

# How to help someone who needs mental healthcare

---

Low- or no-cost services are available in many languages, in neighborhoods across New York City— regardless of insurance coverage, age, immigration status, or ability to pay.

Mental health needs can take many forms. Use this guide to find the right kind of help.

## GET HELP NOW

---

### Speak to a mental health counselor for free

**NYC Well, the City's comprehensive behavioral health helpline, offers free and confidential support 24/7 by call, text, or chat.** Counselors can provide:

- Immediate support for problems like stress, depression, anxiety, or drug and alcohol use,
- Crisis counseling and suicide prevention counseling, and
- Support from Peer Specialists, who have personal experience with mental health or substance use challenges

New Yorkers can reach out to NYC Well on behalf of themselves or someone else. Young people can call on behalf of their parents or caregivers, and anyone can call NYC Well on behalf of a child. Support is available for all ages and can be provided in 200+ languages.

- Call **1-888-NYC-WELL**  
**(1-888-692-9355)**
- Text "Well" to 65173
- Chat online at [nyc.gov/nycwell](https://nyc.gov/nycwell)
- Relay Service for Deaf/Hard of Hearing: Call 711
- Español: Press 3
- 中文: Press 5

## GET HELP NOW

---

### Urgent mental health help for someone you think may be homeless

**If you see someone in a public place and think they may be homeless and need urgent attention, call 311 and request a street outreach team.** These teams offer immediate assistance, transportation to shelter, ongoing case management, and assessment for medical or mental health crises that may require emergency response.

### Emergency mental health help

**If someone is in imminent danger to themselves or others, or needs immediate medical attention, call 911.** Where appropriate, police officers and Emergency Medical Services personnel will respond and may transport someone to a hospital in an ambulance.

## FIND A MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER

---

### Find a mental health provider

**NYC Well** can help find the right provider, regardless of your insurance coverage, using an extensive database of behavioral health providers in New York City.

- Explore NYC Well’s provider database at [nyc.gov/nycwell](https://nyc.gov/nycwell), click “**Find Services**” in the menu or call **1-888-NYC-WELL (1-888-692-9355)** and ask a counselor for help finding the right provider

**For New Yorkers with health insurance**, in addition to calling NYC Well, you can also contact your health insurance company to find providers covered by your insurance.

**For New Yorkers who do not have health insurance**, the NYC Care program guarantees low-cost and no-cost physical and behavioral health services to New Yorkers. All services are provided through NYC Health + Hospitals.

- To enroll: Call **1-646-NYC-CARE (1-646-692-2273)**

### Get help for students and families

Mental health support and resources are available for all students and families. Ask your school's Parent Coordinator, School Social Worker, or Guidance Counselor for more information, or visit [nyc.gov/schoolmentalhealth](https://nyc.gov/schoolmentalhealth) to learn how to access mental health services in the City's public schools

### Connect to ongoing support

**Older New Yorkers:** Older New Yorkers (60 and up) who are isolated can request volunteer support through the Friendly Visiting or Friendly VOICES program. Older adults can get paired with a volunteer visitor or peer close to their age, or join a virtual group.

- Reach out for support by calling **Aging Connect** at **1-212-244-6469**

**Veterans:** For veterans who may need help, or someone to talk to, a volunteer from the veterans' community can give them a supportive check-in call through Mission: VetCheck.

- Request a check-in for a veteran at [nyc.gov/vetcheck](https://nyc.gov/vetcheck)

**If you reach out for services on behalf of someone else**, it will be helpful to provide as much detail as possible about why you think help is needed. Be prepared to describe:

- Symptoms or behaviors of concern,
- Where the person can be located,
- How they can be contacted, and
- How long you have been noticing the need for help

This kind of detail can help providers respond with the right kind of support.

## HELP FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE HAVING TROUBLE STAYING CONNECTED TO CARE

---

### Flexible community-based treatment for people with serious mental illness

New York City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene offers a range of services for New Yorkers with a serious mental illness who have high service needs and are unable to connect or stay connected to site- or clinic-based treatment. These services can include care coordination or ongoing clinical support from an interdisciplinary mobile treatment team.

A referral is needed for these services, and the individual's mental health provider — outpatient, inpatient doctor — can start the process of qualifying the individual for these services.

- Visit the **Mental Health: Single Point of Access** website for more information at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/providers/resources/mental-illness-single-point-of-access.page>
- This website includes a description of these services and the requirements for submitting a referral, which includes a recent psychosocial evaluation and a client consent form. For answers to questions on how to apply, email [SPOASupport@health.nyc.gov](mailto:SPOASupport@health.nyc.gov)

### Intensive help for people having difficulty staying connected to treatment and who pose an imminent risk to themselves or others

In New York State, people with mental illness who are unlikely to survive safely in the community without help can be mandated by a court to participate in mental health treatment under a law called Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT), or Kendra's Law.

Almost anyone with personal or professional contact with the individual can make a referral including family members, roommates, healthcare professionals, treatment providers, and corrections, parole, or probation officials.

After a judge orders a person who meets the legal criteria to AOT, the person will be connected with the **City's AOT program**, which will assign them to outpatient mental health treatment and will monitor their compliance to help them live successfully in the community.

