



Your Compass for Care

***Your* CLIENT HANDBOOK**

Welcome to Directions for Mental Health, Inc. Each year, Directions' staff sees over 10,000 individuals and families seeking counseling, psychotherapy, medications, and/or education to help improve their quality of life.

This handbook has been designed to introduce you to our services and provide general guidelines for receiving services. Please read it carefully. If you have any questions about the information in this handbook, please ask for assistance. If you would like this handbook in an alternate format, please let your clinician know and we will make every effort to provide it to you. It is our commitment to treat all people with dignity and respect.

Our *mission* is to be a welcoming and compassionate provider, advocate, and partner to children, adults, and families in need of integrated healthcare, social support, safety, and hope for the future.

Our *vision* is a community where all adults and children have the safety, security, and support to lead happy, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

Our goal is to provide effective and efficient services to individuals and families based upon their strengths and preferences, as well as their special needs and abilities. We continuously monitor the quality of services to ensure that the needs of the population we serve are being met. If you are interested in learning more about our quality improvement process, ask your primary provider to summarize our latest results for you. You will be asked to help us achieve our mission by actively participating in treatment decisions and giving us feedback on our performance.

We Promise Our Clients:

- To make you our first priority
- To listen to your story
- To protect your privacy
- To focus on your strengths
- To restore your hope

Thank you for choosing Directions as the place to receive your care.

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Our Locations and Hours of Operation

Services are available at three office locations and various community locations throughout Pinellas and Pasco Counties according to specific program guidelines:

Clearwater Center

Administrative Offices and Adult Services

*1437 S. Belcher Rd
Clearwater, FL 33764
(727) 524-4464*

Largo Center

Children & Family Services Specialty Center

*8823 115th Avenue North
Largo, FL 33773
(727) 547-4566*

West Pasco Center

Adult, Children & Family Services

*5642 Meadow Lane
New Port Richey, FL 34652
(727) 847-4465*

Office Hours:

Monday – Thursday
8 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Friday
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Office Hours:

Monday – Thursday
8 a.m. – 8 p.m.
Friday
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Office Hours:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Tuesday and Thursday
10 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Although these are the standard office hours of operation, specific programs can deliver services outside of these hours.

Our offices are closed on the following holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day.

Our services, activities, programs, and facilities are provided without regard to age, race, religion, national origin, handicap, impairment, veteran status, or political opinions or affiliations as provided by law and in accordance with Directions' respect for personal dignity. All of our services and facilities are accessible to and usable by disabled persons, including persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, or blind, or who have other sensory impairments. We serve a variety of clientele and will make translator and/or interpreter services or other assistive and communications devices available free of charge to clients. If possible, please provide 24 hours notice if a translator or interpreter is needed. To request assistance with our facilities, an interpreter, translator, or other assistive devices; if you would like this Handbook in an alternate format; or to receive a copy of our Auxiliary Aids Plan, please speak with your provider, an Access Coordinator, or contact Julie Griswold, *our* Single Point of Contact, at (727) 524-4464, extension 1359.

Our Contact Information

727-524-4464

Our Scheduling Department	Option 2
<i>For your questions about scheduling a first time appointment in Pinellas County</i>	
Our Scheduling Department	Option 3
<i>For your questions about re-scheduling an appointment in Pinellas County</i>	
Our Psychiatry Department	Option 4
<i>When you need to speak with your prescriber</i>	
Our Reimbursement Department	Extension 1251
<i>For your questions or concerns about a bill, payment, etc.</i>	
Our Health Records Department	Extension 1208
<i>For your questions about getting a copy of your record</i>	
Our Quality Department	Extension 1359
<i>To express satisfaction or comments/concerns about your care</i>	
Our Pharmacy – QoL	(727) 533-9073
Our West Pasco Scheduling Department	(727) 847-4465
<i>For your questions about scheduling an appointment in our West Pasco Office</i>	

Our General Program Information

Directions offers a variety of services to our community that may help you, your family, or someone you know. A brief description of each of the services available is listed below. If you are interested in more information regarding any of our programs, please ask your primary provider.

Our Adult Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

- Psychiatric Services – provides psychiatric evaluation and treatment through medication management therapy and monitoring
- Adult Outpatient / Enhanced Outpatient – provides crisis therapy and brief time-limited individual therapy and group therapy for people suffering from mental illness or substance use issues. Services can be provided in office or, in some cases, at the client’s home.
- Case Management and Intensive Case Management - provides coordination of care for eligible people with severe and persistent mental illness.
- Homeless Outreach – provides mental health assessment to link clients to psychiatric services and/or counseling, information regarding community resources, and limited case management.

Our Child & Family Services

- Outpatient Services – provides individual, family, and group therapy to families with children ages 0 through 18 struggling with mental health and/or drug and alcohol concerns. Services can be provided at the office or in the home, depending on the need.
- Early Childhood Consultation Services – provides in-home parent training, parenting classes and on-site training for child care personnel working with children ages 0 to 5 throughout Pinellas County.
- Psychiatric Services – provides evaluation and treatment through medication therapy and monitoring to children and adolescents.
- Case Management – provides assessment and coordination of care for eligible children.

