

## “Getting the Most Out of Your Visit” Checklist

Remember that you play an important role in the quality of your own medical care. As a patient, you’re an expert on yourself. Here are some simple steps you can take to make sure you get the most out of your doctor’s visit.

- ✓ **Identify a support person (friend, family member, significant other, etc.)** who can come with you to your appointment, if possible. It may be helpful to share with them the reason for your visit, symptoms you’ve noticed and/or questions you have for your doctor so they can remind you if you forget.
- ✓ **Be open and honest about your symptoms and medical history**, even if you feel embarrassed. Symptoms that may seem trivial can be very important to making sure you get an accurate diagnosis and treatment plan. Remember that anything you tell your doctor is confidential.
- ✓ **Don’t be afraid to ask questions.** The following are some questions you may want to ask. (It may be helpful to make a list of any additional questions you have to bring it with you to your appointment.)
  - a. What is my diagnosis, if any?
  - b. What treatment are you recommending and why?
  - c. What are my treatment options? Including peer support, counseling, alts to meds, etc.
  - d. If this is a long-term problem, what can I expect in the future (what is the prognosis)?
- ✓ **If possible, keep an accurate medical history.** Keep a card in your wallet with personal medical information, including:
  - e. Any allergies you have, especially to medications;
  - f. All medications you take (including over-the-counter pills, vitamins, and supplements);
  - g. The number of one (or more) support people who can be contacted in case of an emergency.
- ✓ **If you are prescribed any new medications at your visit, make sure you have a clear understanding of how to take them and what to expect.** Here are some questions for your doctor:
  - h. What is the purpose of this medication, and what are the instructions for taking it?
  - i. Does this medication have any common side effects? If so, do they usually go away, and if so, how long does that usually take?
  - j. How long will it take for this medication to take effect? (Some medications prescribed for behavioral health diagnoses may take a while to take effect.)
  - k. Does this drug interact with any medications I already take?
  - l. How much does this medication cost?
- ✓ **Identify your own personal health and wellness goals, as well as what you’d like to get out of the doctor’s visit.** Ask your doctor how he/she can help you achieve these goals. Be sure to review what’s worked for you in the past and what hasn’t been helpful.
- ✓ **Ask your doctor about any low-cost or free community resources available to you** (i.e. peer support groups, classes, etc.) Also ask your doctor if there are any phone hotlines or other resources in the event of a behavioral health emergency.