



Armstrong Indiana Behavioral Health  
Senior Care Task Force

**Behavioral Health**  
**Resource Guide**  
**for**  
**Seniors**  
**in**  
**Armstrong County**

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# Introduction

Dear Senior, Family Member, Care Giver or  
Concerned Citizen,

The Armstrong-Indiana Behavioral Health Senior Care Task Force is a specialized, solutions focused group that was formed to better understand the behavioral health needs of our county residents. We want to ensure that seniors, family members, and care givers in our communities have the behavioral health services and supports that you need.

This county specific resource guide was created with you in mind and includes information about common mental health topics impacting seniors; a section on how to access services; brief descriptions on the types of services in Armstrong County and phone numbers to get you in touch with the resources you need.

***If you feel you are in need of emergent mental health services, we encourage you to contact our local 24 hour 7 days a week crisis services line at 1-877-333-2470.*** The crisis line has trained professionals that can talk with you over the phone, or meet with you in person. You can also call 911 or go to nearest emergency room!

Good mental health is essential to your overall health and well-being. It is our hope that this resource guide will help you to achieve this goal.

Sincerely,

The Armstrong-Indiana Behavioral Health Senior  
Care Task Force

# Mental Health and Older Adults

Many older adults are at risk for developing mental health conditions. This guide reviews the signs, symptoms, and risk factors of some common mental health issues including anxiety, bipolar, depression, suicide, and dementia.

## Seeking Help

If you think that you or a loved one may suffer from mental illness, it is very important to seek treatment:

- ◆ Reach out to a trusted friend or family member for help
- ◆ Contact your primary care physician to discuss your concerns
- ◆ Schedule to see an outpatient mental health provider

## If you need immediate help, or you are thinking about harming yourself or others:

- ◆ Call Armstrong-Indiana Crisis hotline at 1-877-333-2470
- ◆ Call 911 for emergency services
- ◆ Go to the nearest Emergency Department

## Treatment

For most mental health conditions, the earlier that treatment begins, the more effective it is. The right treatment can help to improve your overall health and quality of life and may include:

- ◆ Psychotherapy to teach new ways of thinking and behaving
- ◆ Prescription medications

## **Beyond Treatment**

There are many other things that may help you or a loved one:

- ◆ Join a support group
- ◆ Stay active and exercise, eat healthy foods, and get enough sleep
- ◆ Avoid using drugs and alcohol
- ◆ Spend time with other people
- ◆ Set realistic goals for yourself and ask for help

## **ANXIETY**

Occasional anxiety is a normal part of life, but anxiety disorders are illnesses that cause people to be frightened, distressed, or uneasy for no apparent reason. These symptoms may interfere with daily life. There are several different types of anxiety disorders including *generalized anxiety disorder*, *panic disorder*, *social anxiety disorder*, *obsessive-compulsive disorder*, and *post-traumatic stress disorder*.

### **Signs and symptoms**

If you have been experiencing some of the following symptoms more days than not, you may be suffering from anxiety:

- ◆ Chronic, exaggerated worry or fear about everyday life events, activities, and situations
- ◆ Always anticipating the worst outcome
- ◆ Feeling restless, wound-up, or on edge
- ◆ Difficulty concentrating, having your mind go blank
- ◆ Sleep problems, difficulty falling asleep, not feeling rested
- ◆ Fear of social situations, being judged by others (social anxiety)

- ◆ Extreme, disabling, irrational fear of something (phobia)
- ◆ Sudden, intense feelings of terror (panic disorder)
- ◆ Repeated, intrusive, and unwanted thoughts or rituals that seem impossible to control (obsessive-compulsive disorder)
- ◆ May be accompanied by physical symptoms such as sweating, trembling, muscle tension, nausea, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, and dizziness

### **Risk Factors**

Current research suggests that anxiety is caused by a combination of genetic and environmental factors. The following factors may increase your risk:

- ◆ Personal or family history of anxiety or other mental disorders
- ◆ Shyness or behavioral inhibition in childhood
- ◆ Exposure to stressful life events in childhood and adulthood
- ◆ Being female, being divorced or widowed, having few economic resources

## **DEPRESSION**

Depression is one of the most common mental disorders in the United States. Clinical depression is a medical condition that causes severe symptoms and affects how you feel, think, and manage daily activities. These symptoms do not go away with time and may interfere with your daily life. Depression can begin at any age and is never a normal part of aging.

