Cerebral Online Therapy: Tested & Reviewed in 2024

Updated: July 17, 2024

Our Handbook Team explored the Cerebral online therapy platform to give you our expert insights into its services.

Written by Natasa Gavrilos
Edited by Gabriel Gardella
Fact Checked by Jill Sonke, LMSW

- Our testing experience
- Compare online therapy platforms
- Cost and payment
- Our final verdict
- FAQs

No matter what you're going through, therapy can be a way to get support during difficult times. But accessing traditional talk therapy can be difficult if you live in an underserved area, can't afford in-person sessions, or need a more flexible schedule than most offer.

If any of these reasons sounds familiar, you may consider an online therapy platform to find the help you need. Cerebral is an online therapy platform that can connect you with a therapist from wherever you live in the United States. Its therapists work with those who have mild to moderate cases of anxiety, depression, anxiety, insomnia, and attention-deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD).

Cerebral offers a variety of plans that include unlimited messaging and access to therapy. We found some of Cerebral's features—such as the therapist selection and assessment process—helpful, and they have been altogether that the platform has engaged in unethical business practices, including in how it promotes its services and how it misrepresents its therapists' credentials. We don't feel that we can recommend Cerebral as our top online therapy platform. We encourage you to read our review and review them to help you make the best decision possible. Below, learn more about Cerebral and see how it compares to other best online therapy platforms we tested.

BetterHelp: Our Alternative Pick

If you're looking for a more affordable option or all 50 states and a platform full of more features, BetterHelp may provide a better fit.

Best Alternative

BetterHelp
- One of the largest therapist selections of any online therapy platform
- Costs between $260-$400 per month, billed every 4 weeks or 13 weeks
- Unlimited messaging

Exceptional 4.5 / 5 Visit Site

Cerebral overview

Cerebral
Cerebral
Online Therapy
Rating: 7.2/10 (1,000+ Reviews)
Cerebral
Visit Site

Features

- **Best for:** People who want a straightforward online therapy platform that accepts insurance
- **Cost:** $230 per month for online therapy
- **Insurance:** Accepts many plans
- **Types of services offered:** Online therapy and online psychiatry

Pros and cons of Cerebral

In a mental health emergency:

Online therapists may not be the most appropriate resource to help in a mental health crisis. If you experience a mental health emergency, contact your local emergency services, go to the nearest ER, call 988 or contact and for an online therapist's response. Don't wait. You don't help immediately for.

- Calling 911
- Visiting your local urgent care or emergency room
- Calling or texting 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- Chatting online at 988lifeline.org
- Calling the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA's) Helpline at 1-800-662-4357 or texting your zip code to 435748

All the above will connect you with trained professionals who can provide crisis support. You can find even more resources, including international options, on our helpline directory page.

Insights from our testers

Signing up for Cerebral is easy and only takes a few minutes. You must submit information about yourself, like your name, location, and medical history, before you can browse available therapists and book your first session. Cerebral also requires you to take a short assessment to determine your eligibility for online initial session. They approximate that all therapists have a bio listing their background, specialties, and appointment availability, which makes it easy to choose a provider.

That said, the assessment and preferences on Cerebral can vary by location. For example, during testing, there were 20 therapists available in New York. However, in North Carolina, where our tester was based, Cerebral only had two therapists available. In Texas, Cerebral only had one therapist. Currently, Medicaid, or Medi-Cal online psychiatrists were worse, with only two therapists in Cook available.

For people who want to connect with a trade therapist, a therapist of a specific race, or a therapist of a certain cultural background Cerebral's provider selection may prove too limiting.

Our tester's therapists had various time slots available almost every weekday and on Sundays. They easily located an appointment within two days of signing up, and the video therapy session went smoothly. The audio and video were clear, and our tester experienced no technical issues.

From one of our Cerebral testers

The therapist helped us take small, manageable steps. I appreciated that she kindly introduced herself and told me a bit about her background and career before asking me about myself. It broke the ice, so I felt like I wasn't talking to a complete stranger.

