

FREE GUIDE

Psychologist, psychiatrist or counsellor?

Who does what, how their training differs, and which ones Medicare covers.

The short answer

A **psychologist** provides talking therapies such as CBT and is registered with Ahpra. A **psychiatrist** is a medical doctor who focuses on diagnosis and medication. **Counsellors** aren't covered by Medicare's Better Access program. For most people, a **psychologist is the place to start**: at MeHelp, sessions are by phone or video and bulk billed with a valid Mental Health Treatment Plan and referral.

\$0

to see a MeHelp psychologist with a valid plan and referral

1 in 2

Medicare mental health services are delivered by psychologists

WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THIS GUIDE

- Five roles compared: training, focus and cost
- What "clinical psychologist" means
- Why most people start with a psychologist
- Which professionals Medicare covers
- How to check a practitioner's registration
- Questions to help you choose



Reviewed by **Phillipa Brown**, registered psychologist and founder of MeHelp. Information current at October 2026. General information only, not individual advice.

Who does what

	WHAT THEY DO	MEDICARE
GP	Your first point of contact. Assesses, prepares your Mental Health Treatment Plan, refers and coordinates care.	Yes
Psychologist	Talking therapies such as CBT. Registered with Ahpra after at least six years of training and supervision.	Yes, with a plan and referral
Clinical psychologist	A psychologist with an endorsement in clinical psychology after further postgraduate training.	Yes, at a higher rebate
Psychiatrist	A medical doctor specialising in mental health, focused on diagnosis and medication.	Yes, with a referral
Counsellor	Supportive talking therapy. Training and regulation vary, and the title isn't protected.	No (not under Better Access)

Check registration: psychologists must be registered with Ahpra. Every MeHelp psychologist is Ahpra-registered, and you can search any practitioner's name on the public register at ahpra.gov.au.

Why start with a psychologist

Psychologists are trained in evidence-based talking therapies for the concerns most people come with, and you can start quickly.

OFTEN A GOOD FIT FOR

Common concerns

- Anxiety, low mood and stress
- Relationship and life changes
- Grief, trauma and burnout
- ADHD support and building routines

AT MEHELP

Easy to start

- Bulk billed with a valid plan and referral
- \$180 privately, no referral needed
- Phone or video, Australia-wide
- Free rematch if it's not the right fit

Questions to ask a psychologist before you start

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Do you work with concerns like mine? | ☐ What approach do you use? |
| ☐ Are you registered or clinically endorsed? | ☐ Do you bulk bill? |
| ☐ Phone, video or in person? | ☐ What if we're not a good fit? |

What people ask us

Is a clinical psychologist better than a registered psychologist?

Not necessarily. Both are trained to provide therapy. Fit, experience with your concern and availability matter just as much.

Can a psychologist prescribe medication?

No. Psychologists provide therapy. If medication might help, your psychologist can work alongside your GP.

How do I start with a MeHelp psychologist?

Book privately with no referral for \$180, or get a Mental Health Treatment Plan and referral from your usual GP and send it to us for bulk-billed sessions. We match you within a few days.

Does Medicare cover counsellors?

Not under Better Access. Sessions with a registered psychologist are covered, and at MeHelp they can be bulk billed.



Prefer to talk it through with a psychologist?

MeHelp is an Australian online psychology practice. Sessions are by phone or video, Australia-wide, and can be bulk billed with a valid Mental Health Treatment Plan and referral. We also accept NDIS, WorkCover, DVA, EAP and private health funding.

What MeHelp psychologists help with at mehelp.com.au/our-mental-health-services-and-specialties

1300 323 411 · info@mehelp.com.au

MeHelp is not a crisis service. If you or someone else is in danger, call 000. For 24-hour support, call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636. Under 25: Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800.

This guide is general information about the Australian health system. It isn't individual medical, legal or financial advice, and it doesn't replace an assessment by your GP or a psychologist. Government rules and fees change. Figures are current at October 2026; check health.gov.au, servicesaustralia.gov.au or your insurer for the latest. All MeHelp psychologists are registered with Ahpra.