

Quick Scripts: Referrer Conversation Guide

A practical resource for social workers, hospital discharge planners, and community partners making referrals to BHDD services.

How to Use This Guide

This guide gives you ready-to-use language for three common referral situations: introducing the toolkit to a provider, making a referral directly to a client, and handling hesitations. You don't need to memorize these scripts word-for-word — use them as a starting point and make them your own.

1. Introducing the Toolkit to a Provider or Colleague

USE WHEN: You're meeting with a hospital discharge planner, school counselor, DFCS case manager, or a partner organization like Grady, River Edge, Chris 180, or Georgia Hope, and you want to walk them through the referral toolkit.

Key Talking Points

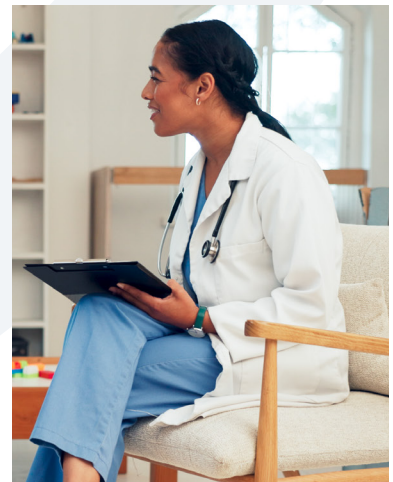
- Fulton County's Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities department offers free or low-cost behavioral health and developmental disability services to residents — and the referral process is simple.
 - This toolkit gives you everything you need to make a confident referral: service cards, a referral form, and materials you can hand directly to your client.
 - You don't need to know every detail about the services — that's what the materials are for.
 - We want to make this as easy as possible for you and the people you serve.
-

Sample Language

OPENING: *"I'd like to share a resource I think your team will find useful. Fulton County's Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Department — BHDD — has services available for residents who need mental health support, substance use treatment, or developmental disability services. And most of them are free or low-cost."*

INTRODUCE THE TOOLKIT: *"We've put together a referral toolkit to make the process as straightforward as possible. It includes service cards you can hand directly to clients, a simple referral form, and a guide that tells them exactly what to expect after they call. You don't have to know everything about the program — the materials walk your client through it."*

CLOSE: *"Would it be helpful to walk through how a referral works? I can show you the form and leave a few service cards with you today."*

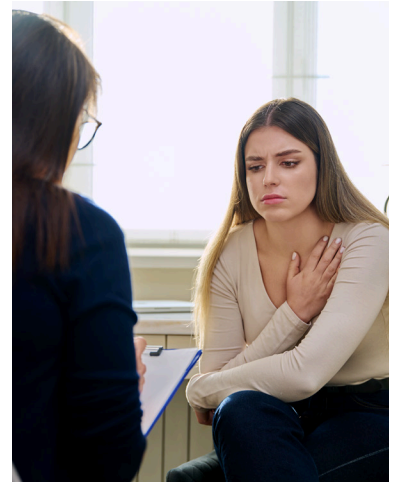


2. Making a Referral Directly to a Client

USE WHEN: You're speaking directly with a resident — a patient, a parent, a student, or a community member — and you want to introduce them to BHDD services and give them a service card.

Key Talking Points

- Keep it warm and simple. Your client doesn't need to understand the whole system — they just need to know what their next step is.
 - Lead with what's in it for them: free or low-cost services, real support, no judgment.
 - Give them the service card and tell them someone will follow up. Take away as much uncertainty as possible.
 - Remind them that asking for help is the right move — not a sign of weakness.
-

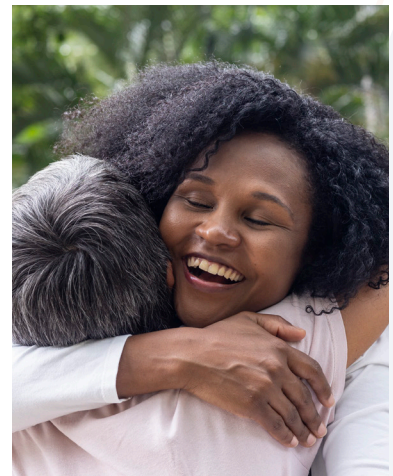


Sample Language — General Introduction

OPEN: *"I want to make sure you know about some support that's available to you right here in Fulton County. It's through the county's Behavioral Health Department, and the services are free or very low cost."*

EXPLAIN: *"This card has all the details — what the program offers, how to get in touch, and what to expect when you call. You won't have to explain everything from the beginning. I'm putting in a referral for you, so someone from Fulton County BHDD may reach out to you directly."*

REASSURE: *"You don't have to have everything figured out before you call. They're there to help you figure it out. And reaching out is honestly the hardest part — you've already done something brave by talking to me today."*



Sample Language — For a Parent or Family Member

OPEN: *"I know you've been carrying a lot, and I want to make sure you and your family have access to support. Fulton County has services that can help — and they're designed for families in exactly the situation you're describing."*

BRIDGE TO THE CARD: *"This card explains the program and has the phone number you'd call to get started. It also tells you what to have ready before your first appointment, so there are no surprises."*

FOR IDD FAMILIES: *"If your child has an intellectual or developmental disability, Fulton County has a specific program for families like yours. It covers both children and adults, and they can walk you through everything at your pace."*



3. Responding to Common Hesitations

Hesitation is normal. Many of the people we serve have had difficult experiences with government systems, or face real barriers like cost, transportation, or distrust. Use the responses below as a guide — lead with empathy and follow with a clear next step.



