



AUSTEN RIGGS CENTER

An Orientation for Families



Families Play an Important Role

Active family participation can play a crucial role in treatment. We have designed this brochure to offer family members a sense of what to expect.



Admission Consultation

The three-hour admission consultation is an opportunity for you, your family member, and our admissions staff to seriously consider whether our treatment approach can meet your needs. We strongly encourage you to attend, spend the day at Riggs, and see the campus together. By meeting with clinical staff members, you will help us begin to understand important family relationships and determine whether our fully open and voluntary setting is appropriate.

The day of the admission consultation is a full one. Here is what you can expect:

The day usually begins with a tour of the Riggs campus, sometimes led by a current Riggs patient.

Next, you will meet with a clinical social worker, while your family member meets with an admissions officer.

Then, you and your family member will meet together with the admissions officer. These meetings will provide an opportunity for you and your family member to offer perspectives, raise questions about our treatment approach, review financial considerations, and help us understand the family context.

At the conclusion of the consultation, the admissions officer will decide whether we can offer admission and, if not, will suggest alternative treatment options. Because of the thorough screening that occurs prior to this point, most of those who have an admission consultation are offered admission.

Once your family member accepts an offer of admission, they become a Riggs patient and the rest of the day is as follows:

You will meet with our business office staff, make the prepayment, and sign a guarantee of payment.

Your family member is then assigned a private room and meets with their sponsor—a current Riggs patient who volunteers to help new patients get acquainted with our environment.

You and your family member are invited to have lunch at the Inn (the residence where all new patients live). This is a good opportunity for you to experience Riggs more fully and to meet other patients in a casual setting.

Also, during this first day, your family member will meet with their individual psychotherapist and psychopharmacologist, and there is an initial opportunity for you to meet the psychotherapist as well.

Newly admitted patients spend the first few days settling into the Riggs community, beginning psychotherapy, meeting with members of the multidisciplinary treatment team, and learning about the process of treatment.



Beginning Treatment

Your Family Member's Privacy

As a patient at Riggs, your family member has an essential right to privacy about their treatment. At the same time, families—who often are supporting treatment financially as well as emotionally—have a focused interest in how the treatment is going. Our staff will be mindful of both of these needs.

In keeping with our desire to help your family member take responsibility for their life, we affirm that they, as an adult, are in charge of making decisions about how information about their treatment is shared with family members.

Correspondingly, and in accordance with federal and state laws, we honor every patient's right to confidentiality. The only exception to this is when, in an emergency, our staff determines that informing a family member is in the best interest of the patient.

With your family member's authorization, a clinical social worker is available to you to respond to questions and address concerns that may arise in the course of treatment. The content of all family communication is shared with your family member. In addition, with your family member's authorization, you are invited to meet with our medical director/CEO.

When needed, a clinical social worker is available to facilitate communication between you and your family member. But, again, we honor each patient's privacy and authority. Some may want to delay family involvement initially as they adjust to the program. In cases where patients choose not to authorize contact with the family, we will work with them to consider how family involvement might be helpful.

Family Involvement

Once your family member is admitted, we take a complete, multigenerational family history. We usually propose a family meeting during the first month to begin discussing treatment issues and to get a better sense of family relationships. We have found that ongoing family work is often helpful throughout treatment. You can play a very important role—in collaboration with your family member and staff—in recognizing, accepting, and managing the potential risks of treatment in an open setting. We may recommend periodic meetings to address family concerns and to assess the need for your ongoing participation. When the clinical social worker and individual therapist convene family meetings, your family member will always be included.

Case Conference

Near the end of the initial six-week evaluation and treatment period, your family member is invited to attend part of a two-hour case conference in which clinical staff gather to hear about the work so far, review the initial assessments, and make recommendations consistent with your family member's goals.

