

Treatment Settings



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Treatment is not a one size fits all approach. Where you go for mental health care treatment depends on your situation and recovery needs. Knowing where to look and what to expect can help reduce confusion and stress. Mental health care professionals that provide services include psychologists, psychiatrists, psychiatric or mental health nurses, social workers and counselors. A professional who accepts your health insurance can help cover the cost of services but some psychiatrists and other doctors do not accept insurance.

Private Practice

Individual, family and group therapy sessions are held in a variety of settings, a common one being private practice. A professional in private practice may work out of a variety of places, from an office to her home. Meeting weekly, bi-weekly or monthly with a care provider can provide a patient better understanding of relationships, feelings, behaviors, and how to manage symptoms and reduce the risk of relapse.

Community or County Mental Health Centers

A community or county mental health care center often provides public mental health care services when a referral to a private doctor or therapist is not possible. Centers are operated by local governments to meet the needs of people whose mental health condition seriously impacts their daily functioning. Some of the services a person might receive from a community or county mental health center include outpatient services, medication management, case management services and intensive community treatment services.

Often centers manage contracts with mental health services providers and refer clients for employment, day program services, residential treatment services, therapeutic residential services and supportive residential services. Psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, counselors and peer support specialist work at centers to provide the range of services clients need. Some centers use the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team-based care model to coordinate a client's care including psychiatry, case management services, help with employment and substance use issues.

Most of the people getting services from a community or county mental health care center receive Social Security disability benefits and rely on Medicaid to fund their treatment needs.

Emergency Rooms

When it isn't possible to get treatment from a mental health center or private doctor, or a situation escalates into an emergency and safety is a concern, a visit to an emergency room might be the only option.

Situations that might require a trip to the emergency room include:

- A suicide attempt
- Assault or threatening actions against another person
- Hearing voices, paranoia, confusion, etc.
- Drugs or alcohol escalating a person's mental health issue

If you are calling 911, be sure to tell the operator that it is a "mental health emergency" and ask for emergency responders with Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training. Many first responders will approach a mental health situation differently, if they know what to expect.

Hospitalization

There may be times when a person is admitted to the hospital for intensive treatment. Private psychiatric hospitals, general hospitals with a psychiatric floor or state psychiatric hospitals are designed to be safe settings for intensive mental health treatment. This can involve observation, diagnosis, changing or adjusting medications, ECT treatments, stabilization, correcting a harmful living situation, etc.

If a person and their doctor agree that inpatient treatment is a good idea they will be admitted on a voluntary basis, meaning that they choose to go. Some private hospitals will only take voluntary patients. If a person is very ill and refuses to go to the hospital or accept treatment, involuntary hospitalization is an option. The legal standard for an involuntary hospitalization requires that a person be considered a “danger to self or others.” This type of hospitalization usually results in a short stay of up to 3 days but can occasionally last a week or so longer.

Partial Hospitalization or Day Hospitalization

Partial hospitalization provides care and monitoring for a person who may be having acute psychotic symptoms without being a danger to self or others. It allows a person to return home at night and is much less disruptive. It can also be used as a transition from inpatient hospital care before a complete return home.

Substance Abuse Centers

Some people with mental health conditions also have substance abuse concerns. The most widely used form of treatment is with integrated intervention. With this treatment a person receives care for both a specific mental illness and substance abuse.

Types include:

- A detoxification facility.
- Acute Residential Treatment (ART).
- Intensive Outpatient Programs (IOP).

See more at: <https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Images/FactSheets/Treatment-Settings-FS.pdf> at NAMI March 2015; Updated April 2017