Our Crisis Intervention Services

Any client of Directions experiencing a mental health crisis during business hours should contact the office where services are received. In the event of a medical or life-threatening emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency room.

Any client in crisis after business hours or on the weekend should call 911. **Directions for Mental Health, Inc. does not provide twenty-four hour per day crisis intervention, but crisis intervention services are always available in the community through the following program:**

P.E.M.H.S.
(Personal Enrichment Through Mental Health Services)
11254 58th Street North
Pinellas Park, Florida 33782
(727) 791-3131

Your Safety in our Facilities

Ensuring the safety of our clients and employees is important to Directions. Our Clearwater, Largo, and West Pasco facilities are equipped with fire alarms and fire suppression equipment. We also have first aid kits located on all three floors at the Clearwater building and at the Largo and West Pasco buildings. If you need first aid assistance, please ask for help from the nearest employee. To find the closest exit, look for the lighted Exit signs in all of our hallways, or for the Fire Escape Routes located in every office.

Directions uses Emergency Codes to quickly communicate to our staff, clients, and visitors when emergency situations arise. Most Emergency Codes will be announced using our overhead paging system. If you have questions about what an announced code means or what to do when a code is announced, please ask the nearest employee.

Directions' Emergency Codes are:

Code	Plan	Action
Red	Fire Threat Activation	Evacuate Immediately. Use the stairs – not the elevators. This code will be used in case the alarm system fails.
Blue	Medical Emergency	Medically trained staff will assist. Everyone else should avoid the area.
Pink	Missing Person	Staff will monitor stairways, exits, and parking lots and contact the police if necessary. Report anything suspicious to an employee.
Gray	Security Alert	Crisis Response Team will respond. Everyone else should avoid the area.
Silver	Security Alert: Weapon involved	Crisis Response Team will respond. Everyone else should stay away from area. Police will be contacted.
Orange	Lockdown	Stay inside. See an employee for more information.
Black	Severe Weather Warning	Stay inside and away from windows.
Brown	Hazardous Biological / Chemical Material Spill	Avoid the area – staff will respond to clean up
Yellow	Bomb Threat	Evacuate the building. Do not use cell phones or other electronic devices
Purple	Other incident	See an employee for more information.

When a code has been resolved, staff will page “All Clear” using our telephone system.

What you should expect when you come for services

When you begin to receive services at Directions, you will receive an assessment. At that appointment, your clinician will review the present situation that brings you to us and how you are coping. We will discuss your personal history, social support, and medical history. We will also want to know about your strengths and hopes for your future. Before the end of the session your practitioner will review the assessment, discuss with you what your options are, and help you formulate a plan to address your needs. Options may include individual counseling, group therapy, case management, and/or medication.

Your Rights and Responsibilities

Adapted from the Florida Patient’s Bill of Rights and Responsibilities, Florida Mental Health Law, and Directions’ Policies and Procedures:

Your Rights

- To be treated with courtesy and respect, including appreciation of your individual dignity, and protection of your need for privacy
- To quality treatment

- To prompt and reasonable responses to questions and requests
- To know who is providing services, his or her qualifications, and who is responsible for your care
- To know what client support services are available, including whether an interpreter is available if you do not speak English, or are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- To know what rules and regulations apply to your conduct
- To be given information concerning diagnosis, recommended course of treatment, alternatives, risks, and prognosis, to guide in treatment decisions. In the case of prevention services, you have the right to be given information regarding the service being provided, expected outcome of that service and any risks related to participation in that service.
- To refuse any treatment, except as otherwise provided by law
- To be given full information regarding fees for services, available financial resources for your care, and an itemized bill upon request
- To impartial access to services or accommodations, regardless of sex, race, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, physical handicap, or resource of payment. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any way, please assist us in our commitment to providing impartial services by contacting Chantal, *our* Compliance Officer at (727) 524-4464 extension 1720.
- To give consent or refusal to participate in experimental research
- To express grievances regarding any violation of your rights, including abuse or neglect, as stated in Florida law, through the grievance procedure of Directions For Mental Health, Inc. This information is provided during the orientation process and is posted in office reception areas. To express a violation of your rights, clients can also contact the Department of Children and Families at 813-558-5700 or the Human Rights Advocacy Committee at 1-800-342-0825. To report abuse or neglect, contact the Florida Abuse Hot Line at 1-800-962-2873.
- To receive services in a safe and healthy environment
- To participate in the development and review of treatment/service and discharge planning
- To seek and/or receive services from the provider of your choice

Your Responsibilities

- To provide accurate and complete information to the best of your ability
- To report changes in your condition, living arrangements, and financial/insurance status
- To report whether or not you understand a suggested course of action and what is expected of you
- To follow the treatment plan agreed upon by you and your service provider
- To ask questions and discuss concerns regarding your treatment as they arise
- To keep appointments regularly and to call and cancel any appointments you cannot keep at least 24-hours in advance. Failure to keep appointments regularly may lead to your case being closed and you will no longer be a client of Directions. If your case is closed, you will have to re-apply for services.
- To accept any consequences that result from refusing treatment or not following the service provider's instructions