The clinical work presented at the case conference includes the following:

- Psychotherapy, including initial ideas about sources of difficulty in the context of your family member's life story
- Comprehensive psychopharmacology assessment
- Intergenerational family history and initial family assessment
- Full physical examination, with referrals as needed for further medical care
- Assessments focusing on skills and needs related to social relationships, emotional self-management, nutrition, and substance use

Psychological Assessment

After the case conference, your family member's individual therapist reviews findings with them. Soon thereafter, with your family member's authorization, you are invited to review the assessment and join in treatment planning, which may include one of the several programs in our continuum of care.

Patient Responsibility

Our open setting offers a unique opportunity for patients to take charge of their lives, but also requires them to take responsibility for their commitment to engage in the treatment. We respect—and work to understand—the choices our patients make, even when we may have reservations about those choices. However, there may be times when a patient's choices make it impossible for us to continue to provide treatment in our open setting.

Our Voluntary Hospital Program is one option for brief periods when a patient's alliance with us is in serious question. However, we do reserve the right to terminate treatment with any patient whose refusal to collaborate prevents us from providing the best care we can. If that should happen, our staff will recommend alternative treatment options. If we think a patient is in imminent danger, we will transfer them to a more secure setting in another hospital.





Treatment Experience

Intensive Psychodynamic Psychotherapy

Intensive psychodynamic psychotherapy four times a week (with the exception of holidays, vacations, or illnesses) with a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist is central to our treatment program and provides a private space for your family member to better understand their emotional experience, relationship patterns, and conflicting desires.

This work is supported by clinical social work, personalized 24/7 nursing care, an innovative and unique Activities Program, and an immersive Therapeutic Community Program structured as a series of interconnected patient/staff groups and programs (community meetings, social support groups, symptom-focused groups, patient government structures, community center activities, a work program, and more). With these resources, we nurture your family member's strengths, address their vulnerabilities, and help them to take charge of their own life.

Multidisciplinary Treatment Teams

A multidisciplinary treatment team meets twice each week, coordinating and monitoring your family member's progress from admission to discharge. The team leader is responsible for integrating the work of the team's psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical social workers, nurses, therapeutic community staff, substance use counselors, and others into a coherent treatment plan.



How Long Will Your Family Member Stay?

Your family member will be admitted to a period of intensive evaluation and treatment that is generally completed in six weeks, culminating in the case conference and recommendations about further treatment. After the initial six-week period, most patients continue in treatment within our full continuum of care for a few to several months. How long your family member continues in treatment is based on a combination of their wishes, clinical considerations, use of step-down programs, financial resources, and life and family circumstances.

Open and Voluntary Setting

Our open setting is an essential part of our treatment approach. Freedom to make choices here can be a step toward deeper understanding and living more fully. In this voluntary treatment environment, we work together to help your family member reconnect with their inner strengths, build healthy relationships, and find a renewed sense of purpose. At Riggs, we respect each patient's autonomy, so your family member will help design their own course of treatment and join other patients and staff in the decision-making that shapes the Riggs community.

Safety is maintained through every patient's willingness to communicate honestly about their experience, rather than through the imposition of privilege systems, locks, or restrictions. Our program is entirely voluntary; your family member is free to come and go at all times. Admission to Riggs involves an agreement by your family member to do the hard work of treatment, come to us for help when in need, and engage in what we call examined living. Examined living involves a commitment to a serious partnership of mutual problem-solving and social learning through relationships.

This is the foundation for a treatment process that affirms each patient's responsibility and accountability for their actions. We expect that your family member, along with the rest of the patient community will keep the setting safe for themselves and others and that they will continue an open dialogue within the Riggs community regarding boundaries, safety, and stability.





Thank You

Thank you for considering treatment for your family member at the Austen Riggs Center. We are committed to hearing and understanding your concerns and encourage you to maintain an open dialogue with us as we work together to help your family member.

AUSTEN RIGGS CENTER

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Admission inquiries: 800.517.4447

www.austenriggs.org



We are conveniently located just two hours from Boston and three from New York City.

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