

Common mistakes when choosing an eating disorder program

Assuming a listing covers every condition, calling only one program or not asking about insurance are common mistakes. Ask each program the same questions and get the answers in writing.

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The most common mistake is assuming a listing tells you everything. The listing on this site comes from a national survey. The survey records that a facility runs a program or group for persons with eating disorders, but it does not name the conditions it treats. A program that shows on this site may treat anorexia and not bulimia, or bulimia and not binge-eating disorder. Only the program can tell you what it treats. Ask every program by name.

The second mistake is calling only one program. When you contact more than one program, you can compare what each offers and how they differ. The questions you ask the first program can be sharper by the second call. Use the questions from the level-of-care tool on this site as a starting point.

The third mistake is not asking about insurance early. Coverage can differ by plan and by program. Ask each program whether it is in-network with your plan, whether it will verify your benefits before admission and what happens if coverage runs out mid-treatment. Ask about single-case agreements and out-of-network billing help too. Ask whether there is a sliding scale or a payment plan if coverage ends. These answers belong in writing.

The fourth mistake is trusting a listing without checking. SAMHSA updates its facility data weekly, but this site holds a copy from a set date. A facility can change its services, phone number or hours after that date. Always confirm the current services, hours and insurance with the program before you decide. The disclaimer on this site says the same thing.

The fifth mistake is looking only at cost and distance. Cost and location matter, but ask about the rest too. Ask about the treatment team, the daily schedule and how the program handles emergencies, during program hours and outside them. Ask what happens when a client needs more support than the program gives.

The sixth mistake is not asking about family involvement. Some programs use family-based treatment models for children and adolescents. Ask what the program expects of family members, how often they are involved and whether the program is licensed or accredited to treat minors at the level of care it offers.

The seventh mistake is forgetting that a listing is a record, not a recommendation. This site never ranks programs by claimed outcomes. A Featured or Sponsored placement on a city page is a paid position with a visible label, not a recommendation. A listing does not tell you about the quality of care.

This guide is information, not medical advice. Ask a doctor or other qualified clinician which treatment fits your situation. In a medical or mental health emergency, call 911 in the US, or call or text 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Frequently asked questions

What is the biggest mistake people make?

Assuming the listing tells the whole story. The survey does not name the eating disorders a program treats, and services can change after the data is copied. Always call the program and confirm.

Do I need a diagnosis before I call a program?

Ask the program what information it needs from you before the first assessment. Ask who decides the level of care and how the assessment works.

Sources

[SAMHSA FindTreatment.gov, Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator](https://findtreatment.gov/) — <https://findtreatment.gov/>
[Eating Disorder Directory, level-of-care-questions tool](https://eatingdisorder.fyi/tools/level-of-care-questions) — <https://eatingdisorder.fyi/tools/level-of-care-questions>