- To learn more about how to begin the AOT process visit <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/assisted-outpatient-treatment.page> or call one of the Assisted Outpatient Treatment Program's main numbers:
  - Manhattan AOT Team:  
**1-347-396-7373**
  - Queens AOT Team:  
**1-347-396-7004**
  - Bronx AOT Team:  
**1-347-396-7375**
  - Brooklyn/Staten Island AOT Team:  
**1-347-396-7374**

## FIND HOSPITAL-BASED TREATMENT

---

### Hospital-based treatment for mental illness

**Hospitalization, also known as inpatient mental healthcare, can help to stabilize people experiencing acute psychiatric symptoms.** During an inpatient stay, physicians and other mental health professionals will establish a diagnosis and begin a treatment plan. Hospitalizations may extend for several days or longer while a patient stabilizes. At many hospitals, social workers will meet with a patient's family to create a discharge plan to ensure patients have a safe place to continue treatment after leaving the hospital.

**To find out if hospitalization may be needed,** New Yorkers can access immediate assessment, crisis stabilization, and urgent mental health support at Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Services Program (CPEP) sites in each borough.

- Call **1-844-NYC-4NYC (1-844-692-4692)** to find the Health + Hospitals Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Services Program (CPEP) closest to you, or visit [nyc.gov/nycwell](https://nyc.gov/nycwell), click "**Find Services**" in the menu to find all CPEPs in New York City

**If a person is experiencing concerning symptoms and refuses to go to the hospital or participate in treatment, involuntary psychiatric assessment, which may lead to involuntary hospitalization, may be an option.** If the person is conducting themselves in a manner that is likely to result in serious harm to themselves or others, there are several ways they can be assessed to determine what course of action to take.

- **You can contact certain medical professionals** to assess the person of concern and determine the appropriate next step.
  - Speak to the person of concern's existing psychiatrist or mental health provider, if they have one who is known to you
  - Call NYC Well to request a Mobile Crisis Team at **1-888-NYC-WELL (1-888-692-9355)**, or
  - Call **1-844-NYC-4NYC (1-844-692-4692)** to find the Health + Hospitals Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Services Program (CPEP) closest to you, or visit [nyc.gov/nycwell](https://nyc.gov/nycwell), click "**Find Services**" in the menu to find all CPEPs in New York City

## FIND HOSPITAL-BASED TREATMENT

---

### Hospital-based treatment for mental illness

- **You can file a petition for an emergency psychiatric evaluation through the court system.** In New York, anyone can file a petition about someone else. You do not need a lawyer to file a petition. After a petition is filed, a judge will determine whether the person of concern is experiencing mental illness and engaging in disorderly conduct or conduct likely to result in serious harm to themselves or others. If so, the judge will issue a warrant requiring the Sheriff's office to bring the individual of concern to the court, where they will be held until there can be a second hearing.

Depending on the results of this second hearing, the individual may then be taken to a hospital for a psychiatric evaluation.

- To find the appropriate court closest to you, call **1-800-COURTNY (1-800-268-7869)**. For more information on New York State court operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, visit [nycourts.gov](https://nycourts.gov) or call the coronavirus hotline at **1-833-503-0447**
- **If someone is in imminent danger to themselves or others, or needs immediate medical attention, call 911.** Where appropriate, police officers and Emergency Medical Services personnel will respond and may transport someone to a hospital in an ambulance. Medical professionals at the hospital will determine whether the person of concern meets the criteria for involuntary hospitalization.

## PEER SUPPORT

---

### Find peer support

**New York City has free clubhouses that provide supportive communities for people with a history of mental illness and substance misuse.** Designed to help people rejoin society and maintain their position in it, clubhouses offer mutual support from other members, professional staff support, work training, educational opportunities, and social connection.

- To find a Clubhouse call NYC Well at **1-888-NYC-WELL (1-888-692-9355)** or visit [nyc.gov/nycwell](https://nyc.gov/nycwell), click “**Find Services**” in the menu and search “**clubhouse**”

### Become a peer

**Through the New York Peer Specialist Certification Board, individuals with personal experience with mental illness can receive training and become certified as a peer specialist.** Peer specialists are recognized as qualified professionals and can work in a number of different areas to support others in their recovery journey.

- To learn more about the benefits of becoming a peer, and how to obtain certification, visit [nypeerspecialist.org](https://nypeerspecialist.org)

### Support groups

If someone you love is experiencing a mental health challenge, it may be helpful to learn how to support your loved one while also taking care of yourself.

**Support groups, facilitated by people who have experience caring for someone with a mental health condition**, can offer important information and community.

- NAMI NYC offers many different support groups for families and friends of people with mental health conditions.
  - Find a calendar of support groups  
[naminycmetro.org/support-groups-family-members-friends](https://naminycmetro.org/support-groups-family-members-friends)
  - Call NAMI's helpline at **1-212-684-3264** for more information

To learn more about mental illness and the support available to caregivers and loved ones of people experiencing mental illness, visit [nami.org/Your-Journey/Family-Members-and-Caregivers](https://nami.org/Your-Journey/Family-Members-and-Caregivers)

### Family counseling

**Family counseling from a professional mental health provider** can help to improve communication, help you and your family members better understand family dynamics, and build stronger relationships with one another.

- NYC Health + Hospitals offers expert care provided by bilingual-bicultural therapists in Family Therapy programs offered at clinics citywide.
  - To make an appointment or find the clinic closest to you, call **1-844-NYC-4NYC (1-844-692-4692)**
- NYC Well's database of behavioral health services includes over 600 providers that offer family counseling.
  - Visit [nyc.gov/nycwell](https://nyc.gov/nycwell), click "**Find Services**" in the menu and search "**family counseling**"
  - This directory allows you to narrow results by neighborhood, language spoken, and insurance type
- You can also contact NYC Well and ask a counselor for help finding a family therapy provider who meets your needs.