

Four Steps to Evaluate Treatment Needs

The Judges and Psychiatrist Leadership Initiative (JPLI) created [Practical Considerations Related to Release and Sentencing for Defendants Who Have Behavioral Health Needs](#), which provides four steps to glean insight into a litigant's treatment needs.

Determining Behavioral Health Treatment Needs

Judges can benefit from information on treatment needs gleaned through four steps:



1. Recognize Signs of a Mental Illness

It is important that judicial officers can recognize signs of a mental illness in the courtroom and respond productively. Also from JPLI, *Judges' Guide to Mental Illness in the Courtroom*, which contains common courtroom observations that may indicate a mental illness and considerations for interacting with a person displaying certain behaviors.

The National Center for State Courts recommends [Key Questions at Appearances for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness](#) when considering the best way to proceed when mental illness appears to be a factor. Additional resources, including the [Judges' Guide to Adult Mental Health Jargon](#), the [Judges' Guide to Youth Mental Health Jargon](#), and the [Substance Use Disorder Dictionary for State Courts](#), provide definitions and information to assist judges.

2-3. Utilize Valid Screening and Assessment Tools

Screening for mental health needs should occur at the earliest point possible. The [Brief Jail Mental Health Screen](#), developed by Policy Research Associates, is a booking tool used during jail intake to flag the need for further mental health assessment in individuals where applicable. Inquire with your sheriff as to whether this tool is being used in your county.

Assessment tools offer a comprehensive evaluation to guide treatment and supervision decisions. Indiana uses the [Indiana Youth Assessment System \(IYAS\) for juveniles](#) and the [Indiana Risk Assessment System \(IRAS\) for adults](#). These systems include 12 instruments used at key decision points to assess risk and identify criminogenic needs.

4. Seek Diagnosis and Treatment Recommendations

Have a trained clinician conduct full assessments of people who screen positive for a mental illness or substance use-related need to develop a diagnosis and treatment recommendation. A non-exhaustive list of treatment options is as follows:

- [24 Community Mental Health Centers \(CMHC\)](#) that serve all 92 Indiana counties, which include [8 Pilot Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics \(CCBHC\)](#) that were rolled out in January 2025.
- [Shatterproof Treatment Atlas](#), a free and confidential resource to find and compare addiction treatment programs.
- 26 Certified [Indiana opioid treatment centers](#), a network of outpatient providers that offer an array of medically supervised medication assisted treatment options for those who wish to overcome an addiction to or dependence on opioids.
- [Indiana Addiction Treatment website](#), which provides information on how to locate addiction treatment in Indiana, find recovery housing in Indiana, and facts about substance use disorder.
- [Regional Recovery Hubs](#), community-based organizations that connect individuals to mental health and substance use treatment providers, as well as Certified Peer Support Professionals. There are 10 hubs that cover all 92 counties.

Additional Resources

Services exist around the state to connect people with resources. Familiarize yourself with these resources and facilitate warm hand-offs as appropriate. A non-exhaustive list of resources is as follows:

- [Indiana 211](#), a free service that connects Hoosiers with help and answers from thousands of health and human service agencies and resources in their local communities, including housing, legal assistance, disaster relief, and mental health or substance use services. Users can search by location and category to find specific providers in their area.
- [Three-pillar crisis response system](#) that includes:
 - Someone to call: [988 suicide and crisis lifeline](#)
 - Someone to respond: All of Indiana's 92 counties are served by mobile crisis teams
 - Somewhere to go for help: 24 crisis receiving and stabilization service providers statewide
- [Indiana Youth Services](#), FSSA resources such as School Based Initiatives, Children's Mental Health Wraparound, and Trauma Informed Practices and Resources.
- [Indiana Legal Help](#), a program of the Indiana Bar Foundation and a way for litigants to connect with free and low-cost legal aid for non-criminal issues including family law, housing, and healthcare. Indiana Legal Help has [150 kiosks](#) across the state, with at least one kiosk in every county, providing free legal resources in a range of topics, such as rent and eviction, family and safety, and driving and criminal expungements.

Judicial Officers can contact the [Office of Behavioral Health](#) at any time for guidance.