

BEL Mental Health Resource Guide

Online Therapy, Culturally Responsive Care & Mental Health Support

Black Educated Lesbians (BEL) believes mental wellness is an essential part of thriving.

Finding a therapist can be difficult, especially when you are looking for someone who understands the intersections of **race, gender, sexual orientation, relationships, family, trauma, and culture.**

This guide is designed to help Black lesbians, Black queer women, and members of our broader community identify mental health resources, understand their options, and make more informed decisions when seeking care.

Important: BEL does not endorse or guarantee any individual therapist, provider, platform, or service listed in this guide. Availability, pricing, insurance participation, and provider licensing can change. Always confirm that a clinician is appropriately licensed to provide services in your state and verify costs and insurance coverage directly with the provider.

The original BEL guide also emphasizes confirming state licensing and insurance acceptance before beginning services.

WHERE SHOULD I START?

If finding a Black therapist is most important to you:

Start with Therapy for Black Girls, Inclusive Therapists, BEAM's Black Virtual Wellness Directory, Alma, or Headway.

If finding an LGBTQ+ affirming therapist is most important:

Start with Inclusive Therapists, LGBTQ Therapy Space, Pride Counseling, or BEAM.

If using your health insurance is important:

Start with Headway, Alma, Talkspace, Brightside Health, or Thriveworks, then verify your specific plan.

If affordability is your biggest concern:

Start with Open Path Psychotherapy Collective, 7 Cups, community mental health centers, university training clinics, or ask providers whether they offer sliding-scale fees.

If you think you may need medication in addition to therapy:

Look for a psychiatrist or psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner. Brightside Health and some larger behavioral-health platforms offer psychiatric services in addition to therapy.

If you are experiencing an immediate mental health crisis:

Skip the routine provider search and see the **Immediate & Crisis Support** section below.

GENERAL ONLINE THERAPY PLATFORMS

1. Talkspace

Website: [Talkspace](#)

Talkspace provides virtual mental health services through video, audio, and messaging. Depending on location and availability, services can include individual therapy, couples therapy, and psychiatry.

May be useful for: People who want a large virtual platform, flexible communication options, or the ability to access therapy without traveling to an office.

Insurance: Some insurance plans and employer benefits may cover Talkspace. Verify coverage before scheduling.

Ask before enrolling: Can I specifically request a Black therapist, lesbian therapist, or clinician experienced with Black LGBTQ+ clients?

2. BetterHelp

Website: [BetterHelp](#)

BetterHelp is a large online counseling platform that connects clients with licensed mental health professionals. Communication options may include live video, phone, and messaging.

May be useful for: People who prioritize convenience, remote access, and flexible scheduling.

Important consideration: BetterHelp generally operates through a subscription model rather than traditional insurance billing. Confirm current pricing and cancellation terms before enrolling.

3. Calmerry

Website: [Calmerry](#)

Calmerry provides online counseling through messaging and live sessions.

May be useful for: People who prefer communicating with a therapist between scheduled sessions or need flexibility because of work, caregiving, transportation, or other responsibilities.

Before subscribing, review the current plan carefully so you understand how many live sessions are included and what services are messaging-based.

4. Brightside Health

Website: [Brightside Health](#)

Brightside Health provides virtual mental health treatment, including therapy and psychiatric services.

May be useful for: Individuals experiencing conditions such as anxiety or depression who may want therapy, medication evaluation, or both.

Because medication management is different from psychotherapy, ask exactly which services your plan covers and whether you will have separate providers for therapy and medication.

5. Thriveworks

Website: Thriveworks

Thriveworks offers therapy and other behavioral health services through both virtual and in-person providers in many areas.

May be useful for: Someone who wants the possibility of transitioning between virtual and in-person treatment or who wants to use insurance.

Search by location and confirm whether the clinician you select is licensed in your state and participates with your specific insurance plan.

6. Online-Therapy.com

Website: [Online-Therapy.com](#)

Online-Therapy.com combines therapist support with structured Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) tools and activities. The original BEL guide specifically identifies its structured CBT approach as a distinguishing feature.

May be useful for: Someone who likes worksheets, structured activities, goal-setting, and skills they can practice between sessions.

BLACK, LGBTQ+ & CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CARE

For BEL community members, finding a therapist isn't simply about finding *any* therapist. A provider can be professionally qualified and still be a poor cultural or identity fit.

You have every right to ask a therapist about their experience working with **Black clients, lesbians, LGBTQ+ people, masculine-presenting women, Black queer women, nontraditional families, religious trauma, discrimination, relationship concerns, and other experiences relevant to you.**

7. Inclusive Therapists

Website: [Inclusive Therapists](#)

Inclusive Therapists is a therapist directory emphasizing culturally responsive, identity-affirming, trauma-informed, and social-justice-oriented care. The original BEL resource guide specifically identifies it as useful for finding Black, queer, and lesbian-affirming providers.

