



PATIENT SERVICES

Patient and Client Guide to Howard Brown

**HOWARD BROWN
HEALTH CENTER**

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WELCOME TO HOWARD BROWN HEALTH CENTER!



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CHIEF CLINICAL OFFICER AND PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER

Howard Brown Health Center (HBHC) exists to provide high quality, dignified and affirming care, regardless of sexual identity, gender expression, race, religion or economic status. HBHC specializes in healthcare services for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) community.

Our goal is to provide a friendly and pleasant experience, answer your health questions and meet your expectations. Many patients have experienced healthcare providers who fail to understand their problems, respect their identities and/or meet their needs. Our goal is to provide affirming, patient-centered care at every visit. If we fail to meet this goal, we want you to let us know.

Your HBHC providers will help you access a range of services that include primary healthcare, testing and treatment for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STI), substance use assistance, mental health services, gynecological care, transgender and gender non-conforming health services, pediatric care, and more.

The purpose of this Patient and Client Guide is to share information to help you become familiar with the array of services we offer, make informed decisions and improve your access to quality healthcare.

Please remember that we are here to be your partners in health. If you have any questions about anything in this guide, we are happy to help – just ask!

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OUR SERVICES

Howard Brown Health Center's team of physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, psychologists, social workers, health educators and other healthcare providers can help you make informed decisions about many aspects of your health. HBHC provides affirming, friendly, respectful care and embraces sexuality and sexual health as a healthy and important aspect of people's lives. We will honor your preferred name and gender pronouns.

Our Services Include:

Primary Care Services:

- Primary healthcare
- Pediatrics and adolescent medicine
- Family practice
- Geriatrics
- Gynecological services, including alternative insemination
- Transgender and gender non-conforming healthcare
- Hormone Replacement Therapy
- HIV/AIDS Treatment

Behavioral Health Services:

- Individual, couples and group counseling
- Domestic violence/intimate partner violence counseling
- Substance use program
- Smoking cessation program
- Behavioral health consultants

Sexual Health and Wellness:

- STI (walk-in testing clinics and treatment, including HIV, HCV, hepatitis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and syphilis)
- Vaccination for Hepatitis A/B
- Tuberculosis testing
- PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) treatment plan
- PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) treatment plan

WHY PRIMARY CARE MATTERS

Primary care is beneficial for health and wellness. Patients with a Primary Care Provider (PCP) have better management of chronic diseases, a smoother transition to specialty care, higher likelihood of receiving preventive screenings/vaccinations, lower overall healthcare costs, and a higher level of satisfaction with their care.

PCPs help to coordinate patient care all in one place. Within a PCP's practice, you have the ability to access a wide spectrum of health services, including preventive care, such as cancer screenings; chronic care for conditions like asthma, hypertension, and diabetes; and acute care for symptoms like cough, stomach pain, or high fever. A team of healthcare professionals is here at HBHC to meet your acute and chronic health care needs, answer questions you may have, navigate you to specialty/hospital care, and be your partner in health.

HBHC is a patient-centered medical home. This means you are assigned to a care team. Your care team will work together to meet your needs and discuss your care. With the team approach, other team members may provide patient care if the PCP is not available. You may interact with different healthcare professionals before, during, and after your visit to help meet your health goals. If you are not satisfied with the care the team is providing, you may change your care team assignment upon request.

Your Primary Care Provider – be it a doctor, nurse practitioner or physician assistant – is your healthcare partner. Your PCP is familiar with your medical history and ongoing conditions; maintaining this ongoing relationship makes it easier to address new problems when they arise and helps to identify and diagnose health issues before they become critical.

Your PCP works with you to develop care and treatment plans that meet your specific needs, advises you on appropriate screenings and immunizations and helps you to manage any medications and/or medical conditions that you have.

Your PCP will listen to you and learn about your treatment preferences and help identify aspects in your life that may be affecting your health. HBHC views healthcare as working with patients as their partners in health and treating the entire person.

You have a choice of who your PCP is and we will assist you in matching you with a PCP who best meets your healthcare needs.

WHY PRIMARY CARE MATTERS

Your Primary Care Provider will:

- Consult with you to ensure you are getting the care you expect and work with you to determine what you need
- Work with you to keep you current on preventative care, screenings and immunizations
- Diagnose and treat medical conditions
- Provide resources to help you manage complex and chronic diseases such as HIV, diabetes and hypertension (high blood pressure), and provide information on new treatments and therapies
- Help coordinate your care among hospitals and specialists when needed
- Provide affirming care that is compassionate and respectful

WHY BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE MATTERS

Even though 25% of Americans will experience a mental health issue in their lifetime, less than 40% will receive the adequate care they need.

