

# Diagnoses & Follow-Up

*Designed to Help Persons with Mental Health Diagnoses  
Successfully Discharge from the Nursing Facility*

## Physical Health Needs

Though your health has improved and you are moving from the nursing facility, it may be helpful to receive assistance in managing chronic health conditions. It is important that the staff at the nursing facility work with you to understand your health condition(s), possible related behaviors, and treatment before you leave.

- If you have *dementia*, using medication assistance (such as pill boxes or charts) is suggested to avoid taking too much or too little medicine. To prevent unsafe situations, nursing facility staff can cue you and your caregiver to safety hazards, including the risks of injury, falling, and getting lost. You and your caregiver can participate in dementia support groups or day programs/respite care, which can greatly reduce stress and also provide information and resources.

- If you have *diabetes*, understanding this disease process is very important. Nursing facility staff can teach you and your family how to handle insulin, recognize side effects, and know symptoms of problems. Make sure that diabetic supplies are ordered as needed. Meals on Wheels can also help you meet your daily dietary needs.

- If you have *COPD*, you must obtain medical equipment in the home (oxygen tanks, portable units, inhalers). Nursing facility staff can help you and your family learn about the disease process and how to use your oxygen tank. You should also receive information about potential problems, furnace safety, and the danger of smoking near an oxygen tank. Staff may be able to provide stress-relieving exercises to help avoid anxiety or depression, which COPD can make worse. Having someone work with you and your medication regime can ensure you take the correct amount.

## About This Brief

- This brief is designed to help successfully discharge older persons who use Medicaid and have mental health diagnoses from the nursing facility to a private home or apartment.
- Staff members of nursing facilities who have helped persons with diagnoses of anxiety, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia successfully discharge to the community suggested and use these helpful discharge strategies.

## Mental Health Symptoms

If you are moving from a nursing facility and you have *anxiety, schizophrenia, or bipolar disorder*, information and a good support system can help you manage your mental health concerns.

- First, make sure that a psychiatrist has evaluated your medications' effectiveness and find out if it is possible for him or her to follow-up with you regularly.
- Nursing facility staff can arrange for you to receive special services like Meals on Wheels, an alert system (Lifeline), mental health therapy, and/or breathing treatment. In addition, take part in social activities and consider having someone you trust manage your finances. All of these can help reduce your anxiety.
- Getting help with remembering to take your medication is very important. Taking part in support groups or therapy may also be helpful.
- If drug and alcohol addiction is a concern, moving to an assisted living or supportive group home is a good option.
- Participating in mental health support groups or individual therapy can help you cope with your symptoms.
- Ask your psychiatrist for a clear explanation of your diagnosis and instructions for taking your medication to avoid complications.

## Medication & Treatment Adherence

Taking your medication and participating in your treatment recommendations are crucial for managing physical and mental health needs. Medication and treatment plans are important, for they can keep you from re-entering a hospital or nursing facility.

Tell nursing facility staff any reasons you might possibly not take your medicine or hesitate to follow your treatment plan. Nursing facility staff can explain why it is so important and develop a plan with you to help you comply with your medication and treatment recommendations for your physical and mental health.

- **Medication.** If you feel like you want to stop taking your medication when you feel better or if you are having trouble remembering to take your medication, tell your doctor or case manager. A family member, neighbor or someone else in your community may be able to help you take your daily medicine. You might try using an automated pillbox that notifies a nurse if you don't take your medicine. Further, nursing facility staff can link you to a case manager, who can answer questions about medication and other concerns. Lastly, nursing facility staff may show you how to file for insurance to pay for your medication and arranging for its order and delivery, which will help you save money.

- **Treatment.** It is important to follow your doctor's instructions for your medicine and treatment. Some people may have trouble following directions for using oxygen, smoking recommendations, dietary needs, physical therapy, or using walkers and canes. You may avoid having to return to your nursing facility by following your doctor's orders. The staff at your nursing facility can help you and your family understand the importance of following instructions.

## Use of Community Services

- Make sure you have a solid plan for transportation to community mental health centers or health appointments. If you do not, call your case manager or ask nursing facility staff.
- To make taking your medicine and following your treatment plan easier, make sure that your treatment and appointment schedules are easy for you to keep and work well with your personality and daily habits.
- Ask that the staff at your nursing facility (including a social worker, nurse, and primary care doctor) help you plan your discharge, which will make your departure easier for you. Your team can create a plan with you to make sure that you keep your appointments, live in a safe home environment, and maintain progress with your health.

*"I would recommend a pill counter with the containers. The daughter might come in every three days and refill it. And then I've had people make a chart, where you have to look at the time and check off when you took [medications]. Then have the daughter come in a few days [a week] and check on it."*

- Director of Social Services

## AAAs and CMHCs

Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) are widely available throughout Kansas. AAAs and CMHCs can provide you with a case manager to help you identify community resources and determine eligibility for services. AAA also provides a resource book, "Explore Your Options," which is a very useful tool for getting contact information for community resources. CMHCs can ensure that mental health treatment is provided for you in the community.



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Office of Aging & Long Term Care  
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