

About the Department of Mental Health (DMH)

As the State Mental Health Authority, the Department of Mental Health (DMH) is responsible for ensuring access to mental health care for people across Massachusetts. DMH has a wide range of functions:

- DMH helps ensure people have access to quality mental health care through policies and regulations
- DMH licenses psychiatric inpatient units and facilities, as well as group living environments for people with mental health diagnoses
- DMH operates a system of state hospitals, psychiatric units, community mental health centers, and other facility-based care for people with mental health diagnoses
- DMH maintains a system of eligibility-based community mental health services for children and adults with a high level of need
- DMH backs promising practices and innovation by funding support, training, and technical assistance projects and programs across the state

You can read more about each of these functions below!

Policy & Regulations

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) helps ensure people have access to quality mental health care across the state through policies and regulations.

DMH writes and enforces certain state regulations relating to mental health. This includes regulations that outline standards for inpatient mental health facilities and group living environments for people with mental health diagnoses, and the regulations relating to its own application process, service planning, and appeals. DMH also issues policies and bulletins to explain the Department's standing on an issue.

[Learn More](#)

DMH Regulations and Policies

<https://www.mass.gov/dmh-statutes-regulations-expedited-inpatient-admissions-other-policies>

Facility Licensing

When it comes to acute inpatient psychiatric care - meaning inpatient care when you're experiencing a mental health crisis - people most often receive treatment in privately-operated hospitals. This can include stand-alone psychiatric facilities like McLean, Bournewood, and Arbour Hospitals. It can also include inpatient units located within general hospitals, like North Shore Medical Center and Newton Wellesley Hospital.

Although not operated by the Department of Mental Health (DMH) directly, these units and facilities are licensed by DMH and must follow DMH policies and regulations to maintain their license.

DMH also licenses many group living environments for people with mental health diagnoses. Like inpatient facilities, group living environments must follow certain regulations in order to operate.

[Learn More](#)

DMH Inpatient Unit and Facility Licensing

<https://www.mass.gov/inpatientirtp-licensing>

DMH Community Licensing

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/department-of-mental-health-community-licensing-division>

Facility-Based Care

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) operates a system of state hospitals, psychiatric units, community mental health centers, and other facility-based care for people with mental health diagnoses.

State Hospitals and Continuing Inpatient Care

DMH operates two state hospitals, Taunton State Hospital and Worcester Recovery Center and Hospital. DMH operates inpatient units at two Department of Public Health hospitals: the Hathorne Units at Tewksbury State Hospital and the Metro Boston Mental Health Units at Shattuck Hospital. DMH also currently contracts with Vibra Hospital in Springfield for additional inpatient beds.

Most of the beds in these facilities are for adults needing continuing treatment and care, although some beds are reserved for people needing speciality evaluations and care. Worcester Recovery Center and Hospital also has inpatient beds for adolescents needing ongoing care.

Community Mental Health Centers

DMH operates three community mental health centers with inpatient beds: Cape Cod and Islands (Pocasset) Mental Health Center in Bourne, Corrigan Mental Health Center in Fall River, and Fuller Mental Health Center in Boston.

Inpatient beds in these centers are generally reserved for people who need more intensive care or longer stays than typically provided in privately-operated hospitals.

Intensive Residential Treatment Programs

DMH contracts for Intensive Residential Treatment Programs (IRTP) for adolescents ages 13 - 18, located in the grounds of Taunton and Tewksbury State Hospitals and Worcester Recovery Center and Hospital. IRTPs are secure, 24-hour residential treatment settings that provide intensive residential support and often prevent the need for longer term inpatient hospitalizations.

Clinically Intensive Residential Treatment Program

DMH also contracts for one Clinically Intensive Residential Treatment Program (CIRT) for children ages 6 - 12, located in Springfield. The CIRT provides intensive treatment for children to help prevent longer inpatient care, transition from acute treatment, and prepare for community-based care with their families.

Community-Based Services

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) maintains a system of eligibility-based community mental health services for children and adults with a high level of need. Most mental health care is funded through health insurance and provided in health centers, clinics, and provider offices in your local community. Eligibility-based services through DMH should be seen supplemental, designed to build on the support a person is already receiving.

Eligibility-based services from DMH begin with an application. To qualify for DMH eligibility-based services:

- you need to have a qualifying mental health diagnosis that has lasted, or is expected to last, at least one year
- as a result of that diagnosis, have a functional impairment in multiple domains
- need a support that DMH provides, and that support is not readily accessible another way
- DMH is able to provide that support

If you are found eligible for services, DMH will send you a notice that lists the services you have been authorized for. DMH will meet with you to determine your service goals, and plan for how you will receive services.

Eligibility-Based Services for Children and Teens

Case Management includes needs assessments, service planning, care coordination, and resource connection.

Flexible Support Services are services for children with significant emotional or behavioral issues and their families. Services are designed to help the child remain in the community and can include clinical and therapeutic support, as well as family and peer mentoring.

Therapeutic Afterschool Programs and Camps are structured programs offering recreational and therapeutic activities to children and teens, after school, on weekends, or during vacation times. Program activities are designed to strengthen social skills, confidence, and creativity.

Caring Together is a collaboration between DMH and the Department of Children and Families. Caring Together supports children with significant emotional or behavioral issues who are at risk for, or are, currently out of the home. Caring Together services are flexible to meet the needs of the child and family and can include residential school placements, group living environments, and wraparound services in the community (called the Continuum).

Services for Transition Age Youth and Young Adults bridge services for children/teens and adult services. The intent is to support young people toward the goals of personal stability, community housing, employment, education and positive family/social relationships.