- To pay fees as promptly as possible. When there are difficulties meeting this responsibility, you can make arrangements with your service provider or a representative from the reimbursement department to pay as soon as possible. Failure to make arrangements for payment may lead to your case being closed.
- To treat all other people in the facility with courtesy and respect
- To refrain from attending appointments when actively infectious or contagious and seek appropriate medical treatment before returning for services
- To follow the facility rules regarding conduct as follows:
 - Avoid being violent or threatening to staff, visitors, or other clients. You can be denied services if you become violent or threatening, or destroy property which does not belong to you. If you become violent, our staff may use crisis intervention techniques to protect you, themselves, others, and/or property.
 - Do not bring unauthorized weapons into the building. If it is discovered that you have an unauthorized weapon, you will be required to leave immediately, **and** we will inform a law enforcement agency in the event of any threatening behavior.
 - Avoid bringing any illegal substance in or around our property. If it is discovered that you have an illegal substance with you, you will be required to leave immediately and we may inform a law enforcement agency.
 - Avoid exposing staff, visitors or other clients to contagious diseases or conditions such as lice, scabies, active tuberculosis, infectious hepatitis, or other contagious diseases. Services can be refused to anyone who has, or claims to have, a currently contagious disease or condition until appropriate medical attention has been initiated and the physical condition is no longer contagious.
 - Directions is a smoke-free environment. The designated smoking area for Directions' guests is under the oak tree in front of the Clearwater location. A bench area at the side of the parking lot at the Largo facility is designated as the smoking area. The designated smoking area at the West Pasco facility is on the west side of the building (toward the hospital).
 - Wear appropriate clothing when in or around our buildings
 - To permit the Department of Children and Families, Juvenile Welfare Board, Value Options, Central Florida Behavioral Health Network and other funding sources to review information regarding your treatment or services if they help pay for your treatment or services provided by Directions

Your Privacy and Security

One of our five promises is to respect your privacy. This is part of our code of ethics. We are required by law to maintain the privacy of "protected health information" about you, to notify you of our legal duties and your legal rights, and to follow the privacy policies described in this notice. "Protected health information" means any information that we create or receive that identifies you and relates to your health or payment for services to you. All information about you is confidential and Directions is committed to protecting and securing your information. Directions adheres to the rules and regulations of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).

Your Privacy Rights

- To confidentiality
- To determine the amount of information to be released either to or from anyone outside Directions by signing a Release of Information
- To determine the length of time that information may be released
- To revoke a written Consent or Authorization for us to use or disclose your protected health information. The revocation will not affect any previous use or disclosure of your information.
- **Right to review and copy record.** You have the right to see records used to make decisions about you, unless a clinical professional determines that disclosure would create a substantial risk of physical harm to you (for example, disclosure to your personal representative may create a risk of physical harm to you if there is an abusive relationship). If requested and with your written permission, we will forward a complete copy of your health record to a subsequent treating provider. If another person provided information about you to our clinical staff in confidence, that information may be removed from the record before it is shared with you. We will also delete any protected health information about other people. We will charge a reasonable fee for this service as appropriate.
- **Right to "amend" record.** If you believe your records contain an error, you may ask us to amend it. If there is a mistake, a note will be entered in the record to correct the error. If not, you will be told and allowed the opportunity to add a short statement to the record explaining why you believe the record is inaccurate. This information will be included as part of the total record and shared with others if it might affect decisions they make about you.
- **Right to a paper copy of this Notice.** You have the right to a paper copy of any Notice of Privacy Practices.
- To file a complaint with Directions' Privacy Officer, Chantal Laperle, at (727) 524-4464, extension 1720, if you feel that Directions has not been compliant with the privacy and security of your protected health information. You can also submit a complaint to the United States Department of Health and Human Services by calling OCR Hotlines-Voice: 1-800-368-1019 or by sending your complaint to:

Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Room 509F, HHH Building
Washington, D.C. 20201

We will never retaliate against you for filing a complaint. You can also contact Chantal Laperle if you have any questions about your privacy and security. Questions about our policies and procedures, requests to exercise individual rights, and complaints should be directed to our Contact Person.

Our Use and disclosure for treatment, payment and health care operations

- We will use your protected health information and disclose it to others as necessary to provide treatment to you, based upon the consent you provided in your registration form or releases of information that you sign. Here are some examples:
 - Various members of our staff may see your clinical record in the course of our care for you. This includes, but is not limited to medical assistants, case managers, nurses, physicians, and other therapists.
 - Your record may be reviewed for quality improvement purposes.
 - It may be necessary to send blood or urine samples to a laboratory for analysis to help us evaluate your medical condition.
 - We may provide information to your health plan or another treatment provider in order to arrange for a referral or clinical consultation.
 - We will contact you to remind you of appointments.
 - We may in some cases use another organization to transcribe the medical progress notes to provide a clear and legible record of your treatment.