From there, our tester and their therapist collaborated to create a plan for upcoming sessions, which included taking advantage of Cerebral's journaling feature.

Our tester wrote a journal entry using Cerebral's mobile app, then shared it with their therapist and discussed it during the sessions. The journal feature is very simple, only meant for lists and expressing themselves through writing. However, the journal feature is only available via the mobile app, not on desktop.

Our tester's therapist also suggested other resources, like reading materials, to supplement sessions. That said, our tester would have preferred more peer resources on the Cerebral platform. For example, some other platforms have the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Interpersonal Therapy (IPT) peer resources.

From one of our Cerebral testers

Cerebral is a very straightforward and basic platform for mental health care... I wish there were more options like meditation, yoga, or exercise.

When other users are waiting

During our November 2023 focus group, online therapy users said that being able to choose their providers was one of the most important aspects of a platform. Specifically, the option to choose between male and female therapists was one of their top priorities.

From one of our Cerebral testers

I prefer online therapists... I didn't want to have the choice (between male and female therapists), I would not want to use a platform.

While Cerebral allows you to select your provider, we notice that some states don't have a choice between male and female therapists. Cerebral's provider selection process varies by location. We prefer platforms that let people choose from any provider within a platform.

Some focus group members also said they like to message or email their therapist between sessions. Cerebral offers unlimited messaging with its therapy plan, which allows users to send their observations or pose one time. During your first session, ask your provider how often you can expect to hear from your therapist.

Department of Justice investigations

In May 2023, the Department of Justice (DOJ) launched an investigation into Cerebral for possible violations of the Controlled Substances Act, alleging that the platform was overprescribing stimulant medications like Adderall and Vyvanse to ADHD patients and that some people may not have accurate mental health and Medicaid/Medicare. Some Cerebral clinicians also reportedly failed to provide adequate care, including failing to provide follow-up care and failing to provide adequate medical records. Cerebral stopped prescribing controlled substances to new and existing patients in May 2023.

In June 2024, Cerebral settled lawsuit with the SEC and Federal Trade Commission (FTC) related to the platform's data breach, which exposed sensitive health information to third parties and for sharing users' information with third parties for business purposes, such as targeted advertising.

Because of these incidents, we do not recommend Cerebral as our top online therapy platforms and encourage readers to select a different platform for virtual therapy or psychiatry services.

Data privacy on mental health platforms

In addition to understanding how your data is collected and used before signing up for a platform, consider additional privacy and security measures. Review the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA) "Privacy Rel Violation" projects.

- Attend your online therapy appointment in a private location, preferably not on a public Wi-Fi network.
- Use your personal computer when possible.
- Look out for clandestine ways people might try to get out of data tracking or medical information disclosure.
- Sign up with your email, not a social login like Facebook.
- Choose a strong password to create a secure account login.
- When choosing a provider, review the platforms' privacy guidelines to understand whether they share private information.

Our testing experience

HelpGuide's Handbook Team has put in more than 70,000 hours of research to bring you our recommendations for the best online therapy and psychiatry platforms. We consult with more than 40 mental health experts, conduct focus groups with current and prospective online therapy users, and interview people who have used online therapy platforms to vet our recommendations.

We strive to bring these unique perspectives and dimensions to our reviews, ensuring you to find the online therapy platform that suits your unique needs.

How we tested Cerebral

HelpGuide *Handbook* for Our Online Therapy Testing Process

Our Handbook Team tested Cerebral and attended online therapy sessions for four weeks. Our tester reported that they felt the most at ease using the platform's easy sign-up process. They found the platform's intake assessment to be a lengthy step and shared the findings with us. We used their tester feedback and our own experience on Cerebral review and sing up on dozens other online therapy platforms pros and cons.

