

Glossary of Behavioral Health Terms

What is the goal of the tool/resource?

To use as a reference when anyone is unsure about behavioral health terms or wants to build their behavioral health literacy.

Who is the audience?

High school youth receiving behavioral health services and their parents/caregivers.

Who should facilitate this tool/resource?

Someone who has an ongoing, trusted relationship with a student and has behavioral health knowledge and the ability to refer to behavioral health services, if needed. This can include school mental health providers, school-based health center staff, school psychologists, professional school counselors, and school social workers.

How should the staff team member facilitate this tool/resource?

Staff team members could have a hard copy of the terms available during sessions and can reference it to help define words that the youth or their parent/caregiver is unclear about. This can also be sent electronically to youth or their parent/caregiver for their own reference. This tool can be used along with the “Transition Readiness Tool,” the “Resource to Find Medical or Mental Health Services” tool, or the “Post-Graduation Wellness Plan.”

Glossary of Behavioral Health Terms

Behavioral Health Services: A term used to describe the many different types of therapy people can receive to help them feel better in their life. Sometimes instead of behavioral health services, people say mental health, counseling, or substance use services.

Example: The clinic offers “medical, dental, and behavioral health services.”

Coping: Ways of dealing with situations, feelings, and people in your life that make you feel overwhelmed.

Example: Writing, going for a walk, and listening to music are all forms of coping.

Crisis: When you feel extreme distress and you are unable to function like you normally do.

Example: Examples of a crisis are thinking about hurting yourself or someone else.

Crisis Intervention: A professional, usually a therapist or counselor, works with the person who is having the crisis to help them be safe and feel better.

Example: A therapist talks with someone who is crying and thinking about hurting themselves until the person has calmed down. Once they are calm, the therapist will help the person get proper treatment to ensure they are safe.

Diagnosis: Doctors and therapists organize symptoms into different categories to understand how the person is feeling. A diagnosis is a name for the group of symptoms a person is feeling or experiencing.

Example: A person who has felt sad, irritable, and hopeless for three months may be told their diagnosis is “depression.” These are all common symptoms of depression.

Disability Accommodations: Modifications or services at work or in college for qualified individuals with disabilities.

Example: Services such as note takers or scribes, giving exams in alternative formats, or assistive listening devices.

Distress: Feelings of being extremely upset, anxious, angry, and/or sad.

Example: After her grandmother passed away, Jessica told her therapist she was feeling distressed.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP): Work-based programs to help employees with personal or work-related problems that impact their job performance, health, and well-being.

Example: While dealing with a tough breakup, Marco was very distracted at work. His boss recommended Marco take advantage of the EAP and get a counseling referral so he can get support during this difficult time.

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Health Insurance: An agreement you make with an insurance company, so they cover the costs of your medical and mental health treatment. Sometimes the individuals or company pays for your health insurance and sometimes the government pays for your treatments. This type of insurance is called Medicaid.

Example: "I pay money every month for my health insurance. Then, when I had surgery on my knee, my health insurance covered the cost of the surgery."

Medicaid: Medicaid is health insurance that is paid for by the government. A family needs to make less than a certain amount of money per year to qualify.

Example: "My mom works part-time. My family applied for Medicaid and now we all have health insurance."

Mental Health: How a person thinks, feels, and acts when faced with life's situations. This includes how people handle stress, make decisions, and interact with other people.

Example: "My mental health is good. I feel happy most days and I can wake up and go to school. I do my homework and have a good relationship with my classmates."

Primary Care Doctor: Your main doctor who you go to for treatment of common illnesses and routine care like check-ups and shots. Your primary care provider can also help you decide if you need to go to the hospital or see a specialist.

Example: Pediatricians or family medicine doctors.

Psychiatric Medication or Psychotropic Medication: A medication used to help people feel better mentally and emotionally. Certain medication, such as Advil, is used to help with pain or discomfort in your body such as a headache. Psychiatric or psychotropic medication is used to help our minds and bodies feel better.

Example: Ana was prescribed psychiatric medication to help reduce feelings of depression.

Symptom: Any feeling or change that is different than how a person normally feels.

Example: Always feeling worried and not being able to sleep are examples of symptoms.

Transition: In general, a transition is a change from one thing to another. For you, it means the process of getting ready to move from high school to adult life. The process happens over a period of many years. Preparing for the transition in advance can help make it easier. You can prepare by talking with adults in your life and making a plan to ensure you have what you need to be successful.

Example: "Now that I have graduated, I need to transition to a therapist outside of school."

Wellness Services: A service or program to help you stay healthy physically and emotionally.

Example: Counseling, support groups, and a health check-up with your provider.