- We will use or disclose your protected health information as needed to arrange for payment for service to you. For example, information about your diagnosis and the services we render is included in the bills that we submit to your health insurance plan. Your health plan may require health information in order to confirm that the services rendered are covered by your benefit program and medically necessary. A health care provider that delivers service to you, such as a clinical laboratory, may need information about you in order to arrange for payment for its services.

- It may also be necessary to use or disclose protected health information for our health care operations or those of another organization that has a relationship with you. For example, our quality assurance staff reviews records to be sure that we deliver appropriate treatment of high quality. Your health plan may wish to review your records to be sure that we meet national standards for quality of care. Additionally, your record may be reviewed by our licensing or accrediting agencies.

- It is our policy to obtain a general written permission to use and disclose your protected health information for treatment, payment or health care operations purposes. Your registration form includes your authorization for the release of medical information necessary to process payment or related claims and for the release of statistical and demographic information to certain local, state, and/or federal agencies.

- Beyond this, it is our policy to obtain specific written permission for every other disclosure of protected health information to third parties except as noted below. You will be asked to sign an Authorization form for disclosure to each person or organization that receives the information.

Exceptions to Confidentiality

There are several important instances when confidential information may be released to others:

- **Emergencies:** If there is an emergency, we will disclose your protected health information as needed to enable people to care for you.
- **Disclosure to health oversight agencies:** We are legally obligated to disclose protected health information to certain government agencies, including the Department of Children and Families or the Managing Entity of Directions' contract with the Department, and the federal Department of Health and Human Services.
- **Disclosures to child, elder, and disabled adult protection agencies:** We will disclose protected health information as needed to comply with state law requiring reports of suspected incidents of child, elder, or disabled adult abuse or neglect. We will disclose protected health information as requested as part of an investigation by a law enforcement agency of an abuse or neglect report.
- **Other disclosures without written permission:** There are other circumstances in which we may be required by law to disclose protected health information without your permission. They include disclosures made:
 - If you invite another person into your treatment session
 - If we are court ordered by a judge to release information
 - If you present a threat of danger to yourself or to someone else
 - If you have a communicable disease that we are required by law to report to public health authorities
 - If you are a minor and your parent or legal guardian requests information regarding your care
 - If you file a formal complaint or take legal action against an employee of Directions
 - If you take other legal action in which you make your mental health an issue
 - To law enforcement officials in some circumstances, for example if you commit a crime while on Directions' property
 - To correctional institutions regarding inmates
 - To federal officials for lawful military or intelligence activities
 - To coroners or medical examiners
 - To researchers involved in approved research projects
 - We share the social security number, name, and address of clients whose services are funded in whole or in part by the Juvenile Welfare Board (JWB) to that agency for the following purposes:
 - To research, track, and measure the impact of JWB-funded programs and services in an effort to maintain and improve such programs and services for the future (individual information will not be disclosed)
 - To identify and match individuals and data within and among various systems and other agencies for research purposes
 - If applicable, to share information with the Florida Department of Health for purposes of Medicaid funding
 - As otherwise required by law

- **Disclosures with your permission:** No other disclosure of protected health information will be made unless you give written Authorization for the specific disclosure.

Personal representative: A “personal representative” of a client may act on their behalf in exercising their privacy rights. This includes the parent or legal guardian of a minor. In some cases, adolescents who are “mature minors” may make their own decisions about receiving treatment and disclosure of protected health information about them. If an adult is incapable of acting on his or her own behalf, the personal representative would ordinarily be his or her spouse or another member of the immediate family. An individual can also grant another person the right to act as his or her personal representative in an advance directive or living will.

Disclosure of protected health information to personal representatives may be limited in cases of domestic or child abuse.

Advance Directives

The Florida Legislature has recognized that every adult has the right to decide what medical and mental health treatment he or she will receive, including the right to refuse treatment. It has enacted the Florida Health Care Advance Directive Law (Chapter 765). This allows you to make decisions about your treatment while you are able to do so – before a crisis.

This is done through a document called an Advance Directive, which lets you write down what you want to have happen later. It also allows you to name a trusted friend or family member, called a Health Care Surrogate, to carry out your wishes.

A Mental Health Advance Directive is a legal document that allows you to state your preferences regarding mental health treatment before a crisis occurs, when you might not be able to understand treatment choices or make decisions.

Upon admission to services, when appropriate, you may be asked by staff if you have an Advance Directive. You may also be asked to complete a form called a Personal Safety Plan / Mental Health Advance Directive. This form lets your treatment team know how you want us to respond if you start feeling badly. We want to prevent a crisis before it starts.

We at Directions strongly encourage you to think about this issue. If you would like more information about Mental Health Advance Directives, or how to name a Health Care Surrogate, ask someone on your treatment team. If you have an Advance Directive documenting a Living Will and/or the appointment of a Health Care Surrogate, it is your responsibility to present a copy of the forms to Directions’ staff. Client choice and preferences identified via your Advance Directive will be respected and implemented according to applicable laws.

Your Satisfaction

Directions values input from our clients and their families. Please feel free to tell staff members when you are satisfied or dissatisfied with our services or facilities. You may be asked to complete a satisfaction survey asking for your opinion at your first appointment, during your treatment, or after you have left services. We appreciate your time and effort to answer these questions. Your feedback allows us to continually improve the services we provide to all of our clients.

