



Questions to Consider for Your Upcoming Integrated Care Visit

Integrated care can feel different.

In the past, you may have received separate services such as mental health not knowing about your physical health concerns and vice versa. Basically, your care providers do not talk to each other and may not even be in the same location. You may have felt that no one hears you as you've had to repeat yourself again, and again.

Now, you go to an appointment and find that your mental health providers and primary care provider are now working closely together, often in the same "pod," to give you the best care possible. This is called integrated care, and they are your integrated care team and the care they provide is different from the care you received previously.

And because integrated care is different, it is good to think of questions that you may want to ask during your visits to help you take advantage of your integrated care team (care team).

For example,

Johanna walks into the clinic and is greeted by the peer support worker who she knows as a friend and fellow community member. She is asked questions about her needs and then she meets with the social worker to discuss issues she is having with housing instability.

After this, the primary care provider (PCP) comes in for a visit, saying that they have talked with the social worker, and understand the housing issues that Johanna is facing. They discuss her chronic pain, too.

Initially, Johanna is surprised to hear that the housing information has been shared with her PCP, as she thought the PCP would only focus on her medical conditions. She asks her PCP, "Why do you need to know about my housing? Do you think my housing is affecting my chronic pain?"

Question Categories

Johanna's questions to her team are good examples of how to better understand your care team's recommendations and actions. Her two questions represent categories you may want to ask at your integrated care visits and include the following.

Question Category 1: Understanding how and why your integrated team is sharing information.

Example: Johanna's question, "Why do you need to know about my housing?"

Sample Category 1 Questions:

- Who are the care team members that share information about me?
- What is the purpose of this sharing of information among the care team members?
- How often does the care team share information about me?
- Am I able to access notes from the care team's conversations about me?
- What can I do if I want to share information with one care team member and not want to share with the other care team members?

Question Category 2: Understanding how your care team plans to address your health conditions.

Ex: Johanna asking, "Do you think my housing is affecting my chronic pain?"

Sample Category 2 Questions:

- Why does the care team feel that my mental health and physical health conditions are affecting one another?
- What does the care team feel that I can do to my mental health that will improve my physical health and vice versa?
- How can I use my traditional culture and practices to improve my health?

A final note about asking questions from your integrated care team.

Questions are a great sign to your team that you are engaged and invested in your own healing. While many people fear asking questions in healthcare settings will seem rude, healthcare professionals appreciate questions. Your integrated care team needs questions to understand your health needs and how to plan for your care. Sometimes, questions from patients help the care team members connect the dots toward new ways to improve the treatment plan.

The bottom line about asking questions is to ask questions of your integrated care team! Your team will appreciate the questions, so you will receive the best care possible!

