When Can An Individual Benefit From Mental Health Services?

Many everyday challenges result in changes in the way people feel and behave. It is important to distinguish between typical behavior changes and signs of more serious problems. Problems deserve more attention when they are severe, persistent, and impact an individual’s daily activities. Treatment for emotional distress or mental health problems is available.

As with any illness, seeking treatment will help you get better and stay well longer. Mental health services can be obtained in both private and public mental health systems. They offer a broad array of person-centered treatment services that are responsive to diverse cultural groups. Community and family education is also available.

How Are Mental Illnesses Treated?

Mental health services involve two major phases: assessment and treatment.

Assessment - Problems are assessed to determine whether or not you can benefit from mental health services. Assessment is an ongoing collaborative process that involves developing long-term treatment goals based on a person’s strengths, challenges, desires, and needs. Usually, potential causes (e.g. biological or environmental) of your problems will be identified so that you can be referred to the appropriate services.

Treatment - In general, mental health problems are treated with Medication, Therapy, and Psychosocial Rehabilitation services.

• Medication can help reduce or eliminate symptoms and behaviors associated with mental health problems.
• Therapy can help individuals understand and manage their lives, enhance overall well-being, and assist with long-term social and living skills building.
• Psychosocial Rehabilitation can help people develop a personal support network, coping, social and vocational skills, manage symptoms, and use self-help, while supporting a person’s recovery.

Services are provided in a variety of settings, including:

• Outpatient services, provided in clinics or other community settings, assist individuals to manage and stabilize their symptoms and maintain the skills and supports needed to live in the community. These services can include individual and group counseling.
• Psychiatric emergency services are used to assist persons who are experiencing a crisis and pose a danger to themselves or others. During a crisis people often feel helpless and experience emotional turmoil. If such a crisis occurs, call 911 or take your family member to the local hospital.
• Inpatient hospital treatment provides 24-hr intensive, medically supervised services and involves the evaluation and re-evaluation of a person’s symptoms in order to stabilize acute symptoms during a crisis.

• Residential treatment is an alternative to inpatient and other institutional care for people in crisis or in need of assistance in returning to the community who need 24-hour intensive support but do not need 24-hr medical supervision.
• Vocational rehabilitation programs help individuals recognize their work potential and interest and provide assistance in learning job skills that assist a person to keep employment.
• Self-Help and Peer Support Programs provide emotional support and counseling on a peer-to-peer level. Hope and recovery are core goals. These services can assist with reducing stigma.

Service coordination is important in helping individuals gain access to needed services and coordinating treatment and services among providers.

Who Provides Treatment?

There are specially trained mental health providers who can evaluate and treat mental health problems.

• Psychiatrist – a medical doctor who specializes in the treatment of mental health problems, and can prescribe medication and provide other therapeutic services.
• Psychologist – has a doctorate in psychology, and is typically involved in research, psychological testing, and in the provision of therapy.