Our Consumer Advisory Board

Directions also solicits feedback from our Consumer Advisory Board (CAB). We believe that the experiences of consumers and clients are valuable and can serve to improve our programming. The CAB meets monthly and helps inform decisions that Directions makes about how services are provided and about how to improve those services. If you are interested in serving on our CAB, please contact our Chief Quality Officer, Chantal Laperle, at (727)524-4464, extension 1720.

Our Grievance Procedures

Any client, family member, or legal representative of a client may file a grievance as a formal notice of dissatisfaction. The grievance procedure involves a series of steps offering the possibility of resolution at each step. In the event that you have a concern about your treatment or the services provided by Directions, we recommend that you first discuss this with your primary treatment or service provider. If the concern cannot be resolved or you would like to appeal the resolution, you may then request that a formal grievance be filed. To do this, we ask that you:

- Write your concern on paper giving as many specific details as possible, such as names, dates, etc.
- You can also request to speak with a member of the Quality Improvement department directly, by requesting to speak with Julie Griswold, Supervisor of Quality Improvement. She can also be reached by calling (727) 524-4464, extension 1359.
- Once the Quality Improvement Department receives the concern, an investigation will be completed. As part of that investigation, a member of the Quality Department will speak to you, your service provider, and any other relevant individuals to the specific incident.
- The Quality Department will respond to you with a verbal or written resolution within 10 business days unless additional time is needed due to extenuating circumstances.

If you are still not satisfied with the response, your request will be forwarded to the Chief Quality Officer, who respond to your concern. The Chief Quality Officer will review the matter and respond within ten business days, in writing, if specifically requested to do so.

If you need assistance with this process, our Compliance Officer, Chantal Laperle (727-524-4464, Ext. 1720) will be happy to help you. We will attempt to resolve every reasonable grievance as rapidly as possible within these guidelines. *Directions will not retaliate against any person who reports a concern or assists the organization in the investigation of a complaint.* This process, in and of itself, will not result in any retaliatory action or barriers to service. Directions values the input of all the persons it serves and will evaluate all concerns as part of an ongoing commitment to improve the quality of its services.

If you believe that you have been discriminated against with regard to accessing services, being denied benefits, or being excluded from services on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, or disability, you may file a grievance with Directions as indicated above or you may file a written complaint within 180 days of the alleged discriminatory act with:

Assistant Staff Director for Civil Rights
DCF Office of Inspector General
Office of Civil Rights
1317 Winewood Blvd.
Building 1, Room 110
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0700
(850) 487-1901; TDD (850) 922-9220

United States Department of Health and
Human Services (HHS)
Attention: Office for Civil Rights
Atlanta Federal Center, Suite 3B70
61 Forsyth Street, S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-8909
(404) 562-7886; TDD (404) 331-2867
Fax: (404) 562-7881

Directions is committed to operating in accordance with all federal/state regulations and high ethical standards. All staff is responsible for adhering to the Directions' Code of Ethics. A copy of the corporate Code of Ethics is available at your request.

Answers to *Your* Frequently Asked Questions

Regarding *Our* appointments and fees

- Q. What if I can't keep an appointment?
A. *We require that appointments be canceled at least twenty-four (24) hours in advance. If there is a pattern of cancellations and/or failures to keep appointments, services may be discontinued. Your provider will discuss the barriers to treatment and the importance of following treatment recommendations.*
- Q. Why do I have to give twenty-four (24) hours notice?
A. *This allows us to be able to reschedule with another client.*
- Q. What will I be required to pay?
A. *Fees for most services are based on income and family size. Our minimum fee in most cases is \$15.00.*

- Q. Do I have to pay a co-payment or co-insurance, if I have insurance? What if I have Medicaid or Medicare? Is there also a deductible payment required?
A. In many cases, yes, including Medicaid and Medicare. However, Medicaid HMO's do not require a co-payment. Medicare HMO's vary with each plan as to how much of a co-payment is required, and Medicare requires an annual deductible to be reached before it will pay for services.
- Q. If I don't have insurance and am not eligible for discounted fees, can I still receive treatment here?
A. Yes.
- Q. Can I owe money, if I can't pay each visit?
A. Payment of fees is expected at time of service.

Regarding *Our* Therapy Services

- Q. Can all clients get therapy at Directions?
A. Depending on the resources available to you, you may be able to see a therapist at Directions, or we may need to refer you to an outside organization.
- Q. If I have an emergency and my therapist is not available, who can help me?
A. If your therapist is not available there is always another therapist or supervisor who will be able to assist you upon request.
- Q. Who will be coordinating my case? Who is my contact person?
A. Your therapist will be the coordinator of all services you receive while in counseling. If you are being seen for medication services only and do not have a therapist, our medical assistants will coordinate your services.
- Q. What if I just want to see a medical staff person for medications only?
A. Adult clients have the choice of just seeing the psychiatric provider (a physician or nurse practitioner). Depending upon your child's needs, your child may be required to be seen by a therapist before being seen by medical staff for medication evaluation or treatment.
- Q. What if I am unhappy with my therapist or doctor and I want to change?
A. If you and your therapist and/or doctor are unable to maintain an active, constructive relationship, we recommend discussing this with that person. If this does not help, the Program Supervisor will evaluate your request and determine if a transfer will be made.