Eligibility-Based Services for Adults

Case Management includes needs assessments, service planning, care coordination, and resource connection.

Respite is short-term, community-based support that helps someone remain in the community. Respite can be used to enable someone to remain in a stable living situation, or as a bridge to support someone as they transition from a service or situation like inpatient hospitalization or

incarceration. Respite can be site-based, meaning people access the respite at designated location, or mobile, meaning people are supported where they are.

Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) is a clinically-focused service providing support through a multi-disciplinary integrated team. ACCS Teams develop person-centered treatment plans to support members in achieving their recovery, health and self-sufficiency goals.

Program of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) is an intensive, multi-disciplinary program for people diagnosed with mental health conditions who have not responded well to other interventions. People who are enrolled in PACT receive most treatment, rehabilitative, and support services directly from the PACT team.

Homeless Outreach Teams engage and support people who are living in shelters and on the street. Shelter beds in the Fuller and Lindemann Mental Health Centers, and beds operated by community organizations, provide additional intensive stabilization support.

The Aggressive Treatment and Relapse Prevention (ATRP) provides housing and support to people who are homeless and have a mental health diagnosis and substance use.

Forensic Transition Teams help ensure effective reentry plans for people incarcerated in state prisons and county houses of correction.

[Learn More](#)

DMH Child, Youth, and Family Services Overview

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dmh-child-youth-and-family-services-overview>

DMH Adult Services Overview

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dmh-adult-services-overview>

Apply for DMH Services

<https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-dmh-services>

Support, Training, and Technical Assistance

DMH backs promising practices and innovation by funding support, training, and technical assistance projects and programs across the state, through contracts and grants with community organizations. This includes programs related to peer and family support, training, and engagement, employment, psychosis, and forensics. Some programs are open to anyone, while others have their own eligibility process.

Peer Support, Engagement, and Training

Young Adult Access Centers are low- and no-barrier centers for young people up to age 24. They help young people build skills for independent living, learning, and employment, and offer opportunities for peer support and mentoring.

Recovery Learning Communities (RLCs) are peer-run communities offering support groups, one on one support, training, and more. They are open to people who have a mental health diagnosis, have experienced trauma or extreme emotional states, and others who would like to get support there. There are RLCs in each DMH region. Their support is free, and insurance is not needed.

The Western Mass Recovery Learning Community also works to increase the voice of people in marginalized communities through their **Wild Ivy Social Justice Network**.

The Transformation Center runs the **Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) Training**. This training prepares peer supporters to facilitate support groups and offer one-on-one peer support.

Radiate Career Consulting runs the **Gathering, Inspiring, Future, Talent (GIFT) training**. This training prepares young adults to offer peer support and mentoring.

Family and Community Support and Engagement

Family Support Programs around the state to provide information and support to families of children and teens with emotional or behavioral issues. This can include support groups, information, workshops, coaching, connection to community resources, and more.

The Parent/Professional Advocacy League additionally works to offer engagement opportunities for family members.

NAMI Massachusetts provides support groups, training, information and referral, and engagement opportunities for family members of adults.

The **Massachusetts Association for Mental Health** promotes mental health awareness and stakeholder engagement in policy development.

Employment Supports

Clubhouses are community centers for people with mental health diagnoses. They focus on helping people build long-term relationships that will support them in obtaining employment, education, and housing. Clubhouses have a vocational focus - they abide by the philosophy of a “work-ordered day,” and the belief that work is restorative. Clubhouses provide members with work opportunities, both inside and outside the clubhouse, and support to be successful in these opportunities.

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission works with DMH to support Mental Health Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Integrated Resource Teams. These speciality teams work with people enrolled in DMH's Adult Clinical Community Service (ACCS) program to work towards their employment goals.

First Episode Psychosis Programs and Promotion

First Episode Psychosis programs provide treatment and support for people with emerging symptoms of psychosis.

The Massachusetts Psychosis Network for Early Treatment (MAPNET) provides consultation, training, support, and community building among First Episode programs in Massachusetts. MAPNET also offers information about First Episode programs for the public, including a listing of First Episode programs across the state.

Forensic Supports

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training and Technical Assistance Centers provide CIT training to police officers and other first responders across the state.

Co-Response Jail Diversion Clinicians work cooperatively with local police departments to support people who are experiencing mental health symptoms and help them avoid the criminal justice system.

The Co-Response Training and Technical Assistance Center provides training support to local co-response clinicians and police departments.

Court Clinics are responsible for providing court-ordered clinical evaluations in the Juvenile, District, and Superior Courts in Massachusetts, including specialty mental health, drug, and veteran court sessions. Court clinicians evaluate people with mental health symptoms and diagnoses who come to the attention of the justice system.

[Learn More](#)

DMH Young Adult Access Centers

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dmh-access-centers>

Recovery Learning Communities

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/recovery-learning-communities>

Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) Training

<https://transformation-center.org/home/training/certified-peer-specialists/>

Family Support Programs and the Parent/Professional Advocacy League

<https://ppal.net/>

NAMI Massachusetts

<https://namimass.org/>

Clubhouses in Massachusetts

<https://www.massclubs.org/massachusetts-clubhouses>

Vocational Rehabilitation

<https://www.mass.gov/vocational-rehabilitation>

Massachusetts Psychosis Network for Early Treatment (MAPNET)

<https://www.mapnet.online/>



This information is for educational purposes only. Contact the COMPASS Helpline for additional information and resources about this topic.

call COMPASS at **617-704-6264** or **1-800-370-9085**
email COMPASS at compass@namimass.org