

# Preparing for Your Psychiatric Evaluation

## What is a psychiatric evaluation?

A psychiatric evaluation is a structured interview by a psychiatrist or a psychiatric nurse practitioner (ARNP) that takes about 60-90 minutes. You will be asked about your current symptoms, treatment history, and life experiences.

It can be hard to open up to a new person. Please share only as much as you're comfortable with. It will be used to make sure you're given the most fitting diagnosis. At the end of your appointment, your provider will talk about your mental health diagnoses with you and come up with the best fitting treatment plan. Sometimes, a second visit is needed to decide about diagnoses and best treatment.

## Is a psychiatric evaluation right for me?

- If switching care to Valley Cities, you'll need to have a psychiatric evaluation to get your medications prescribed here. The provider might suggest changes to your diagnoses or medications based on this evaluation.
- You may want a psych eval if you're interested in taking or learning about medications.
- You don't need a psych eval to start counseling or groups. You can start these therapies while waiting to have an evaluation.
- If you're not sure, you can talk to your counselor about it and decide to schedule a psychiatric evaluation later.

## How can I prepare for a psychiatric evaluation?

- Bring **all** medication bottles that you are taking (or a written list), including any herbs or supplements.
- Bring any past treatment records that you think might help the provider understand your history.
- It is helpful if you are able to write down a list of all the past psychiatric medicines you have tried, how long you took them, at what dose, and any effects (good or side effects).
- You can bring a family member or partner for support, or if you have trouble explaining your symptoms.
- You may have your blood pressure, heart rate, and weight checked, which is part of good medical care and may be needed to monitor certain medications.

## For youth:

- If the youth has an IEP or 504 plan, please give us a copy before the psych eval.
- If under the guardianship of DCYF, please give us a copy of the CHET screening and any other paperwork for the youth's DCYF case before the psych eval.
- For children under 13, a parent or legal guardian must come to the psych eval and follow-up appointments to give information, and permission for any medications that may be prescribed.

## Please note:

- We don't do disability evaluations or parenting/custody assessments.
- We do diagnose ADHD, but we don't do testing for Autism Spectrum Disorder or learning disabilities.
- Please talk to your primary care provider about getting an outside referral for this service.
- If you don't have a primary care provider please let us know and we will help you find one.
- For safety reasons, we do not prescribe a benzodiazepine at the same time that one or more of the following medications is being prescribed: stimulant medication for ADHD, opioid pain medication, methadone, Z hypnotic medications.

## Mandated Reporting:

All Valley Cities staff, including psychiatric providers, are mandated reporters and must report suspected abuse, abandonment, neglect, or financial exploitation of individuals under 18, disabled individuals, or a seniors to the appropriate authorities. We know that involvement of outside systems can be stressful or frightening, and we can talk with you about the effects of such a report if we have to make one.