



MENTAL HEALTH URGENT CARE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1) WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH URGENT CARE?

Mental Health Urgent Care (MHUC), like traditional physical health urgent care, fills the gap between emergency care and primary care. It's for people who need mental health services, support, and treatment but do not require a trip to the emergency department.

2) WHY ARE WE OPENING A CLINIC IN CHITTENDEN COUNTY?

Data shows that people go to the emergency department for an urgent mental health need that could possibly be treated in an alternative setting. To be good stewards of our community resources, we are opening a Mental Health Urgent Care clinic so that people have therapeutic options. There are currently several Mental Health Urgent Care programs opening across Vermont.

3) WHY ISN'T MHUC OPEN 24/7 LIKE THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT?

To start, Mental Health Urgent Care will be open Monday – Friday, 9:00 am-5:00 pm. Our community needs may exceed these hours. In the future we may consider expanding the program, depending on community need, funding, and workforce availability.

4) DOES MHUC SERVE CHILDREN/YOUTH?

MHUC serves adults over age 18. We understand some guests may have children/youth with them. It is a family-friendly environment, and services can be family-focused, as needed. If a child/youth needs to access services, staff will assist in making referrals for appropriate care.

LOCATION: 1 South Prospect Street, Burlington

TIMELINE: Opening October 28, 2024

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



5) WHAT HAPPENS AT 5:00 PM IF GUESTS NEED ONGOING SUPPORT?

Before MHUC closes at 5:00 pm, staff will support guests to determine their next steps for the evening. This could include referrals to other programs in the community or help with identifying natural supports. Transportation by staff may be available. Guests may return in the morning to receive additional support or follow-up care, as needed.

6) DOES MHUC CHARGE GUESTS OR BILL INSURANCE FOR RECEIVING SERVICES?

MHUC is fully funded for three years. No one seeking services during this period will be charged or billed except when guests who have health insurance coverage receive physical health medical care services. Staff will review any billing with guests and receive advance consent to provide services. Insurance information will be gathered for data collection to help with planning after the initial three years.

7) AFTER THREE YEARS, WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE PROGRAM WHEN THE INITIAL FUNDING RUNS OUT?

If the program is successful in providing a therapeutic alternative to emergency department care for people in self-defined crisis (based on utilization and other outcomes), we hope to continue the program beyond the initial three years. We will need to develop sustainable funding through state and local partnerships and third party insurance coverage.

8) WHAT SERVICES ARE PROVIDED?

- Peer support
- Mental health assessment
- Brief intervention

(continued on back)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(continued)

- Care management and coordination
- Safety planning
- Medical care, such as medical assessments, wound care, health education, and chronic disease management
- Assistance with medications
- Referrals or connection to other services and resources

9) DO I NEED TO ACCESS ALL OF THE SERVICES, OR CAN I CHOOSE?

Guests of MHUC will work with staff to determine what their needs are and what services are most appropriate. There will be a menu of services, and some may be recommended based on the need. Services are voluntary; guests can choose the services they access.

10) DO I HAVE TO BE IN CRISIS TO ACCESS SERVICES?

What constitutes a crisis is different for different people. If you are in self-defined crisis or need immediate support or care, you are welcome to come to this program. If you are considering going to the emergency department for mental health services, we would like you to come to MHUC instead. If your symptoms are getting worse or your needs are growing, we encourage you to access MHUC services as soon as possible to avoid an emergency.

11) WHAT HAPPENS IF I NEED MORE CARE OR A HIGHER LEVEL OF CARE?

MHUC staff are able to make referrals for different types or levels of care and treatment in our community, including outpatient treatment, intensive outpatient programs, crisis stabilization placements, and inpatient psychiatric hospitalization, if needed. There may be some instances where staff and a guest decide together that care in the emergency department is the most appropriate option, based on an individual's specific circumstances.

12) CAN THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT REDIRECT PEOPLE TO MHUC?

Yes. Federal law requires emergency department staff to help someone who comes to the emergency department for care, and staff cannot refuse or immediately transfer treatment. However, emergency department staff can include a referral to MHUC in the future, as needed, as part of a discharge plan.

13) HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT?

Mental Health Urgent Care has a specific focus on mental health and wellbeing. Care is provided in a trauma-informed, suicide-safe environment, and staff offer different types of support and services based on the needs of the guests.

14) CAN OTHER COMMUNITY PARTNERS PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM?

Howard Center is operating this program in partnership with The University of Vermont Medical Center, Community Health Centers, and Pathways Vermont. The program will refer to additional community partners, as needed, to best meet the needs of our guests.

15) HOW CAN I HELP OR PROVIDE SUPPORT?

Although we do not have capacity for volunteers, financial support can be given to Howard Center and earmarked specifically for Mental Health Urgent Care. There may be times when goods or services can also be donated to the program.

To make a donation, contact Howard Center's Development and Communication office at 802-488-6913; DevelopmentTeam@howardcenter.org.