



SUNFLOWER HEALTH PLAN Mental Health Guide



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

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

We hope these resources and strategies are easy-to-understand. This toolkit aims to foster a caring and knowledgeable community network that can promote mental wellness for all.



CONTENT FLAG

Please note this resource has information about mental health conditions, mental health crisis and references, mental-illness symptoms, suicide and substance use.



ABOUT SUNFLOWER HEALTH PLAN

Sunflower Health Plan has a contract to serve Medicaid members in Kansas. We partner with physicians, specialists, hospitals and other providers to ensure each member receives the right care, at the right time, in the right setting.

SunflowerHealthPlan.com | 1-877-644-4623 (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 people 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 one's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning.

Just as someone may have a physical illness, a person 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 with daily life in limited ways. Others are so severe that a person may need care in a hospital or supports throughout their life.

Examples of mental illnesses include:

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



Disclaimer: *Sunflower Health Plan is providing this information for reference and education. 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 know 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, try these tips.



- Speak in a relaxed and calm manner.
- Ease into the conversation. The person may not be 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. Engage 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 chance to talk and open up, but don't press.
 - Reduce any defensiveness by sharing your feelings and looking for common ground.
- Watch for the 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 is at risk of hurting themselves or others, prevents them from being able to care for themselves, and/or stops them from functioning effectively in the community.

External factors may cause a crisis. Examples are increased stress, loss of someone close or a pet, traumatic events, major life changes, or internal triggers such as intense depression, hopelessness, anxiety, anger or panic.

Common crisis emotions include fear, negative emotions and loss of control. Generally, the person or their loved ones need the help of trained professionals to resolve the crisis.

Navigating a Crisis as a Support Person

Try to reduce the intensity.

If you know the person, these options may help. 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.
- Get help from a trained professional if there is a risk to yourself or others.
- 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.
- Give options for ways you can make the person feel safe.



If the person is willing to seek care, make 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 feelings like this in the past?”
- “Is there a 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 is needed?

Extreme changes in behavior may include:

- 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. It's now known as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. The Lifeline has 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 with service 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 give support and resources.

Emergency Services

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

For some people, contact with emergency services can be traumatic. Some other options might be:

- Using mobile crisis teams.
- Working with the person's loved ones or mental health team.
- Encouraging them to get to a crisis stabilization unit, emergency department, or urgent care.



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

Find more mental health resources on page 10 >

Reducing the Stigma

What is stigma?

Stigma is a negative view of a person because they have a mental health condition. Stigma causes people to feel shame for something they cannot control. It creates an environment of fear, silence and isolation. It keeps people from seeking the help they need.

Some examples of stigma include:

- Having one's condition referred to as a "phase."
- Discrimination in housing or employment.
- Being labeled as "other" or "abnormal."

Four Ways to Reduce Stigma

1. Talk openly about mental health.

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

Talking about mental health in an open and honest way helps to normalize it. It's important to know 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. Knowing more can help you understand what someone is going through and when to help. Many people with mental health conditions live well and happily in recovery.





3. Be conscious of language.

- 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.”
- Use caution when talking about suicide. It’s appropriate to say, “Died by suicide,” not “committed suicide or chose to kill him/her/themselves.”
- Be kind and accepting. 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. 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 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 one’s therapy will depend on their personal situation.



Peer Support

Peer support refers to help given by someone who has a life experience with mental illness. People get 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 get care from a mobile treatment team in or near the place they live.



Inpatient Treatment

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



Outpatient Treatment

Outpatient treatment is care in the community without staying overnight at a facility.

Respect and Process Your Own Experience

Supporting someone with mental illness can be a challenging time for you, too. Take time to process those experiences. Consider using mental health resources to support your own well-being during this time.

Resources

Mental Health Resources	
Mental health resources are tools, services and supports to help people maintain or improve their mental well-being.	
Community Care Network of Kansas 1-785-233-8483 communitycareks.org/page/find-a-clinic	Contact Community Care Network of Kansas if you want help with alcohol or drug use, gambling, suicidal thoughts or mental health.
National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233 Text: 88788 (START)	Free and confidential help 24/7 for domestic violence situations. Support is available in English, Spanish and 400 other languages.
National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-4673	Speak one-on-one with a support specialist by phone. The service is available 24/7 and is free and confidential.
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) NAMIKansas.org 1-800-950-6264 (NAMI)	Visit NAMI's website to learn more about mental health conditions, research, support and advocacy. Learn about local support groups and classes.
Mindspring Health MindspringHealth.org	Visit this site to sign up for free webinars about many mental health topics.
Headquarters Kansas 785-865-2600 Or call/text 988 Online Chat: 988lifeline.org	Contact Headquarters Kansas if you want help navigating Kansas mental health or substance-use systems.

Peer Support Resources

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

Compassionate Ear Warmline
Mental Health American of the Heartland

1-913-281-2251

Peer-run phone line. The line is for anyone struggling with mental health or substance use issues. The line is staffed 24/7 by peers.

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 or mental health providers.

NAMI Peer Support Groups
NAMIKansas.org

NAMI chapters throughout Kansas offer free support groups for people struggling with their mental health. They have groups for family members or loved ones of people with mental health conditions. Visit their website to find groups in Kansas.



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