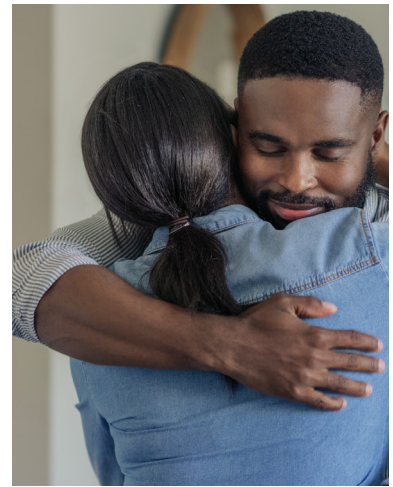
COMMON CONCERN	SUGGESTED RESPONSE
<i>"I don't think I can afford it."</i>	<i>"Most of these services are free or offered on a sliding-fee scale based on income, so cost doesn't have to be a barrier. The service card has details, and when you call, they can walk you through exactly what to expect before you commit to anything."</i>
<i>"I don't have a way to get there."</i>	<i>"Fulton County has services in multiple locations — North, South, and Midtown — so there may be a site closer to you than you think. Some clients also use MARTA or Medicaid transport."</i>
<i>"I've tried to get help before, and it didn't work out."</i>	<i>"I hear you, and I'm sorry that happened. I can't promise everything will be perfect, but I can tell you that this program has helped a lot of people in this community, and I wouldn't be recommending it if I didn't think it was worth trying. Would you be open to just making one call and seeing what they say?"</i>
<i>"I don't want people to know my business."</i>	<i>"That's completely understandable. What you share with this program is private. They're a county health service, and they're required to protect your personal information, the same as any doctor's office."</i>
<i>"I don't think anything is really wrong."</i>	<i>"That's a fair question. When you call, someone will ask you a few basic questions about what kind of support you're looking for. There's no commitment just from calling. The 'What to Expect' card I'm giving you walks through the whole process step by step."</i>
<i>"I'm too busy right now."</i>	<i>"I understand. Would it help to just take this card? There's no deadline — you can reach out whenever you're ready. And if things get harder before they get better, you'll already have the number."</i>

4. Service-Specific Scenarios

Behavioral Health Outpatient Services

USE WHEN: Client is experiencing anxiety, depression, trauma, grief, substance use concerns, or other mental health challenges.

SAY: *“Fulton County has free outpatient counseling and mental health services available to residents. You can meet with a counselor regularly to work through what’s going on — no insurance required. I’m going to give you a service card with the details and a direct number to call.”*



Crisis Services

USE WHEN: Client is in acute distress, expressing suicidal ideation, or presenting in a mental health emergency.

Note for crisis situations: If a client is in immediate danger, contact 911 first. The language below is for clients who need urgent but non-emergency support, or who are in crisis and need a warm handoff to county services.

SAY: *“I’m concerned about you right now, and I want to make sure you have support today — not next week. Fulton County has a crisis line and same-day services available. I’m going to help you make that call right now. You don’t have to go through this alone.”*



IDD Services — Adults

USE WHEN: Adult client has an intellectual or developmental disability and needs support services, waiver navigation, or day program referral.

SAY: *“Fulton County has programs specifically designed to support adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities — things like daily living support, job preparation, and community programs. Services are often covered through Medicaid waiver programs. I’ll give you a card that explains the options, and when you call, they can walk you through what your family member qualifies for.”*



IDD Services — Children & School Transition

USE WHEN: Family has a child with an IDD diagnosis, or a student is transitioning out of school-based services.

SAY: *“As your child gets older and transitions out of school, the services that have supported them will change. Fulton County has programs that can continue that support into adulthood — and the earlier you connect with them, the smoother that transition tends to be. This card will tell you who to call and what to expect.”*

5. After the Conversation

What to Leave Behind

FOR THE CLIENT	FOR THE PROVIDER/COLLEAGUE
✓ Program-Specific Service Card(s) ✓ "What to Expect" Card ✓ "While You're Waiting" Checklist ✓ Service Location Guide ✓ FAQ Sheet (If Relevant)	✓ Service Overview One-Pager ✓ Eligibility Quick Reference Guide ✓ Referral Form (Print/QR Code) ✓ Your Contact Info

Note on follow-up: After you submit a referral, the client can expect to hear from the BHDD team by phone within 1–2 days. If they have any questions while they're waiting, they can call 404-612-6520.