Memorial Community Hospital & Health System
Blair • Fort Calhoun • Tekamah

Senior Life Solutions®

Reasons to Refer

◯ Medication isn't fully managing depression or anxiety

Older adults may find limited relief from psychiatric medications due to changes in metabolism, medication interactions, or complex emotional needs. If symptoms like sadness, anxiety, irritability, or apathy persist despite a stable regimen, consider a referral for added support such as therapy, group sessions, or psychosocial education.

◯ Social isolation or chronic loneliness

Isolation is linked to poorer health, increased risk of dementia, and depression. Patients who rarely receive visitors, avoid group settings, or express having "no one" may benefit from group-based therapy that fosters connection and emotional support.

◯ Mood-related decline in self-care or nutrition

When emotional distress interferes with hygiene, nutrition, or routine, it's a red flag. Signs may include weight loss, missed medications, poor hygiene, or withdrawal. A mental health referral can help re-establish motivation, structure, and daily functioning.

◯ Recent major health event or chronic illness progression

A serious diagnosis or worsening condition can cause fear, emotional overwhelm, and loss of independence. Mood changes, anxiety, or disrupted sleep and appetite may follow. A referral can help patients adjust and regain a sense of control.

◯ Passive suicidal thoughts or hopelessness

Even subtle remarks like "I'm a burden" or "I wish I wouldn't wake up" should be taken seriously. While not always indicating an immediate risk, these statements often reflect deep emotional pain. A safe, therapeutic environment can prevent further decline.

Grief from loss or reduced independence ◯

Grief may be prolonged or complicated in older adults, especially after losing a loved one or facing a loss of independence. Signs like withdrawal, frequent crying, disinterest in life, or struggling with daily tasks signal a need for therapeutic support to process grief, reduce risk of depression, and restore purpose.

Emotional distress despite clear thinking ◯

An older adult who is mentally sharp but shows signs of sadness, worry, irritability, or hopelessness may have untreated depression or anxiety. These symptoms are not a normal part of aging and often respond well to structured mental health care.

Unexplained physical symptoms without medical cause ◯

Depression and anxiety often show up as physical symptoms like fatigue, stomach issues, pain, or shortness of breath, especially when no clear diagnosis exists. Persistent complaints may signal emotional distress in need of mental health support.

Frequent clinic or ER visits for unclear concerns ◯

Repeated visits for vague symptoms with no medical explanation may reflect unmet emotional needs. A mental health program can help these patients better understand and manage what they're feeling.

Caregiver stress or burnout ◯

Older adults caring for others may face exhaustion, resentment, or depression. If you notice physical decline, emotional fatigue, or tearfulness, a referral can offer emotional relief, coping tools, and strategies for setting healthy boundaries.

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