

Informed Consent

What will my appointment be like?

First Appointments

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire prior to this 45 to 90 minute appointment. This is a time for the provider and patient to gather information about each other. You will discuss recommended treatments and goals for future sessions. It is also important to use this time to determine if you and the provider are a good fit to continue working together.

Future Appointments

Follow up appointments will depend on the service you are receiving. Your provider will discuss your recommendations at your initial appointment but here are some general guidelines.

- **Psychotherapy or Substance Use Counseling** sessions involve talking about your concerns and using evidenced-based therapy techniques to help you make changes. These sessions may be with a licensed psychologist, master's level therapist, or drug and alcohol counselor. Therapy appointments typically last 45-60 minutes.
- **Psychiatry Appointments** focus on medications and other medical treatments that may help with your concerns. You will be asked to first meet with nursing staff for approximately 10 minutes to complete assessments needed by your provider. You will then meet with a psychiatrist (MD) or psychiatric nurse practitioner for approximately 20 to 30 minutes.
- **Psychological or Neuropsychological Testing** appointments vary greatly depending on the purpose. You will receive more specifics about this from the licensed psychologist completing your evaluation.

How often and how long will I be seen?

The frequency will depend on the service and the nature of your needs. Many people can benefit from one or two sessions. Other people need treatment for a longer period. Your provider will be developing a treatment plan with you to determine your specific course of treatment. Always feel free to ask questions.



What if I feel suicidal or have some other mental health emergency?

If you have a life-threatening concern, please call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest emergency room. If you are feeling suicidal but are not in immediate danger, you may call 9-8-8 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255. You may also call Northwest Connections Mental Health and AODA Hotline for more local resources at 888-552-6642.

If it is not life threatening, but you need an appointment sooner than your next scheduled appointment, please contact the Behavioral Health front desk during business hours at 715-483-0343. We will make every effort to get you in based on cancellations.

What are the risks and benefits of treatment?

The benefits of mental health treatment are a reduction in your symptoms and a happier and healthier life. If you are receiving medications or other medical treatment, your provider will discuss the specific risks and benefits of those treatments with you. In therapy, risks are rare, but some people do report a temporary increase in symptoms or conflicts in relationships because of some of the changes they decide to make.

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Privacy

The information you share with your provider is protected by privacy laws. However, there are times when your provider is permitted or required by law to share information. These include:

- Sharing information with your other healthcare providers for the purpose of transferring or coordinating your care.
- Other medical providers accessing your provider's notes within the electronic healthcare record when necessary for your care.
- Your insurance company or other payer (e.g., workman's comp) accessing records to make sure care is appropriate and necessary.
- Your provider is required to report suspicions of abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult. *(Note: depending on the state, sexual contact between minors may apply.)*
- Your provider must report and act if you are a danger to yourself or others*.
- The court system can order a provider to release records in certain circumstances.
- If you are a minor, your parents may or may not have access to your records (please see rights of minors later in this document).
- If required by professional reporting laws.
- As otherwise permitted or required by law.

***Please note that MN law now requires that if a client is a danger to themselves or others, the mental health professional must communicate the threat or risk to the sheriff of the county where the client resides and make a recommendation to the sheriff regarding the client's fitness to possess firearms. This applies in MN only.**



Cost of Services

We will make every effort to bill your insurance, but you are responsible for the cost of your services. To obtain an estimate of your cost please call one of our Patient Financial Counselors at 715-483-0475. You may also use the estimate tool on our website at: <https://www.saintcroixhealth.org/patients-visitors/insurance-billing/patient-estimate-generator/>

Insurance

If your health insurance plan changes during the time you are receiving care with us, please call us at 715-483-0243 with your new insurance information prior to your next appointment so we can verify coverage for our services through your new plan, get authorization, and bill appropriately. If you change health insurance plans during the time you are receiving care with us and do not inform us of the change, you may be responsible for any charges incurred for services not authorized by your new health insurance plan.

Financial Assistance

Financial Assistance is available to those who qualify. Contact a Patient Financial Counselor for more information at 715-483-0475. You can also find more information and an application at: www.saintcroixhealth.org/patientsvisitors/insurance-billing/financial-assistance/

If you have any questions or need assistance, please discuss your concerns with your provider or contact our billing office at 800-828-3627.

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Departmental Policies

Appointment Confirmation

Appointments must be confirmed by 10:00 AM the business day before the appointment. Appointments may be confirmed by text message, MyChart, or leaving a message on the confirmation line, 715-483-0387.

No Shows/Late Cancellations

For treatment to be effective, it is important to keep your appointments. If you miss two (2) initial appointments or three (3) follow-up appointments without canceling by 10:00 AM the business day before an appointment, you may lose the option of scheduling future appointments and will need to seek services elsewhere.

Illness

Please do not come to the clinic if you have symptoms of a contagious illness. If you are ill or have another last minute emergency (e.g., inclement weather), please call 715-483-0343 as soon as possible to discuss your options and/or offer your time to someone else. Some, but not all, situations may allow us to see you via telehealth instead (See telehealth policies later in this handout).



Discontinuation of Services

We will make every effort to be helpful to you. However, there are times when we reserve the right not to provide services. We may discontinue your care under the following circumstances:

- 1) Failure to comply with the recommended treatment plan and/or irreconcilable breakdown of the therapeutic relationship.
- 2) No Shows or Late Cancellations as noted at left.
- 3) Aggressive, abusive or threatening behavior towards the provider, staff, other patients, or facility property will NOT be tolerated. This includes racist, sexist, or other remarks that harass or demean others. Such behaviors are grounds for discharge.
- 4) Theft of property of the medical center, patients, or employees.
- 5) Failure to make payments after the facility has made a good faith effort to recover debt.

