

How to Find An Outpatient Counselor

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

Many individuals seek recommendations for marriage and family therapists who specialize in addressing addiction-related issues. These inquiries come from various regions across the country and even internationally. While I don't have specific contacts to provide personalized recommendations, resources are available to assist you in locating a suitable counselor or therapist, regardless of your location.

- There are numerous therapist referral websites online. To effectively utilize a therapist finder service, you must identify the type of therapist that best suits your needs. Considerations include:
- The type of sessions required - individual, family, marital, or group.
- The primary issues to address - marital discord, mental health concerns, addiction, or a combination thereof (e.g., dealing with addiction within a marital context).
- The qualifications of therapists that align with your situation, such as psychologists, licensed professional counselors, licensed marriage/family therapists, licensed alcohol/drug counselors, or other professionals.

A suitable example of finding the right fit would involve seeking a professional licensed both as a marriage and family therapist and as an alcohol/drug counselor to address substance use disorder within a marital dynamic.

Once you have determined the type of assistance needed, follow these steps to utilize a therapist referral service:

Visit a therapist referral service like Psychology Today's Find a Therapist (PsychologyToday.com) and Therapist.com.

Click on "find a therapist" or a similar option.

Conduct a location-based search. Even "online only" searches begin with an "identified location." Many states have licensing restrictions that allow counselors and therapists to only work with people physically in their state. There are no such limitations for those seeking coaching and consultation (e.g., www.transformationalendeavors.online.)

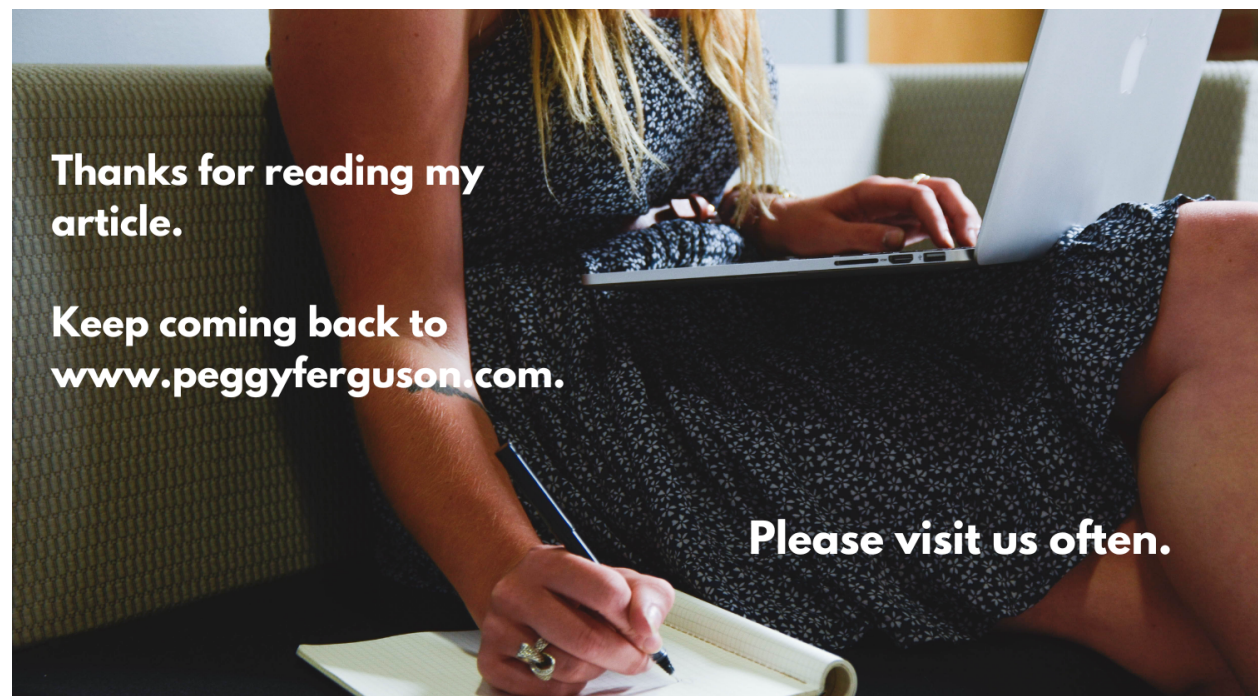
Identify professionals possessing the credentials you seek, including psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical social workers, licensed professional counselors, licensed marriage and family therapists, and licensed alcohol/drug counselors.

A better set of resources are the people you know. Seek referrals from friends, colleagues, or community members. Ask for recommendations from individuals within your religious or professional circles. If you attend support groups like AA, inquire among fellow attendees, as they often have insights into the best therapists. You can also contact licensing boards or visit their websites to locate professionals based on your geographical area.

Once you have obtained contact information, reach out to potential counselors. Inquire about their services, including their specialties, fees, accepted insurance, session frequency tailored to your needs, therapeutic approaches (e.g., Cognitive Behavioral Therapy), and the specific populations they work with (e.g., seniors, adolescents, adults, individuals struggling with addiction). When leaving voicemail messages, enunciate and repeat phone numbers to facilitate a prompt response, as misunderstandings may lead to missed connections.

Schedule appointments with selected counselors and attend initial sessions. Evaluate whether they align with your therapy goals and whether you feel comfortable working with them. Explore other options if the therapeutic relationship lacks compatibility after a few sessions.

Remember, the primary determinant of therapy success lies in the rapport between therapist and client. **Note: This article has been revised and edited from its original version, which was previously published in 2010 on this site. The content has been updated for contemporary language, clarity and accuracy.**



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