

# ANXIETY IN THE CLASSROOM

## How to Make a Community Referral for Treatment

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# Students with anxiety and/or OCD, may have needs that go beyond the scope of what can be provided in the school setting.

Some students may already be connected with an outside support team (therapist, psychiatrist, and/or support group) while others may not. In these cases, **it might fall to school personnel to assist the student in getting connected to treatment and support in their community.**

# OVERVIEW



## 1 Starting a conversation about a community referral

- *Tips for making a community referral*

## 2 Making the actual referral

## 3 Tips for choosing a treatment plan

- *Interview questions to ask when considering a mental health professional*

# STARTING A CONVERSATION ABOUT COMMUNITY REFERRAL

If a family asks for your help in seeking a referral to treatment, the following are some suggestions for starting the conversation with the student and/or their family:

- Build upon your existing rapport with the student/family to bring up things you may have noticed that are leading you to make this referral.
- Work on speaking without judgment and avoid using black/white statements.



# STARTING A CONVERSATION ABOUT COMMUNITY REFERRAL



## Tips to starting a conversation for a community referral continued:

- Focus on stating facts and remaining neutral.
- Reiterate that it is not “weird” or “shameful” to have mental health concerns, and that they are not character flaws or misbehavior on the part of the student.



# STARTING A CONVERSATION ABOUT COMMUNITY REFERRAL



## Tips to starting a conversation for a community referral continued:

- Acknowledge how difficult things may have been for the student/family since symptoms first started appearing. Remember – parents/families are often just as much in need of support as the student!

# STARTING A CONVERSATION ABOUT COMMUNITY REFERRAL

## Tips to starting a conversation for a community referral continued:

- **Recognize how scary it can be** to hear that they might have a mental health condition, and provide space for the discussion of their concerns.
- **Emphasize the family's strengths** in this situation. For example, you could reflect to the parent/caregiver seeking a referral all the ways you recognize their love and care for their child.



# STARTING A CONVERSATION ABOUT COMMUNITY REFERRAL



## Tips to starting a conversation for a community referral continued:

- **Express encouragement** to the student/family for seeking mental health treatment.
- **Frame the referral in terms of a solution** the student/family hopes to see. For example, you could say, “I can refer you to a doctor who helps children manage anxiety symptoms.”



# STARTING A CONVERSATION ABOUT COMMUNITY REFERRAL



## Tips to starting a conversation for a community referral continued:

- Try to identify the belief system(s) of the family to assist in making an adequate mental health referral (e.g., spiritual, cultural, and ideas about health).
- Explain what the family can expect as the next steps. For example, clarify if someone will provide them with a phone number, are expected to make an appointment, or will meet with a care coordinator.

# MAKING THE COMMUNITY REFERRAL.

When it comes to making a referral itself, the IOCDF's Resource Directory can be a great tool for school personnel.

- The Resource Directory contains listings of licensed therapists, clinics, support groups, and organizations that specialize in working with OCD and related disorders in youth. Anyone can search the Resource Directory by zip code, city/state, city/country, or full street address in order to find results close to them.
- **For BIPOC individuals seeking support** for mental health concerns or racism-related stressors, consider making a mental health referral to a multicultural or racial trauma-informed therapist. This directory contains listings of licensed therapists, clinics, and organizations that specialize in culturally affirming mental health care.

Access the Resource Directory at [www.iocdf.org/find-help](http://www.iocdf.org/find-help)

# TIPS FOR MAKING A COMMUNITY REFERRAL

- Familiarize yourself with the resources within your community so that you can make a more confident and informed referral.
- Continue to follow up with the student/family post-referral as appropriate (based on your role and relationship), checking in on their needs and how things are going.



# TIPS FOR MAKING A COMMUNITY REFERRAL



Some school personnel may have the time and space to do their own research and create a resource sheet for their school district. Other school personnel may not be able to do this, and may instead support the student/family in doing it on their own. In either case, the following tips can be helpful for school personnel, families, and students alike.



# TIPS FOR CHOOSING A TREATMENT TEAM

- Some families may ask for guidance in choosing a treatment team for their child – it can be overwhelming to not know where to start, or how best to go about doing so.
- Remind families **that they have every right to interview mental health professionals** before making a decision about who to see.
- If the professional is guarded, withholding of information, or angry at requests for more information, they should probably look elsewhere.