Members of the LGBTQ community are more likely to experience depression, anxiety and substance use disorders than the general population. Stress from being closeted, coming out, confronting discrimination and social stigma around mental health contributes to higher rates of mental health concerns. Some people in the LGBTQ community also experience more social exclusion and are more distant from their families because of their identities. In addition, the LGBTQ community may have a more difficult time finding empathic and culturally affirming mental healthcare.

The service area HBHC serves suffers a disproportionate rate of depression, anxiety, and substance use. Although HBHC has programs tailored to the LGBTQ community, the services are available to all communities.

Howard Brown Health Center has designed its behavioral health services specifically to address the needs of the LGBTQ population and surrounding communities. Our counselors, social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists are experienced with our community's specific needs and our programs work to address those needs. If you are experiencing depression, anxiety, grief, or are seeking support with substance use, or have any other concerns, please talk with a member of your care team.

You may access HBHC's behavioral health services by calling to schedule a phone screening (773-388-1600) or inquiring through your primary care provider. HBHC has Behavioral Health Consultants at all primary care sites.

WHY BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE MATTERS

Behavioral Health in Primary Care

As a Patient Centered Medical Home, Howard Brown Health Center is committed to helping you help yourself stay healthy. Our Behavioral Health Consultants (BHC) work closely with your Primary Care Provider and other members of your care team to help you consider how your body, mind and behavior impact your health. A BHC does not offer traditional counseling or therapy; instead a BHC offers brief, solution-focused interventions that focus on changes you can make to maintain or improve your health. Visits are brief and can range from a one-time consult to a short series of consultations when you visit your PCP.

Howard Brown Health Center also has therapists (social workers and psychologists) who provide individual, group, couples and family therapy. They are available if you are interested in talking in more depth about issues that relate to your health and well-being.

HOW TO BE AN EMPOWERED PATIENT

Seeing a healthcare provider can be stressful. That stress can come from the fear of being judged, fear of the unknown, having negative experiences with other providers, being nervous about a new medication, or being terrified of needles.

Your stress and concerns are normal. Our goal is to take the mystery out of medicine and to work with you to address your fears. We want to earn your trust so that you will visit Howard Brown Health Center more often and make choices to improve your health.

We want you to feel empowered. We encourage you to ask questions and have opinions – it's your body!

Four Ways to Feel Empowered:

- **Trust:** We are not here to judge. The more honest you are with your medical team, the more helpful we can be in addressing your needs. Tell us about yourself. Do you smoke? Have you skipped doses of your medication? By sharing with us, we can more effectively talk to you about goals that meet your needs.
- **Own Your Body:** You know yourself better than anyone else. When something feels off, don't be quiet about it. Even things that seem small can be important.
- **Set Goals:** It's a good idea to set manageable goals to improve your health. Your primary care provider can help you set realistic goals that can help make a big difference in your life. Whether it's losing weight, doing a better job of sticking to your medication schedule, or adopting more healthy habits, we can work on it together.
- **Do Your Own Research:** Doctors are smart, but they don't know everything. You can find a wealth of information online and come to your appointment with questions and ideas. By doing your own research on matters related to your care and treatment, you will strengthen the collaboration with your medical team.

PREPARING FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT

Once you have an appointment at a Howard Brown Health Center, there are a few things you can do to prepare for your visit. If you're not able to provide any or all of this information, we can still work with you to improve your health, but the more you are able to share, the more we can do for you.

Before your appointment:

- **Transfer your records:** If another medical provider has your health records, such as x-rays, test results and treatment histories, please arrange to have the records transferred before your appointment. You can do so by filling out a release of information from your provider's office or requesting one from us. To obtain a form you can visit www.howardbrown.org and search "release of information," call us at (773) 388-1600 to request a form to be mailed or emailed to you, or stop in for this service.
- **Keep a list of questions:** Write down your questions so you don't forget anything you want to cover with your medical provider.
- **Note any changes, side effects and symptoms:** A health journal can help you track changes, pains, aches or certain side effects (even small ones!) from medications you are taking. Record the time of day, conditions such as stress, lack of sleep, and any other observations that you think may be relevant.
- **Keep track of everything you're taking:** Your medical team needs to know all the medications you are on from prescriptions to vitamins, be it for prevention or to address a condition. This is especially important for new patients.
- **Share your medical history:** Tell your medical team about any allergies or pre-existing conditions.
- **Know your family history:** Your medical team can review the medical histories of your blood relatives, like parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents and aunts and uncles to identify issues for which you may be at risk. If you have this information, please share it.

