



DO I USE A PUBLIC OR A PRIVATE MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT PROVIDER?

Medical Insurance can dictate who you will be treated by, however usually you are given a list of providers that are approved by your insurance.

HOW DO I CHOOSE A THERAPIST, PSYCHOLOGIST OR PSYCHIATRIST?

- Ask others about their experiences.
- Ask the treatment professional you are considering about his/her treatment approach and/or qualifications. Do not assume all therapists have expertise in all disorders.
- Ask how frequently they will meet with you.

Mental health services should be developed and delivered based on the knowledge that people can and do recover from mental illness. If you feel that your treatment provider does not believe in your Recovery, then you may want to change that provider.

ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

Advocacy agencies such as Mental Health Associations or the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) can be helpful resources for education on legislative issues, advocacy and self-advocacy programs.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS AN INDIVIDUAL CAN DO TO BE AN EFFECTIVE SELF-ADVOCATE?

Rule 1: Don't be afraid to ask questions.

Rule 2: Don't assume that the treatment professional always knows best. Develop a support system of friends and family and treatment staff who can help you make decisions after you are informed about all of your options.

Rule 3: Don't commit to anything if you are unsure. It is okay to take time when considering your treatment options.

Rule 4: You are the real expert when it comes to knowing your mental health.

HOW TO USE A MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE

There may be times when you are unable to resolve issues or concerns on your own. If after following an agency's grievance policy you are still dissatisfied, you can request the assistance of a Mental Health Advocate. The Mental Health Advocate serves as a spokesperson and problem-solver for persons in the community who have mental illnesses in various life situations such as mental health services, housing and employment. The Advocate can clarify issues and help you understand mental health services regulations. The Advocate may make suggestions, or if needed, attend a meeting with you to help resolve your concerns. If you decide you would like to pursue further action, the Advocate can discuss your options with you.

The Advocacy Alliance's Adult Mental Health Advocates work at the state hospitals and community psychiatric in-patient units, helping to see that patients understand their rights, their rights are respected and their stay is helpful.



NAVIGATING THE ADULT MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM




The Adult Mental Health System in Pennsylvania is guided by the belief that people can and do recover from mental illnesses. All adult services should promote recovery.

Recovery is a self-determined process that persons undertake to heal and grow. Recovery is facilitated by relationships and environments that provide hope, empowerment, choice and opportunity that promote persons reaching full potential as individuals and community members.

Understanding the who, what, where and when of accessing mental health treatment can be overwhelming. This brochure can be used as a guide to assist you in understanding Pennsylvania's mental health treatment options and supports.

the Advocacy
Alliance

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WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT?

Levels of treatment refer to the different adult mental health services available in the community. A primary health care approach should be used to address person's diverse health needs and include a focus on prevention, health promotion and early intervention. Services are offered along a continuum of care, although not all communities offer all the services that are described below.

OUTPATIENT INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT

Outpatient treatment is usually individual therapy provided for approximately 1 hour in a therapist's office. Outpatient may also refer to a group therapy process that is geared toward one particular issue, such as a depression. Either individual or group, therapy is recommended according to the needs of a person. The expertise of the outpatient therapist may vary from being a bachelor's level or master's level therapist with a degree in a mental health field and supervised by a psychiatrist or psychologist, to a licensed master level social worker or licensed master or doctorate level psychologist. Rarely does a psychiatrist provide mental health therapy.

PSYCHIATRIC PARTIAL HOSPITALIZATION TREATMENT

Partial Hospitalization treatment is a program designed for the more intensive needs of a person who has a serious mental disorder and needs more therapy than can be provided in an outpatient setting, yet does not need an inpatient hospitalization. A partial hospitalization program is designed for persons who are experiencing or who are at risk of a crisis, relapse or a full hospitalization. A person can go to a partial hospitalization program daily, or multiple times during the week, again according to a person's mental health treatment needs.

PSYCHOSOCIAL REHABILITATION

Psychosocial Rehabilitation includes a therapeutic activities and education/intervention program provided individually or in groups that may include development and maintenance of daily and community-living skills.

PSYCHIATRIC EMERGENCY AND CRISIS SERVICES

Emergency/crisis services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to help during a mental health emergency. Examples of services include telephone crisis hotlines, suicide hotlines, crisis counseling, crisis residential treatment services, crisis mobile teams, and crisis respite care.

CRISIS RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT SERVICE

Short-term, usually up to one week, 24 hour care provided in a non-hospital setting to a person during a psychiatric crisis. The purpose of this level of care is to keep a person safe and to avoid an unnecessary psychiatric hospitalization. A person usually cannot enter this level of treatment without a psychiatric recommendation. In some communities that have this level of care, a person can continue with their mental health treatment program, such as a partial hospitalization program during the day, and stay at the crisis residential in the evening.

PSYCHIATRIC INPATIENT HOSPITALIZATION TREATMENT

Inpatient psychiatric treatment is 24 hour care provided to a person who is in a serious mental health crisis and cannot be properly cared for in an outpatient or partial hospitalization setting. A psychiatric inpatient hospitalization is usually provided in a locked unit of a community hospital, but can also be in a separate hospital building. It is usually short term treatment.

STATE PSYCHIATRIC LONG TERM HOSPITALIZATION

A publicly funded state-run psychiatric hospital for persons who have a serious mental illness and are in need of long term care. Persons are court ordered to this level of care from a community hospital because they cannot be stabilized to return to the community and impose a danger to self and/or others. Usually a person enters a state hospital only after all other options have been tried to help stabilize the person's illness.

CASE MANAGEMENT

Case management is support services that help persons who have severe and persistent mental illness to receive appropriate and needed services and supports. A case manager helps to coordinate a person's mental health treatment, as well as any service or support needed, such as transportation, budgeting, employment opportunities, and recreational needs a person requires to enjoy a good quality of life. There are different levels of case management services available, depending on the intensity of a person's needs.

WHAT ARE SOME NATURAL SUPPORTS IN THE COMMUNITY THAT CAN BE USED IN A RECOVERY PROGRAM?

Natural Supports can be anything or anyone that is available to help support you in your Recovery Program. Things such as family, neighbors, and friends, consumer support groups, church groups, as well as any local community resources are considered natural supports.

DROP-IN CENTERS AND CLUBHOUSES

Drop-in Centers are psychosocial clubs offering both peer support and activities for individuals who have a mental illness. Each Drop-in Center varies in their programs and support for individuals, offering both social activities and educational programs. Greenhouses are similar to Drop-in Centers in programming and activities, but also offer employment training opportunities.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAM (CSP), PEER SUPPORT

Consumer run groups such as CSP are financially supported by the Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and its membership includes persons who have a mental illness, their family members and/or interested community members. CSP has a guiding set of Principles that endorse community involvement, quality of life, choice and empowerment for persons who have a mental illness. Local CSPs, while connected to a network of regional and state CSPs, decide their own agendas and projects. They may choose to work on local issues or to be a part of a larger issue such as addressing the stigma of mental illness or legislative advocacy. These programs are very successful in working to build a community free of stigma where individuals with mental illness work together as valued members of the community with the dignity, respect, and opportunities afforded to all citizens.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Member run groups offering peer support around a variety of issues, illnesses, or problem areas.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Supported Employment services assists persons who have a mental illness find and keep competitive employment within their communities. Staffed by employment specialists, the goals of supported employment are to integrate meaningful employment with mental health services.