## **Signs and Symptoms**

If you have been experiencing some of the following symptoms most of the day, nearly every day, you may be suffering from depression:

- ◆ Persistent sad or “empty” mood
- ◆ Feeling worthless, hopeless, helpless, discouraged, or pessimistic
- ◆ Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities
- ◆ Decreased energy and fatigue
- ◆ Irritability, restlessness
- ◆ Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- ◆ Appetite and/or weight changes
- ◆ Insomnia, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
- ◆ Aches and pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive issues without a known cause that do not ease with treatment

## **Risk Factors**

Current research suggests that depression is caused by a combination of genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors. The following factors may increase your risk:

- ◆ Personal or family history of depression
- ◆ Stress and major life changes including loss, trauma, and abuse
- ◆ Certain physical illnesses, chronic conditions, and some medications
- ◆ Having a disability
- ◆ Loneliness and social isolation
- ◆ Misuse of drugs and alcohol

## **BIPOLAR DISORDER**

Bipolar disorder is characterized by extreme highs and lows in mood and energy. High moods are called mania and low moods are called depression. Bipolar disorder does not mean that someone is highly emotional; it refers to extended periods of mood that are excessively high alternating with excessively low, with periods or normal mood in between. While everyone has ups and downs, the severe shifts that occur with bipolar disorder can have a serious impact on a person's life.

### **Signs and Symptoms**

If you have been experiencing episodes of some of the following symptoms nearly every day for at least 1 week, you may be suffering from bipolar disorder:

Mania:

- ◆ Feeling very elated or euphoric, increased energy and activity
- ◆ Racing thoughts and rapid talking
- ◆ Easily irritated, agitated, or distracted
- ◆ Uncharacteristically poor judgment, engaging in risky behaviors
- ◆ Decreased need for sleep, trouble falling asleep or staying asleep

Depression:

- ◆ Feeling very sad, down, or empty
- ◆ Feeling guilty, hopeless, or worthless
- ◆ Decreased energy and activity levels
- ◆ Irritability or restlessness
- ◆ Difficulty concentrating or forgetful

## **Risk Factors**

Current research suggests that bipolar disorder may be caused by a combination of genetic and environmental factors:

- ◆ Personal or family history of bipolar or other mental disorder
- ◆ Exposure to distressing life events

## **SUICIDE AND THE ELDERLY**

Older adults are the fastest growing segment of the population and are also at the highest risk of suicide. Elderly men are at higher risk than the general population with white men over the age of 85 being more likely to complete suicide than any other group.

## **Warning Signs**

It is crucial that friends and family of older adults identify the warning signs of suicide and take action. Some common warning signs include:

- ◆ Feeling worthless, hopeless, helpless, pessimistic
- ◆ Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities
- ◆ Decreased social interaction, withdrawing from friends and family
- ◆ Loss of interest in personal hygiene and grooming
- ◆ Breaking medical regimens (not taking meds, canceling appts)
- ◆ Getting affairs in order (updating will, giving things away)
- ◆ Stockpiling medications or obtaining other lethal means
- ◆ Refusing to eat, drink, or take medications
- ◆ Preoccupation with death, lack of concern about personal safety

- ◆ Statements like “I wish I was dead” or “You would be better off without me”
- ◆ Expression of suicidal intent, suicide attempts

### **Risk Factors**

The reasons why older adults are at higher risk of suicide are complex and suicide is rarely preceded by only one cause or reason. Common risk factors include:

- ◆ Depression or other mental illness
- ◆ Family discord or recent loss of a loved one
- ◆ Physical illness, disability, chronic pain, fear of a prolonged illness
- ◆ Loneliness and social isolation, major changes in social roles
- ◆ Increased dependence on caregivers, fear of becoming a burden
- ◆ Loss of control, decreased abilities (mobility, driving, etc.)

## **DEMENTIA**

Dementia is a general term that describes a range of symptoms associated with a decline in mental ability severe enough to interfere with daily life. Dementia causes serious impairment in memory, language, attention, reasoning, and visual perception and leads to changes in thinking, behavior, and emotion. Alzheimer’s disease is the most common type of dementia.

