

# MENTAL HEALTH Directory

Where To Go, What To Do, Who To Call  
To Obtain Free and Low Cost Mental Health Services



June 2011

&lt;&lt;&lt;&lt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;

*"For the majority of us, the essential question and task remain: What can we do that will help us understand, alleviate, and prevent the worst effects of mental illness and, what can we do to help those who suffer from mental illness regain their lives in such a way that the condition, like others, become merely another part of their history and their ongoing lives. And how might we best work together in our common enterprise: in the search for the best ways to be of assistance to individuals afflicted with conditions that are, commonly, catastrophic."*

*Jay Neugeboren, from his book, "Transforming Madness", page 120*

&lt;&lt;&lt;&lt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;

## Vision

*"That all individuals who have a mental illness have three main things:  
a safe place to live, a meaningful day to look forward  
to and adequate treatment options"*

paraphrased from the Behavioral Health Region 3 Summit, Nov. 18,2010

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Mental Health and Substance Abuse Emergencies--What To Do, Where To Go</b>	
<b>Mental Health and Substance Abuse: Non-Emergencies—What To Do, Where To Go</b>	
<b>Suicide: Ask a Question--Save A Life.....</b>	
<b>Georgia Crisis And Access Line (GCAL)--To Get Help With A Mental Health, Drug Or Alcohol Problem....</b>	
<b>Do's and Don'ts for Helping Someone with a Mental Illness</b>	
<b>Public Mental Health &amp; Substance Abuse Outpatient Centers in Fulton and DeKalb Counties</b>	
<b>Gateway Center Mental Health Services for Homeless Individuals</b>	
<b>Questions To Ask If You Have a Mental Illness</b>	
<b>Are You Addicted to Drugs or Alcohol? Take This Test To See.</b>	
<b>Mental Illness Basics</b>	
<b>Why Are So Many People With Serious Mental Illnesses Homeless?</b>	
<b>Recovery from Mental Illness by Janet Reason</b>	
<b>Legal Rights of People with a Mental Illness</b>	
<b>Case Management Services</b>	
<b>Check List for Helping Individuals with a Mental Illness .....</b>	
<b>Vocational Rehabilitation Programs</b>	
<b>Government Benefits</b>	
<b>SSI &amp; Social Security Disability Benefits—A Helpful Guide for Applying For Disability Benefits</b>	
<b>Representative Payee Program for Social Security and SSI Monthly Benefits</b>	
<b>Organizations That Serve As Representative Payees</b>	
<b>Links to Mental Health Organizations .....</b>	

# What to Do and Where To Go In Case Of A Mental Health and/or Substance Abuse

## If It's an **EMERGENCY**

Anyone who has a mental health or substance abuse **emergency** can go at anytime to any private or public hospital anywhere in Georgia to be helped

It's state law!

\*

Also, you can call for yourself or someone you know the toll-free number shown below to talk to a care consultant who will help you and if you wish, call the hospital where you want to go so when you go there, they will have information about you making it easier for them to help you.

**GEORGIA CRISIS AND ACCESS LINE (GCAL)**  
**1-800-715-4225**

# What to do and where to go in case of a Mental Health and/or Substance Abuse

## If it's a.... **Non-Emergency**

### What is a Non-Emergency?

If you or someone you know needs prompt but not immediate attention for a mental health or substance abuse problem consider calling any one of the offices below. If you call the Georgia Crisis and Access Line (you do not have to be in a crisis to do so) you can talk to a trained "care consultant" any time day or night who will help you decide what can be done to help. The counselor will give you information that may be of immediate help and will make an appointment for you at a mental health/substance abuse recovery center if appropriate.

### Georgia Crisis & Access Line

**It doesn't have to be an emergency to talk to a counselor!**

**Anyone anywhere in Georgia can call this number**

**It's a free service**

**800-715-4225**

Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. No caller is turned away. **Services:** Hotline for emotional crisis, depression, suicide, abuse, family conflict, mental illness, and substance abuse crisis counseling. Crisis intervention visits in the community and evaluations are conducted by the mobile crisis team, crisis grief counseling for affected groups, support group for families of suicide victims and speakers' bureau and literature on suicide prevention.

### DeKalb Community Service Board's Central Access Line

**404-892-4646**

(for assessments, scheduling appointments, referrals and crisis calls)

Trained counselors are available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week to speak to you or your client. A mobile crisis team is available within DeKalb County from 3:00pm to 11:00pm if needed. You may be referred to the Georgia Crisis and Access Line when you call this number.

### Fulton County Department of Behavioral Health

**404-613-3675**

Hours: 8:30 AM to 5PM Mon-Fri

Any resident of Fulton County may call this number to make an appointment at any of the five (out of a total of 7 public; mental health centers in Fulton County that the Fulton County Department of Behavioral Health directly manages. There are two others in Fulton County. Grady Hospital's Auburn Avenue Recovery Center and North side Mental Health Outpatient Center. All five centers managed by Fulton County DBH have been or will be incorporated into "one-stop shops" that provide both mental health and physical health services in one location. You may call GCAL for advice but GCAL is not allowed to make mental health appointments at any of the five mental health centers supervised by the Fulton County Department of Public Health.

# Suicide - Ask a Question, Save a Life

It is a myth that suicide cannot be prevented, **It can be**. The first step to preventing suicide is to question. Try to get the person in a private setting. If at the end of your questioning you are convinced the person is serious about ending his/her life, **YOU MUST GET THEM HELP IMMEDIATELY!** People who are thinking about suicide are not necessarily being irrational. They see suicide as a solution to their problems. It is important to make them realize there are other solutions, be prepared to offer solutions if you say they exists! Here are a few questions that may help you prevent suicide:

- **Do you ever feel hopeless?** Feelings of hopelessness are often associated with suicidal thoughts.
- **Do you have thoughts of death?** A "yes" response may indicate suicidal desires, but not necessarily suicidal plans. Many persons who are depressed say they think they'd be better off dead (dying in their sleep or being killed in an accident). Most will say they have no intention of killing self.
- **Do you have impulses or urges to kill yourself?** A "yes" indicates active desire to die. This is a more serious situation.
- **Do you have actual plans to kill yourself?** If "yes", then ask about specific plans, i.e. "how do you plan to do it?" Jumping? Pills? A gun? Hanging? "Have you obtained a rope?" "What building are you going to jump from?" Though these questions may sound gruesome, they may save a life. Danger is greatest when plans are clear and specific, and when method chosen is lethal.
- **Is there anything that would stop you, such as family or religious beliefs?** If person feels others are better off without them have no deterrents, suicide is more likely.
- **Have you made suicide attempts in the past?** Previous attempts indicate that future ones are more likely. Even if previous attempts did not seem serious, the next may be fatal, don't minimize previous attempts. All attempts should be taken seriously.
- **Would you be willing to talk to someone or ask for help?** If the person is cooperative and has a plan for reaching out or is willing to accept help, the danger is less than if they are stubborn, secretive, hostile and unwilling to ask for help.

## Other helpful questions are:

- Do you ever wish you could go to sleep and never wake up?
- Do you want to stop living?

Every year over 900 people in Georgia take their own lives. Suicide is a major, preventable public health problem. In 2006, it was the eleventh leading cause of death in the U.S., accounting for 33,300 deaths. The overall rate was 10.9 suicide deaths per 100,000 people. An estimated 12 to 25 attempted suicides occur for every suicide death.

**For help finding treatment, support groups, medication information, help paying for your medications or other mental health-related services in your community, please contact the Georgia Crisis & Access Line at 1-800-715-4225.**

# Georgia Crisis & Access Line

*www.mygcal.com*

*www.behavioralhealthlink.com*

**To get help with a mental health, drug or alcohol problem....**

**You do not need to be in an emergency to call this number. Anyone can call anytime**

## **1-800-715-4225**

**Call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week**

### **If you, or someone you know:**

- \*Threatens to or talks about hurting or killing themselves**
- \*Feels helpless**
- \*Feels rage or uncontrolled anger**
- \*Feels trapped like there is no way out**
- \*Engages in reckless behaviors**
- \*Increases alcohol or drug use**
- \*Withdraws from friends and family**
- \*Feels anxious, agitated, or unable to sleep**
- \*Encounters dramatic mood changes**
- \*Sees no reason for living**

**This is a free, confidential hotline that provides access to counseling and other services for preventing a crisis or getting through a crisis. Trained, caring professionals will help connect you to services in your area. They can even help you schedule appointments.**

**A crisis has no schedule. Wherever you live in Georgia, help is available; you don't have to have an emergency to call. Speak to a trained counselor, not a recording. A mobile crisis team is available when needed.**

# DO'S AND DON'T WHEN HELPING SOMEONE WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS

## DO'S

- Remove yourself and others from threat of violence, and seek help
- Try to establish a rapport, be careful not to come off as "phony"
- Understand that the person may be terrified by experience of loss of control over thoughts and feelings
- Remember that there is a person behind the symptoms of the illness
- Treat the person with respect
- Listen
- Avoid belittling conversation, try not to speak in "baby talk", it's demeaning
- Speak in simple sentences
- Ask questions: you might save a life
- Avoid direct, continuous eye contact or touching (can accelerate or encourage aggressive behavior)

## DON'TS

- Shout. If the person appears not to be listening it could be that other voices are interfering or predominating, not that the person is hard of hearing. If the person is shouting, make a point to lower your voice
- Criticize. It only makes matters worse, increases agitation
- Bait the person into acting out, consequences could be tragic
- Stand over the person. If he or she is seated, seat yourself
- Attempt to transport the person if you perceive he/she may be dangerous
- Block entry or exit, especially if the person is experiencing paranoia or agitation
- Deny delusions or paranoid thoughts, they are "real" to the person experiencing them. Your denial could be perceived as calling the person a liar. Try instead to meet them where they are, i.e. "It must be frightening feeling that you are being followed" or "I understand how frustrating that must be for you." etc. You may also want to ask them "Have you always felt this way?" "When did you start to feel this way?" This line of questioning may be an effective lead-in to determine if the person has previously taken psychotropic medications.