# TIPS FOR CHOOSING A TREATMENT TEAM

The following are examples of good interview questions to ask a mental health professional:

- 1 **What techniques do you use to treat anxiety/OCD?**
  - If the therapist is vague or does not mention cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) or exposure and response prevention (ERP), use caution.
- 2 **Do you use cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)/exposure and response prevention (ERP) to treat anxiety/OCD?**
  - Be cautious of therapists who say they use CBT, but won't be more specific.



# TIPS FOR CHOOSING A TREATMENT TEAM



## Examples of good questions continued:

- 3 **What is your training and background in treating anxiety/OCD?**
  - If the therapist says they went to a CBT psychology graduate program or did a post-doctoral fellowship in CBT, it is a good sign. Another positive is if a therapist says they are a member of the International OCD Foundation (IOCDF), the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA), or the Association of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapists (ABCT).
  - Also, look for professionals who say they have attended specialized workshops or trainings offered by ADAA or the IOCDF, like the Behavior Therapy Training Institute (BTI), Pediatric BTI, or Annual OCD Conference.



# TIPS FOR CHOOSING A TREATMENT TEAM



## Examples of good questions continued:

- 4 Are you trained to work with youth with anxiety/OCD?
  - The answer should be “Yes.”
- 5 How much of your practice currently involves youth with anxiety/OCD?
  - A good benchmark would be over 25%

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# TIPS FOR CHOOSING A TREATMENT TEAM

## Examples of good questions continued:

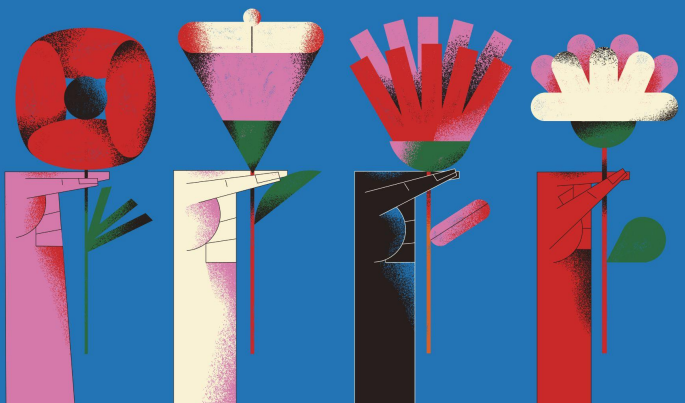
- 6 **Do you feel that you have been effective in your treatment of anxiety/OCD?**
  - The answer should be “Yes.”
  
- 7 **Are you willing to leave your office if needed to do behavior therapy?**
  - The answer should be “Yes” – it is often necessary to go outside of the office environment and into the places where the student is experiencing distress (e.g. at home, at school, etc.) to do effective treatment.

# TIPS FOR CHOOSING A TREATMENT TEAM

## Examples of good questions continued:

### 8 Do you include families in any of the treatment?

- Anxiety and OCD can be very isolating, and also may involve or otherwise heavily impact the family. Parents/guardians, caretakers, and other family members are an important part of a student's anxiety/OCD treatment, and should be involved in many ways.
- The therapist should be open to including family members as part of the treatment plan and team.



# TIPS FOR CHOOSING A TREATMENT TEAM



## Examples of good questions continued:

- 9 **Have you received cultural competence training or taken courses on issues surrounding race, ethnicity, or culture?**
  - Use caution if the therapist is vague or says they have not pursued opportunities to do so.
- 10 **Are you or members of your staff bilingual? If not, have you received appropriate training in working with interpreters?**
  - If you or a family member speak a language other than English, use caution.

# TIPS FOR CHOOSING A TREATMENT TEAM



## Examples of good questions continued:

- 11 **Do you have experience treating people who look/identify like my child?**
  - The answer should be “Yes.”
- 12 **How would you include aspects of my cultural identity, such as age, faith, gender, race, or sexual orientation, in my care?**
  - Symptoms of anxiety and OCD, and treatment recommendations, can vary across cultures. The therapist should be able to state examples of how they will take a culturally mindful approach to provide services to you/your family.

# IN RARE CASES...

- In rare cases, school may be the only place where the student receives professional support for their anxiety or OCD.
- If this is true for one of your students, the best course of action will be to **work as a team to address the child's school-related needs, while providing the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) with resources for helping at home.**

# THANK YOU.

## QUESTIONS ?

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