

Questions About Finding the Best Substance Use Treatment Program? Know What to Ask!

The goal of substance use disorder (SUD) treatment is to stop compulsive and continued drinking and drug use that persists despite negative legal, health and social consequences. Quality treatment allows people to live active lives in their family, workplace and community.

One continual challenge is keeping patients in treatment long enough for them to achieve this goal. That is why finding the right treatment for a person's specific needs is critical. Treatment for SUD is not a "one size fits all" approach. Treatment outcomes depend on the:

- Extent and nature of a person's problems
- Appropriateness of treatment
- Availability of additional services
- Quality of interaction between the person and the treatment provider

Family and friends can play an important role in motivating people with SUD to enter and remain in treatment. However, trying to identify the right treatment programs for a loved one can be a difficult process.

Janus of Santa Cruz, with resources from the National Institute of Drug Abuse, created this information guide containing the five central questions to ask when searching for a treatment program.

Does the program use treatments backed by scientific evidence?

Effective drug abuse treatments can include behavioral therapy, medications or, ideally, the combination of both.

Behavioral therapies vary in focus and may involve:

- Addressing a patient's motivation to change
- Providing incentives to stop compulsive drug use
- Building skills to resist drug abuse
- Replacing drug-using activities with constructive and rewarding healthy activities
- Improving problem solving skills
- Building better personal relationships



Behavioral Therapies Include:

- **Motivational Incentives/Contingency Management** uses positive reinforcement, such as providing rewards or privileges for reductions or elimination of drug use, or for taking treatment medications as prescribed.
- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy** seeks to help patients recognize, avoid and cope with situations in which they are most likely to abuse drugs.
- **Motivational Interviewing** uses strategies to encourage rapid, self-driven behavioral change to stop compulsive illicit drug use and help a patient enter and stay in treatment.
- **12-Step Facilitation Therapy** is an active engagement strategy designed to increase the likelihood of a substance user becoming affiliated with and actively involved in 12-step self-help group, thereby promoting abstinence.

Family Behavior Therapy (FBT) is an approach that addresses substance use problems and co-occurring problems, such as conduct disorders, child mistreatment, depression, family conflict, and unemployment. FBT combines behavioral contracting with contingency management.

Group Therapy helps patients face their substance use disorder realistically, come to terms with its harmful consequences, and boost their motivation to stay obtain and sustain recovery and wellness. Patients learn how to resolve their emotional and personal problems without returning to compulsive illicit drug use.



Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)

Medications are an important part of treatment for many patients, especially when combined with counseling and other behavioral therapies. Different types of medication may be useful at different stages of treatment: to stop compulsive drug use, to suppress cravings and block withdrawal, to remain in treatment, and to avoid relapse. Currently, medications are available to treat opioid, tobacco, alcohol, and cannabis use disorders.

Medicines to Treat Substance Use Disorders

- **Opioid:** Methadone, buprenorphine and naltrexone are used to treat opioid use disorders (prescription pain relievers, heroin).
- **Nicotine:** Nicotine patches, gum, lozenges, nasal spray, and the medications Chantix and Zyban are used to treat nicotine dependence.



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- **Alcohol:** Disulfiram (Antabuse), acamprosate, naltrexone, and topiramate are used to treat alcohol use disorders.
- **Cannabis:** Gabapentin (neurontin) is used to treat cannabis use disorders.

Does the program tailor treatment to the needs of each patient?

No single treatment is right for everyone. The best treatment addresses a person's overall needs, not just their drug use.

Matching treatment settings, levels of care (medication-assisted, outpatient, residential) and program type to a person's unique problems and needs is key to their ultimate success. It's important for the treatment approach to be broad in scope, taking into account a person's age, gender, ethnicity, and culture. The severity of substance use disorders and previous efforts to stop compulsive drug and alcohol use can also influence a treatment approach.

The best programs provide a combination of therapies and other services tailored to meet a patient's needs. In addition, to substance use treatment, a patient may require other medical services, family therapy, parenting support, job training, and social and legal support.

Because SUD and other mental health disorders often occur together, a person with one of these conditions should be assessed for the other. And when these problems co-occur, treatment should address all conditions, including the use of medications, as appropriate.

Does the program adapt treatment as the patient's needs change?

Individual treatment and service plans must be assessed and modified as needed to meet changing needs

A person in treatment may require varying combinations of services during its course, including ongoing assessment. For instance, the program should build in drug monitoring so the treatment plan can be adjusted if relapse occurs. For most people, a continuing care approach provides the best results, with treatment level adapted as a person's needs change.

The chronic nature of severe substance use disorder means that relapsing to compulsive use is not only possible, but likely – similar to what happens with other chronic medical illnesses that have behavioral components like diabetes, hypertension and asthma. Like these illnesses, SUD also requires continual evaluation and treatment modification if necessary. ***A relapse to drug use indicates a need to re-instate or adjust the treatment strategy. It does not mean treatment has failed.***

Is the duration of treatment sufficient?

Appropriate time in treatment depends on the type and degree of a person's problems and needs. Medical detoxification is a necessary first step in the treatment of certain substance use disorders, but by itself does little to change long-term use. Research tells us that most individuals with SUD need at least three months in treatment to really reduce or stop their compulsive drinking and/or use, and that a longer treatment duration result in better outcomes. The best programs will measure progress and suggest plans for maintaining recovery. Like other chronic illness, recovery from SUD is a long-term process that often requires several episodes of treatment and ongoing support from family or community.



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How do 12-step or similar self-help/peer support recovery programs fit into SUD treatment?

Self-help groups can complement and extend the effects of treatment



The most well-known programs are Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, both of which are based on the 12-step model. This peer-led group model draws on the social support offered by peer discussion to help promote and sustain recovery. Most SUD treatment programs encourage patients to participate in peer recovery support during and after treatment, when appropriate.

SUD Treatment Programs & Services at Janus of Santa Cruz

- Detox/Special Care
- Residential Treatment
- Intensive Outpatient Treatment
- Perinatal Treatment
- Medication-Assisted Treatment
- Therapy & Counseling
- DUI Services
- Sober Living Homes

Janus of Santa Cruz is an accredited non-profit organization, licensed by the State of California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs to provide quality SUD treatment programs. **For more information about our SUD treatment programs and services, contact Janus of Santa Cruz at (831) 462-1060 or visit www.januscc.org.**



Additional Treatment Resources

- For science-based principle of treatment, see NIDA's Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment: A Research Guide at: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/PODATIndex.htm>,
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Treatment Locator: www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov. Or call 1-800-HELP.



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