



## **Intake Assessment at the OICBT**

### *Reducing the Trial-and-Error Process of Finding the Right Fit for Treatment*

#### **Purpose**

The Intake Assessment at OICBT is a standard practice to gather information and help aid in matching individuals with assessment and/or therapy supports. We use a research-informed stepped care (SC) process in making treatment decisions (more information on SC to follow below). The intake therapist completing this initial session is a registered health professional. All services provided by the intake workers at the OICBT are under the supervision of Clinical Psychologists that review all assessment and treatment decisions.

During the Intake, the Intake worker will ask questions to gather more information about your history, symptoms, how your symptoms affect your functioning, and what you hope to get out of treatment. At the end of the intake, you will be set up with some questionnaires to complete on an online platform called Greenspace. These measures will help to capture information that may have been missed during the intake and will serve as a baseline in the future monitoring of your response to treatment (should you choose to obtain services at OICBT). These measures are an important part of the intake process and informing next steps. With the use of the intake information and questionnaires, the supervising psychologist is able to recommend the most appropriate treatment plan to fit your specific needs. Prior to proceeding with an Intake we want to ensure you have a full understanding of its aim, goals, and how this information will be used in determining treatment recommendations

#### **An intake will not provide:**

- A diagnosis: if you are interested in a diagnostic assessment, you can be referred to this service after the intake
- The intake aids in this process to gather background information and current symptom presentation for making triaging assessment and treatment decisions (i.e., determining whether more intensive assessment is needed; determining the type and intensity of services needed)
- A guarantee for treatment: there is a chance that OICBT will not have the right services to fit your needs. When it is clear that our therapists do not have the expertise in the area where a client needs support and/or the client may be requiring a higher level of service intensity than what is provided at OICBT, we then try to provide some alternative service recommendations. Often only an intake can determine this. We provide an Intake assessment to all clients to ensure you are not placed on a waitlist only to be redirected by a health professional following an assessment. This allows us to expedite the process and increase your chances of timely

mental health care services (whether internal or external). Our goal is to find services that will best meet your needs.

### **Cost**

The cost of the intake assessment will be charged at the end of the session. You can add a credit card to your OWL account after it is set up with administration, or you can provide the card information to administration or the intake worker. E-transfer is also available for those that prefer. The cost of the intake session is non-refundable. Please visit: <https://www.ottawacbt.ca/current-fees> for the current price of our intake assessment.

### **What Happens Next?**

After the intake session and the completion of your Greenspace questionnaires, the intake therapist will be bringing the information to the supervising psychologist to review. The registered psychologist will make their recommendation, which the intake therapist will inform you of. This process will typically take 1-2 weeks. If you have follow-up questions/concerns, you can reach out to your intake therapist via secure messaging on OWL or through their extension at the clinic which is listed on the website. If you receive services outside of the clinic, OICBT can share the intake document with other medical professionals at your request. You can call administration at any time to provide consent for information to be shared with specified health care providers.

### **Insurance Coverage**

This type of service is usually covered for individuals with extended health care benefits; however, we recommend that you follow-up with your insurance company to confirm this. After the assessment, a receipt can be emailed to you to forward to your insurance provider. The intake therapist and supervising registered psychologist's names and registration numbers will be on the receipt.

### **Who should I contact if I wish to discuss this service?**

To make an assessment appointment, or to get more information about this service, including the fees, please go to [www.ottawacbt.ca](http://www.ottawacbt.ca), and click on the "Book Now – Free Information Call Adults/Seniors". If you have any other questions, you can contact us by phone (613-820-9931 x 0) or by email at [info@oicbt.ca](mailto:info@oicbt.ca).

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## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Is CBT the right fit?**

Cognitive behavioral therapy or CBT is the gold-standard psychological treatment for mood and anxiety disorders such as depression, OCD, social anxiety disorder, panic disorder and PTSD. CBT is the most

researched form of psychotherapy and numerous large-scale review studies have shown CBT to be more effective than any other psychotherapeutic approach for most forms of mental illness. The CBT model - particularly with respect to how therapy works - has been researched extensively and maps well to current neurobiological explanations around the brain & behavior (David, Cristea & Hoffman, 2018; Fordham et al., 2021).

### **What is stepped care & why is it used at OICBT?**

Stepped care involves delivering the right intensity and dosage of treatment to the right people, at the right time. Within a stepped care model, a client's treatment plan is based on a multidimensional assessment of the client's presenting concerns and functional status. The resulting treatment plan seeks to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of treatments by optimizing the frequency, timing, and intensity of service delivery, often at a "dose" that far exceeds what would be delivered in the traditional "one-hour therapy session per week" model. Treatment is then stepped up or down in intensity based on close monitoring of how treatment is progressing.

Psychotherapy is often delivered in a one size fits all approach with little consideration of the required dose, intensity, and delivery method. Commonly, treatment consists of once a week, 50-minute therapy sessions with a psychologist. This may be the treatment model offered regardless of the seriousness of the client's challenges. While some clients can be very well served by this model, for other clients this intensity of care is unnecessary. Of perhaps even greater concern, clients with moderate to severe mental health challenges may be dramatically underserved by this model and need many more clinical resources devoted to their care. In a stepped care model, it would not be unusual to have a client working with two or three clinicians as they begin a more intensive form of treatment.

