

Signs and Symptoms

Anorexia Nervosa

- Noticeable weight loss
- Restriction of food
- Unusual eating habits
- Belief of being “too fat” even when thin
- Frequently checking weight
- Irregular or cessation of menstruation
- Depression, lethargy
- Always being cold

Bulimia Nervosa

- Binge eating
- Vomiting
- Secretive eating
- Chronic sore throat
- Laxative, diet pill or diuretic abuse
- Puffy cheeks
- Erosion of tooth enamel, tooth decay

Binge Eating

- Weight gain
- Feeling out of control when eating
- Rapid consumption of large quantities of food
- Feelings of guilt and shame
- Low self-esteem
- Secretive eating patterns
- Avoidance of social situations



EDCA

Eating Disorder Center of Alabama
A Division of Alabama Psychiatric Services

www.edcalabama.com



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Program Philosophy

The Eating Disorder Center of Alabama (EDCA) is a division of Alabama Psychiatric Services, P.C. (APS). This program is dedicated to providing patients with eating disorders an integrated, cost effective treatment option. The program incorporates the medical expertise of physicians, advanced practice registered nurses, specially trained licensed therapists and nutritionists for the provision of psychotherapeutic treatment in a comfortable, safe and supportive environment.

The program is built on the belief that people who suffer with eating disorders can, through increased self-awareness and insight, re-establish a healthy balance in life, develop a healthy relationship with food and one's self, achieve meaningful, positive interpersonal relationships, and return to a productive life.

Program Description

EDCA is a partial hospitalization program located in Birmingham, Alabama which provides a structured, intensive outpatient treatment alternative to inpatient treatment. Patients may be admitted directly to the program or from an inpatient setting. The length of treatment is based on the individual needs of each patient but generally lasts a minimum of six to eight weeks. The program operates Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm. Boarding accommodations can be arranged for patients who live outside of the Birmingham area.

What is an Eating Disorder?

Eating disorders are serious medical and psychiatric illnesses in which people suffer severe disturbances in eating behaviors. These conditions are common and affect about 5-10 million people in the United States, most often women between the ages of 12 and 35. During the past few years, there has been an increasing number of males diagnosed with eating disorders.

• **Anorexia Nervosa** is characterized by extreme dieting or refusal to eat with an intense fear of gaining weight. Patients perceive themselves as fat even though they are usually underweight.

• **Bulimia** is characterized by episodic binge eating, usually followed by self-induced vomiting or excessive laxative use.

• **Binge Eating Disorder** is characterized by the rapid consumption of very large quantities of food. Patients feel a lack of control during the binge. Purging is not associated with binge eating disorder.

Eating disorders can affect all aspects of one's life. Relationships with loved ones, the ability to work or maintain routine activities, and physical health may be impacted by the disorder. In addition to the significant physical effects of an eating disorder, emotional problems such as depression and anxiety may be present. Eating disorders can be complex and may require a more intensive treatment approach than what is typically available in an outpatient office setting.

Treatment

Effective treatment of eating disorders includes therapies which address the emotional and physical health of the patient. The interdisciplinary team of the EDCA has specialized training and skills for working with eating disorders. Each patient is assessed by the team of professionals. Individualized treatment plans are developed based on the unique needs of each patient.

The treatment team includes:

Board Certified Psychiatrists
Advanced Practice Registered Nurses
Licensed, Registered Nutritionists/Dietitians
Licensed Therapists
Psychologists

Treatment modalities include:

Psychiatric Evaluation and ongoing assessment: Every patient receives a comprehensive psychiatric assessment by a board certified psychiatrist. If necessary, medication may be prescribed and closely monitored by the team. The psychiatrist sees each patient on a regular basis throughout the course of treatment.

Medical Evaluation: Patients who present with medical complications as a result of an eating disorder will be referred to an internal medicine specialist who also has experience in the treatment of eating disorders.

Nutritional Assessment and Counseling: Each patient is evaluated by a registered, licensed dietitian. Counseling and education is provided which focuses on present and healthier eating patterns.

Individual Psychotherapy: Patients under the care of APS providers are encouraged to continue the relationship with their therapists during the program to ensure continuity of care and appropriate discharge planning. The EDCA has facilities for videoconferencing with providers in outlying areas.

Group Psychotherapy: Group therapy approaches may include dialectical techniques, psychoeducational, cognitive behavioral, body image, relaxation, movement, art therapies and yoga.

Meal Support Groups: Supervised breakfast, lunch and snack times are an integral component of the program. Meal support groups are designed to help patients return to normal eating behaviors while providing the nutrition needed for their bodies.

Family Therapy: Therapists guide families through the exploration of relationships and functioning within the family unit. Family education is also provided and is an integral part of the recovery process.

Referral Procedure

Interested candidates for the program may contact EDCA for an assessment to determine if the program is suited for their needs.

Physicians may refer by contacting the Program Psychiatrist or the Program Director.

Criteria for Admission:

- Primary diagnosis of an eating disorder (DSM-IV)
- Motivation and willingness to participate in intensive treatment
- Medical stability consistent with partial hospitalization setting