

# Client Orientation Handbook

Your guide to  
an Alberta  
Health  
Services'  
addiction and  
mental health  
clinic



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# Welcome to your AMH Clinic!



First, we want you to know you are not alone. By taking the time to learn about the addiction and/or mental health services available to you, you are taking a key step toward your recovery. We welcome the opportunity to support you in this journey. This client handbook has been developed to help you understand what an Alberta Health Services' (AHS) Addiction and Mental Health Outpatient Clinic (AMH clinic) can provide. It will tell you how to get the most from your addiction and/or mental health care, and help you determine if this is the right service for you at this time.

## This handbook is for clients in the following clinics:

- Community AMH Clinics (NW, South, Central, NE)
- Rural Community AMH Services (Strathmore, Airdrie, Banff, Canmore, Lake Louise, Chestermere, Claresholm, Cochrane, Didsbury, High River, Diamond Valley, Okotoks, Vulcan)
- Addiction Centre
- Adult Addiction Services
- Adult Psychosis Program
- Anxiety Disorders Clinic
- Calgary Diversion Service
- Carnat Centre for Mental Health Rehabilitation
- Community Geriatric Clinic
- Early Psychosis Intervention Program
- Dialectical Behavioural Therapy Clinic
- Forensic Assessment and Outpatient Services
- Indigenous Mental Health
- Mood Disorders Program
- Psychiatric Adult Service

## What other supports are available to me?



### If you need to be seen urgently

AMH clinics offer scheduled appointments only and have limited ability to respond to urgent concerns. There are many other services with single-session, telephone supports, or emergency supports:

- The brochure ([Know Your Options for Finding Help](#)) directs you to these services.
- You can also call Access Mental Health for information, consultation, and referral at 403-943-1500, Monday to Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

### Other supports available to you

#### Emergencies

Call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department (24/7)

#### Health advice

Call Health Link at 811 (24/7)

#### Addiction advice

Call the Addiction Help Line at 1-866-332-2322 (24/7)

#### Mental health advice

Call the Mental Health Advice Line at 1-877-303-2642 (24/7)

#### Wellness advice

Call the First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line at 1-855-242-3310 (24/7)

#### Crisis support

Call the Distress Centre Calgary (24/7) at 1-403-266-HELP (4357) or chat/text at [distresscentre.com](https://distresscentre.com)

## What will happen at the AMH clinic?



An AMH clinic provides assessment, treatment, support, and relapse management for mental health and/or addiction concerns.

An AMH clinic does not provide:

- third-party assessments (i.e., insurance, disability, workplace compensation, Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped),
- court mandated treatment\*,
- urgent care services or crisis services.

\*FAOS services are only provided via court mandate.

### What you can expect

You can expect to work on goals related to your mental health and/or addiction concerns. You, as an active participant, and your mental health professional will discuss your goals, the steps to help achieve them, and the timelines required. You will be a partner in your care.

AMH clinics provide time-limited treatment. Recovery is a journey, and you will continue to work on your goals, even after you have completed your care with us. You and your mental health professional will create a plan to help you navigate future challenges.

AMH clinics strive to provide high quality, patient- and family-centred care. This means you can expect:

- To be treated with dignity and respect.
- Open communication with your AMH clinic care team.
- Your family, culture, ethnicity, and community supports are incorporated in your care, as desired.
- Your strengths will be utilized to build your treatment plan and support you in achieving your goals.

*Diversity and inclusion  
are essential to  
everything we do at AHS*

### What will be expected of you

In the spirit of working together as partners, we ask that you:

- Treat all members of the AMH clinic care team with dignity and respect.
- Communicate openly.
- Be open to learning more about your mental health.
- Be an active participant in your care by practicing new skills, asking questions, and sharing thoughts.
- Identify any other mental health professionals from whom you are currently receiving care or have received care from in the past, as this is important for planning your AMH clinic treatment.

There are additional expectations related to confidentiality and attendance (See: informed consent and confidentiality, and clinic attendance on P. 9).

# How do I prepare for my first appointment?



During your first appointment, your mental health professional will get to know you, to better understand your concerns and your goals. Questions for you to consider ahead of time may include:

- What do I want from my AMH clinic care?
- What do I hope to work on?
- What would tell me that my time at the clinic was a success? What would I notice that would be different or better?

Here's how you can prepare for your first appointment:

## Think about your goals

- Bring your ideas about what you want from your care. Your AMH clinic care team will work with you to establish goals.

## Identify your supports

- Identify your supports-including professional supports-such as your family physician, family members, friends, or helpful people or strategies you are using now to support your wellness.

## Prepare your medication list

- If you take medications, you will be asked to prepare a list of the medications you're taking and how and when you take them.

## The importance of setting goals

Care related to mental health and/or addictions is most effective when your goals are clear for you and the team working with you. If you enter your mental health journey without goals or an idea about what you want to change, you might not reach that destination. As on any journey, you might change your mind part way, or find a quicker route to your goals. But it is a good idea to start with an idea of what you want.

# What will the rest of my care at the AMH clinic be like?



There are several steps to complete as part of your care, including assessment, receiving, and participating in care, and transitioning to ongoing supports. Each are described here.

