

INFORMATION GUIDE:

Outpatient Individual Mental Health & Addictions Services



Who are we?

Our therapists come from a variety of different professional backgrounds such as nursing, occupational therapy, social work and psychology. Psychiatrists specialize in the assessment and treatment of mental disorders and most often act as consultants to other health professionals such as family doctors. Psychiatrists are medical doctors who provide consultation for patients who present with severe psychiatric symptoms or complex mental health related issues, such as worsening of chronic mental disorders. Psychiatric consultation is typically short term, with timely re-activation if indicated.

What do we do?

Our aim is to help you develop awareness and tools to better cope with difficult thoughts, feelings, relationships, experiences and stressors. How we do this will depend on your own individual goals and needs, which we will explore together. A closer look at your past is sometimes a focus, but not always. Therapy involves talking but can also involve things like relaxation exercises. Our work together is always based on human interaction, and it is the therapy relationship where trust forms; so, you can develop a greater understanding of yourself and what you would like to change/improve in your life.

Psychiatrists usually recommend a mix of treatment options, including medications, psychotherapy and lifestyle changes. Their recommendations are put in practice in collaboration with family physicians, psychologists, clinical social workers and other mental health professionals.

What will the first session look like?

The first session varies, depending on the therapist. However, most therapists will make sure you are informed about the therapy process. This includes:

1. Discussing the importance and limits of confidentiality;
2. Gathering information about your concern and previous experience with mental health/addictions services;
3. How you are currently coping; and
4. Your goals/hopes for therapy.

What is expected of you?

As a client, you have an important role and responsibility – to keep appointments, actively participate in therapy and discharge planning, ask questions, tell your therapist about your needs and concerns, and respect others. Typically, clients attend therapy for one hour every week or two. The duration can vary from a single session to brief therapy or longer term. Most of the work happens between sessions, and clients often leave session with something they can think about, try or practice before the next session. Most clients get out of therapy what they put into it.

How can you prepare?

It is important to consider what you hope to get out of therapy prior to attending your first appointment. Try considering the question: “If your life was better because of therapy, what would you be doing differently?” This can help to determine certain areas of your life that you may like to improve upon. Attending a group session, or doing some reading on topics we can suggest, might also give you some helpful information before attending your first session.

Important things to consider

Experiencing difficult thoughts, feelings, relationships and stressors are a part of life; and so, it is important to learn to cope without therapy. Therefore, our work together is time-limited. Your therapist will typically ask questions to guide you to face challenges you need to face for real growth. This can mean therapy is not always a comfortable or pleasant experience. Some people may actually feel worse before they feel better – and this is okay.

Success in therapy can be determined by the achievement of goals, such as a return to work, the accomplishment of specific task, or simply by developing an awareness of issues and challenges, without making specific changes. You may even realize that you are not quite ready to face those challenges and decide to return to therapy at a later date. Learning and growth related to our mental health is a lifelong process; so, the work can, and often does, continue beyond the end of therapy.

Please note: *This is not an emergency service. If you are experiencing a mental health and addictions emergency, please go to your nearest emergency room - or call the 24-hour, province-wide Mental Health Crisis Line at: 1-888-737-4668*