



Family Center by The Falls

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What is the difference between a psychiatrist, psychologist, or counselor?

The difference is in the specialty, education, and training.

A psychiatrist is a Medical Doctor (M.D.) who has graduated from a medical school. A psychiatrist's training focuses on general medicine while in medical school. They will then go on to 3-4 years of residency where they will specialize in psychiatry. Psychiatrists do psychiatric evaluations for the purpose of determining if an individual would be appropriate for treatment with medications. The psychiatrists at Family Center by the Falls also make recommendations beyond medication for home, school, and in the community that may be beneficial to your child. If they determine medication is appropriate, the psychiatrist prescribes the medications and then follows the patient for medication management. Medication management includes initially following the patient closely until they are stabilized with the proper dosage (usually once every 2 weeks until stabilization occurs) and then usually once every 1-3 months for maintenance.

A psychologist is a clinician who holds a Doctorate in Psychology (Psy.D.) or a Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology (Ph.D.). These clinicians have spent at least 5-6 years of graduate work strictly studying psychology, then moving on to complete 1-2 years of internship followed by 1-2 years of supervised clinical work experience before qualifying for the right to sit for the licensing examination. A psychologist does not prescribe medication. Instead, they provide psychotherapy through their in-depth knowledge of psychological theory, therapy, research and diagnostic testing. Psychologists also specialize in psychological testing and are the only group of clinicians trained to do so. Psychological testing requires years of training that involves not only how to give the tests, but also how to score and integrate the test information with clinical interviews, background information, knowledge of personality theory, human development and research. Psychologists are also trained to do educational testing to assist with IEP's and educational needs.

Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors hold Masters degrees. Their training consists of typically 2 years of graduate school and 1-2 years of internship. Licensed counselors assess, diagnose, intervene and treat individuals, families and groups with psychosocial problems.

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