### **Signs and Symptoms**

While symptoms of dementia can vary greatly, individuals may experience:

- ◆ Forgetfulness, trouble learning new things
- ◆ Inability to focus and pay attention
- ◆ Difficulty completing complex tasks

- ◆ Getting lost in familiar environments
- ◆ Difficulty communicating and finding words
- ◆ Impaired reasoning and judgement, poor decision making
- ◆ Difficult with planning, organizing, and problem solving
- ◆ Confusion and disorientation
- ◆ Hallucinations, delusions
- ◆ Personality and behavior changes including irritability, agitation, or aggression

### **Risk Factors**

Current research suggests that dementia may be caused by a combination of genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors. The following factors may increase your risk:

- ◆ Age
- ◆ Family history of dementia
- ◆ Cardiovascular factors (blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar)
- ◆ History of heart attack or stroke
- ◆ Traumatic brain injury, concussions
- ◆ Drug, alcohol, and tobacco use
- ◆ Sleep apnea
- ◆ Down Syndrome

### **DIFFICULT BEHAVIORS**

Older adults with mental illness or dementia may exhibit concerning behaviors including agitation, suspiciousness, refusing care, wandering, and other behaviors. Behaviors may be very distressing because of disruption to others and risk of harm. Effectively managing behaviors can improve quality of life, reduce

caregiver stress, and help to keep your loved one at home.

### **Identify the Cause of Behaviors**

Behaviors are often a form of communication about unmet needs and may be a reaction to external stress.

Many factors can trigger behaviors:

- ◆ Underlying medical conditions or medication side effects
- ◆ Physical discomfort like pain, being hot/cold, hungry, or tired
- ◆ Impaired vision or hearing
- ◆ Changes in environment, caregiver, or routine
- ◆ Overstimulation from environment
- ◆ Activities that are too complicated
- ◆ Lack of stimulation, boredom, nothing productive to do
- ◆ Loss of control, feeling powerless, not having choices
- ◆ Fear and confusion, disorientation
- ◆ Lack of exercise and physical activity
- ◆ Communication issues

### **Remove Stressors and Triggers**

Some general ways to reduce common triggers of behavior:

- ◆ Ensure a thorough medical evaluation to rule out physical causes
- ◆ Create a calm, quiet, comforting environment
- ◆ Maintain a consistent routine and familiar caregivers
- ◆ Monitor personal comfort by checking for pain, hunger/thirst, toileting needs, etc.
- ◆ Give some control over choices whenever possible

- ◆ Repeat, remind, and re-orient to reduce fear and confusion
- ◆ Provide enjoyable activities and daily exercise
- ◆ Allow adequate rest between stimulating events or activities

### **Employ Strategies to Manage Behaviors**

If possible triggers have been removed or reduced and the behavior is still present, there are strategies that may help to manage behaviors. Not every technique will work every time so try more than one:

- ◆ Distract and redirect through reminiscing, singing, art, changing location, getting a snack, or bringing in another person or pet
- ◆ Reduce environmental stimulus by turning off the TV, dimming lights, or moving to a quieter area
- ◆ Provide comforting things for the individual like a blanket, sweater, or stuffed animal
- ◆ Help them to relax with warm milk, soothing music, massage, aromatherapy, brushing their hair, etc.
- ◆ Change how or when care is provided, some care can be postponed until later, or have someone else offer care
- ◆ Engage them in a meaningful activity or hobby, go for a walk, take a ride in the car, or work on a household chore

### **Be Aware**

The personality and demeanor of the caregiver can significantly affect the behaviors of the individual. It is important to be aware of personal thoughts and actions that may affect others:

- ◆ Be calm, pleasant, gentle, and respectful

- ◆ Use positive statements and avoid saying “no” when possible
- ◆ Ask permission to provide care: “May I help you?”
- ◆ Don’t forget to apologize: “I’m sorry I upset you.”
- ◆ Practice effective communication and active listening
- ◆ Be aware of body language
- ◆ Maintain a sense of humor, be flexible, and “go with the flow”
- ◆ Don’t try to reason, argue, scold, reprimand, or shame them
- ◆ Don’t take their behavior personally and don’t be offended
- ◆ Know that they aren’t intentionally making you angry or upset
- ◆ Remember that the person has a disease and behaviors are a way to communicate that they are afraid, uncomfortable, or confused

## **How to Obtain Mental Health Treatment**

For those who are seeking mental health treatment, there are several ways to get started:

- Call your primary physician to discuss treatment options or request a referral for a mental health specialist.
- Contact your county Base Service Unit (BSU) for assessment and referral for various mental health services.
- Call an outpatient mental health provider to schedule an evaluation.

- Contact your insurance company for a list of mental health providers who accept your insurance.

For individuals experiencing a crisis or mental health emergency:

- Call the Armstrong-Indiana Crisis Hotline at 877-333-2470.
- Go to the nearest Emergency Department.
- Call 911.

