

**QUICK
GUIDE**

Types, Roles, and Services of Professionals

When navigating your own brain injury or a loved one's, you may find yourself dealing with doctors and other professionals unfamiliar to you. There are many types of health care professionals who specialize in different things that can be helpful for people with brain injuries so it's important to know who and what to look for when needing treatment.



Medical Doctors

Physiatrist / Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R)

Trained to treat disorders or disabilities of the muscles, bones, and nervous system. The physiatrist helps the person with a brain injury to make the most of their cognitive, behavioral, and physical function.

Neurologist

Trained in diagnosing, treating, and managing disorders of the brain and nervous system. Neurologists may focus on particular diseases or injury, which may include traumatic brain injury, concussion (mild brain injury), seizures/epilepsy, headaches, pain, or diseases such as Parkinson's or Multiple Sclerosis. Neurologists often conduct tests for mental status, vision, strength, coordination, reflexes, and sensation, which may involve things like CT Scans, MRIs, EEGs, and Sleep Studies.

Psychiatrist

Specializes in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders. Some problems they address include anger management, depression, uninhibited sexual behavior, and delusions. They can order diagnostic tests and prescribe medications.

Neuro-Optometrist / Behavioral Optometrist

Specializes in treating visual defects resulting from brain injury and other neurological injuries. Neuro-optometric therapy is the rehabilitation of visual/perceptual/motor issues including (but not limited to) double vision, visual orientation/movement problems, motion sickness, vision perception problems, and visual processing impairments.



Mental Health Professionals

Neuropsychologist

Specializes in understanding how the brain and its abilities are affected by neurological injury or illness. Neuropsychologists have undergone extended training, and provide evaluation and treatment using a combination of interviews and tests to determine how much the injury has affected cognitive abilities (i.e., thinking skills), behavior, and emotions.

Counselor

Includes multiple types of professionals who provide counseling such as a Licensed Clinical Psychologists (Ph.D. or PsyD.), Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW), and Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC). Counseling helps people with brain injury and/or family members who are experiencing difficulty adjusting to life after the injury.



Rehabilitation Therapists

Occupational Therapist (OT)

Addresses “activities of daily living” (also called ADLs) such as feeding, swallowing, grooming, bathing, dressing, and using the bathroom. OTs work on cognitive (thinking) skills for basic housework and money management, as well as social skills for community re-entry. OTs can address vision, sensation, driving skills, and fine motor skills (movement of small body muscles, such as in the hands).

Physical Therapist (PT)

Evaluates and treats a person’s ability to move their body. The PT focuses on improving physical function by addressing muscle strength, flexibility, endurance, balance, and coordination. Functional goals include increasing independent ability with sitting, walking, getting in and out of bed, going up and downstairs, and getting up off the floor.

Speech/Language Pathologist (SLP)

Evaluates an person’s ability to understand what is seen or heard, as well as express oneself through speech, writing, or other forms of communication. SLPs may address cognitive (thinking) issues and ways to compensate for difficulties. In situations where the person is unable to speak, SLPs will train them to use assistive technology as an alternative form of communication.

Brain Injury Association of Virginia can help you better understand brain injury and consult with you about your personal situation. We can then direct you to services in your area you might need. Our services are confidential and free. To get in touch: call **1-800-444-6443** or visit **biav.net**.