## 1 Assessment

The first step—assessment—is when a mental health professional collects information to understand you, and how to meet your needs. This may include

conversations, completing questionnaires, and reviewing past and current health information.

## 2 Receiving care/Participating in care

Receiving and participating in care in an AMH clinic—also known as treatment or therapy—will focus on:

- Understanding symptoms and their impacts.
- Reducing, stabilizing, and managing symptoms.
- Learning and practicing new skills.
- Building upon your strengths and resilience.
- Growing and expanding on the changes you are experiencing.

Once your goals have been set, a care plan will be developed with you outlining the support and treatment options to help you meet them. These could include:

- Individual and/or group therapy
- Medication management
- Case management
- Outreach, peer, social or cultural supports, or connections to community resources

As your care is customized to your needs and goals, it may not include everything listed.

## 3 Transitioning to ongoing supports

After completing your care at an AMH clinic, you and your mental health professional will develop a transition plan to guide your recovery going forward.



## Who will be part of my care team at the AMH clinic?



Your AMH clinic care team will vary depending on your needs. You will work with a primary mental health professional who may be a nurse, social worker, or psychologist. Other AMH clinic team members—such as psychiatrists, recreation therapists, occupational therapists, or peer support workers—may be involved. Your care team may also include family members, close friends, or community-based supports identified by you. Those involved in your care will be outlined in your care plan.

Your family physician is an important member of your healthcare team. They remain your lead healthcare provider even when you are enrolled in an AMH clinic, and you are encouraged to stay connected with them.

## Will the care I receive be confidential?



Confidentiality is very important in healthcare. AMH clinic staff follow policies to ensure your confidentiality and that of other clients is respected.

Your family physician will receive information regarding your care at an AMH clinic. If you do not wish this to happen, you must inform your AMH clinic mental health professional. If anyone outside of AHS requests information, it will only be released with a signed consent from you.

Be aware that audio/visual recordings of any session (group, individual, etc.) without consent is a breach of confidentiality, is taken very seriously and could result in discharge from the clinic. This includes recording using cellphones.

### Exceptions to confidentiality

AHS keeps everything you share as part of a clinic visit confidential with the exception of the following instances:

- If you disclose, or a healthcare provider has reason to believe, that you are likely to harm yourself or others. The necessary steps will be taken to ensure your safety and the safety of others.



- If you disclose, or a healthcare provider has reason to believe, that a child has been abused or neglected. This will be reported to Alberta Child and Family Services as required by law.
- If your records are subpoenaed by the court, AHS must comply with the request.
- If your mental health professional needs to consult any AHS AMH team member regarding your care to collaborate in your care plan.

## Do I need to provide consent for my care?



Informed consent is guided by Alberta law and AHS policy, to ensure you understand and agree to receive healthcare services. You can expect to discuss consent at your first appointment.

## What are the attendance expectations at the AMH clinic?



AMH clinics have expectations related to attendance. These help each AMH clinic serve clients fairly and equitably. Any exceptions to these attendance expectations will be addressed by your mental health professional.

### Late arrival

If you are late for your appointment, your time with your mental health professional may be limited. If you are more than 15 minutes late, your appointment may need to be rescheduled and considered a no-show.

### Illness

If you are feeling unwell or have an infectious illness, we ask you to reschedule your appointment. This will not be considered a no-show.

### Cancellations

We require at least 24-hours' notice if you need to cancel an appointment but would appreciate as much notice as possible. This allows another client to use the appointment time. Cancelling without 24-hours' notice will be considered a no-show.

### File closure

Appointment no-shows and cancellations are taken seriously and could result in your file being reviewed or closed:

- If you miss your first appointment, two attempts will be made to contact you.
- If you have two no-shows in a row, or a total of three or more cancellations or no-shows.

Contact the AMH clinic if you have any questions, require additional support to attend appointments, or if you feel it is not the right time for you to engage with an AMH clinic. AMH clinic staff can explore other options to support your needs.

# How do I provide feedback about my care?



Your feedback is important to us. It helps us better understand what is working well, your appreciation of mental health professionals or specific treatment approaches, or what could be improved upon. We encourage you to share your feedback at any point in your journey.

You can use client experience questionnaires or feedback boxes, where available, or by speaking directly to AMH clinic staff. If you have a concern about your care, you can take the following steps:

1 Talk to your care team

This provides an opportunity to work together to find a resolution. Expressing concerns can be challenging but can be very helpful for everyone involved. We ask that you to be open with your AMH clinic care team about any issues.

2 Talk to a clinical supervisor

If you and your mental health professional aren't able to find a solution, ask to include a clinical supervisor. Your mental health professional will provide you with the clinical supervisor's contact information so you can contact them directly. Another option is to contact the AMH clinic manager.

3 Contact Patient Relations

If the steps above have not resolved your concerns, you can contact Patient Relations at [ahs.ca/patientfeedback](https://ahs.ca/patientfeedback) or 1-855-550-2555.

## Conclusion

We hope this orientation handbook has provided you with valuable information and assists you in better understanding what your AMH clinic can offer. If you have additional questions, a mental health professional at your AMH clinic can help. Refer to the contact details for your specific AMH clinic, provided in the service welcome letter.