### **Types of Treatment**

There are many different treatment options available and individuals can choose what treatment, or combination of treatments, they receive. There is no single treatment that works for every condition or every person. However, pairing medication *and* therapy is often the most effective treatment. This resource guide provides information regarding local services such as:

- Medication management
- Individual and group therapy
- Case management
- Peer support services
- Self-help and support groups

## **Outpatient**

**Family Counseling Center** offers a number of diagnostic and assessment services designed to identify treatment options both within the Center and in the community.

Individuals should contact the Base Service Unit with their questions or to schedule an appointment.

300 South Jefferson Street Kittanning, PA 16201 724-543-2941

**Family Psychological Associates** provides mental health services and treatment for geriatrics and their families. Their treatment goals focus on: self-reliance and growth, recovery and inclusion in the community, access to appropriate services and supports, a quality of life that includes family and friends.  
365 Franklin Hill Road Kittanning, PA 16201 724-543-1888

## **Crisis Provider**

**The Open Door** Provides 24/7 Crisis Hotline services to Armstrong and Indiana Counties.  
Address: 665 Philadelphia Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Suite 201, Indiana, Pa 15701  
Phone: 1-877-333-2470  
Website: [www.theopendoor.org](http://www.theopendoor.org)

## **Inpatient**

**ACMH** has an acute inpatient behavioral health unit in which a multidisciplinary team provides care to individuals with behavioral health diagnoses in a safe, structured environment.  
Address: One Nolte Drive Kittanning, PA 16201  
Phone: 724-543-8500  
Website: [www.acmh.org](http://www.acmh.org)

**IRMC** has a short-term inpatient unit that provides comprehensive assessment and treatment in a secure setting for patients 55 and older who may be experiencing acute psychiatric symptoms.  
Address: 835 Hospital Road, Indiana, PA 15701  
Phone: 724-357-7404  
Website: [www.irmc.org](http://www.irmc.org)

## **Drug & Alcohol**

The **Armstrong-Indiana-Clarion Drug and Alcohol Commission** is the designated Single County Authority (SCA) for drug and alcohol services in Armstrong, Indiana, and Clarion counties in the state of Pennsylvania. The commission targets four core drug and alcohol service areas: Prevention, Intervention, Treatment, Casemanagement. For more information on drug and alcohol services, please call 724-354-2746

## **Mental Health supportive services including drop in services**

### **Certified Peer Specialist Providers**

Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) is an individual with lived mental health experience who has been trained and certified on how to assist others in recovery and wellness. A CPS works one-on-one with individuals in recovery to provide advocacy, goal development, identification of community resources, education on maintaining wellness and recovery, and education on navigating the mental health system.

### **PeerStar, LLC**

Address: 14 College Park Plaza, Johnstown, PA 15904

Phone: (814) 515-2699

Website: [www.peerstarllc.com](http://www.peerstarllc.com)

**Unity Family Services**

Address: 118 Market Street, Kittanning, PA 16201

Phone: (724) 845-2978

Toll Free: 1-866-771-4488

Website: [www.ufsmentalhealth.com](http://www.ufsmentalhealth.com)

**Family Counseling Center of Armstrong County**

Address: 300 South Jefferson Street Kittanning, PA  
16201

Phone: (724)548-5126

Website: [www.fccac.org](http://www.fccac.org)

**Family Psychological Associates**

Address: 365 Franklin Hill Road Kittanning, PA 16201

Phone: (724)543-1888

Website: [www.family-psych.org](http://www.family-psych.org)

**Mental Health Drop-In Centers**

A mental health Drop-In Center is a place for self-help, advocacy, education and socialization. Drop-In centers provide individuals in recovery from mental illness with the opportunity for socialization, support, training and education, activities and crafts, a daily meal, and advocacy. The centers are free to attend or join. For more information, hours of operation, or a schedule of activities, call the Drop-In Center listed below.

**Kittanning Empowerment Center**

113 Market Street, Kittanning PA 16201

Phone: (724)543-2063

Email: [KEC@anrinfo.org](mailto:KEC@anrinfo.org)

## Support Groups

*For individuals, families, and caregivers.*

### **Alzheimer's Support Group**

Hosted by AristaCare at Hillsdale Park

*Support for individuals and families affected by Alzheimer's disease.*

Meets first Tuesday of the month from 6:00 – 7:00 PM

Clymer Family Medicine

349 Franklin St, Clymer, PA 15729

Contact Kim Neff at 814-743-6613

### **Alzheimer's Support Group for Caregivers**

Hosted by AseraCare

*Emotional support and education of those caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders.*

