What You Need to Know About Finding Substance Use Treatment

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Tips and Advice for Finding Treatment for Substance Use

There's a lot of information swirling around the internet on substance use treatment and recovery. That makes it hard to tell which sources to trust as you consider your options. This is why we offer tips on finding treatment.

With the input of leading substance use treatment clinicians and experts from non-profit, academic and government institutions, the Start Your Recovery team has built out a few steps to help you begin finding the support you need to get back on track.

Explore Your Treatment Options

Addiction comes in many forms, and so does recovery. Each person is facing unique challenges, like aging, transitions and mental health conditions. That's why it is important to explore your treatment options.

With research and help from your physician, you can identify a treatment plan that may work best for you. Here is an overview of some options:

Rehabilitation

Rehab is a general term for intensive, supervised programs that help people stop using drugs or alcohol and give them the tools they need to live a healthy life. Rehab programs typically involve these general steps:

- **Detoxification:** Safely removing drugs and alcohol from the patient's system.
- **Therapy:** Helping patients change their behaviors that come with or trigger their use of drugs or alcohol.
- **Resocialization:** Learning new ways of functioning in society to stay sober.

Types of rehab include:

- **Outpatient treatment:** Patients live at home and go to a clinic or facility regularly for sessions with substance use treatment professionals.
- **Inpatient treatment:** Patients stay in a hospital, usually for at least 28 days, and receive intensive and highly structured care.
- **Residential treatment:** Patients receive intensive and highly structured care in a nonhospital setting.
- **Recovery housing:** Patients live in supervised, temporary housing where they can participate in treatment programs.

The length and form of treatment vary, based on your situation and level of dependence on drugs or alcohol.

Therapy

Behavioral therapy is the most commonly used method for treating substance misuse. It helps patients change their behaviors that accompany or trigger their use of drugs or alcohol. Behavioral therapies include:

- **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT):** Through CBT, you can learn how to identify your triggers for using drugs or alcohol, recognize and prepare for situations that increase your risk for misusing substances, and cope with your cravings.
- **Strategic/interactional therapy:** Through this form of therapy, your counselor can help you identify personal strengths and create situations that make it easier for you to avoid using drugs or alcohol.
- **Motivational enhancement therapy (MET):** MET promotes rapid, self-motivated change, rather than guiding clients through a series of steps. The goal is to identify the things that can drive the patient to change and then strengthen that motivation.
- **Contingency management (CM):** CM uses positive reinforcement, or rewards, to encourage people to resist using drugs, primarily opioids and cocaine.

These therapies may also include community reinforcement, family therapy, a 12-step program, or the use of medication. They're offered on an outpatient or inpatient basis and can be tailored to the specific needs of a person with a drug or alcohol problem. They can be combined or phased in to increase their effect at different stages of recovery.

Support Groups

Support, or self-help, groups can be a vital part of the recovery process, providing a supportive space for people who have faced the same challenges or had similar experiences.

In a support group, people can share their stories, receive encouragement and hear about ways to manage their recovery. Self-help groups include programs like Alcoholics Anonymous and SMART Recovery (Self-Management and Recovery Training) as well as family, faith-based and community networks.

Treatment for Co-occurring Disorders

When people face substance use disorders and mental illness at the same time, they have what is called co-occurring, or dual, disorders. Some treatment facilities offer diagnosis and treatment of both, which is important for achieving and maintaining a full recovery.

For co-occurring disorders, recommended treatment considers the overlap in the causes and effects of substance use problems and mental illness so they can be explored and addressed together. Such integrated treatment is provided at many inpatient rehab centers as well as in outpatient treatment programs.

By pairing medications for co-occurring mental health conditions with rehab treatment, integrated treatment can stabilize patients while they work to develop coping skills and heal from their addiction.

Consider What's Best for You

One size does not fit all when it comes to treatment. First, identify your treatment needs and the programs that can meet them. Your needs and the severity of your drug or alcohol problem will help determine which type of treatment will work best to help you start your recovery.

Some treatment referral services are eager to recommend inpatient facilities, but they may not take into consideration the patient's unique situation or medical needs. Whenever possible, consult a licensed medical or mental health provider for advice and support. As you pursue treatment, do not be afraid to ask questions and advocate for yourself.

Next, determine the program's cost, remembering that the most effective treatment is not necessarily the most expensive. Sometimes alcohol or drug rehab programs provide luxury extras that have not been proven to treat addiction or lead to recovery effectively.

This does not mean you should search for only the cheaper rehab centers, but you should focus on finding an affordable program that provides effective treatments that match your needs.

For each program, review your options for covering costs, including insurance, employer assistance, state and local programs, and loans. Take advantage of services and credible benefit hotlines that can help you find programs that offer reduced fees or payment assistance.

Lean on Your Support Network

A strong support network — including family members, friends, your community, counselors and healthcare providers — is an important part of recovery.

As you begin your journey, leaning on this support network can make all the difference in staying on track. You are not alone, so call on the people who care about you to help.