Regarding *Our* Psychiatry Services

- Q. What is a psychiatrist? Is (s) he a medical doctor?

A. A psychiatrist is a medical doctor who specializes in treating emotional or behavioral problems. Psychiatrists typically have received four years of medical training to become a physician and then another four years of specialty training in psychiatry.

Q. What is a nurse practitioner?

A. An Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner, or ARNP, is a nurse who has completed graduate study in psychiatric nursing. By Florida law, ARNPs can prescribe medications under the supervision of a licensed physician. Our Chief Medical Officer supervises our ARNPs.

Q. Does the Medical Services Department help with disability claims?

A. We do not advocate for or against clients when a disability application is made. Our resources are directed toward the treatment of mental illness; however, with written permission we will forward a copy of the medical record to the appropriate party.

Q. If my doctor requires me to get blood tests, where can I get them?

A. Directions offers blood testing on Friday mornings at the Clearwater office from 8:30 to 10:15 a.m. The front desk staff can provide the information you need about scheduling and payment. However, Medicaid HMO's will require you to get blood tests at one of their designated facilities, and not at Directions.

Q. Will I be able to get free medications from Directions?

A. Once we have reviewed your financial information, we may be able to help you. We participate in pharmaceutical-company sponsored Patient Assistance Programs which provide medications at little cost to you based upon your mental health diagnosis and your income. To process your application, we may need specific paperwork such as your tax return and we may need you to get a letter from the local Medicaid office indicating that you are not eligible for Medicaid. Your doctor or ARNP will tell you more about these programs. On the basis of your income, you may also qualify to receive selected medications from our Indigent Drug Program at little cost to you. However, your doctor or ARNP must prescribe medications from that program, and the program does not include all psychiatric medications. This program is intended for short-term use only. Your doctor or ARNP will give you more information if you qualify. Our processing fee for this service is \$1 per prescription per month.

Q. Whom do I call if I am experiencing side effects from medication or have other medical treatment related questions?

A. Ask for our medical assistants, your therapist, or case manager if you have one, when you call. Our medical assistants will discuss your call with your psychiatrist or ARNP, (or with the Chief Medical Officer if your doctor/ARNP is not available). If your call is received before 2 p.m., we will make every effort to call you back that same business day with treatment recommendations. If you call after 2 p.m., we will respond the next business day. If it is an emergency, let our telephone operator know and we will be able to assist you. After business hours or on weekends or holidays, call 911 if necessary or go to the closest hospital emergency room in the event of an emergency.

- Q. Can I get primary health care services at Directions?
 A. We are offering primary health care services to our adult behavioral health clients who have Medicaid, Medicare, or a Medicaid or Medicare HMO. Your provider will be able to provide you with more details on this service, including how to schedule an appointment.

More Health Information

At Directions, we consider it important to provide you with information regarding issues that may affect your health. If you have questions or would like additional health information, please ask your health care provider.

Cold/Flu

Influenza, more commonly known as the flu, is a contagious respiratory infection caused by a virus. The influenza virus usually enters the body through the mouth, nose, or eyes. When a person with the flu sneezes, the virus becomes airborne and can be inhaled by someone nearby. The flu can also be spread by touching a contaminated surface, like a door handle or telephone and then touching your nose or mouth. The influenza virus can live for 2-8 hours on surfaces.

A cold is caused by different viruses than influenza and has different symptoms.

Signs and Symptoms	Influenza	Cold
Fever	Usually present	Rare
Aches	Usual, often severe	Slight
Chills	Fairly common	Uncommon
Tiredness	Moderate to severe	Mild
Symptom Onset	Symptoms appear within 3-6 hours	Symptoms appear gradually
Coughing	Dry, unproductive cough	Hacking, productive cough
Sneezing	Uncommon	Common
Stuffy Nose	Uncommon	Common
Sore Throat	Uncommon	Common
Chest discomfort	Often Severe	Mild to moderate
Headache	Common	Uncommon

To prevent the spread of the cold and flu viruses:

- Wash your hands frequently
- Cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough
- Do not eat or drink after others
- Use hand sanitizers

HIV and AIDS

At Directions, we consider it important to continually educate our clients about how human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) are spread and how they can be prevented. Please take the time to become familiar with the following information. If at any time you have questions, or would like additional information, please discuss it with your clinician.

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome). The immune system is the body's ability to fight infection. HIV has the ability to harm, disable, or destroy the immune system. Many people with HIV/AIDS often look and feel healthy; you cannot tell by looking at them if they are infected or if they can infect you. This disease affects people of all ages, sexes, races, cultures, and socioeconomic statuses.

The following lists have been designed to provide you with basic information. We have included some of the ways this disease cannot be transmitted, the ways in which it can be transmitted, the early signs and symptoms, and how you can protect yourself and your family.