It is sometimes not a good idea to ask if someone is taking medications, or if they have been diagnosed with a mental illness. It may prove helpful to approach the issue by asking leading questions. The more psychotic the individual, the less likely your chances of success in getting answers:

- Have you had your blood pressure checked recently?
- Have you ever been checked for diabetes?
- How is your appetite?
- Do you take any type of medication? When is the last time you had it?
- How have you been feeling lately? (depending on the answer...)
- How long have you been feeling this way?
- Why do you think you feel this way now?
- Have you ever talked to a doctor about this?
- Would you like to see a doctor?
- Is there a family member or friend I can call?

It is helpful to listen for phrases like "stressed out", "nerves are shot", "nervous breakdown", "freaking out", "going off", "out of it", "under a lot of pressure" etc. Always ask "what do you mean by that?" or "could you explain that to me?"

*\*\*The above information was contributed by NAMI Georgia\*\**

# Public Mental Health & Substance Abuse

## Outpatient Centers in Fulton and DeKalb Counties

Do you, or someone you know experience these symptoms? \*Feels helpless\*Feels rage or uncontrolled anger \*Feels trapped like there is no way out \*Engages in reckless behaviors \*increases alcohol or drug use \*Withdraws from friends and family \*Feels anxious, agitated, or unable to sleep \*Encounters dramatic mood changes \*Sees no reason for living \*Threatens to or talks about hurting or killing themselves? If so, and it is an emergency, call 911 and while waiting for help, call the [Georgia Crisis and Access Line \(GCAL\)](#) 24 hours a day at 1-800-715-4225 and speak to a care consultant who will talk to you or the person you know who needs help. It is also important to know that anyone with a mental health emergency or substance abuse emergency can go to any public or private hospital for help 24 hours a day. Non-emergencies It does not have to be an emergency to call GCAL. GCAL if you wish, can make an appointment at any public mental health outpatient center in Georgia. To get a mental health appointment almost anywhere in Georgia you can call the Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL) at 1-800-715-4225 at anytime, day or night, 24/7. When you call this number you can talk to a trained "care consultant" who will offer help and make you an appointment at a mental health outpatient clinic. If you are in a crisis, the care consultant will suggest immediate action. If you have internet access, go to [www.mygcal.com](http://www.mygcal.com) to search by zip code statewide for both mental health and substance abuse outpatient and residential treatment. Fulton County Department of Behavioral Health, which manages five centers identified below that provide mental health and substance abuse services does not allow GCAL to make appointments for its five centers but does provide its own access line as shown below.

**LISTED BELOW ARE ALL THE PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH/SUBSTANCE ABUSE OUTPATIENT CENTERS IN FULTON COUNTY AND DEKALB COUNTY. THE GEORGIA CRISIS AND ACCESS LINE CAN PROVIDE YOU INFORMATION ABOUT ALL CENTERS THROUGHOUT GEORGIA.**

### **PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH OUTPATIENT CENTERS AND RELATED FACILITIES IN FULTON COUNTY**

**Grady Health System Outpatient Mental Health/Substance Abuse Programs**-Intake, Community Based and Ongoing Service. First. Adult Outpatient Services: Grady Health System offers a variety of mental health and/or substance abuse services to help meet your varied needs. These services range from intensive community based services offered in your home or place of housing, intensive day programming offered through our Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services (PSR), and group and individual therapy and medication management services at the Auburn Avenue Recovery Center (AARC). To receive adult mental health and/or substance abuse outpatient services you must first have an assessment at our Intake center located at 48 Coca Cola Place (less than two blocks from the main entrance to Grady Hospital). You can schedule an Intake appointment by calling the Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL) at 1-800-715-4225. Someone will be available to answer your call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you prefer to walk-in without an appointment, the Intake program is open Monday-Friday at 8:00am. Availability to see you as a walk-in is limited and not guaranteed. Following your assessment at Intake, you will be referred to the ongoing outpatient services which meet your needs and preferences. The majority of these services are located in the Auburn Avenue Recovery Center at 250 Auburn Avenue. If you are in need of services provided in your home or place of housing, you may be referred to our Community Outreach Services (COS). You do not need to have a Grady card or go to the Grady Financial Counseling Office before receiving mental health or substance abuse services at Grady. You do not need to have a homeless shelter letter to be provided mental health or substance abuse services at Grady. If you have trouble completing the financial counseling process, our staff will assist you once you are getting the mental health or substance services you need. We promote overall health and wellness and it is important for everyone to get preventive and routine medical, dental and vision care. Grady's financial assistance program helps people get the care they need. Child and Adolescent Outpatient Services: The child and adolescent outpatient program provides a range of in-clinic and outreach services including assessment, individual, group and family therapy for children and adolescents through ages 4-17. If you need information about scheduling an intake, please call 404-616-2215. At the time your intake is scheduled, the staff will advise you about what information and identification you will need to bring with you to your first appointment. The child and adolescent outpatient program is located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Piedmont Hall at Grady Hospital, 81 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive, Atlanta, GA.

**Northside Mental Health Outpatient Center:** 1140 Hammond Dr NE, Suite J-1075 Atlanta, GA 30328-5558 Atlanta, GA: (404) 851-8960 You can ask for an appointment for mental health counseling and/or an appointment for substance abuse treatment. You are allowed to call this center directly if you wish: 404/851-8950 Hours: 8:00 - 5:00 MON – THU You may call this center directly or call the Georgia Crisis and Access Line 24/7 for an appointment.

**Newport Integrated Behavioral Healthcare:** 1810 Moseri Rd. Decatur, Georgia 30032 404-289-8223 just inside I-285 & just off Glenwood Ave. This is a private firm that contracts with the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities to serve among others, Fulton County residents who do not have insurance or very little or no income. You can call the Georgia Crisis and Access Line 24/7 to get an appointment or you can call Newport directly.

### 5 more centers in Fulton County--Special Note

The five centers listed below are managed directly by the Fulton County Department of Behavioral Health. You cannot get an appointment at any of these five centers by calling GCAL. Instead, you can make appointments at any of the five centers located below by calling the Fulton County Behavioral Health Access & Information Line at 404-613-3675 between 8:30 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday-Friday or by calling or visiting anyone of the 5 centers. Fulton County Department of Behavioral Health is in the process of converting its mental health centers into one-stop-shop centers so more people can get a wide range of services with one stop.. Each of these centers is or will soon offer the following services: 1. Behavioral Health Care 2. Substance Abuse treatment 3. Nutrition Services 4. Dental Services 5. WIC 6. Workforce Development 7. Public Health 8. Primary Care At each center **you** can expect to receive: a. Individual Counseling b. Group Counseling c. Family Counseling d. Medication management e. Nursing Assessment f. Physician Assessment. For information about developmental disability services and child and adolescent services offered by Fulton County's Department of Behavioral Health, you may call the Fulton County Department of Behavioral Health's information and access line at 404-613-3675. Here are the five adult one-stop shops that provide mental health and substance abuse recovery assistance:

**South Fulton Behavioral Health Center:** 1636 Connally Drive East Point, GA 30344 Telephone: (404) 762-4042

**West Fulton Behavioral Health Center:** 475 Fairburn Road, SW Atlanta, GA 30331 Telephone: (404) 691-9627

**Neighborhood Union Health Center:** 186 Sunset Avenue, NW Atlanta, GA 30314 Telephone: (404) 612-4665

**The Center for Health and Rehabilitation:** 265 Boulevard, NE Atlanta, GA 30312 Telephone: (404) 730-1650 Fax: (404) 730-1651

**Common Ground Health Center (North Fulton Service Center):** 7741 Roswell Rd, Atlanta, Ga. 30350 Hours: 8 AM to 5 PM.  
404-612-2273

### PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH OUTPATIENT CENTERS AND RELATED FACILITIES IN DEKALB COUNTY

The DeKalb County Community Service Board (CSB) provides two ways to make first time appointments at any of its three mental health outpatient centers: 1. By calling the Georgia Crisis and Access Line at 1-800-715-4225 or 2. By calling its own Central Access Line at 404-892-4646. Each of the three centers listed below provide adult and older psychological rehabilitation programs and child and adolescent mental health services.