Rights & Grievances

We want you to be satisfied in your treatment. If for any reason you have a complaint, please talk to your provider directly so we can better assist you. You also have a right to file a complaint with our Quality Department at 715-483-0282. Please review the client rights and grievance procedure brochure you received for details of this process.

Likewise, if you are happy with your services or have a compliment for any of our staff we hope you will express it directly to them, note it on the patient satisfaction survey, and tell others about your positive experience.

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Contacting Your Provider

If you need to reach your provider, the best way to do so is to call 715-483-0343 and leave a message.

Please be aware that we do not email or accept email from patients as these communications are not HIPAA compliant. Our system also does not allow you to send MyChart messages to your behavioral health provider. For everyone's privacy, please do not attempt to "friend" or contact your provider through social media.



If you and your provider mutually agree that telehealth is an appropriate option, all the other guidelines regarding privacy and policies still apply. In addition, you should be aware of the following:

- Please be appropriately dressed, seated, and ready for your appointment on time.
- Make sure you have a distraction-free and private space for your session. While you may not mind someone else in the room, their presence waives your legal protection of privacy
- Confidentiality still applies for telehealth services. No one else can be present in the room, and no one may record the session without permission from both parties.
- To protect your privacy, use only a secure internet connection rather than public/free WI-Fi.
- If a session is disconnected due to technical issues, your provider will attempt to reconnect. Please provide a back up phone number to restart the session or reschedule in the event of technical problems.
- Your provider will ask you to provide an emergency contact and the name of the nearest emergency room. If you appear to have a medical or other emergency during your session, your provider will contact local emergency services.
- You must confirm with your insurance company that video sessions will be reimbursed. If they are not reimbursed, you will be responsible for full payment.
- You are responsible for the cost of your internet or phone connection including any overage charges on data plans.
- Minors must have permission of their parent or guardian to participate in telehealth.
- While we make every effort to protect your information, the use of telecommunication technology presents unique threats to the security and transmission of client data and information (e.g. hackers).
- Your provider may determine at any point that telehealth is no longer appropriate and that in person sessions should resume.

Telehealth Policies

Can I be seen by telehealth?

In most cases, we prefer to see you in person.

However, there may be times when telehealth is the best or only option.

There are a number of factors that determine whether telehealth may or may not be appropriate including the type of services you are seeking, the location of you or the provider, the providers licensure, insurance, or other issues. If you are interested in being seen via telehealth, please discuss with your provider whether or not that is an option. **Please understand there are potential benefits and risks of video-conferencing that differ from in-person sessions.**

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Policies Related to Minors

Please note that this page applies specifically to those individuals who are minors (under the age of 18). Laws regarding minors may vary by state and we will follow the current laws in the state where services are provided. Please see also the Rights of Children & Adolescents Brochure for additional details and discuss with your provider any questions you may have.

Consent to Treatment

Minors age 12 and above can receive limited treatment for alcohol and drug use such as an initial evaluation or detox services without parent/guardian consent. Ideally, their parents are also involved and give consent. Please speak to your provider about specifics in this situation.

- **In Wisconsin**, parents typically must consent to mental health treatment for minors. Below the age of 14, minors need not consent, but we would hope that they participate voluntarily. Between the ages of 14 and 18, both the minor and the parent must consent to mental health treatment. If either does not agree, there is a process to allow only one or the other to consent which your provider can explain to you.
- **In Minnesota**, parents must consent to treatment for children under the age of 16. Ideally, they are also involved and consent for minors 16 and older. However, in Minnesota, minors 16 and older can now seek treatment without their parent's consent.

What if parents are divorced or unavailable?

Divorce can be difficult for children. With divorced parents who have joint legal custody, ideally both parents consent to and are involved in treatment (regardless of placement).

If youth are in foster care or other placement, parents must still provide consent unless there is a guardianship or other court order giving someone else the right to consent for them.

Privacy of minors

The limits to privacy discussed earlier in this document also apply to minors. These are additional guidelines regarding consent and privacy for minors.

Parental Access to Records

With some exceptions, parents/guardians typically have the legal right to access medical records. With that said, therapy sometimes does not work well if the minor believes his or her parent/guardian will know everything about the session. Please discuss with your therapist specific expectations regarding sharing information.

In Minnesota, if a minor who is 16 or older legally consents to services as authorized in the Consent of Minors for Health Services statutes (Minn. Stat. §§ 144.341 to 144.347), then the parents or guardians do NOT have access to the minor's health records without the minor's authorization. However, a health professional may inform a minor's parent or guardian of treatment if, in the professional's judgement, failure to inform the parent or guardian would seriously jeopardize the minor's health.

Who can sign a release of information?

Ideally, both the parent and the minor are involved in discussions of any release of information. However, depending on the circumstances, either may be able to sign a release of information. Please discuss the specifics of your situation with your provider.

- **In Wisconsin**, parents need to sign consents for clients below the age of 14. Between the ages of 14 and 18, the minor and/or the parent may sign.
- **In Minnesota**, the parents must sign the release of information unless the minor is 16 or older legally consents to services as authorized in the Consent of Minors for Health Services statutes and then the minor 16 and older can sign.

