

## **What is confidential and what is not?**

State laws differ regarding parental access to records and information regarding psychotherapy with children. However, for psychotherapy to be most effective, the child or adolescent must feel safe with the therapist. This can be best accomplished if they know that what they say is confidential and will not be revealed to anyone without their permission. However, confidentiality can be broken if the therapist feels the child is in danger in some way or threatens someone else.

## **What is psychotherapy with children and adolescents?**

In psychotherapy with children and adolescents, play and talking are used to help children understand and express feelings and to change behaviors, which are causing them problems with their families and friends, their school performance, or their feelings about themselves.

## **When does your child or adolescent need psychotherapy?**

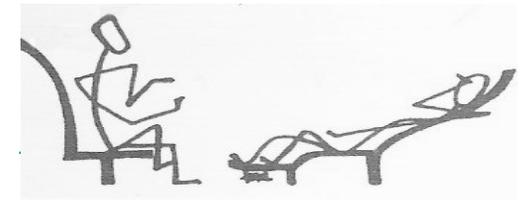
Children and adolescents may need psychotherapy when either they or others who live with them feel they could use some “help.” Difficulties can include a range of problems including anxiety, depression, fears, behavioral difficulties and peer problems, to give a few examples. Referrals may come from schools, pediatricians, courts, parents, family, or friends.

## **What contact will the therapist have with other professionals working with your child?**

Children and adolescents interact with many settings and professionals during their daily living. Effective psychotherapy will often require the therapist’s understanding of how the child responds and relates in other settings besides the therapist’s office. Therefore, contact with teachers, counselors, school psychologists, pediatricians and others who may have information regarding your child is extremely important. However, before contacting or communicating with any of these individuals, the therapist will ask for your permission, usually in writing.

## **Will my insurance cover the cost of therapy?**

Psychological help for your child’s emotional well-being is as important as medical help for their physical well-being. Many insurance companies and plans recognize this, at least to some extent. Coverage varies greatly and it is very important that you speak directly with your health insurance carrier to understand what coverage you have and how to go about making a claim. Sometimes there are specific treatment limitations or requirements for prior authorization of treatment. Your child’s therapist needs to know about any forms or special filing requirements which your health plan requires.



Sakowitz Counseling

# **PSYCHOTHERAPY WITH CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS**

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## **How do you find a therapist?**

When seeking out a therapist for your child, it may well prove helpful to consult with your child's school psychologist, pediatrician, local or state psychological association, mental health clinic, and/or others you trust to give you a recommendation. It is important to feel positively about the person you have chosen to work with your child. Therapists should be licensed and one should consider such factors as sex of therapist as well as their style of therapy.

## **What forms of therapy are available?**

There are really three different forms of therapy for children. Individual or play therapy is where the child and therapist meet alone together. In group therapy, the therapist meets with a small group of children within the same general age range. Family therapy involves all significant family members with the therapist. Depending on the nature of the difficulty your therapist will evaluate which type is best for you.

## **Why is it a good idea to get help early for children?**

It is clear that providing help early on to children who are having emotional difficulties is usually more effective and less expensive. Childhood emotional difficulties can affect a child's social relationships, school performance and overall self-image, sometimes resulting in life-long problems. A child who gets help when it is needed will have fewer difficulties later on and will be more comfortable seeking help independently later in life if need arises.

## **How frequently or for how long will your child or adolescent meet with the therapist?**

Typically the therapist will meet with your child for 45-50 minutes once a week. However, depending on the severity of the difficulty this may become more or less frequent. The length of treatment is dependent on the severity of the difficulty and can be anywhere from three months to a year or more.

## **What should you tell your child or adolescent about going to see a therapist?**

Honesty is always the best policy in any new situation. Do not lie to your child or adolescent. Try to give them a few days notice so as they can adjust to the idea. Let them know your concerns and why they feel that this is the best option. Let them know the person they are going to see is there to help and that therapy is not a punishment. Be prepared for some resistance and have a plan to push through the resistance and insist they at least check it out. If it becomes difficult to get your child or adolescent to attend talk to your therapist about ways to try to encourage them. IN addition, le the child or adolescent know that you the parent are also looking at ways in which you (the parent) can change to help alleviate the problem as well.

## **What should you expect from your child or adolescent after the first visit?**

Some children will talk about their meeting in an open spontaneous way, while others will not say much at all. Most adolescents will share a little about their sessions. The rule of thumb is to listen, don't press or cross examine your child and do not evaluate, judge or give opinions. Just be a good listener.

## **What contact should you have with your child or adolescent's therapist?**

Generally, therapist will not discuss to the parents any specifics about what a child has told them, but will give the parents their overall impression of the difficulties the child is experiencing and how they can be helpful. Parents are extremely important to the therapeutic process and should be included in treatment plans. Your cooperation is critical to a successful outcome.

The amount of contact you will have with the therapist will vary greatly depending on the issue and therapist orientation. It is advised that you discuss with the therapist at the beginning of treatment what the expectations are with regard to this issue.

Most therapists will have an initial meeting with parents to discuss their concerns about the child. It is important that both parents attend this meeting even if they do not both live with the child. If, in the case of divorce or separation, this is too uncomfortable, separate meetings can be held with each parent. Step-parents should be included in these meetings if they have regular contact with the child or adolescent.