**North DeKalb Mental Health Outpatient Center**—770-457-5867--3807 Clairmont Rd. N.E. Chamblee 30341

**Clifton Springs Mental Health Outpatient Center:** 404-243-9500--3110 Clifton Springs Rd. Suite B Decatur, Georgia 30034 HOURS: 8:15 am to 5:00 pm MON – FRI

**Kirkwood Mental Health Outpatient Center:** 404-370-7474 -- 23 Warren St. SE. Atlanta, Georgia 30317 HOURS: 8:15 am to 5:00 pm MON – FRI

**North DeKalb Mental Health Outpatient Center**—770-457-5867--3807 Clairmont Rd. N.E. Chamblee 30341

**Winn Way Mental Health Outpatient Center:** 404-508-7770-- 445 Winn Way 4th Fl. Decatur, GA 30030 HOURS: 8:15 am to 5:00 pm MON – FRI

**DeKalb Regional Crisis Center**—404-294-0499--450 Winn Way, Decatur 30030 provides outpatient crisis and interventions for DeKalb County, Fulton County and Clayton County residents. Services include psychiatric emergency treatment, a temporary observation unit and a stabilization unit.

**DeKalb Addiction Clinic**—404-508-6430--455 Winn Way, Decatur 30030 Provides comprehensive and intensive outpatient substance abuse treatment. Services that address the social, psychological, physical, and spiritual components of recovery through education, counseling, coping skills, and life skills development. through education, counseling, coping skills, and life skills development.

### VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION MEDICAL CENTER--MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

1670 Clairmont Rd, Ste. G, Box 29 Decatur, GA 404-321-6111 open 24/7 Services include: adult psychiatric inpatient, Mental health evaluations, psychiatric case management, alcoholism counseling, drug abuse counseling, inpatient alcoholism treatment for veterans with an honorable discharge. Need discharge papers.

### ATLANTA VET CENTER

This center serves only veterans who have served in a combat zone of any war. It offers outpatient counseling. Address: 1440 Dutch Valley Place, Suite 1100, Box 55, Atlanta 30324. 404-347-7264 Hours: 8P[M to 4:30 PM Mon-Fri.

## Questions to help determine if you may have a mental illness

### Questions your doctor or a mental health professional might ask during a mental health assessment.

Mental illness has many faces, ranging from occasional episodes of depression to severe, chronic conditions like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Unlike broken bones that can be seen by an x-ray, the form of mental illness someone has can be hard to diagnose. It can also be hard to know how severe their condition might be.

It is important to talk to a healthcare professional if you believe that you or a loved one may be suffering from a mental illness. In order to determine if you are ill, a doctor might ask you many questions, such as these:

- Do you have difficulty sleeping, either too much or too little?
- Have you been sad or depressed for a long period of time?
- Have your relationships with loved ones changed?
- Do you ever do things without knowing why you did them?
- Do you ever hear or see things that other people do not?
- Have you ever thought of suicide?
- Do you get nervous or angry easily?
- Are you often anxious or afraid?
- Do you drink a lot of alcohol or take street drugs?

---

If you can, let your first step be to talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

You can call the **Georgia Crisis & Access Line--1-800-715-4225--** right now to speak to a live care consultant free of charge and in total privacy. You can call this number 24 hours a day and get a mental health appointment anywhere in Georgia. You do not need to be in a crisis to call this number.

---

## ***Are you addicted to drugs or alcohol? Take this test to see.***

Thanks to Helpline Georgia for permission to publish this

If you have doubts about whether or not you're an addict, take a few moments to read the questions below and answer them as honestly as you can.

- Do you ever use alone?
- Have you ever substituted one drug for another, thinking one particular drug was problem
- Have you ever manipulated or lied to a doctor to obtain prescription drugs?
- Have you ever stolen drugs or stolen money or property to obtain drugs?
- Do you regularly use a drug when you wake up or when you go to bed?
- Have you ever taken one drug to overcome the effects of another?
- Do you avoid people or places that do not approve of you using drugs?
- Have you ever used a drug without knowing what it was or what it would do to you?
- Has your job or school performance ever suffered from the effects of your drug use?
- Have you ever been arrested as a result of using drugs?
- Have you ever lied about what or how much you use?
- Do you put the purchase of drugs ahead of your financial responsibilities?
- Have you ever tried to stop or control your using?
- Have you ever been in a jail, a hospital, or a drug rehabilitation center because of your using?
- Does using interfere with your sleeping or eating?
- Does the thought of running out of drugs terrify you?
- Do you feel it is impossible for you to live without drugs?
- Do you ever question your own sanity?
- Is your drug use making life at home unhappy?
- Have you ever thought you couldn't fit in or have a good time without drugs?
- Have you ever felt defensive, guilty, or ashamed about your using?
- Do you think a lot about drugs?
- Have you had irrational or indefinable fears?
- Has using affected your sexual relationships?
- Have you ever taken drugs you didn't prefer?
- Have you ever used drugs because of emotional pain or stress?
- Have you ever overdosed on any drug?
- Do you continue to use despite negative consequences?
- Do *you* think you might have a drug problem?

**If you answered "yes" to some of the above questions, you may want to seek further evaluation.**

### **Do you want help right now?**

You can call the **Georgia Crisis & Access Line- 1-800-715-4225** at any time, day or night and talk to a trained care consultant will help you determine if you need to seek treatment for your problem with substance abuse. The consultant can provide the names of all the public mental health outpatient centers in Fulton and DeKalb Counties as well as the public outpatient addiction centers, all of which also offer substance abuse treatment, as well as mental health Issues.

# Mental Illness Basics

<http://www.webmd.com>

**What is mental illness?** Mental illness is any disease or condition affecting the brain that influence the way a person thinks, feels, behaves and/or relates to others and to his or her surroundings. Although the symptoms of mental illness can vary from mild to severe and are different depending on the type of mental illness, a person with an untreated mental illness often is unable to cope with life's daily routines and demands.

**What causes mental illness?** Although the exact cause of most mental illnesses is not known, it is becoming clear through research that many of these conditions are caused by a combination of genetic, biological, psychological and environmental factors. One thing is for sure -- mental illness is not the result of personal weakness, a character defect or poor upbringing, and recovery from a mental illness is not simply a matter of will and self-discipline.

**Heredity (genetics):** Many mental illnesses run in families, suggesting that the illnesses may be passed on from parents to children through genes. Genes contain instructions for the function of each cell in the body and are responsible for how we look, act, think, etc. But, just because your mother or father may have a mental illness doesn't mean you will have one. Hereditary just means that you are more likely to get the condition than if you didn't have an affected family member. Experts believe that many mental conditions are linked to problems in multiple genes -- not just one, as with many diseases -- which is why a person inherits a susceptibility to a mental disorder, but doesn't always develop the condition. The disorder itself occurs from the interaction of these genes and other factors -- such as psychological trauma and environmental stressors -- which can influence, or trigger, the illness in a person who has inherited a susceptibility to it.

**Biology:** Some mental illnesses have been linked to an abnormal balance of special chemicals in the brain called neurotransmitters. Neurotransmitters help nerve cells in the brain communicate with each other. If these chemicals are out of balance or are not working properly, messages may not make it through the brain correctly, leading to symptoms of mental illness. In addition, defects in or injury to certain areas of the brain also have been linked to some mental conditions.

**Psychological trauma:** Some mental illnesses may be triggered by psychological trauma suffered as a child, such as severe emotional, physical or sexual abuse; a significant early loss, such as the loss of a parent; and neglect.

**Environmental stressors:** Certain stressors -- such as a death or divorce, a dysfunctional family life, changing jobs or schools and substance abuse -- can trigger a disorder in a person who may be at risk for developing a mental illness

**Can Mental Illness Be Prevented?** Unfortunately, most mental illnesses are caused by a combination of factors and cannot be prevented.

**How Common Is Mental Illness?** Mental illnesses are very common. In fact, they are more common than cancer, diabetes or heart disease. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, an estimated 23% of American adults (those ages 18 and older) -- about 44 million people -- and about 20% of American children suffer from a mental disorder during a given year. Further, about 5 million Americans adults, and more than 5 million children and adolescents suffer from a serious mental condition (one that significantly interferes with functioning).

**Depression** Sometimes physical problems can cause depression. But other times, symptoms of depression are part of a more complex psychiatric problem. There are several different types of depression, including: Major depressive disorder, Dysthymia, Seasonal affective disorder, Psychotic depression and bipolar depression

**Major Depression--**An individual with major depression, or major depressive disorder, feels a profound and constant sense of hopelessness and despair. Major depression is marked by a combination of symptoms that interfere with the person's ability to work, study, sleep, eat, and enjoy once pleasurable activities. Major depression may occur only once but more commonly occurs several times in a lifetime. **What Are the Symptoms of Major Depression?** Symptoms of depression include: Sadness, Irritability, loss of interest in activities once enjoyed, withdrawal from social activities and Inability to concentrate

**Bipolar Disorder--**Bipolar depression, also called bipolar disorder or "manic-depressive" disease, is a mental illness that causes people to have severe high and low moods. People who have this illness switch from feeling overly happy and joyful to feeling very sad, and vice versa. Because of the highs and the lows -- or two poles of mood -- the condition is referred to as "bipolar" depression. In between episodes of mood swings, a person may experience normal moods. The word "manic" describes the periods when the person feels overly excited and confident. These feelings can quickly turn to confusion, irritability, anger, and even rage. The word "depressive" describes the periods when the person feels very sad or depressed. Because the symptoms are similar, sometimes people with bipolar depression are incorrectly diagnosed as having major depression. Most individuals with bipolar disorder spend more time in depressed phases than in manic phases. **What Are the Symptoms of Bipolar Disorder?** The dramatic and rapidly changing mood swings from highs to lows do not follow a set pattern, and depression does not always follow manic phases. A person may also experience the same mood state several times before suddenly experiencing the opposite mood. Mood swings can happen over a period of weeks, months, and sometimes even years. The severity of the depressive and manic phases can differ from person to person and in the same person at different times.

**Schizophrenia--**Schizophrenia is a serious brain disorder that distorts the way a person thinks, acts, expresses emotions, perceives reality and relates to others. People with schizophrenia -- the most chronic and disabling of the major mental illnesses -- often have problems functioning in society, at work and at school, and in relationships. Schizophrenia can leave its sufferer frightened and withdrawn. It is a life-long disease that cannot be cured, but usually can be controlled with proper treatment. Contrary to popular belief, schizophrenia is not a split personality. Schizophrenia is a psychosis, a type of mental illness in which a person cannot tell what is real from what is imagined. At times, people with psychotic disorders lose touch with reality. The world may seem like a jumble of confusing thoughts, images and sounds. The behavior of people with schizophrenia may be very strange and even shocking. A sudden change in personality and behavior, which occurs when people lose touch with reality, is called a psychotic episode.

# Why are so many people with a serious mental illness homeless?

*<http://www.nrchmi.samhsa.gov/facts> <http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/Homelessness/>*

**2 - 3 million individuals are affected by homelessness each year in the United States. For most people, homelessness is a short, one-time event. But a relatively small and visible group experiences homelessness repeatedly or for long periods and places heavy demands on available assistance. For people with severe mental illnesses, home can be a space to live in dignity and move toward recovery. Providing adequate housing for individuals with mental illnesses requires support services and access programs, such as those provided via the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.**

**As many as 700,000 Americans are homeless on any given night. An estimated 20 to 25 percent of these people have a serious mental illness, and one-half of this subgroup also has an alcohol and/or drug problem. Minorities, especially African Americans, are over-represented among homeless persons with mental illness.**

**The Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) supports programs to assist people with mental illnesses who are homeless in obtaining treatment and other services such as primary health care, substance abuse treatment, legal assistance, entitlements, and other supports, while making the transition from homelessness. CMHS develops models for programs to deliver mental health services to people who are homeless with severe mental illnesses and provides funding to States to deliver support services.**

**People with serious mental illnesses are over-represented among the homeless population. While only four percent of the U.S. population has a serious mental illness, five to six times as many people who are homeless (20-25%) have serious mental illnesses. Their diagnoses include the most personally disruptive and serious mental illnesses, including severe, chronic depression; bipolar disorder; schizophrenia; schizoaffective disorders, and severe personality disorders. Why so many? People with serious mental illnesses have greater difficulty exiting homelessness than other people. They are homeless more often and for longer periods of time than other homeless subgroups. Many have been on the streets for years. Up to 50% have co-occurring mental illnesses and substance use disorders. Their symptoms are often active and untreated, making it extremely difficult for them to negotiate meeting basic needs for food, shelter and safety and causing distress to those who observe them. They are impoverished, and many are not receiving benefits for which may be eligible.**

**What do we know about them? The majority have had prior contact with the mental health system, either as inpatients or outpatients. These experiences were not always positive; they may have been hospitalized involuntarily or given treatment services or medications they did not feel were of benefit. Their mental illness symptoms as well as the hygiene problems associated with homelessness result in many untreated physical health problems such as respiratory infections, dermatologic problems, and risk of exposure to HIV and TB. They typically are long-term citizens of the communities in which they are homeless. Their social support and family networks are usually unraveled. Family members often have lost regular contact with their relatives or are no longer equipped to be primary caregivers. They are twice as likely as other people who are homeless to be arrested or jailed, mostly for misdemeanors. What can be done? Most can be voluntarily engaged or re-engaged in treatment, housing, and support services. Mobile outreach can provide access to basic services, treatment, and housing.<sup>4</sup> Integrated mental health and substance abuse treatment delivered by multidisciplinary mobile treatment teams can reduce symptomatology and improve functioning in the community. Providing supportive services to people in housing has proven effective in achieving residential stability, improving mental health, and reducing the costs of homelessness to the community.**

## Recovery from Mental Illness

*By Janet G. Reason, Community Friendship, Inc. February 2004*

1. **Get back**
2. **Getting back one's health**
3. **Recuperate**
4. **The action of process of recovering what was lost**
5. **A return to a normal condition**

With the onset of mental illness, the magnitude of such a loss can be devastating and make you feel hopeless. Without hope we fall into the downward spiral of hopeless despair. We all need someone to believe in us, to encourage us, and to reassure us that we are going to make it.

Shame is a prevailing sense of worthlessness, which leads to the false belief: I am what I am. I cannot change. I am hopeless.

Our search for significance can lead us down a road that is totally unfamiliar and very frightening. While we may try as hard as we can to understand what is happening, we most often have to turn to a professional to diagnosis our dilemma.

After the diagnosis (which is likened to a death sentence) your next step is to decide to take your medication. This is totally a choice that has to be made; sometimes from relapse to relapse, and becomes a "life" choice. Regardless of what you've been dealt, most of us have to come to the realization that without our medications, we usually do end up in a relapse.

Mary Ellen Copeland has developed a wonderful tool to help in our recovery titled, "The Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP).

This is a daily work book that the patient uses to monitor his/her symptoms, triggers and crisis points

You stay aware of your own recovery. You become more independent in yourself and less dependent on others; however, she recommends that you have a support team of family, friends, co-workers, etc.

Overcoming shame caused by stigma from others who either aren't educated about mental illness or don't know anyone with a mental illness, can be very freeing when you make the decision to walk above ay shame they may feel.

Shame can have powerful effects on our esteem, and it can manifest itself in many ways. It often engulfs us when a flaw in our performance is so important, so overpowering, or so disappointing to us that it creates a permanently negative opinion about our self-worth.

That's why we have to get beyond the passivity, self-pity and destructive behavior that so easily disable us. We have to come out of isolation and withdrawal and reach out to others for our own recovery, and to search for God and His answers. Our inner undeniable need for personal significance was created to make us search for our purpose in life. I truly believe mental illness was the perfect thing that happened to me.

## Legal Rights of People with Mental Illness and/or a Substance Abuse Problem

All Georgia residents no matter their county of residence have the right to go to any public mental health and/or substance abuse center in any county in the state that has a contract with the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health to provide core services.

No one can be involuntarily committed to an institution or legally arrested, if they have not broken any laws, unless they are an immediate danger to themselves, are an immediate danger to others or are gravely (physically) disabled..

Everyone also have the right not to accept treatment or medicine for mental illness. If a person is being involuntarily committed to a mental hospital, that person is entitled to receive free legal assistance, to have a hearing on whether or not they can continue to be held involuntarily and to review and correct errors in their clinical records. See the Official Code of Georgia, 37-3-40 through 37-3-95 and 37-3-140 through 37-3-168.

The Georgia General Assembly has also adopted laws signed by the Governor, which establish the rights of Georgians to seek and receive treatment for mental illness:

- (a) The State of Georgia recognizes its responsibility for its citizens who are mentally ill or mentally retarded or who suffer from certain developmental disabilities including epilepsy, cerebral palsy, autism, and other neurological disabling conditions or who abuse alcohol, narcotics, or other drugs and recognizes an obligation to such citizens to meet their needs through a coordinated system of community facilities, programs, and services.
- (b) It is the policy of this state to provide adequate mental health, mental retardation, substance abuse, and other disability services to all its citizens. It is further the policy of this state to provide such services through a unified system, which encourages cooperation and sharing of resources among all providers of such services, both governmental and private.
- (c) It is the purpose of this chapter to enable and encourage the development of comprehensive, preventive, early detection, rehabilitative, and treatment disability services; to improve and expand community service boards for the disabled; to provide continuity of care through integration of county, area, regional, and state services and facilities for the disabled; to provide for joint disability services and the sharing of manpower and other resources; and to monitor and restructure the system of providing disability services in the State of Georgia to make better use of the combined public and private resources of the state and local communities (O.C.G.A. 37-2-1).

It is the goal of the State of Georgia that every citizen is provided an adequate level of disability care through a unified system of disability services. To this end, the department through the division shall, to the maximum extent possible, allocate funds available for services so as to provide an adequate disability services program available to all citizens of this state. In funding and providing disability services, the division and the regional boards shall ensure that all providers, public or private, meet minimum standards of quality and competency as established by the department and the division.

