

# TERMS TO KNOW

If you're thinking about addressing your mental health for the first time, you may come across words that seem simple but you aren't *exactly* sure what they mean. Below is a list of terms used throughout the 2022 "Back to Basics" Mental Health Month Toolkit.

**COPING SKILL:**

a strategy to help you deal with difficult situations and lessen unpleasant emotions, thoughts, or behaviors

**HEALTH INSURANCE:**

a signed contract with a health insurance company that requires the company to pay for some of your health care costs

**LIVED EXPERIENCE:**

first-hand, personal experience dealing with a mental health or substance use challenge

**MENTAL HEALTH CONCERN:**

anything that causes a person to believe their mental health may be suffering; could be a symptom, a group of symptoms, or a diagnosable mental health condition

**MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION:**

a set of related symptoms that have been recognized by the mental health community; includes conditions defined in the DSM-V, ICD-11, and by people with lived experience

**MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL:**

a licensed or certified mental health treatment provider (See [mhanational.org/types-mental-health-professionals](https://mhanational.org/types-mental-health-professionals) for a detailed list)

**MENTAL HEALTH SCREEN:**

an evaluation of your mental health and well-being through scientifically validated assessment tools (Visit [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org) for free, confidential screening tools)

**NEUROTRANSMITTERS:**

chemicals that carry messages throughout your brain

**OUTPATIENT:**

treatment that takes place in an office, hospital, or other clinical setting but does not involve overnight stays

**PEER:**

someone who shares the experience of living with a mental health condition and/or substance use disorder

**PROTECTIVE FACTOR:**

something that decreases the chances of developing a condition and/or balances out an existing risk factor

**PSYCHIATRIST:**

a licensed medical doctor who has completed additional psychiatric training; can diagnose mental health conditions, prescribe and manage medication, and provide therapy

**RECOVERY:**

a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential

**RISK FACTOR:**

something that increases the chances of developing a condition

**SELF-STIGMA:**

negative attitudes and shame regarding an individual's own mental health, resulting from internalizing public stigma

**SLIDING SCALE PAYMENT:**

a payment model providers can use to make treatment financially accessible for those who would not otherwise be able to afford it due to income or lack of health insurance coverage

**SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH:**

the conditions in which people live, learn, work, and play that impact their health and quality of life

**STIGMA:**

negative, judgmental, and/or discriminatory attitudes toward mental health challenges and those who live with them

**STRESS:**

a feeling of emotional or physical tension in response to being overwhelmed or unable to cope with mental/emotional pressure

**SYMPTOM:**

a physical or mental feature that indicates the potential existence of a concern, condition, or diagnosis

**THERAPIST:**

a mental health professional trained to help individuals understand and cope with their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; may assess and/or diagnose mental health conditions

**TRAUMA:**

an emotional response to a disturbing, scary, or shocking experience that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope