

# Meeting the Specialized Mental Health Needs of Older Adults

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The mental health concerns of older adults are highly treatable. Over 80 percent are likely to respond to treatment, which usually consists of a combination of medication and talk therapy. Despite this high success rate, only 16 percent seek help from appropriate professionals. Barriers like misinformation, stigma, and lack of access to specialized services in geriatric mental health frequently get in the way of older adults receiving the help they deserve.

Volunteers of America, MN –Senior Mental Health Services works to address these barriers, providing specialized services with the older adult in mind. This includes:

- Having licensed and credentialed mental health professionals who are knowledgeable about issues that come with aging. Staff are in-network providers for most medical insurance plans including Medicare.
- Having free phone consultations available to older adults, family members, or other concerned parties from a trained mental health professional by calling the program's main number. Staff can also facilitate the linkage to our program services or to other community resources.
- Having in-home individual & family therapy services available to older adults when it is medically necessary because a physical health and/or mobility concern impacts accessing program services.
- Having a geriatric psychiatrist who can provide psychiatric evaluations and medication management for those participants who would benefit from mental health medications. This allows participants to work with a doctor who specializes in mental health medications appropriate for older adults.
- Locating two of our program's office locations within Senior Community Centers. This allows our participants to receive mental health services within our private offices and to pursue socializing and physical well-being by engaging in coffee clubs, card games, senior dining, and exercise classes.
- Taking into consideration all aspects of the older adult's life including physical health, cognitive health, and daily functioning level all of which interact critically with an older adult's mental health. This allows us to provide a well rounded assessment of a participant's well-being and to pace work in therapy to a participant's abilities.

**Contact:**

Volunteers of America-Minnesota  
Senior Mental Health Services

**Phone:** 763-225-4054

**Website:** [www.smhvoamn.org](http://www.smhvoamn.org)



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