Each patient in a facility and each person receiving services for mental illness shall receive care and treatment that is suited to his needs and is the least restrictive appropriate care and treatment. Such care and treatment shall be administered skillfully, safely, and humanely with full respect for the patient's dignity and personal integrity (O.C.G.A. 37-3-162)

Georgia's Mental Health Codes includes in its definition of "disability" 1. Mental or emotional illness 2. Mental retardation 3. Other neurological disabling conditions which require treatment similar to that for the mentally retarded including epilepsy, cerebral palsy, and autism 4. Abuse of, addiction to, or dependence upon alcohol, narcotics, drugs.

# MENTAL HEALTH

## CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

### Saint Joseph's Mercy Care Service

Services: include linkage to community mental health, substance abuse services, medical services, services, referrals and continuing assistance with emergency, transitional, supportive, and permanent housing, residential drug and alcohol programs, employment, financial/mainstream benefits and legal needs. Who is eligible: Individual must have a suspected mental illness and be currently homeless to qualify for help. Where to go for help: Main office 424 Decatur St. Atlanta, Ga. 30312 Monday-Friday 8:30am-5:00 pm 678-843-8500 Mercy Clinic at the Gateway 24/7 275 Pryor St., Atlanta, Ga. 30303 Monday-Friday 9:00am-4:00pm 678-843-8840 Mercy Clinic at St. Luke's 420 Courtland Street. NE Atlanta, Ga. 30308 Mon & Wed only 9:30am-4:00 pm 678-843-8870 \*you are encouraged to call first for an appointment and to confirm hours. Walk-ins are accepted on a first come/first served basis and based on case manager's availability. [www.stjosephsatlanta.org](http://www.stjosephsatlanta.org)

### Jewish Family & Career Services

Located at the Gateway Center at 275 Pryor Street NW, Atlanta, GA 30303  
Main office number is 770-677-0474.  
Contact Person: Angeline Lawson, 404-215-6637

### Community Advanced Practice Nurses, Inc. (CAPN) Mental Health Clinic

Services: include counseling and therapy; Eligibility: adult women who are homeless  
458 Ponce de Leon Ave. Atlanta, GA. 30306 404-815-1811 Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday

Note: CAPN offers counseling and therapy for children at their CAPN Physical Health Clinic at 173 Boulevard NE, Atlanta 30312, 404-658-1500 Call for hours the Physical Health Clinic is open as hours vary.

### Atlanta Day Shelter for Women and Children

Services: mental health counseling Who is eligible: homeless women and children  
Various mental health providers visit the day shelter so it is best to call first to confirm when a mental health counselor will be present.  
655 Ethel St. NW Atlanta 30318 Hours: Monday-Saturday 8 am to 4 am Sunday 10 AM to 4 PM  
404-876-2894

### Community Friendship Inc.

85 Renaissance Pkwy., NE Atlanta, GA 30308 (404)875-0381 SERVICE HOURS: Day program: 9:00 am to 2:00 pm MON - FRI; all other services: 8:30 am to 5:00 pm MON - FRI; noon to 3:00 pm SAT

# Check List

## For helping individuals with a mental illness

This checklist may help insure that the most commonly needed services are not overlooked.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Social security # \_\_\_\_\_

### NEED?

- \_\_\_ Mailing address--Crossroads (404-873-7650) First Presbyterian 404-228-7746
- \_\_\_ Mental health treatment: counseling and medications—call GCAL 24/7 at 1-800-715-4225—its easy. Call anytime day or night to talk to a care consultant free of charge and get an appointment for outpatient mental health and/or substance abuse treatment—all free if you are have no income.
- \_\_\_ Mental health case management--call United Way at 211 or 404-614-1000
- \_\_\_ Food stamps---apply at Dept. of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) offices
- \_\_\_ SSI/SSDI disability application and related appointments,: First Step at 404-577-3392 or call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 from 7am-7pm M-F to get an appointment to go into their office, apply online or apply by telephone.
- \_\_\_ General assistance—applying at DFCS office for this assistance while awaiting decision on SSI/SSDI disability application (DFCS)—two requirements: prove an SSI or SSDI claim has been filed and obtain doctor's statement
- \_\_\_ Shelter, Transitional Shelters, Transitional
- \_\_\_ Housing visit or call Gateway at 404-215-6600 275 Pryor St. at Memorial Dr.
- \_\_\_ Permanent housing--call United Way at 211 or 404-614-1000 24 hours a day 7 days a week
- \_\_\_ Physical Health Care--Grady Hospital at 80 Butler St., Mercy Mobile (call 404/880-3600 for locations) and others.
- \_\_\_ Drug/alcohol recovery programs--call Gateway Center at 404-215-6600 or United Way at 211 (or 404-614-1000) for info.
- \_\_\_ Vocational Rehab/Employment--call the GA Dept. of Vocational Rehab at 404-261-8600
- \_\_\_ ID & Birth Certificates & ID--Places that help with ID: Crossroads: (404-873-7650) Central Presbyterian: (404-659-7119)
- \_\_\_ Clothing--call United Way (211 or 404-614-1000)
- \_\_\_ Transportation assistance--call United Way-at 211 or 404-614-1000
- \_\_\_ Legal services--Atlanta Legal Aid at 404-524-5811, GA Law Center for Homeless at 404-681-0680
- \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

# Vocational Rehabilitation

Programs available for people with a mental illness

## Georgia Department of Labor Vocational Rehabilitation Program

404/206-5434 TTY 404-206-6010 Fax 404-206-6011

This program assists individuals with disabilities find jobs. Must be willing and able to work at least 25 hours a week, meet financial eligibility guides and have a disability that substantially interferes with employment. Who is eligible? Any citizen with a permanent physical, mental or learning disability that substantially interferes with his or her ability to work.

## Bobby Dodd Institute

16 years of age and above with mental or physical disabilities; also serves economically disadvantaged individuals; Marietta Blvd. ATL, GA 30318 678/365-0071 or 678/365-0099 TTY; Hours: 8:00 am to 4:30 pm MON – FRI

## Goodwill Industries of North Georgia

– 1295 Columbia Dr. Decatur, Ga. 30032 404/728-8600

Hours: 8:00 am to 5:00 pm MON - THU; 8:00 am to 4:00 pm FRI

## Tommy Nobis Center

1480 Bells Ferry Rd. Marietta, GA 30066; 16 years of age and above with disabilities and others with vocational training needs (770)427-9000; Hours: 8:15 am to 3:45 pm MON – FRI

# Government Benefits

Available to individuals with a serious mental illness who are unable to work

Government benefits for individuals with severed mental illness who are unable to work can greatly assist in efforts to find housing and get them out of homelessness and highly undesirable living arrangements. Therefore, this part of this directory provides information to assist in exploring all benefits for which a person with mental illness might be eligible.

It may be helpful to ask individuals with mental illness if they are receiving monthly checks in order to help them find housing. If they are not receiving benefits, then they should consider applying for disability benefits.

Men, women and children with a serious mental illness may be eligible to receive SSI disability or Social Security disability insurance benefits (SSDI), or they might already be receiving these benefits. Receiving the benefits due to the disabled homeless individual with mental illness can make the difference between being homeless and having permanent housing!

For those not receiving benefits it can make all the difference in their lives if those who have contact with them help them apply for these benefits. Most people need a lot of help in the lengthy, difficult process of complying with all the requests they receive from the Social Security Office.

**Here is a brief rundown on what government benefits the homeless mentally ill may be eligible for:**

## 1. SSI and SSDI

SSI, SSDI, and Medicare are federal programs. There are two disability programs administered by the Social Security Offices. One is SSI (Supplemental Security Income) and SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance). Both are designed to provide monthly income to people with severe, long-lasting disabilities that would preclude self-supporting work or who are 65 or older for SSI and 62 or older for Social Security retirement benefits.

To be eligible for SSDI disability checks, a person must meet two primary requirements: **1.** Must have worked at least 5 years in the last 10 years before becoming disabled. **2.** Must be totally and permanently disabled. This means a person must be unable to work and the disability must last at least 12 months or longer.

SSI, unlike SSDI, is not based on a person's work history. SSI is based on need and is intended for individuals with little or no income who have resources valued under \$2000. Those who have not worked long enough under Social Security may be eligible but they must meet the same disability requirements as those under SSDI--be totally and permanently disabled as defined above.

People interested in applying for SSI or SSDI benefits can do so (1) by telephone, (1-800) 772-1213, 7am-7pm Mon-Fri except holidays, or (2) by mail or (3) in person at any Social Security office. In fact, just about any kind of Social Security business can be done by calling the 1-800 telephone number (which is a national number) such as changing an address, reporting working or stopping work. Social Security welcomes the assistance of people who want to help individuals with mental illness apply for benefits.