HIV is NOT spread by Casual Contact:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| × sharing a drinking glass | × toilet seats |
| × mosquitoes | × sharing offices and rooms |
| × coughing | × water fountains |
| × swimming pools | × donating blood |
| × sneezing | × showers |
| × hugging | × restaurants/cafés |

HIV is transmitted by:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ✓ Exposure to blood through needle stick, instruments, or sharps | ✓ Exposure to body fluids – blood, semen, vaginal secretions, or amniotic fluid |
| ✓ Unprotected oral, anal, and vaginal sex | ✓ Sharing of needles as in drug administration, tattoo equipment, and body piercing |

Early signs and symptoms:

- Unexplained weight loss
- Swollen glands
- Persistent diarrhea

You can protect yourself by:

- Never sharing needles in piercing or tattooing
- If you use needles, learning how to clean them consistently and properly

- Abstaining or postponing sex; sexual abstinence is the only absolute way to avoid getting or passing along the HIV infection through sexual contact
- Properly using condoms, which provides the best available protection against HIV/AIDS for sexually active people

The Department of Health requires that we inform our clients about the Florida law on HIV and AIDS testing, confidentiality of test results, and treatment of patients pursuant to ss. 381.004 and 384.25. You or your guardian must give consent to be tested for HIV. You have the right to be informed about your test results. If your test result is positive, you should also receive information regarding the availability of appropriate medical and support services, preventing transmission of HIV, and notification of partners who may have been exposed. You have a right to have the results of your test kept confidential. However, you should know that the Health Department is required to keep a record of all positive results including identifying information if available.

The Health Department is required to maintain a list of sites at which anonymous testing is performed.

Information about your HIV status may be released without your consent to medical personnel in a medical emergency, to personnel involved in your daily care when you are incarcerated or living in a congregate facility, to partners who may have been exposed if you do not inform them yourself, to the health department if you have not already done so, or by court order.

Directions does not provide HIV testing nor do we require any person to take or submit to a HIV related test as a condition of admission.

Additional information can be found at the Florida website:
<http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index/SEC0035.HTM>

To obtain HIV Testing and Counseling, contact the Florida AIDS hotlines at:

- 1 – 800 – FLA – AIDS (English)
- 1 – 800 – 545 – SIDA (Spanish)
- 1 – 800 – AIDS – 101 (Creole)

Tuberculosis (TB)

Tuberculosis, also known as TB, is a contagious bacterial infection that mainly involves the lungs, but may spread to other organs. TB is spread by inhaling the air droplets from the cough or sneeze of an infected person. Most people will recover from a TB infection without further symptoms. However, in some people, the infection may be asleep, or dormant, for years and then reactivate.

Some people are at higher risk for developing a TB infection, including the elderly, infants, and people with weakened immune systems. Symptoms include cough, coughing up blood, excessive sweating (especially at night), fatigue, fever, and unintended weight loss. Other symptoms might include breathing difficulty, chest pain, or wheezing.

You should get tested for TB if:

- You have spent time with a person known to have active TB disease or suspected to have active TB disease
- You have HIV infection or another condition that puts you at high risk for active TB disease
- You think you might have active TB disease
- You are from a country where active TB disease is very common
- You live somewhere in the United States that active TB disease is more common (such as a homeless shelter, migrant farm camp, prison or jail, and some nursing homes)
- You inject illegal drugs

Treatment of TB typically involves a combination of several medications and may last for about six months. Symptoms usually improve within 2-3 weeks of beginning treatment.

Your health care provider, including Directions for Mental Health, is required to report to the local health department if you have TB.

MRSA Skin Infections

Staphylococcus aureus (“Staph”) bacteria is a skin infection resistant to many antibiotics (drugs that kill bacteria), also called methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus—“MRSA.”

MRSA may look like a pimple, rash, boil, or an open wound.

Staph/MRSA is often misdiagnosed as spider bites. Staph bacteria are commonly found on the skin of healthy persons. Staph/MRSA infections often begin with an injury to the skin. Symptoms of a Staph infection include redness, warmth, swelling, tenderness of the skin, and boils or blisters. Sometimes it does not cause any problems; sometimes it causes minor infections, such as pimples or boils. If left untreated, it can cause serious skin infections or worse.

Staph/MRSA can rub off the skin of an infected person onto the skin of another person during skin to skin contact. Or, the Staph can come off of the infected skin of a person onto a shared object or surface, and get onto the skin of the next person who uses it. Examples of commonly shared objects include towels, soap, benches in hot tubs, and athletic equipment—in other words, anything that could have touched the skin of a Staph infected person can carry the bacteria to the skin of another person. Staph/MRSA lives on skin and survives on objects for 24 hours or more. The cleanest person can get a Staph/MRSA infection. Antibiotic-resistant Staph/MRSA skin infections are found in places where there are crowds of people (schools, jails, gyms).

To prevent MRSA:

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean with soap and water
- Avoid skin contact and sharing personal items with anyone you suspect could have a Staph skin infection

- When using protective gloves to treat infected area, remove and dispose of them properly, then wash your hands with soap and water

What should I do if I think I have a skin infection?

