



IOWA TOTAL CARE
Mental Health Guide



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Our mental health guide is designed to empower community organizations without medical backgrounds to support individuals facing mental health challenges.

By providing easy-to-understand resources and practical strategies, this toolkit aims to foster a compassionate and knowledgeable community network who can help and promote mental wellness for all.



CONTENT FLAG

Please note the content of this resource contains information about mental health conditions, mental health crisis, and references mental illness symptoms, suicide, and substance use.



ABOUT IOWA TOTAL CARE

Iowa Total Care is one of Iowa Medicaid's managed care organizations (MCOs).

IowaTotalCare.com | 1-833-404-1061 (TTY: 711)

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Overview



What are mental health conditions?

Mental health conditions refer to a wide range of diagnosable disorders that affect one's mood, thinking, and behavior. Many individuals may experience mental health concerns, some of which are characterized by distress and inability to function.

Mental health includes our psychological, emotional, and social well-being. Our mental health can determine how we handle stress and make decisions.

Like physical health, everyone has mental health. Mental health concerns can disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others, and/or daily functioning.

Just as someone may have a physical illness, people could also have a mental illness. Mental illness does not discriminate; it can affect anyone. Mental illnesses take many forms. Some are mild and only interfere in limited ways with daily life, and others are so severe that a person may need care in a hospital and/or supports throughout their life.

Examples of mental illnesses include:

- Anxiety disorders.
- Bipolar disorder.
- Depression.
- Eating disorders.
- Obsessive compulsive and related disorders (OCD).
- Personality disorders.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Schizophrenia.
- Substance use disorders.



Disclaimer: *Iowa Total Care is providing this information for reference and educational purposes. This should not be used to make or infer a diagnosis of mental illness. Please consult with your provider or a mental health professional if you feel you or your loved one needs support with a mental health condition.*

*To learn more about mental health conditions, please visit **NAMI.org**.*

Tips For Supporting a Person's Mental Health

Because millions of people in the U.S. live with a mental health condition, you likely encounter people with a mental illness in your family or in your daily life. However, if you are unsure of how best to approach someone who may be struggling, these tips may help.



- Be sure to speak in a relaxed and calm manner.
- Ease into the conversation, gradually. It may be that the person is not in a place to talk, and that is OK. Greeting them and extending a gentle kindness can go a long way. Sometimes less is more.



- Be respectful, compassionate, and empathetic to their feelings by engaging in reflective listening, such as “I hear that you are having a bad day today.”
 - Be a good listener, be responsive and make eye contact with a caring approach.
 - Give them the opportunity to talk and open up, but don't press.
 - Reduce any defensiveness by sharing your feelings and looking for common ground.
- Be aware of a person becoming upset or confused by your conversation with them.
 - Show respect and understanding for how they describe and interpret their symptoms.
 - Genuinely express your concern.
 - Offer your support and connect them to help if you feel that they need it. Ask, “How can I help?” if appropriate.



What Is a Mental Health Crisis?



Generally, a crisis is any situation in which a person's behavior puts them at risk of hurting themselves or others, prevents a person from being able to care for themselves, and/or stops them from functioning effectively in the community.

This could be caused by external factors such as increased stress, loss of someone close or a companion animal, traumatic events, major life changes, or internal triggers such as intense depression, hopelessness, anxiety, anger, or panic.

Common crisis emotions include feeling frightened, overwhelmed by negative emotions, and out of control. Generally, the person or their loved ones are unable to resolve the crisis without the help of trained professionals.

Navigating A Crisis as a Support Person

Reduce the intensity as much as possible.

If you know the individual, these can be options of things you have done for them in the past. Giving them a few choices may be easier than them having to come up with ideas on their own.

- Speak calmly, softly, and slowly.
- Relax your body and voice.
- Be genuine.
- Keep yourself and others safe.
- If engaging may create a risk to yourself or others, immediately get support from a trained professional.
- Ask simple, respectful questions about what happened and their thoughts/feelings.
- Do not try to talk the person out of delusions or hallucinations. This will only create mistrust.
- Offer options for ways you can make the person feel safe.



If the person is willing to seek care, establish a plan.

The person may have a written plan of action for mental health crises or other ideas about what works for them. Ask the person what their preferences are:

- “Is there a therapist, doctor, or other care provider we could call?”
- “What has helped when you’ve had similar feelings in the past?”
- “Is there a certain hospital or clinic you prefer?”
- “Do you want to bring anything with you?”
- “Is there anyone else you would like to call?”
- “When we get there, do you want me to stay with you or drop you off?”

What are signs that action must be taken?

Extreme changes in behavior may include the following:

- Attempts or making plans to harm or kill oneself.
- Threats to hurt others.
- Verbal or physical abuse.
- Excessive isolation.
- Not sleeping or eating for several days.
- Acute psychotic symptoms causing distress (e.g., delusions, hallucinations, paranoia).

Crisis Resources

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

988 is the three-digit dialing code for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, now known as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. The Lifeline provides free and confidential support for people in distress 24/7. If you or someone you know is in a mental health crisis, call 988.

How can I contact the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline?

Call or text 988, or chat with a trained counselor at [988Lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org).



What happens when you call 988?

1. First, you will hear a message giving service selection choices.
2. Hold music may play while your call is connected.
3. You will be connected to a skilled counselor who will ask about your safety, listen to you, and provide support and resources.

Emergency Services

You might contact emergency services (e.g., 911, police, sheriff) for assistance in times when a risk of harm to self or others is imminent or in progress.

For some individuals, having contact with emergency services can be traumatic. Utilizing mobile crisis teams, collaborating with the person's loved ones or professionals, or encouraging them to get to a crisis stabilization unit, emergency department, or urgent care are additional options for someone facing mental health challenges.