**Addresses for all metro Atlanta offices are as shown below:**

401 W. Peachtree St., NW Ste. 2860 Atlanta, GA 30308-3510	1-800-772-1213
2630 Martin Luther King Dr., SW, Ste. A, Atlanta, GA 30311	1-800-772-1213
2853 Candler Rd. Ste. 8, Decatur, GA 30034	1-800-772-1213
1415 Franklin Rd., SE Marietta, GA 30067	1-800-772-1213
4365 Shackelford Rd. Norcross, GA 30093	1-800-772-1213
6452 S.Lee St., Morrow, Ga.	1.800-772-1213

**2. Medicare and Medicaid**

SSI payments begin the month that Social Security determines your disability began and all other eligibility requirements are met. SSI recipients in Georgia automatically receive full Medicaid coverage, which pays for all doctors and hospital bills and for medicines (except SSI recipients must pay \$1.00 per prescription).

SSDI payments can start the sixth month after the month Social Security says you became disabled and met all the requirements for benefits. After two years on SSDI, the disabled person will for the first time become eligible for Medicare and will at that time automatically receive **Medicare Part A** (hospital) benefits. **Medicare Part B** (doctor's) is not automatic

Both the SSI and the SSDI disability programs allow its recipients to work and earn limited amounts each month and there are a variety of work incentives available for those attempting return or entry to work. However, it is untrue that people getting SSI or SSDI checks can earn as much as they want without their checks being reduced. It is very important to tell Social Security about all work so they can make any necessary adjustments in the amount of the check.

Almost everyone 65 or older is guaranteed either SSI or Social Security retirement benefits. If they are not receiving these benefits, they should call or visit the nearest Social Security Office as soon as possible.

**3. General Assistance**

A person can apply for general assistance (also called interim assistance) while he or she is waiting for Social Security to make a decision regarding their disability claim. The State of Georgia through the Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) county offices administers general assistance. To get general assistance, a person needs to show DFCS that **(1)** he or she has applied for SSI and/or SSDI and **(2)** submit a doctor's statement that he or she is disabled. If approved, general assistance will continue until Social Security makes a decision on his or her SSI/SSDI application. The amount of general assistance ranges from \$80 to \$225 in Fulton County depending on an individual's living arrangements. If Social Security denies the application for disability, the applicant should always appeal since the general assistance payments will continue until all appeals have been exhausted or until the application is approved. If the disability claim is approved, Social Security will take out of the applicant's first check the money they have paid in general assistance. If not approved, the money does not have to be repaid.

**4. Food Stamps**

Individuals who have no income (including homeless individuals) may be eligible for food stamps. Getting food stamps is fairly easy and takes just a short time to be approved. Any Department of Family and Children's Services office takes applications for food stamps. The one nearest downtown Atlanta is at 84 Walton St. It is best to arrive around 8:30am or earlier when applying.

**5. VA Disability Benefits**

Veterans can call 1-800-827-1000 for information about benefits and claims assistance. Homeless veterans can call the "Homeless Program" located at the Veterans Administration Medical Center at 1670 Clairmont Rd. Decatur, GA 30033 404/321-6111 for counseling and referral for benefit assistance.

# SSI & Social Security Disability Benefits Guide

## Two Kinds Of Disability Payments

Social Security makes disability payments under two programs: 1. Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). **SSDI** payments are made to workers (and minor children and spouses with children in their care) who have worked at least 5 years in the last 10 years before becoming disabled. 2. SSI payments are made to people (from age 1 up through age 64) who have little or no income or resources (things they own).

## Do You Have A Disability?

To get SSDI or SSI, you must be unable to do any substantial work because of your medical conditions. In 2007, substantial earnings mean, \$900 (or \$1500 if blind) or more a month. This amount goes up each year. Your medical conditions must have lasted, or be expected to last, at least 1 year, or be expected to result in your death.. Even if you cannot do your regular job, **you must be unable to perform any regular paying job for at least 12 months to qualify for SSDI or SSI disability.** However, it is your right to apply for disability benefits even if you are told you probably will not be approved.

## How Do You Get Started?

If you think that you may be eligible for SSDI or SSI payments, there are 4 ways to do it. 1. **By telephone:** Call 1-800-772-1213 from 7AM to 7PM, M-F. 2. **In person:** To get appointment to go to the social security office you can call 1-800-772-1213 or you can just walk in and apply without an appointment. 3. **By mail:** You can call 1-800-772-1213 and request application forms be mailed to you or you can go to the social security office and ask for the forms. 4. **By internet:** Go to [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

If you are currently **homeless**, be sure to let SSA know. Your case will be assigned to a **Homeless Unit** where someone who is familiar with the challenges facing homeless people will handle it.

## Information Social Security Office Needs When You Go For Your Interview

1. Your **social security number**. 2. Names of all your **employers**, when you worked there, hours worked, how much you were paid. 3. W-2 for last year 4. Birth certificate (original or certified copy. 5. **Military discharge papers** (DD-214) if you served in the military. 6. If applying for a child, school records, letters or reports from child's teacher. 7. **Medical records** (see below).

**If you do not have all of these documents, do not delay applying. Social Security will help you obtain what you need.**

## Medical Information Needed

**Review the following list of places and check where you have been treated or who knows about your disabilities.**

Hospitals	Insurance companies	Occupational therapists	TB tests, Blood tests
Clinics	Attorney records Special education	Speech therapists	Hearing tests, Heart tests
Doctors, Nurses	School records	Unions, HMOs	Physicals, Prescriptions
Jail Records	Social Workers	Vocational Rehabilitation	Psychological Evaluations
Prison Records Mental Health Hospitals	Case Workers	Workmen's Comp	X-rays, CAT scans
		Veterans Admin	Any other records and sources

For **each disability** that keeps you from working, list **ALL of the places** above that you have treated you for this disability, when you were first and last treated there, how many visits you have made, and the address. If you have any old medical records, discharge papers, medical bills, these will help jog your memory about dates of treatment. If you have been treated under more than one name, be sure to tell Social Security

## What Happens Next?

Social Security will send your application to the Georgia Department of Labor's Disability Adjudication Services (DAS) center in Stone Mountain, GA, where the medical decision will be made as to whether you are disabled or not according to Social Security's rules. (Note: No later than 1 week after you have completed your application at SSA, it should have been forwarded to the DAS. Call DAS at 678-639-2100 to find out the name and number of the adjudicator reviewing your case) A person called a disability adjudicator at the DAS, will order your medical records, review them, and make a decision if they have enough information. If additional information is needed you may be asked to provide more work history, a description of your daily activities, and perhaps go to a special exam or special test that Social Security will pay for. It takes about 4 to 5 months to complete most disability claims. Social Security will send you their decision. If they approve your application, they will tell you your payment amount and when payments will start. If they turn you down, they will tell you how to appeal.

## 10 Actions You Can Take To Improve Your Chances To Be Approved For Disability Benefits

- ❖ **Mention ALL your disabilities:** At the time you apply for Social Security benefits, be very sure to tell Social Security about ALL the reasons that keep you from being able to work—all physical conditions and mental problems. All disabilities you tell Social Security about must be evaluated. Tell Social Security about all of them.
- ❖ **Find out who your disability adjudicator is:** After Social Security takes your application, they send your claim to the Disability Adjudication Service, where a person, called a disability adjudicator, will decide if you are disabled or not according to Social Security's rules. How do you know who your adjudicator is? Call 678-639-2100 from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM and when you get a recorded message, press #7 which connects you to the switchboard operator. Tell her your social security number and ask to speak to the person who has your case. Adjudicators are very willing to help you. You should respond as promptly as you can when your adjudicator requests information from you.
- ❖ **Make sure the disability adjudicator gets ALL your medical records from ALL sources for EACH of your disabilities.** Ask the person who took your application for SSI and/or SSDI to give you a copy of all the information you gave them about your medical treatment. You can use this information to make sure that your disability adjudicator gets all the medical records from all your treating sources. This is very important. For example, the disability adjudicator may ask Grady Hospital for your records from 2001 to present but Grady only sends records from 2002 to October 2004. Or Grady sends the records for your heart condition but not for your diabetes. You won't know what your adjudicator received so you need to ask him or her if your medical sources sent them all the records they were supposed to. (Note: If you are applying for SSI disability benefits, Grady Hospital's policy as of April 1, 2005 is to provide you with copies of all your medical records free of charge.)
- ❖ **Special doctors exams and tests:** If you are asked by your disability adjudicator to go for a special doctor's exam or for special tests, be sure you keep the appointment or that you let them know in advance why you cannot. If you missed your appointment, call your adjudicator and ask that the exam be rescheduled. These special exams and tests are very important. Failure to keep your appointment might result in your being turned down for SSI or SSDI.
- ❖ **Appoint someone to help you:** If you think you will need help with your disability application, and you have a friend, relative, counselor, anyone you trust who is willing to help you, you can informally do this or you can do it formally by asking the Social Security office for form SSA-1696, Appointment of Representative. Your representative, who does not need to be a lawyer, will get copies of all mail sent to you and will be able to discuss your case with anyone at the Social Security office or at the Disability Adjudication Services office. Some organizations in the Atlanta area that help people apply for disability benefits:
- ❖ **Homeless?** If you are homeless, make sure you let the Social Security Administration know. Special assistance is offered to people who are homeless because Social Security understands difficulties you may have in getting mail, or having to change your address often.
- ❖ **Mailing address:** Be sure you have a reliable, stable mailing address and check often to see if you have mail. Some of the larger mailrooms for homeless people: Crossroads (St. Luke's) 420 Courtland St. Atl 30308 , Odyssey III (must have I.D.), 276 Decatur St., Atl 30312, Safehouse, 89 Ellis St. Atl 30303, Central Presbyterian Outreach and Advocacy Office, 201 Washington St. Atl
- ❖ **If you don't live at your mailing address:** If your mailing address differs from your residence address or you are homeless, be sure to tell Social Security at the time you apply and your disability adjudicator where you actually live so that they can schedule any doctor's appointments in zip codes most convenient for you whenever they can.
- ❖ **Forms:** You are most likely to be asked by your disability adjudicator to fill out two forms: Function Report-Adult-Form SSA-3373-BK and Work History Report-Form SSA-3369-BK. These forms are used when the medical reports were not sufficient to make a decision. It is very important that these forms be completed and returned to your disability adjudicator. When completing the Function Report, you want to give details. You want to emphasize how and when your disabilities limit your ability to do things an average person can do. If you are not able to complete these forms, call your adjudicator and say you need help. Failure to complete and return these forms may hurt your chances for being approved. Social Security employees and your disability adjudicator will help you complete these forms if you have difficulty answering all the questions.
- ❖ **Vocational Rehabilitation**—don't wait until you have been denied to think about a referral to VR. If VR helps you to obtain sustained work, that is great. You will be able to earn more than you would get with SSI. If VR is not successful, then this can be evidence that there is no work that you can do despite the best efforts of VR experts. You can call the VR office (404-206-6000) to ask for services at the same time Social Security is processing your SSI/SSDI application.