PREPARING FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT

- **Keep track of your successes:** If you set goals with your primary care provider during a previous visit, keep a record of what strategies were effective for you so that you can revisit the goals and work with the provider to revise your plan, if needed.
- **Ask about appointment prerequisites:** Some tests require you to refrain from eating or drinking hours prior. For example, if you are getting a pap smear, you shouldn't have intercourse the night before your appointment. When you make your appointment, we will let you know of any requirements; by adhering to them, you can ensure accurate test results.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR VISIT

Before you leave home:

- **Pack your notes and questions:** Don't forget to bring the materials you prepared (see "Preparing For Your Appointment")
- **Double check:** Confirm your appointment time and location. We have more than one clinic so make sure you know which site your appointment is at. If you're uncertain give us a call at (773) 388-1600 or log into the online patient portal.
- **Arrive early:** New patients should plan to arrive 30 minutes before their appointments and returning patients should arrive 15 minutes early. This allows us to update your paperwork and any insurance information that you have before the appointment.
- **Get directions:** If you're a new patient, make sure that you have clear directions on how to get to your appointment site and have mapped out the best route to get there. Give yourself plenty of travel time.
- **Bring:** Current form of ID; insurance information (if applicable); pay stubs, which can help determine your sliding scale payment (if any); and available healthcare records.

During the Appointment:

- **Refer to your written notes and questions:** Speak up about all of the things that you wrote down. If the provider doesn't ask about something you think they should be aware of, tell them! You're the expert on your own body.
- **Ask questions and repeat answers back:** If something doesn't make sense, ask your providers to explain. You can repeat back the information aloud to confirm your understanding; this is especially a good idea if you are discussing a new treatment plan. Do not leave until you are satisfied that you understand your care plan.
- **Don't forget about your emotional health:** Your primary care provider can also help you access help for emotional health issues you may be having. Emotional health can affect your physical health. We have specialists on staff who can help with addictions, intimate partner violence, depression, and much more.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR VISIT

- **Make a plan for after you leave:** Before you leave the appointment, make sure that you and your primary care provider have worked out a plan and set goals to address issues you have identified.
- **Is a follow-up visit needed?** If you have a health issue, make sure you understand what the next steps are and if you need a follow-up appointment.
- **Newly diagnosed?** If you have been diagnosed with a chronic illness – HIV, diabetes, heart disease or something else – it's important to talk about future steps and how to manage your illness physically and emotionally. It's also okay to seek a second opinion.
- **Get your primary care provider's contact information:** Ask your provider how best to contact them with questions or concerns. Some providers prefer email, others prefer phone. You can ask what hours are best to reach them and how soon you should expect them to respond.
- **Paperwork:** If you are asked to fill out and sign any paperwork or medical forms, make sure to read everything carefully and ask questions to get clarification.

FEEDBACK

Part of feeling empowered is speaking up when you feel that you have not been treated fairly or with the respect that you are entitled to.

Complaints:

- If you are comfortable doing so, discuss your concern with any staff member. That person will attempt to resolve the complaint and inform you about the available alternatives or actions moving forward.
- If you're not comfortable speaking with the staff member providing your services, or they are the problem, ask to speak with that staff member's supervisor. If the staff member's supervisor is not immediately available, the supervisor will attempt to contact you as soon as possible, but no later than two business days.
- If you are unsatisfied with the supervisor's response and proposed solution, you can talk to the department director for a response and proposed resolution.
- You may also talk to HBHC's grievance officer. **You may leave a message with the grievance officer at (773) 572-8361.** The grievance officer will contact you within seven business days of receiving the message.
- If you would rather fill out a form, you can access the Client/Patient Complaint and Grievance form at the front desk of any clinic or at www.howardbrown.org. You can deliver (by mail or in person) to: **Grievance Officer, Howard Brown Health Center, 4025 North Sheridan Road, Chicago, IL 60613.**
- If your complaint is about a service that you know to be funded through the Ryan White Program, you can contact The Center for Conflict Resolution (CCR) at no cost by calling **1-866-CARE-212.**
- If your complaint is about a service that you know to be funded through the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC), you can contact Michael Grego at AFC at **(312) 784-9089.**

FEEDBACK

Compliments:

We hope you have a positive experience at Howard Brown Health Center! If you do, we would love to hear about it.

