communicate with the therapist at the new school to support a smooth transition.
- Families should try to meet the new therapist before the school year starts. This helps students feel more comfortable and learn where the therapist's office is.

Transitioning Therapy Services

What Is a Transition Plan?

A transition plan should be made with you and your child. It usually:

- Lists goals and services for the next school year
- Is based on your child's strengths, needs, skills, and interests
- Says who will give therapy at the new school

Why Is a Transition Plan Helpful?

- Helps students feel safe and supported when starting a new school
- Ensures a warm handoff between the current therapist, new therapist, and family

Caregiver Responsibilities During Transition

Caregivers play a critical role by:

- Collaborating with therapists to support treatment goals
- Providing consent for therapists to share information (when appropriate)
- Supporting their child emotionally during gaps in service

While Waiting to Start Therapy, Caregivers Can:

- Connect with supportive adults
- Establish consistent routines
- Encourage your child to practice coping skills
- Prioritize self-care

(Adapted from *On Our Sleeves*, 2023.)

Information Sharing & Privacy

What Information Is Shared?

- Written consent is required to share confidential treatment information.
 - Only information necessary for continuity of care is exchanged.
 - Mental health information is not included in academic records.
 - Privacy protections like HIPAA apply to school-based mental health services.
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Continuing Care After Transition

Can My Child Continue with Their Current Therapist?

- When medically appropriate, it is recommended that students transition to the school-based therapist at their new school.
- Students receiving therapy at the school they attend are **25–50% more likely to remain engaged in care.**
- School-based therapists are available during school hours so they can often help during mental health emergencies.
- Some agencies serve multiple school levels and may offer continuity through telehealth or office-based care. Discuss options with your current therapist.

If There Is a Waitlist at the New School

- Request that your child be added to the school-based therapist waitlist while exploring community providers.
- Search www.MindPeaceCincinnati.com/search or call **(513) 803-0844** for assistance.

Insurance Information

Medicaid Benefits

Will I have costs after transitioning to a new provider?

- Most school-based mental health agencies accept Medicaid with no out-of-pocket cost.
- Benefit limits may apply, so check with your therapist or agency.

What if Medicaid coverage lapses?

- Coverage decisions are handled case by case.
- Reapply promptly if eligible.
- If switching to private insurance, your therapist can help with referrals.

What if yearly Medicaid therapy hours are used?

- Providers may bill beyond 52 hours per year if medically necessary.
- Coordination between providers supports continuity and documentation.

OhioRISE Participants

- Contact your assigned care coordinator through your local Care Management Entity.
- Ask about Primary Flex Funds for services or supplies not otherwise covered.
- Learn more at: <https://managedcare.medicaid.ohio.gov/managed-care/ohiorise>

Private Insurance

Will the therapist accept my plan?

- Contact the therapist directly or check the school-based provider list on MindPeaceCincinnati.com.

What about high deductibles and co-pays?

- Co-pays vary by plan. Contact your insurer or the therapy agency.
- Ask agencies if sliding scale fees are available.

Filing an Insurance Complaint

If you cannot resolve a concern with your insurer:

- File a complaint with the Ohio Department of Insurance – Consumer Services Division
- Online form:
<https://gateway.insurance.ohio.gov/UI/ODI.CS.Public.UI/Complaint.mvc/DisplayConsumerComplaintForm>
- Email: Consumer.Complaint@Insurance.Ohio.gov
- Phone: (800) 686-1526

Other Care Options

Receiving Therapy Outside of School

If school-based therapy is not the right fit:

- Search the MindPeace provider database or call (513) 803-0844 for help connecting to community-based care.

Ending Treatment

- Discuss plans to end therapy with your therapist in advance.
 - Therapists can help prepare your child for future challenges and connect you with resources.
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Reference

Hoet, A. (2023). *4 ways to support a child while waiting to start therapy*. The Kids Mental Health Foundation: On Our Sleeves.