May be useful for: Black LGBTQ+ people who want greater control over the identities, specialties, and approaches they prioritize when selecting a clinician.

8. LGBTQ Therapy Space

Website: [LGBTQ Therapy Space](#)

This resource focuses specifically on LGBTQ+ mental health and identity-affirming clinicians.

May be useful for: People who don't want to spend the first several therapy sessions explaining basic LGBTQ+ terminology, relationships, identities, or experiences.

Still ask individual therapists about their experience working specifically with **Black lesbians and Black queer women**. LGBTQ+ competence does not automatically mean racial or cultural competence.

9. Therapy for Black Girls

Website: [Therapy for Black Girls](#)

Therapy for Black Girls provides a directory designed to help Black women connect with culturally responsive mental health professionals. It was included in BEL's original guide as a resource for Black women seeking culturally competent care.

May be useful for: Black women who want race and culture considered as part of their provider search.

When contacting a provider, ask specifically about their experience with Black lesbian and queer clients if that is important to you.

10. Ayana Therapy

Website: [Ayana Therapy](#)

Ayana focuses on connecting people from marginalized communities with culturally responsive mental health care.

The original BEL guide included Ayana because of its emphasis on matching clients with diverse and culturally aware therapists, including Black and LGBTQ+ clients.

11. BEAM — Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective

Website: [BEAM](#)

BEAM is a Black-led organization focused on healing, wellness, and mental health within Black communities.

Its resources go beyond conventional individual psychotherapy and can be especially valuable for people interested in culturally grounded approaches to healing and community wellness.

Black Virtual Wellness Directory: Look for BEAM's directory of Black virtual wellness practitioners when searching for culturally responsive support.

LOWER-COST & ACCESSIBLE OPTIONS

12. Open Path Psychotherapy Collective

Website: [Open Path Psychotherapy Collective](#)

Open Path connects people who have limited insurance coverage or cannot afford standard private-pay therapy rates with participating clinicians offering reduced-fee sessions.

Current published pricing: Individual therapy generally ranges from approximately **\$40–\$70 per session**, with a one-time membership fee. Couples and family sessions may cost more.

May be useful for: People who are uninsured, underinsured, have high deductibles, or cannot reasonably afford typical private-pay therapy.

13. 7 Cups

Website: [7 Cups](#)

7 Cups provides emotional-support options, including peer/listener-based support, with additional paid services available.

Important: Peer emotional support is **not the same thing as psychotherapy** with a licensed clinician.

This may be useful when you want someone to talk to, but determine whether you need peer support, professional therapy, or crisis intervention.

FIND A THERAPIST WHO TAKES INSURANCE

14. Headway

Website: [Headway](#)

Headway helps people search for therapists and other mental health providers who participate with various insurance plans. The original BEL guide highlighted its ability to help people locate therapists accepting insurance and offering virtual care.

May be useful for: Someone whose biggest barrier is figuring out which therapists actually accept their insurance.

Do not rely only on a directory listing. Verify benefits with your insurance company and the provider before your first appointment.

15. Alma

Website: [Alma](#)

Alma is a provider directory that can help people locate therapists based on insurance, location, specialty, and other characteristics.

May be useful for: People who want to compare several therapists rather than being automatically matched with one provider.

HOW TO CHOOSE A THERAPIST

A therapist having an opening does **not** mean you have to choose them.

Treat the initial consultation as an opportunity for *you to interview them too*.

Consider asking:

- What experience do you have working with Black women?
- What experience do you have working with lesbians or Black LGBTQ+ clients?
 - Have you worked with masculine-presenting Black women?
 - How do you incorporate culture and identity into treatment?
 - What is your approach to trauma?
 - What therapeutic approaches do you typically use?
 - How do you approach religious or spiritual trauma?
- Do you have experience working with discrimination, minority stress, workplace stress, or family rejection?
- Do you provide LGBTQ+-affirming relationship counseling?
 - What happens if I don't feel like we're a good fit?
 - Do you accept my insurance?
 - What will I owe per session?

- What is your cancellation/no-show policy?
 - Do you offer a sliding-scale fee?
- How frequently do you typically recommend sessions?

You are not being difficult by asking these questions. **Therapy is healthcare, and provider fit matters.**

UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

The letters behind someone's name can get confusing.

Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC/LCPC): Provides psychotherapy and counseling for mental health and emotional concerns.

Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW): Provides psychotherapy and may also help clients understand social, family, community, and resource-related factors affecting their lives.

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT): Often specializes in relationships, couples, families, and interpersonal dynamics.

Psychologist (PhD/PsyD): May provide psychotherapy, psychological testing, assessment, diagnosis, and other psychological services depending on training and licensure.

Psychiatrist (MD/DO): A physician specializing in mental health who can diagnose psychiatric conditions and prescribe medication.

Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP): An advanced-practice nurse specializing in psychiatric care who may diagnose conditions and prescribe medications according to state law and scope of practice.

A psychiatrist or PMHNP and a therapist can be part of the **same treatment team**. You do not necessarily have to choose between medication management and psychotherapy.

INSURANCE & PAYING FOR THERAPY

Before your first appointment, call the number on the back of your insurance card or review your behavioral-health benefits online.

Ask:

“Do I have outpatient mental health benefits?”

Then ask:

“What is my copay or coinsurance for outpatient psychotherapy?”

“Do I have a deductible that must be met first?”

“Is this provider in network?”

“Is telehealth covered the same way as an office visit?”

“Do I need prior authorization?”

“Are there limits on the number of visits?”

Also ask the therapist's office to verify your benefits. **Do both.** Insurance information can be misunderstood, and you don't want your first surprise to be a bill.

If You Don't Have Insurance

Ask providers whether they offer:

Sliding-scale fees: Your rate may be reduced based on financial circumstances.

Self-pay rates: Some providers have a set rate for clients who aren't billing insurance.

Reduced-fee slots: Some therapists reserve a limited number.

University training clinics: Graduate programs in psychology, counseling, social work, and marriage and family therapy may provide lower-cost treatment supervised by licensed professionals.

Community mental health centers: Local nonprofit or public clinics may offer lower-cost behavioral healthcare.

YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT

Your first session may include questions about:

- What brought you to therapy
- Current symptoms or concerns
 - Mental health history
 - Physical health

- Medications
- Family history
- Relationships
- Work and school
- Substance use
 - Trauma
 - Safety
- Goals for therapy

You do not have to tell your entire life story in the first hour.

A good first goal is simply helping the clinician understand **why you're seeking support and what you hope will change.**

IS THIS THERAPIST ACTUALLY A GOOD FIT?

After several sessions, ask yourself:

Do I feel heard?

Do I feel respected?

Can I talk about race without having to educate my therapist?

Can I talk openly about being lesbian or queer?

Does my therapist understand my relationships without automatically applying heterosexual assumptions?

Does the therapist listen when I disagree?

Do I understand what we're working toward?

Am I learning skills or gaining insight that helps me outside the therapy room?

Therapy can be uncomfortable because difficult topics come up. But there is a difference between **productive discomfort** and feeling repeatedly dismissed, stereotyped, misunderstood, or unsafe.

You are allowed to change therapists.

WATCH FOR THESE RED FLAGS

Be cautious if a therapist:

- Dismisses your concerns about racism, sexism, homophobia, or discrimination.
 - Treats being lesbian or LGBTQ+ as something that needs to be “fixed.”
 - Repeatedly stereotypes Black women or LGBTQ+ people.
 - Pushes religious beliefs onto you.
 - Makes inappropriate comments about your appearance, gender expression, or relationships.
 - Violates professional boundaries.
 - Cannot clearly explain fees or billing practices.
 - Claims they can guarantee a cure.
 - Discourages you from obtaining appropriate medical or psychiatric care.
 - Makes you feel that you cannot question or participate in decisions about your treatment.

You can end treatment, request another clinician, contact the practice, or make a complaint to the appropriate professional licensing board when warranted.

IMMEDIATE & CRISIS SUPPORT

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or text: 988

Website: [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#)

The 988 Lifeline provides crisis support throughout the United States.

You do not have to wait until a situation becomes unbearable before reaching out.

The Trevor Project

Website: [The Trevor Project](#)

Provides crisis and mental health support resources focused on LGBTQ+ young people.

SAMHSA National Helpline

Call: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Website: [SAMHSA](https://www.samhsa.gov)

Provides information and treatment referrals related to mental health and substance-use concerns.

You can also search for treatment providers through:

[FindTreatment.gov](https://www.findtreatment.gov)

NAMI

Website: [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](https://www.nami.org)

NAMI provides mental health education, support resources, information, and connections to local affiliates.

CREATE YOUR PERSONAL MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE LIST

Don't wait until you're overwhelmed to figure out where everything is.

My primary care provider: _____

My therapist: _____

My psychiatrist/PMHNP: _____

My insurance behavioral health number: _____

My pharmacy: _____

Trusted person I can call: _____

Local crisis resource: _____

Nearest emergency department: _____

One thing that helps me regulate when I'm overwhelmed:

A NOTE FROM BLACK EDUCATED LESBIANS

Mental health care should not require you to leave pieces of yourself outside the room.

Black lesbians and Black queer women deserve care where our experiences are **heard, respected, affirmed, and taken seriously.**

Finding the right provider may take more than one attempt. Asking questions, requesting culturally responsive care, checking credentials, understanding costs, and changing providers when the relationship is not working are all legitimate parts of advocating for yourself.

Black Educated Lesbians (BEL)

United in Power, Purpose, and Pride.

This guide is educational and informational and is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, treatment, or emergency services.