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon in the standard treatment model for clients with moderate to severe mental health challenges to spend months or years in a standard 50-minute session a week model with little to no benefit, but at considerable cost. So, while intensive stepped care can cost more in the short run, it has actually been designed so that your quality of life can improve sooner than it might in traditional long-term therapy.

### **What is the Evidence for Stepped Care?**

The stepped-care model is the model of care recommended within the clinical guidelines outlined by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in the UK for mental health challenges. Stepped care allows clients to have earlier treatment responses and superior outcomes compared to treatment as usual for a range of mental health issues including depression & anxiety (Katon, W., Von Korff, M., Lin, E., et al. 1999; Oosterbann et al., 2013). Stepped care also translates into a briefer overall duration of therapy and corresponding cost effectiveness (Firth et al., 2015; Ho et al., 2016). One way that outcomes are improved in a stepped care model is through continual client monitoring that allows the treatment team to adjust treatment based on response (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2019). In fact, simply tracking outcomes can improve treatment response by 30 percent (Delgado et al, 2018; Lambert, 2010).

### **How was my treatment plan determined?**

Services offered at the OICBT vary in approach, intensity, and cost. Clients seeking treatment are first carefully assessed to determine the nature, history, and severity of the problem they are experiencing and the impact of this problem on their life. After this initial assessment, treatment recommendations are made by a registered psychologist to address the identified difficulties. In collaboration with the registered psychologist's professional opinion and an empirically-based tool (LOCUS: level of care utilization system, Sowers, George, & Thompson, 1999) we determine the level of care and intensity tailored to your needs. Starting with the correct intensity of services optimizes positive outcomes. Our mission is to help you meet your goals as effectively and efficiently as possible.

### **What might my treatment plan look like?**

Within a stepped-care model, treatment recommendations are designed to match the severity and complexity of the problems reported. Progress in treatment is monitored weekly using self-report tools and based on how treatment is progressing we may suggest that treatment be a) continued as it is or b) be reduced (stepped down) or c) increased (stepped up) in terms of intensity. Depending on the types of problems someone may be experiencing, the most appropriate level of care may range from involvement in a non-intensive psychoeducational group all the way to a more intensive day treatment program requiring the ongoing involvement of several mental health professionals. A more intensive treatment plan could include 4 to 10 contacts per week with our therapy team for 12 to 16 weeks.

### **Why would I need higher intensity services?**

The rationale for increasing the intensity of treatment, when needed, is to reduce the duration and total cost of treatment while aiming to resolve symptoms and improve quality of life as soon as possible. Regular monitoring of clinical outcomes facilitates collaborative discussion between the clinician and client to determine whether the intensity of treatment should be "stepped" up or down. If you have tried typical outpatient CBT (i.e., on a weekly basis) in the past but have had difficulty putting your behavioural goals (i.e., ERP, behavioural exposure/activation) in place, then this "stepped up" program may be a good choice. Research has suggested that symptom reduction is optimized when sessions occur from two to five times per week for up to two hours per session, particularly at the outset of a new course of treatment. The advantages of this intensive treatment over more traditional weekly hour-long outpatient therapy include greater support from clinical team members, more structure, and a higher "dose" of treatment. By increasing the frequency of skills practice as well as diversifying the contexts in which practice takes place, we become more confident in our ability to navigate daily living, thereby improving overall quality of life. This program can help kickstart this process.

### **Can I modify my treatment plan? (EX. to not include group sessions)**

Best practice dictates that we offer a treatment plan to meet your needs most effectively. We will not offer services that are above or below the level of intensity that would be beneficial to you. Each aspect of the suggested treatment plan is expected to help you meet your goals. Through careful monitoring by your treatment team, any aspect of the plan can be removed or modified if it is not benefitting you throughout the program.

**How many weeks would it take before I see a reduction in my symptoms?**

This is a hard question to answer as it varies from person to person. On average, a minimum of three weeks is necessary to adequately assess your treatment response. At this time we may be better able to estimate the length of your treatment. Our aim is to teach you skills to put in place even after treatment ends.

**What if I just want to see an individual therapist once a week?**

If a higher level of intensity has been recommended, then we cannot offer once a week individual sessions. This is to ensure you get the treatment from OICBT that has the best expected outcome. There are many other wonderful resources in our community, if you are looking for lower intensity services. Administration would be happy to provide you with names of other services that specialize in the areas where you are looking for support.

**What if I would like a specific type of service or a specific therapist included within my treatment?**

The type(s) of service (e.g., individual therapy vs. group therapy vs intensive programming) and type(s) of therapy providers (e.g., psychologist, social worker, occupational therapist, etc.) vary based on several factors including: a) intensity level needed (low, moderate, high), b) the primary area(s) of focus (depression, anxiety, addiction, etc.) and/or c) our OICBT waitlists. If services cannot be provided within 3 to 4 months, we do not place clients on our waitlists for specific services or therapy providers. Research demonstrates that timely access to services improves treatment outcomes, and accordingly, recommendations are also based on such considerations. Our waitlists for particular services and therapists vary month to month.

**All treatment planning and triaging is to ensure you get treatment from OICBT that has the most timely and best expected outcomes. Your integrity, well-being, and the provision of the highest level of care are of the utmost importance at the OICBT; all guidelines and policies are formulated based on these priorities.**

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