Compare Cerebral with other online therapy platforms

	Cerebral	BetterHelp	Brightside	Talkspace	Teen
	Visit Site	Visit Site	Visit Site	Visit Site	Visit S
Monthly Price (Without Insurance)	$285	$260-$400	$300-$349	$276-$436	Varies b provide
Services offered	Therapy, psychiatry	Therapy	Therapy, psychiatry	Therapy, psychiatry	Therapy, psychia
Accepts Insurance?	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Can prescribe a controlled substance?	No	No	No	No	Yes, in sor states

Cerebral cost and payment options

Cerebral's therapy plan costs $285 per month out of pocket. It includes an initial consultation with a provider, unlimited messaging, and one video session per month. If you need more than one session a month, your therapist provider can refer or phone. You can also message your therapist another between appointments.

If you're interested in adding medication to your mental health care plan, Cerebral also offers a medication plan that costs $85 per month. It includes an initial 30 minute consultation with a psychiatric provider and a follow-up 15 minute appointment every month. Cerebral also offers a Psych Plus Package plan, for a flat rate. Cerebral prescribes only no longer prescribe controlled substances following the DEA's investigation previously mentioned.

If you're interested in combining medication and therapy, Cerebral offers a bar with both services for $385 per month (a $30 savings).

Cerebral also offers discounted bundles for new users who want to pay for multiple months upfront. For instance, paying for two months of the therapy only plan costs $480, a saving of $90. You can pay for your monthly subscription by credit, debit, health savings account (HSA) or flexible spending account (FSA).

If you're looking for more ways to save on telehealth, read our review of the most affordable online therapy platforms.

Insurance options

Cerebral accepts insurance plans from some companies, including BlueCross BlueShield, Humana, Cigna, Aetna, and Oscar. If Cerebral is in network, your monthly therapy payment will cost $35 plus any additional costs, such as prescriptions.

Note that Cerebral only accepts insurance options in the following 21 states:

- Arizona
- Arkansas
- California
- Florida
- Georgia
- Illinois
- Iowa
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Maryland
- Massachusetts
- Michigan
- New York
- Oklahoma
- Pennsylvania
- South Dakota
- Texas
- Utah
- Virginia
- Washington
- West Virgina

For an online platform that works with a wider variety of insurance plans from other states, check out our review of the best online therapy platforms that take insurance.

Our final verdict

Cerebral can offer a straightforward way to connect with a therapist virtually. Our tester found their therapist empathetic, kind, and helpful. Video sessions were easy to book and were conducted without technical issues, and the journaling feature provided an excellent tool.

That said, we are alarmed by the Justice Department investigation into Cerebral prescribing practices and the platform's data breach. We don't feel that we can recommend Cerebral as our top online therapy and currently anywhere feasible (where Brilliant and Online Psychiatrist could offer more resources to supplement sessions, such as workshops or mindfulness exercises. Ultimately, we do not recommend Cerebral and want users to have all the information available to them when making a decision about which platform to use.

If you'd prefer a platform that offers a broader selection of therapists, accepts more insurance companies, or provides more accessible online therapy services, we recommend Betterhelp, Talkspace, or Brightside—they suit your needs better. Don't be afraid to explore different avenues and practitioners until you find an organization that feels right to you.

Frequently asked questions

- Does Cerebral take Medicaid?
- In which states is Cerebral currently available?
- How much does Cerebral cost?

References

HelpGuide.org

About Us | Meet Our Team | Our Experts | Our Story
Resources | Newsletter
Get In Touch | Contact Us
1255 S Coast Dr, Ste 1004
Los Angeles, Ca 90017

Join Our Newsletter
Mental health and wellness tips, we share articles, resources and more.
Email Address | Subscribe

Mental Health Helplines
Are you or someone you know in crisis? Enter our helpline around the world.
Find Help

© 2024 LIFE MANAGEMENT, INC.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. HELPGUIDE.ORG, HELPGUIDE.ORG, LLC, the Logo or Mind Logo are registered trademarks of HELPGUIDE.ORG, HELPGUIDE.ORG, LLC, and LIFE MANAGEMENT, INC.
Terms & Conditions | Privacy Policy | Cookie Policy