

LO-3 Activity: Stepped Care Examples

Instructions: Consult the case examples provided for the activity or create a unique list for student use. First, ask students to “place” patients at the appropriate level of care using the stepped care model in Figure 1 for current symptoms. Second, ask students to recommend next steps in response to the information provided on patient progress over time. Next steps could include the following options: “step down,” “step up,” or continue at current level. Invite students to explain the rationale for their decision.

Primary Prevention and Self-Directed Care

- *Current:* The patient presents with mild stress, occasional worry, and early signs of emotional strain related to life transitions. They are functioning well overall but seek tools for stress management, resilience building, and maintaining wellness through self-guided strategies.
- *Patient progress:* After using self-directed tools and adjustment to their life transitions, the patient reports that they are managing much better.
- *Next step recommendation:*

Integrated Care with Brief Interventions

- *Current:* The patient reports acute but mild-to-moderate anxiety or depressive symptoms associated with a recent stressor. They need immediate support, brief assessment, and practical coping strategies delivered within a single primary care visit.
- *Patient progress:* One month later, after two follow-up sessions to reinforce coping strategies, the patient reports improvement and interest in maintaining their progress.
- *Next step recommendation:*

Community Support Services with Brief and Long-term Treatment

- *Current:* The patient experiences persistent low mood, anxiety, or adjustment difficulties that interfere somewhat with daily functioning. They would benefit from short-term therapy combined with peer support to develop coping skills, normalize experiences, and reduce isolation.
- *Patient progress:* One month later, the patient reports they are feeling more overwhelmed, increased nightmares related to a past trauma, and inability to perform some independent activities of daily living.
- *Next step recommendation:*

Intensive Services with Therapy and Care Management

- *Current:* The patient presents with moderate to severe mental health symptoms, such as recurrent depression, trauma-related distress, or functional impairment across domains. They require structured, ongoing therapy, coordination of services, and case management to support stability and recovery.
- *Patient progress:* Three months later the patient reports they are coping much better and that the medication adjustment provided by their prescriber helped tremendously. The patient rates many symptoms as moderate versus severe.
- *Next step recommendation:*

Intensive Services for High Complexity

- *Current:* The patient has severe and chronic mental health conditions, potentially including co-occurring disorders, high risk of harm, or frequent crises. They need comprehensive, multidisciplinary care with intensive supervision, crisis intervention, and long-term support to ensure safety and continuity of care.
- *Patient progress:* Over time: Despite increased stability over a period of several months, the patient continues to report intermittent crises that require active management by an interdisciplinary team.
- *Next step recommendation:*