

Choosing the Appropriate Level of Care For Substance Use Disorder Treatment

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Various treatment options are available for substance use disorder. The primary objectives of substance use disorder treatment are fostering abstinence and preventing relapse. Treatment offers brief interventions in a doctor's office to long-term inpatient care. Each "level of care" has its strengths and benefits.

"Best practices" in substance use disorder treatment entail appropriate placement on a continuum of care, where providers strive to align the level of care with the patient's needs. Based on standardized criteria, providers match individuals to a level of care, determining escalating tiers of care by intensity and restriction levels.

The following treatment options are available to those seeking help:
Brief Intervention: A brief intervention, not classified as "treatment," typically assumes that the issue is of a mild level of severity and has not progressed to a level requiring a more in-depth and intensive treatment. It often involves educational efforts to motivate behavior change before problems escalate. Examples include a DUI (driving under the influence) assessment and an ADSAC (Alcohol and Drug Substance Abuse Course) class.

Outpatient Counseling: One of the least restrictive forms of substance use treatment, outpatient counseling allows clients to maintain their daily responsibilities while attending individual or group counseling sessions. They receive education about alcohol and drugs, explore the impact of substance use on their lives, and address emotional and psychological issues. Sessions can occur once or twice a week, with intensive outpatient programs offering several hours of sessions several days a week.

Significant advantages include lower expenses compared to inpatient treatment and the opportunity to practice new skills in real-world settings. Inpatient Treatment: Residential care facilities offer live-in services in standalone units or hospital settings. Inpatient treatment can encompass short-term detox services, 28-day (or longer) programs, or long-term inpatient treatment programs.

Detox Programs: Short-term inpatient detox facilities provide supervised detox with round-the-clock care, individual and group education, brief counseling, and potential referrals for ongoing treatment. However, detox alone is often insufficient for sustained abstinence.

Individualized Inpatient Programs: Standard inpatient programs offer tailored treatment based on individual needs, which may necessitate flexible lengths of stay. Patients requiring detox assistance or more structured and intensive services for maintaining abstinence may benefit from inpatient care.

Residential treatment programs feature multidisciplinary teams comprising medical providers, addiction and recovery educators, individual, group, and family counseling professionals, and aftercare coordination services. Inpatient care offers additional structure, focused attention on developing early abstinence skills, and simultaneous treatment of common mental health issues co-occurring with substance use disorder. Specialized inpatient centers concurrently address more severe mental health problems and substance use disorders.

Long-term Inpatient Treatment Programs: Long-term treatment facilities cater to individuals needing extended inpatient care. Patients reside onsite and focus solely on recovery. Therapeutic goals involve deepening acceptance of substance use disorder, developing relapse prevention plans, applying constructive use of leisure time, developing a spiritual program of recovery, and enhancing living skills. Long-term care aids in managing post-acute withdrawal symptoms and establishing the necessary structure and support for utilizing new recovery tools and coping skills. This level of care is recommended for individuals with a history of chronic relapse after multiple residential treatment attempts.

Halfway and Three-Quarterway Houses: These residential treatment programs provide ongoing support, including meetings, counseling, recovery activities, and employment assistance. While similar to halfway and three-quarterway houses, Oxford Houses do not offer professional counseling. (See the [Links](#) page for more information about Oxford Houses.)

Selecting the appropriate level of care for substance use disorder treatment involves considering the individual's specific needs, including the severity of substance use disorder, co-occurring mental health issues, and home support. It's crucial to recognize that substance use disorder is a treatable condition, and professional help is available at every level of care. The ultimate goal is sustained abstinence and relapse prevention, which is achievable with the right level of care. Note: This article has been revised and edited from its original version, which was previously published in 2009 on this site. The content has been updated for contemporary language, clarity and accuracy.

Understanding the various levels of care is essential in making informed decisions regarding your recovery. It's equally important to recognize potential challenges that can arise, including the risk of cross addiction. In my ebook, "Understanding Cross Addiction to Prevent Relapse," we explore this often overlooked aspect of recovery. By examining the concept of cross addiction and providing practical strategies for prevention, this guide empowers individuals to safeguard their sobriety and maintain long-term wellness. Don't let the threat of cross addiction disrupt your recovery. Equip yourself with the knowledge and tools needed to stay on the path. Download your copy of "Understanding Cross Addiction to Prevent Relapse" today and take control of your journey towards a healthier, addiction-free life.



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