

The Belongly Checklist for Therapists Starting a Private Practice

To begin your own therapy practice may seem like a daunting undertaking. However, the best way to overcome this feeling of being overwhelmed is to break it down into smaller, manageable tasks. You can utilize this checklist as a guide to prepare your practice for launch. For more comprehensive information, you can refer to our guide on starting a therapy practice.

Belongly



10 Tips for Starting a Successful Mental Health Practice

Starting your own mental health practice can be an intimidating prospect. It doesn't have to be. Additionally, starting your own practice does not need to involve becoming a business person who dedicates all their time to marketing, budgeting, and other such tasks. Although starting your own practice does require some business savvy, you can successfully grow a practice while dedicating the majority of your energies to your clients.

Anyone who has trained to be a mental health professional knows that entire books have been written on the subject of starting one's own practice. A brief overview can't cover every single thing you need to know about starting a mental health practice that will thrive for years to come.

That said, this guide can simplify the process by offering 10 critical tips to keep in mind during the early stages of growth. To position your mental health practice for success, you should:

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Build a budget

It's possible that your budget may encompass varying time periods such as months, quarters, or years. Once a period has concluded, it's important to revise your budget with the actual revenue and expenses incurred, and utilize this information to guide future budgeting decisions.



Create a business name

If you intend to use a name for your business that is different from your legal name, you must register for a Doing Business As (DBA) name. The registration process for DBAs is typically conducted at either the county or state level. To obtain further details on this process, visit the website of your Secretary of State. [Download our branding for mental health providers resource for help.](#)



Choose a business entity

The type of business entity you select will determine how you file and pay taxes, your level of personal financial liability, and other factors that can impact the way your business operates. While your state may recognize your practice as a certain business entity, the IRS may recognize it differently. If you choose not to establish a business entity, the IRS will automatically consider you a sole proprietor.



Assign a registered agent (if necessary)

Some business entity types, like corporations or limited partnerships, are required to designate a registered agent. All official correspondence from your state regarding your business will be directed to your registered agent. If you reside in the state where your business is located, you have the option of serving as your own registered agent. For additional information, please visit the website of your Secretary of State.



Get an EIN

To open a business checking account, you will need an employer identification number (EIN), regardless of whether or not you have employees. While many services may charge a fee to obtain an EIN on your behalf, the process is simple and can be completed by yourself. [To apply for an EIN online, visit the IRS website.](#)



Get an NPI

In order for your services to be eligible for insurance coverage, you must obtain a National Provider Identifier (NPI), which is a unique ten-digit code. [To gain further knowledge about NPIs and to apply for one online, please follow the appropriate resources.](#)



Open a bank account

By opening a business checking account, you can effectively keep your personal and professional finances separated, which can be advantageous for several reasons. If you require assistance with choosing the right checking account for your therapy practice, kindly read on for further guidance.



Get insurance

The laws pertaining to business insurance requirements can vary depending on the location of your practice. It's advisable to confirm with your Secretary of State to determine if there are specific types of business insurance that are legally mandated for your therapy practice. [Here's a guide to insurance companies for mental health providers.](#)



Choose HIPAA-compliant software and services

HIPAA-compliant software and services play a crucial role in safeguarding your clients' confidential information and preventing any inadvertent violations of HIPAA guidelines. Some common software and services that require HIPAA compliance include:

- Email: [Google provides HIPAA-compliant professional email services.](#)
- Electronic Health Record (EHR) software: Most EHR software is designed to be HIPAA-compliant, but it's important to verify this before signing up.
- Payment processor: To ensure that your payment processing is in line with HIPAA regulations, it's important to learn more about HIPAA-compliant payment methods.

[Download our HIPAA Compliance Guide](#)



Set up your bookkeeping system

Your bookkeeping system is responsible for monitoring and recording the flow of income and expenses within your therapy practice. For additional information on the role of a bookkeeper, please refer to our articles on "What Does a Bookkeeper Actually Do?" and "How to Choose Accounting Software for Your Therapy Practice."



Set your fees

Setting the appropriate fees for your therapy services is crucial as it can significantly impact your income and cash flow. To ensure that you establish the right fees for your private practice, it's important to consider various factors. For detailed guidance on how to set your fees, kindly refer to our article titled "How to Set Your Fees in Private Practice."

[Check out the Belongly Guide To Raising Your Rates](#)



Begin marketing

Although it's not essential to have all your marketing assets set up simultaneously, the following are typically the most common investments for new therapy practices:

- Create a professional website
- Establish listings on online therapy directories
- Create and maintain social media profiles
- Develop a content marketing strategy, [such as blogging](#) or podcasting
- Engage in local advertising, such as in newspapers or magazines
- Network with other professionals and referral sources
- Offer promotions or discounts to new clients
- Attend local community events and health fairs
- Host workshops or seminars to showcase your expertise
- Implement a referral program for current clients.

Remember that marketing is an ongoing process, so it's important to continually evaluate and adjust your strategies for maximum effectiveness.

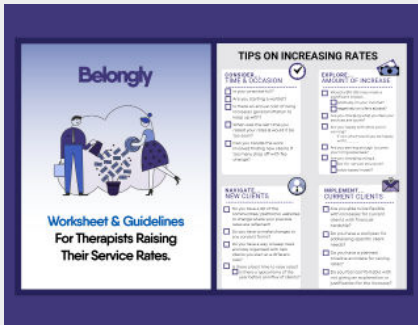


Plan how you'll file taxes

If you're new to managing your own therapy practice, handling your own tax filings can be time-consuming and may increase the likelihood of errors. Explore how Heard can provide assistance in this area.

[Download The Tax Deductions Cheatsheet for Therapists](#)

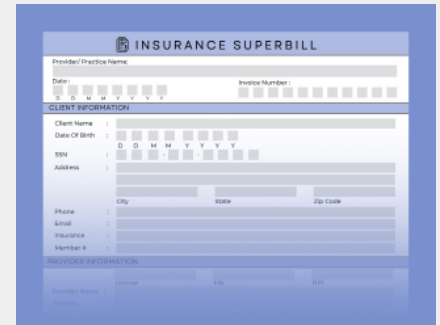
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[Daily Media Opportunities For Mental Health Professionals](#)

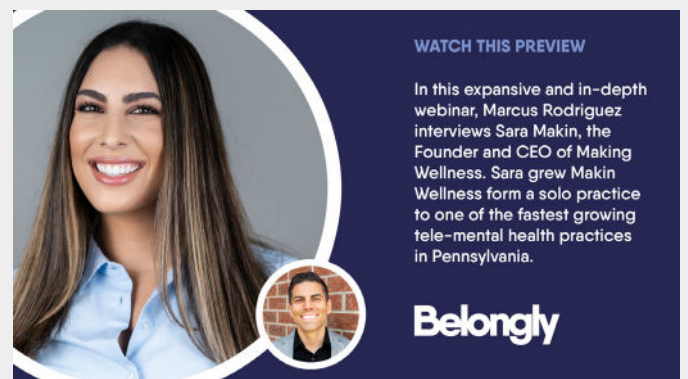


[The Tax Deduction Cheatsheet For Therapists](#)

Videos & Webinars Worth Watching



WEBINAR: Grow your online course offering and social media presence



WEBINAR: How to build a thriving mental health practice.



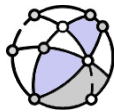
The Professional Community for Mental Health Providers

A free, secure space for mental health professionals to collaborate with and meet new colleagues, support each other with referrals and stay connected to a trusted network of peers.

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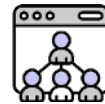
Belongly is a secure private platform. Currently, we only accept US-based therapists.



Connect

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