- Tell the staff member offering you services. Everyone loves a compliment and our team works hard to do well; please let them know when you have a great experience!
- If you are interested in sharing your Howard Brown story, let us know! We can profile you in our marketing and if you'd like, you can remain anonymous. By sharing your experience, you help raise the visibility of Howard Brown as a resource and help educate the community. You can email us at communications@howardbrown.org or call (773) 383-2665, ext. 1052.

INSURANCE, REFERRALS AND BEYOND

How do I pay? Co-payments and balances are due at the time of service. Howard Brown has a variety of payment options available, including credit cards, cash and checks. We will always see you regardless of ability to pay. Questions about insurance and/or billing statement(s) should be directed to the billing manager at (773) 388-8991.

- **How do I get my lab results?** Your provider might have ordered lab tests during your visit to help evaluate your health. These tests can include HIV/STIs, cholesterol, and diabetes. If any lab test is abnormal, we will call you. If your results are normal, you can access them through the patient portal. Ask an HBHC staff member if you need an invitation to or have questions about the patient portal. Most lab services ordered will be performed onsite at the clinic, and lab appointments are scheduled separately from your provider appointment.

- **How do I get my test results?** We are committed to providing test results in a timely fashion. Many results are available immediately, but many require up to 10 days to process. Your results will be delivered either via a phone call or a secure email via the patient portal. Please tell your primary care provider which works best for you.

- **How do I fill a prescription?** All of our clinics have a Walgreens onsite. We can also give you a written prescription or call in a prescription to the pharmacy of your choice. Refills that do not require an assessment of your health condition will be processed within three business days of the request. Your pharmacy can request the refill or you can contact us directly to request it.

- **What's a referral?** Your primary care provider may identify a service you need that Howard Brown does not provide, such as a mammogram or obstetrics. Your provider will refer you to the specialist you need and will coordinate your care with the specialist. In some instances, your health insurance may require preauthorization, which may delay your care.

WHY WE REQUEST DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Q: What do my race, ethnicity, language, sex assigned at birth and current gender identity have to do with my health?

A: Collecting this information helps Howard Brown advocate for additional resources to provide high-quality healthcare to more people. As a community health center, we are also obligated by our funders to collect certain information (such as race, language, and current gender identity) about our patients.

Howard Brown Health Center understands that current categories for race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, sex assigned at birth, and gender identity do not adequately capture our individual identities. At the same time, differences in access to things such as transportation, health insurance, quality of culturally competent services, and other factors impact our patients' health. Together, we can work to reduce these differences in individual patients and community health.

Q: How will Howard Brown use this information?

A: Information you give us about your race, ethnicity, language, sex assigned at birth and current gender identity will help us provide better services and programs to everyone. For example, with this information, we can provide health information in languages spoken by our patients and offer culturally competent programs that reflect the diversity of our patient population. We do not report individuals' information to funders, only compiled information (for example, percentage of patients who are male).

Q: Who will see my information?

A: Your information is kept private and confidential and is protected by law (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act HIPAA, 1996). The only people who will see your information are members of your healthcare team and others who are authorized to see your medical records. If you would like more specifics, you may download the HIPAA notification policy at www.howardbrown.org or call us at (773) 388-1600 to request a copy.

Q: What if I don't want to answer these questions?

A: We understand if you do not wish to answer some or all of the questions. You can tell us as much or as little as you want. We will provide you the best possible care regardless of whether you answer these questions. Providing this information helps inform our practices and services.

Hours & Locations

Please visit howardbrown.org/locations for the most up-to-date hours and locations



Cool Stuff. Vintage. Every Day.

Oak Park

217 Harrison Street,
Oak Park, IL 60304
708.445.0612

Lakeview

3020 N. Lincoln Avenue,
Chicago, IL 60657
773.549.5943

Andersonville

5404 N. Clark Street,
Chicago, IL 60640
773.271.9382

Want to donate?

Donate to any of our locations, or call 773.549.5943


The Brown Elephant
The Resale Shop of Howard Brown Health Center