■ Do not delay applying for benefits because you don't have all the things Social Security requests. You may lose money if you delay applying. Social Security will help you obtain whatever information is needed.

■ You have a right to be served by any Social Security Office you prefer. You are not required to go to the office nearest to your mailing address or residence.

**IF YOUR DISABILITY APPLICATION IS TURNED DOWN, be sure to file an appeal. Always appeal.** The first appeal is called reconsideration and the same office (the DAS) that turned you down will review your appeal. It will take about the same amount of time to process as your initial claim took. If your reconsideration request is turned down, you can appeal again and this is called a hearing request where you go before an administrative law judge. Find a lawyer who specializes in Social Security cases and who will not charge you anything unless you win your appeal. It varies from state to state but generally the hearing may take up to two years to complete.

# Representative Payee Program

**What is a Representative Payee?** A representative payee is an individual or organization that receives Social Security and/or SSI payments for someone who cannot manage or direct the management of his/her money. Payees should use the funds for the current and foreseeable needs of the beneficiary and save any remaining funds for the beneficiary's future use.

**What is a Beneficiary?** A beneficiary is a person who receives Social Security and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments. Social Security and SSI are two different programs and both are administered by SSA.

**Who Needs a Representative Payee?** The law requires minor children and legally incompetent adults to have payees. In all other situations, adult beneficiaries are presumed to be capable of managing benefits. If there is evidence to the contrary, however, SSA may appoint a representative payee.

**What Does A Payee Do For Me?** Your payee receives your payments on your behalf and must use the money to pay for your current needs, which include: housing and utilities; food; medical and dental expenses; personal care items; clothing; and rehabilitation expenses (if you're disabled). After those expenses are paid, your payee can use the rest of the money to pay any past-due bills you may have, support your dependents or provide entertainment for you. If there is money left over, your payee should save it for you. The payee must keep accurate records of your payments and how they are spent and regularly report that information to Social Security (800) 772-1213. Your payee also should share that information with you. If you live in an institution, such as a nursing home or a hospital, the payee should pay the cost of your care and provide money for your personal needs.

**What Should I Tell My Payee?** Be sure to tell your payee if you: get a job or stop working; move; get married; get money from another source; take a trip outside the United States; go to jail or prison; are admitted to a hospital; save any money; apply for help from a welfare department or other government agency; and are no longer disabled, if your benefits are based on a disability.

If you or your payee fails to report any of the above actions to us, you may be paid more money than you are due. You may have to pay back any money you were not due, and your payments may stop.

**What If SSA Believes That I Cannot Handle My Money?** We will investigate your capability to manage your own funds. Your benefits will continue being paid directly to you until we finish the investigation and a decision is made.

**Why Do I Have a Representative Payee?** You have a payee because we have determined that you need help in managing your money. Usually the representative payee is someone who sees you often, knows you and your needs, and wants to help you.

Can I be forced to have a payee? SSA assumes adult beneficiaries are capable of managing their money unless there is legal, medical or lay evidence to the contrary. Having a representative payee is not an option or a choice. The law requires that some beneficiaries have a representative payee. Those required to have a payee include: • Minor children under age 15 (For children age 15 - 17, SSA policy requires a representative payee, unless an exception is granted.); • legally incompetent adults; and • Disabled adults who are determined by SSA to be incapable, and who SSA has determined to have a drug addiction or alcohol (DAA) condition. Federal Code: 42 U.S.C.A. §§ 1383(a) (2)(A), and 1382(e)(3)(A) (II) In the case of an individual eligible for benefits under this subchapter by reason of disability, the payment of such benefits shall be made to a representative payee if the Commissioner of Social Security determines that such payment would serve the interest of the individual because the individual also has an alcoholism or drug addiction condition (as determined by the Commissioner) and the individual is incapable of managing such benefits.

**What is someone who is his or her own payee and loses the ability to manage their money?** If a beneficiary is receiving their own Social Security and/or SSI payments and they lose their ability to manage their money, they can be reported to the SSA (1-800-772-1213). When this occurs, SSA will obtain medical or lay evidence to determine if the beneficiary is capable of managing his or her payments. If the beneficiary is determined to be incapable, SSA will appoint a representative payee.

**What If I Believe I No Longer Need a Representative Payee?** If you have a representative payee because of a physical or a mental disability, in order to become your own payee, you must show SSA that you are now mentally and physically able to handle your money yourself. You could provide: A doctor's statement on an SSA--787 form or its equivalent that there has been a change in your condition and that the doctor believes you are able to care for yourself; or An official copy of a court order saying that the court believes that you can take care of yourself; or Other evidence that shows your ability to take care of yourself. Note: Be advised that if SSA believes your condition has improved to the point that you no longer need a payee, we may reevaluate your eligibility for benefits.

**What If I Disagree With SSA's Decisions?** You have the right to appeal either the decision that you need a representative payee, or the person or organization SSA has chosen as your representative payee. You have 60 days to appeal a decision by contacting SSA. Please contact your local Social Security office or call 1-800-772-1213 for more information.

**What Should I Do When A Rep Payee Does Not Use The Money Properly For The Beneficiary?** If you have a payee and you think he or she is not using your funds properly, you may report this to any Social Security office. If you know someone who has a payee and you have reason to suspect the payee may be misusing or stealing that person's money, report it to any Social Security office.

# Organizations that Serve as Representative Payees

## Organizations that ARE authorized by SSA to charge a fee for their payee service:

“Fee for Service” organizations can collect the lesser of 10% of the combined SSI/SSDI monthly payment, or **\$37.00**. If drug and alcohol is “secondary” the org. can collect \$50.00 for the beneficiaries

**DeKalb Community Service Board**- 404-892-4646, <http://www.dekcsb.org/>

**GA National Payee Trust** - 404-401-0262 and lorden62@bellsouth.net,  
[www.ganationalpayeetrust.com](http://www.ganationalpayeetrust.com)

**People’s Choice** - 404-284-6958, 1348 Alvarado Way Decatur, GA 30032

**Planned Lifetime Assistance Network/PLAN of Georgia** - 404-634-0094

**Quest Payee Services** - 678-523-6315

## Organizations that ARE NOT authorized to charge a fee for their payee services:

**Apple Payee Services** - 877-271-0003 Cell: 404-889-2939, Fax: 404-745-0249, [www.applepayee.com](http://www.applepayee.com)

**Home Away from Home, Family Resource Center, Inc.** - P.O. Box 370035, Decatur, GA 30037-0035, Crisis line: 404-381-4080, Office: 404-289-4235, Fax: 404-289-4236,  
[hafh-familyresourcecenter@hotmail.com](mailto:hafh-familyresourcecenter@hotmail.com)

**Paradise4Living Services, Inc.** - 678-374-4420, Fax: 678-374-4421, [paradiseforliving@yahoo.com](mailto:paradiseforliving@yahoo.com),  
[www.paradise4living.org](http://www.paradise4living.org)

**Quilt Community Resource Enterprises LLC** - 678-837-8209  
[jcooks@thequilttransitionalservices.com](mailto:jcooks@thequilttransitionalservices.com)

**RROC--Restore and Rebuild Our City** - 941-9052 or 404-454-4427, Cell: 404-379-5436,  
Fax: 404-228-2380, [ifnot4grace@gmail.com](mailto:ifnot4grace@gmail.com)

**Visions of Hope Atlanta** - 678-754-4452

**DeKalb County Dept. of Family and Children’s Services** — adult Protective Service.  
178 Sams St. Decatur, GA 30030 404/370-5000

**Fulton County Dept. of Family and Children’s Services** — adult Protective Service.  
84 Walton St. Atlanta 30303 404/657-8000

# Links to Mental Health Organizations

These web sites are excellent for learning more about mental health issues. Some of these agencies also offer services in Atlanta.