Safe Police Interactions: What to Say If You Need to Call the Police During a Mental Health Crisis

State that the situation is a mental health crisis to both the 911 dispatcher and the responding officer, request mobile crisis. For example:

"I am calling because I am supporting someone who is having a mental health crisis. My goal is for them to stay safe and get help. If possible, I'd like an officer with crisis intervention training to respond."

More mental health resources can be found on page 9 >

Reducing the Stigma

What is stigma?

Stigma is when someone views a person in a negative way because they have a mental health condition. Stigma causes people to feel ashamed for something that is out of their control. It creates an environment of fear, silence, and isolation, and it prevents people from seeking the help they need. Some examples of stigma include:

- having their condition referred to as a “phase,”
- being discriminated against in housing or employment, and/or
- being labeled as “other” or “abnormal.”

Four Ways to Reduce Stigma

1. Talk openly about mental health.

When people discuss their mental health conditions openly, it helps to break down barriers and start positive conversations. One in five Iowans will experience a mental health condition each year, which means almost everyone knows and loves someone who is struggling.

The more we talk about mental health in an open and honest way, the more normalized it becomes. It’s important to remember that everyone has the right to decide how and when to share their personal story.



2. Educate yourself and others.

Learn more about mental health conditions, including symptoms, warning signs, and treatments. If you know the facts, you can better understand what someone is going through and when to help. Remember that many individuals who experience mental health conditions live well and happily in recovery.



3. Be conscious of language.

- Do use person-first language. A person is not defined by a condition. For example: “He experiences bipolar disorder,” NOT “He is bipolar.”
- Don’t use the words “crazy,” “psychotic,” or “insane.”
- Don’t call someone “mentally ill.”
- Don’t use mental health conditions as adjectives. For example, don’t say “The weather is schizophrenic today,” or “She’s so OCD about her organized closet.”
- Do use caution when discussing suicide. It’s appropriate to say, “Died by suicide,” not “committed suicide or chose to kill him/her/themselves.”
- Do be kind and accepting, and do not spread toxic positivity. For example, say, “Your feelings are valid. I’m here to listen,” not “Good vibes only! Why don’t you focus on the positive?”

4. Show compassion.

If someone trusts you with their story or their experience, practice active listening and don’t judge their experience.

The Different Types of Help

Treatment is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Where someone goes for mental health treatment depends on their situation and recovery needs. Knowing where to look and what to expect can help reduce confusion and stress.



Therapy

Therapy is also called individual therapy, psychotherapy, “talk therapy” or counseling. The length of your therapy will depend on your personal situation.



Peer Support

Peer support refers to support given by someone who has a life experience with mental illness. People receive peer support through support groups, peer-run programs, and from trained peer providers called certified peer specialists.



Community-Based Treatment

Community-based treatment means that the person is not in a hospital setting. Instead, they receive care from a mobile treatment team in or near the place they live.



Inpatient Treatment

Inpatient treatment is when an individual receives care at a general or specialty hospital with 24-hour care from mental health professionals.



Outpatient Treatment

Outpatient treatment is when an individual receives care in their community without staying overnight in an inpatient setting.

Respect and Process Your Own Experience

Supporting someone with mental illness often means you have experienced a challenging period yourself. It’s important to take time to process these experiences. Consider utilizing mental health resources to support your own well-being during this time.

Resources

Mental Health Resources	
Mental health resources are tools, services, and supports designed to help individuals maintain or improve their mental well-being.	
<p>Your Life Iowa YourLifeIowa.org (chat available) Phone: 1-855-581-8111 Text: 1-855-895-8398</p>	Contact Your Life Iowa if you are looking for help with alcohol or drug use, gambling, suicidal thoughts, or mental health.
<p>National Domestic Violence Hotline Phone: 1-800-799-7233 Text: 88788 (START)</p>	Free and confidential help 24/7 for domestic violence situations. Support is available in English, Spanish, and 400 other languages through interpretation.
<p>National Sexual Assault Hotline Phone: 1-800-656-4673</p>	Speak one-on-one with a support specialist by phone. The service is available 24/7 and is free and confidential.
<p>National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) NAMIiowa.org Phone: 1-800-950-6264 (NAMI)</p>	Visit NAMI’s website to learn more about mental health conditions, research, support, and advocacy. You can also search for local support groups and classes.
<p>Mindspring Health MindspringHealth.org</p>	Visit this site to sign up for free webinars about many mental health topics.
<p>Iowa Office of Recovery Services (ORS) Phone: 1-855-622-4692 info@orsiowa.org</p>	Contact the ORS if you want assistance navigating Iowa’s mental health or substance use systems.
<p>Findhelp iowatotalcare.findhelp.com</p>	Use this free site to find mental health resources and more in your community.

Peer Support Resources

Peers are people with lived experience with mental health or substance use challenges who are trained to help support others.

Iowa Warmline

1-844-775-9276 (WARM)

Peer-run phone line. The line is for anyone struggling with mental health or substance use issues. The line is staffed 24/7 by people who have been through a similar journey and are in recovery themselves.

NAMI HelpLine

1-800-950-6264 (NAMI)

Text HelpLine to 62640

helpline@nami.org

Hours: Monday - Friday

9 a.m. to 9 p.m. CT

Contact NAMI to be connected with a peer support service for people living with a mental condition, their family members, and mental health providers.

NAMI Peer Support Groups

NAMIiowa.org

NAMI chapters throughout Iowa offer free support groups for people struggling with mental health conditions, and groups for family members or loved ones of people with mental health conditions. Visit their website to learn more about opportunities in Iowa.



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