If you think that you have a skin infection, consult your doctor or healthcare provider as soon as possible. Early treatment can help prevent the infection from getting worse. Be sure to follow directions from your doctor or healthcare provider closely, even when you start to feel better. Not taking all of your medications leads to stronger, antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

If my doctor or healthcare provider has told me that I have a Staph/MRSA skin infection, what can I do to keep others from getting infected?

- Clean your bandages, your hands, and your home
- Keep the infected area covered with clean, dry bandages, as pus from infected wound is very infectious
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water, especially after changing your bandages or touching the infected skin
- Regularly clean your bathroom, kitchen, and all other rooms, as well as your personal items
- Wash clothes and other items that become soiled with hot water or bleach, when possible, and dry clothes in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying, to help kill bacteria in clothes
- Tell any healthcare providers who treat you that you have an antibiotic-resistant Staph/MRSA skin infection

Scabies

Scabies is a transmittable, parasitic skin infection caused by a mite called *sarcoptes scabiei*. Scabies is characterized by intense itching of the tiny, red bumps or marks caused by the mites which burrow into the skin to lay their eggs. Scabies in humans is highly contagious and an infestation can require treatment for the entire family or group such as classmates and nursing home residents. Scabies in humans is not the same type of scabies that cats or dogs get, which is called mange. Although pet scabies can spread to humans, those types of mites usually die after a few days.

Although people with weakened immune systems are more vulnerable to scabies (including children and the elderly), scabies can infest anyone of any age group or of any social class.

Signs and Symptoms

The scabies mites are tiny, eight-legged insects that cannot be seen without magnification. Once the scabies mites make their way onto a human host, it can take 4 to 6 weeks for symptoms to appear. During this period, a person is contagious and can unknowingly spread the mites to other family members or classmates. The symptoms which develop are actually an allergic reaction to the adults, eggs and waste of the scabies mites. This allergic reaction takes approximately 4 weeks to develop. In a re-infestation, a reaction can occur in a matter of hours or days.

The intense itching that accompanies a scabies infection can be more intense at nighttime. In a normal scabies infestation, 5 to 15 mites may live on the host with 10 being the average. These mites appear as tiny, red bumps or irregular S-shaped lines caused by the mites burrowing a path under the skin. Mites can occur anywhere on the body but are usually found: between the fingers, armpits, waist, insides of wrists, inner elbows, breasts, male genital area, knees, and shoulder blades. In younger children, infestations occur mostly on the hands and feet, inner wrists, and under the arms.

How Scabies Spreads

According to the Centers for Disease Control, scabies is spread by direct, prolonged skin to skin contact with an infected person, including sexual contact. Scabies cannot be spread by a simple handshake or hug. Mites are unable to fly or jump. A person can also become infected with scabies by sharing clothes, towels, and bedding with someone who is infected.

Treatment

If you believe you have scabies, you should see your doctor or dermatologist. Scabies is most commonly treated with prescription strength topical, medicated lotions. In severe or persistent cases, an oral anti-parasite medication may be prescribed.

Follow your doctor's instructions when using the medicated lotion. According to the CDC, a single application covering the entire body (except the face) for 8 hours is often sufficient, followed by another application 1 week later.

Since scabies can live in clothing, bedding and towels, all items that were in contact with the infected person should be washed in hot water with detergent and dried in a hot dryer.

Even though the scabies can be effectively treated with the medicated lotion, itching may persist for 1 to 3 weeks. Your doctor may recommend calamine lotion and oral antihistamines to sooth the itching. If left untreated, the intense scratching may lead to bacterial infections and impetigo, which is a highly contagious skin infection characterized by crusting and pus filled blisters called pustules.

Lice

Head lice are tiny insects that live on the scalp. They can be spread easily by close contact with other infected people or by sharing clothing, bedding, or hair brushes. Head lice is more common in close living conditions. Having head lice does NOT mean a person has poor hygiene. Head lice can infect people of all social classes, genders, or ages.

Symptoms of head lice include intense itching, small red bumps on the scalp, neck and shoulders, or tiny white specks in the bottom of the hair.

Head lice are highly treatable by using a lotion or shampoo with an anti-parasite chemical. Additionally, the nits (eggs) must be removed from the hair and all bedding, linens, and clothes in

hot water with detergent. To prevent head lice, never share hair brushes or combs, hats, hair pieces, bedding, towels, or clothing with someone who has head lice.

Here are some additional resources that may be useful to you:

St. Petersburg Health Center

205 Martin Luther King St, N.,
St. Petersburg
727-824-6900

Clearwater Health Center

310 N. Myrtle Avenue
Clearwater
727-469-5800

Pinellas Park Health Center

6350 76th Avenue, N
Pinellas Park
727-547-7780

Tarpon Springs Health Center

301 S. Disston Avenue
Tarpon Springs
727-942-5457

For information and referral services you can dial 211 or visit the 211 website at www.211tampabay.org.

This client handbook was informed by Directions for Mental Health's Consumer Advisory Board and it is continually subject to improvement.

Please submit your feedback on this handbook to cab@directionsmh.org.