Meets every third Tuesday of the month from 6:00 – 7:00 PM

The Communities at Indian Haven

1675 Saltsburg Ave, Indiana, PA 15701

Contact Lisa German at 814-684-1630

**Weathering Grief Kittanning** Grief Support for those who have had a recent loss in the past two years ACMH 1 Nolte Drive, Kittanning, PA Third Tuesday of each month, 7:00PM-8:30PM

**OASIS (Overdose and Suicide Integrated Support)** Peer led support for those who have lost a loved one to overdose or completed suicide ACMH 1 Nolte Drive, Kittanning, PA Second Tuesday of each month, 7:00PM-8:30PM

### **Grandparents as Parents**

Free Education and Support Group. Recovery Community Organization, 408 8th St, Rear Suite, New Kensington, PA 15068 Mondays at 7pm

### **NAMI of Armstrong County**

Kittanning, 4th Thursday of the month  
Family Counseling Center of Armstrong County  
300 South Jefferson Street  
Meeting information contact: Family Counseling Center of Armstrong (724) 543-2941

### **Healing with Hope**

Support group for those who have lost a family member or friend to suicide. Meetings are held 2nd Tuesday of month, 7pm to 8:30pm at Harvest Community Church, 143 Reed Road, Kittanning PA 16201  
Questions? email [sptfac.info@org](mailto:sptfac.info@org) The Suicide Prevention Task Force of Armstrong County

### **Substance Abuse Recovery Meetings**

*Support groups for individuals, family, and friends in recovery from drugs and alcohol (includes AA, NA, Nar-Anon, ALANON, etc.)*  
Meeting times and locations vary  
Contact Arc Manor at 724-548-7607

## Overview on insurance

### APPRISE Insurance- State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)

APPRISE is Pennsylvania's State FREE Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP). The Pennsylvania Department of Aging created APPRISE to help Pennsylvania residents understand their Medicare and other health insurance benefits, and assist citizens in making informed decisions about their health care options. APPRISE works individually and confidentially with clients to determine their individual health care needs and preferences, compare health insurance options, plan ahead for long term living, and obtain Medicare and supplemental coverage that fits their lifestyle and their budget.

### OUR APPRISE COUNSELORS CAN HELP YOU:

#### UNDERSTAND

- MEDICARE BENEFITS
- MEDICARE PRESCRIPTIONS
- CHOICES ABOUT MEDICARE COVERAGE OPTIONS
- FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
- BENEFITS UNDER LONG TERM CARE POLICIES
- PROVIDING PRESENTATIONS TO YOUR GROUP OR ORGANIZATION

**Toll-free APPRISE Helpline is 1-800-783-7067, all services are free and confidential.**

**Community Health Choices is a new Medicaid (medical assistance) managed care program for eligible people covered by both Medicare and Medicaid. The program started in January 2018 for the southwest region of Pennsylvania.**

**Community Healthcare Choices (CHC)** participants receive both Medicare and Medicaid. The key goal of CHC is to improve coordination between Medicare and Medicaid. Medicare will continue to be the primary payor for any service covered by Medicare. Provider will continue to bill Medicare for eligible services prior to billing Medicaid.

For those enrolled in CHC, your ACCESS card will be replaced. It will be a medical card from one of three plans you choose. The three managed care plans available are:

AmeriHealth Caritas 1-855-235-5115

PA Health and Wellness 1-844-626-6813

UPMC Community Health Choices 1-844-833-0523

### **Behavioral Health**

Your behavioral health plan will not change. Those currently with VBH-PA Beacon will retain their VBH-PA Beacon coverage with no changes in benefits. To further assist, VBH-PA Beacon will also provide enhanced services for seniors and enhanced care management for those individuals on long term care waiver. VBH-PA Beacon has telephone services available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Credits: Value Behavioral Health of PA  
HEALTHCHOICES.PA.GOV  
Southwestern PA Area Agency on Aging, Inc.  
Family Services of Western Pennsylvania

# Online Resources

## Online Resources for Consumers and Families

Many sites offer free information about seniors, mental health, dementia, suicide, and substance abuse.

Alzheimer's Association

[www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

Indiana County Department of Human Services

<http://www.humanservices-countyofindiana.org/>

Mental Health America

[www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)

National Alliance on Mental Illness

[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

National Department of Health and Human Services

[www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov)

National Institute of Mental Health

[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

National Institute on Aging

[www.nia.nih.gov](http://www.nia.nih.gov)

PA Department of Aging

[www.aging.pa.gov](http://www.aging.pa.gov)

PA Department of Human Services

[www.dhs.pa.gov](http://www.dhs.pa.gov)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

**Armstrong-Indiana Crisis Services**

**1-877-333-2470**

Provided by The Open Door

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