
Mental health treatment planning

Summary

- Think about the type of support each member of your healthcare team can provide, and when.
 - Everyone's treatment needs are different – making a plan for your mental health treatment can help you and your GP work out which services will benefit you.
 - You will probably need to review your plan regularly to make sure it continues to meet your needs.
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Some people with mental illness work with several healthcare professionals to meet their treatment needs. It can be helpful to think about the kinds of treatment and support that you require from each of those professionals and when treatment should be provided. You can also document the best ways to assist you if you are experiencing acute symptoms of mental illness or indicators that your condition may be deteriorating.

You and your doctor (general practitioner or GP) should work together to work out what services you need, set goals and decide on the best treatment options for you. At times, you and your GP might develop a plan with other services – for example, if you are returning home from spending time in hospital.

The purpose of a mental health treatment plan

Ongoing treatment and support for someone who is living with mental illness can involve several different people and organisations. These may include psychologists, GPs, family members or carers, psychiatrists and mental health nurses. They are all part of the healthcare team that works together to provide treatment and support.

Everyone's mental health treatment and support needs are different. It can be helpful to put down in writing the services each of the people in your mental healthcare team can provide, and make sure that everyone knows who is responsible for what and when. You are an important part of this team and should be fully involved in preparing this information.

Planning your mental health treatment and support

Your GP will work with you to decide:

- what your mental health needs are
- what help you require – your medical, physical, psychological and social needs are all considered
- what result you would like
- what treatment would be best for you.

Once you and your GP have agreed on your goals and what treatment and support you need to achieve them, your GP might seek your permission to discuss this with the other members of your healthcare team. Planning your treatment and support might take one visit or it might take a number of visits.

Your GP will offer you a copy of the document and will also keep a copy in your medical record. If you give permission, a copy can also be given to other people, such as psychologists or family members and carers. You should tell your GP if there is any information you do not want other people in your healthcare team to know.

Benefits of mental health treatment planning

Being involved in treatment planning will help you become more involved in your healthcare. Treatment and support planning can:

- help you to set and achieve goals
 - make sure everyone involved in your mental healthcare team is working towards the same goals
 - help you and your GP manage your long-term treatment in a way that is clear and easy to understand
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- give you a way to monitor your progress and check that you continue to receive the treatment you need
- lead to better treatment by focusing on improving and maintaining your health rather than just dealing with problems as they arise.

Issues to consider when mental health treatment planning

Most mental health treatment planning is done in collaboration with your GP. However, you may also work with mental health service providers to plan for discharge from a hospital admission. The time it takes to develop and document a plan depends on your healthcare professional and the complexity of your situation.

Some things to think about include the following:

- You will need to request a long consultation with your GP to allow enough time to discuss and plan your treatment options.
- If you would like a carer, family member or someone else to be involved in the planning and accompany you to mental health treatment plan appointments, you may wish to let your GP know beforehand.
- Your GP must get your consent before they develop a formal mental health treatment plan, and they should give you a written statement of your rights and responsibilities. Ask them to explain anything about these that you are unsure of.
- Tell your GP about any aspects of your treatment that you do not want discussed with the other members of your healthcare team.
- If you are not confident with English and would like an interpreter to help at your consultation, let the receptionist know when you are making your appointment.

Reviewing your mental health planning

Once you have a mental health treatment plan, you should continue to see the same GP for review and management. Significant changes in your health may mean you need to review your planning. Even if there are no big changes to your situation, your planning should be reviewed regularly to make sure it continues to aid in your recovery and management of your illness or condition. You should agree a date for review when you document your planning.

Costs associated with a mental health treatment plan

Your GP should tell you what costs (if any) are involved if you decide to work together to plan your treatment and support. If you are unsure, ask your GP what the fees will be.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Mental healthcare professional
- Kids Help Line, call 1800 55 1800
- Mensline Australia, call 1300 789 978

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Better Health Channel - (need new cp)

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