Chapter 5. Types of Treatment Available

Chapter Overview

The types of treatments and services available for older adults with mental health issues vary depending on how severe their need is. Many older adults get their treatments primarily through their family doctor, often referred to as their “primary care physician.” Primary care can address mild forms of anxiety, depression, and other common mental health problems. Many individuals may feel comfortable using their primary care physician as the only one involved in their care, but for some situations, specialized mental health care may be necessary. If you have any symptoms or concerns about the way you are feeling, talk to your doctor. If you have questions about your medication, you can talk to your pharmacist or your doctor.

In this chapter, we describe most of the agencies you might work with and the services provided by each agency.

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Treatment Providers

There may be times that the family doctor needs to make a referral for more specialized mental health care than she or he is qualified to provide, just as they might for other medical conditions. Depending on the need, recommended specialists may include:

- Psychiatrist (a medical doctor with a specialty in psychiatry).
- Geropsychiatrist (a psychiatrist with a specialty in working with older adults).
- Clinical psychologist.
- Clinical social worker.
- Pastoral counselor.
- Clinical nurse specialist.
- Nurse practitioner.
- Physician’s assistant.

Types of Mental Health Services

Private Outpatient Care

Outpatient counseling. Specialized counselors, such as some of those listed above, will see individuals and families in their offices for psychotherapy or “talk therapy.” Some types of psychotherapy, such as cognitive behavioral therapy, can be very effective in treating some conditions like depression, anxiety, and personality disorders. Psychotherapy may at times be provided in conjunction with medication prescribed by a licensed physician or nurse practitioner.

Private psychiatrists. A limited number of physicians who specialize in psychiatry will see patients in their office. They can provide both psychotherapy and prescribe medication.

In-home counseling and consultation services. Some organizations offer in-home counseling and coordination of services for persons of all ages.

Home-based Nursing Services

Visiting nurses. Some home-based nursing services specialize in psychiatric nursing and can provide mental health counseling as well as help to manage medication for homebound persons.

Payment. Private outpatient and home-based nursing services are generally paid through private insurance and/or person's ability to pay full fees. In some cases, Medicaid and/or Medicare will cover some of the costs.

NH Bureau of Behavioral Health

The NH Bureau of Behavioral Health (BBH) is the state office for behavioral and mental health services, which is a part of the Division of Community Based Care and Health and
Human Services in New Hampshire. BBH provides funding to community mental health centers and peer support centers. Examples of some of the organizations and services funded through BBH follow.

Community Mental Health Centers

There are ten regional community mental health centers throughout the state. (See listing at the end of this section.) To increase accessibility, some of the community mental health centers also have satellite offices within their regions.

Services

Each center provides an array of outpatient mental health services. In addition to providing office-based services, all of the centers have staff who will visit people that are homebound. Services offered to individuals of all ages include the following:

- Assessment.
- Individual or group counseling.
- Case management for mental health services.
- Medication evaluation and monitoring services.
- Emergency mental health services (24 hours/day).

In addition to these services, some centers offer specialized services for older adults, including the following:

- Outreach to persons who are homebound.
- Day treatment programs.
- Mental health services for residents of nursing facilities.
- Family/caregiver support.
- Respite care.
- Housing options, including residential group homes.
- Services to assist persons with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias.
- Coordination with inpatient units providing geropsychiatric care.

Practitioners

Community mental health centers are staffed by a variety of clinicians including psychiatrists, nurse practitioners, clinical social workers, clinical psychologists, pastoral counselors, psychiatric nurses, and mental health counselors. Some of the clinicians are specially trained to work with older adults. For example, a few of the mental health centers have a geriatric psychiatrist on staff. A geriatric psychiatrist is a medical doctor who specializes in psychiatry and has received additional training in elder mental health issues and medical conditions.
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Payment

Most of these services are available to those who meet state eligibility. Community mental health centers provide eligibility evaluations, and Medicaid funding is typically resolved for those with significant symptoms.

Community mental health services accept private insurance as well as Medicaid and Medicare. They also offer a sliding scale for fees based on ability to pay.

Geographic regions

Each mental health center has a region, which includes several towns to which they provide services. The mental health centers can provide more information about the services they have to offer and areas that they serve.

To find out more about mental health services for older adults in your region, contact the Administrator for Older Adult Mental Health Services, NH Bureau of Behavioral Health, at 603-271-5094. You may also call one of the following mental health centers directly:

Region I: Northern Human Services. Phone: 603-447-2111
Region II: West Central Behavioral Health Services. Phone: 603-448-0126
Region III: Genesis Behavioral Health. Phone: 603-524-1100
Region IV: Riverbend Community Mental Health Center. Phone: 603-228-2101
Region V: Monadnock Family Services. Phone: 603-357-4400
Region VI: Community Council of Nashua. Phone: 603-889-6147
Region VII: The Mental Health Center of Greater Manchester. Phone: 603-668-4111
Region VIII: Seacoast Mental Health Center. Phone: 603-431-6703
Region IX: Community Partners. Phone: 603-749-4015
Region X: Center for Life Management Behavioral Systems. Phone: 603-434-1577

For a more detailed listing of community mental health centers, including the towns that they serve, see “Community Mental Health Centers” on page 124.

State Facilities

New Hampshire Hospital. New Hampshire Hospital (NHH) is located in Concord. Persons are generally admitted to NHH on an involuntary basis or through a guardian, and only when a less restrictive setting, such as a local hospital or outpatient treatment, is not an option due to the severity of the person's illness. Admissions to NHH are intended to be short-term. There is a clinical team at the hospital that specializes in the care of older adults. You can reach NHH at 603-271-5300.

Glencliff Home for the Elderly. Glencliff is a state owned facility that specializes in providing nursing home level care for older adults with long-term mental illness and/or developmental disabilities. Glencliff strives to improve the quality of life and to minimize
or eliminate the institutional-like living environment for all of its residents. You can reach Glencliff at 603-989-3111.

**Inpatient Psychiatric Services**

Some hospitals provide special inpatient units for older adults. These are often referred to as geropsychiatric units. They are staffed with a team of clinicians who specialize in mental health care for older adults in need of short-term hospitalization. Some hospitals may also offer an alternative to hospitalization such as day treatment, which does not involve an overnight stay. See “Hospitals in NH accepting geropsychiatric admissions” on page 127.

**Self-Help and Peer Support**

Most of the disorders described in this section reference various types of medical or mental health treatment options. It is important to remember that many people with these disorders also find that an effective part of recovery is gained through learning self-help techniques and getting support from others with a similar experience. Peer support centers are designed to provide support and encourage self-help for persons with mental illness. For more information on peer support centers, contact the Office of Consumer and Family Affairs at 603-271-5138. Also, the “Wellness” section of this Guidebook offers more information on ways that one can direct their own recovery and health.

**Summary**

Your needs for services may change depending on the severity of the mental health problems or issues related to aging. If you are unsure of what kind of services you should be seeking, you can start by discussing your needs with your primary care doctor. If there is a mental health specialist or social worker involved with your family, you can discuss options with them as well.

See the Appendix C, “Community, State, and National Resources,” beginning on page 111 for further listings of services and organizations that can help.
For additional copies, questions, or comments, please contact:

**NAMI New Hampshire**
(National Alliance on Mental Illness, New Hampshire Chapter)
15 Green Street, Concord NH 03301
Phone: 603-225-5359 or 800-242-6264
Fax: 603-228-8848
Email: info@naminh.org

To view this Guidebook online, go to:

www.naminh.org