## Local and State

**Behavioral Health Service Coalition--BHSC** is a statewide collaboration of public and private individuals and organizations which educates and shares information, among our members, the public and policy-makers and coordinates advocacy. The coalition holds meetings in Atlanta every second Monday of each month and sponsors two events each year: the Candlelight Ceremony and Mental Health Day at the Capitol. For more information and membership, contact Rheba Smith at [rheba.smith@gpsn.org](mailto:rheba.smith@gpsn.org). All meetings are held at the Skyland Trail Fuqua Center at 1931 North Druid Hills Road, Atlanta. The address of the BHSC is 1381 Metropolitan Parkway | Atlanta | GA | 30310

Community Health

**Community Friendship, Inc. (CFI)** [www.commfriend.com](http://www.commfriend.com) 75 Renaissance Parkway, Atlanta 30308 404-875-0381 Provides a wide range of supportive housing in multiple locations for men and women who are chronically homeless and who have a chronic mental illness so they can develop living, learning, working and social skills and access the resources needed to lead successful and satisfying lives.

**Coalition for Homeless People with a Mental Illness**—Atlanta [www.homelessmentallyill.org](http://www.homelessmentallyill.org) 2026 Dellwood Dr. Atlanta. Ga. 30309 404-351-3225 This coalition is composed of volunteers, homeless service providers, advocates, government agencies, volunteers, just anyone else who is interested in improving the delivery of critically needed services to homeless people with a mental illness. They meet every 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday to address a wide range of topics that directly or indirectly affect Atlanta's homeless men and women. Key contact is Alan Harris.

**Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO)** 404-885-1234 [www.thegao.org](http://www.thegao.org) The Georgia Advocacy Office is a private non-profit corporation. Its mission is to work with and for oppressed and vulnerable individuals in Georgia who are labeled as disabled or mentally ill to secure their protection and advocacy. GAO's work is mandated by Congress, and GAO has been designated by Georgia as the agency to implement Protection and Advocacy within the state. Its main priority is standing beside people in stopping abuse.

**Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD)**—provides treatment and support services to people with a mental illness and addictive diseases and support to people with mental retardation and related developmental disabilities. DBHDD serves people of all ages with the most severe and like to be long-term conditions. Georgia.

**Georgia Mental Health Network**--[www.mcg.edu/resources/mh/index.html](http://www.mcg.edu/resources/mh/index.html) for additional mental health services and resources in Georgia (Medical College of Georgia)

**FaithWorks** --[www,FaithWorks.org](http://www.FaithWorks.org)—Mission is to target the faith community hoping to educate and engage clergy and lay leaders under the FaithWorks banner. And, lead the way toward a better quality of life for those with mental and/or addictive illnesses and their families. This will be done by educating, innovating and championing effective solutions to intractable problems.

**Mental Health Consumer Network**-- 246 Sycamore St. Decatur 30030 404/687/9487 [www.gmhcn.org](http://www.gmhcn.org) The Consumer Network is a Georgia non-profit corporation founded in 1991 by consumers of state services for mental health, developmental disabilities, and addictive diseases. It hosts one of the largest statewide annual consumer conventions in the nation. The corporation evolved from a meeting of 30 consumer leaders held in Tucker, Georgia in October of 1990. And now has grown to over 3700 members across the state

**Mental Health America of Georgia**--[www.mhageorgia.org](http://www.mhageorgia.org) 100 Edgewood Ave. Atlanta 30303 404-527-7175 MHA is the merger of two advocacy and service provision agencies. Formerly called the National Mental Health Association of Georgia, it is a leading voice in advocacy across the state working at the individual and system level to ensure that Georgians obtain access to best practice level mental health services statewide. A primary goal of Mental Health America is to educate the general public about the realities of mental health and mental illness. Behavioral Health Service Coalition--BHSC is a statewide collaboration of public and private individuals and organizations which educates and shares information, among our members, the public and policy-makers and coordinates advocacy in behalf of individuals who have a mental illness, an addiction to drugs/alcohol or both. The Coalition holds monthly meetings in Atlanta at noon every second Monday and sponsors two events each year: the Candlelight Ceremony and Mental Health Day at the Capitol. For more information and membership, contact Rheba Smith at [rheba.smith@gpsn.org](mailto:rheba.smith@gpsn.org)

**National Alliance For The Mentally Ill of Georgia (NAMI):** 3050 Presidential Drive, Suite 202, Atlanta, GA 30340, 770-234-0855 or 800-728-1052.

This is a nonprofit, grassroots, self-help, support and advocacy Organization of consumers, families and friends of people with brain disorders (mental illness), such as schizophrenia, major depression, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety disorders, etc. Founded in 1979, NAMI has more than 225,000 members and 1200 state and local affiliates that seek equitable services for people with mental illness NAMI Georgia has 32 local affiliates with 1200 members. Working on the national, state, and local levels, NAMI supports increased funding for research, and advocates for adequate health insurance, housing, rehabilitation, and employment for people with psychiatric illnesses. NAMI also provides education about brain disorders. The Family-to-Family Education Program is offered at no cost to participants. NAMI works with the Governor, the Legislators, the Department of Human Resources, other State Agencies, and other mental health advocacy groups. We continually strengthen and develop our relationship with these organizations to improve the system of care in Georgia. See the "Advocacy" page for further information. NAMI has outreach programs that range from 30 minute presentations for general audiences to a 40 hour training course for Law Enforcement

## National

**BAZELON CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH LAW**--[www.bazon.org](http://www.bazon.org)--The mission of the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law is to protect and advance the rights of adults and children with mental disabilities to exercise meaningful life choices. Its advocacy is based on the principle that every individual is entitled to choice and dignity. The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law uses a coordinated approach of litigation, policy analysis, coalition-building, public information and technical support for local advocates.

**CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (CMHS)**--[www.mentalhealth.org](http://www.mentalhealth.org) and [www.samhsa.gov/cmhs](http://www.samhsa.gov/cmhs) offers numerous programs and projects that aim to increase the range, quality, and availability of treatment and other supportive services for people with mental illness. The homeless programs branch of CMHS has many initiatives related to housing and homelessness.

**COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**--[www.comcon.org](http://www.comcon.org) This is HUD's information center. Anyone can access this site for copies of program regulations, descriptions of model programs, etc.

**DSM-IV CRITERIA** [www.psychology.net/org/dsm.html](http://www.psychology.net/org/dsm.html) offers diagnostic criteria for the most common mental disorders, including description, diagnosis, treatment and research findings.

**INTERNET MENTAL HEALTH**--[www.mentalhealth.com](http://www.mentalhealth.com) for 52 of the most common mental disorders, medications, news, recovery stories, links

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH**--[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov) This is the world's foremost mental health scientific organization. This federal agency takes the lead in neuro-scientific investigation devoted to understanding the causes, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of schizophrenia and other mental disorders, which afflict millions of Americans.

**NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE NETWORK (KEN)** -- [www.mentalhealth.org](http://www.mentalhealth.org) this is a one-stop resource center providing the public with information and referrals on mental health services. Free copies of publications on a range of mental health issues are available. A KEN health information specialist answer callers' questions or refer them to federal, state or local resources for more information and help, also offers up to the minute information on issues such as treatment, prevention, and rehabilitation services for mental illness and on subjects ranging from advocacy to women's issues.

**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS AND MENTAL ILLNESS**--[www.prainc.com](http://www.prainc.com) This center on homelessness and mental illness provides information and technical assistance concerning the treatment, services and housing needs of homeless persons with severe mental illnesses. The center maintains a bibliographic database of materials and will provide database searches.

**SCHIZOPHRENICS ANONYMOUS**--[www.sanonymous.org](http://www.sanonymous.org) The purpose of this organization is to help restore dignity and sense of purpose for persons who are working for recovery from schizophrenia or related disorders.

**SCHIZOPHRENIA HOME PAGE**--[www.schizophrenia.com](http://www.schizophrenia.com) This is a non-profit information, support and education center offers information on schizophrenia and its causes.

**SURGEON GENERAL**--[www.surgeongeneral.gov](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov) This is the site of the U.S. Surgeon General in the "library" section you'll find information on publications such as the 1999 report of the surgeon general on mental illness you can search for a wide range of information on mental illness

**TREATMENT ADVOCACY CENTER** [www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org](http://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org) This is an especially good website that provides current happenings across the U.S. and a huge wealth of information. TAC's mission is to eliminate the legal and practical barriers to treatment for millions of Americans who suffer from, but are not being treated appropriately for, severe brain disorders, such as schizophrenia and manic-depressive illness, and to prevent the devastating consequences of non-treatment: homelessness, suicide, victimization, worsening of symptoms, violence, and incarceration.

**WORLD FEDERATION OF MENTAL HEALTH LINKS**--[www.wfmh.com/links](http://www.wfmh.com/links) This is a link to many other mental health web sites around the world. Its key value seems to be in identifying widespread mental health issues, and encouraging international, national and local campaigns for public education.