

What is treatment?

Dear Denise:

When I was faced to deal with a loved one's substance use disorder it was recommended that I try to get her in treatment as soon as possible. What is treatment? What do they do at treatment?

Thanks,
Michelle

Dear Michelle:

This is a very common and important question. "Get your loved one into treatment" is almost always the answer when someone asks what they can do about a loved one suffering from Substance Use Disorder (SUD). There is no reason why anyone would really know the answer to this unless your profession is in the field of addiction or medicine and/or you or a family member has suffered from SUD and have previously sought help for this.

I will give you an overview of what treatment is and can be. It can sometimes be complicated and detailed and there is not enough space in my letter to get into the details. But, let's talk about what you or your loved one will generally be meeting when going to a treatment facility. I will address the details in future letters.

First of all there are several types of treatment facilities.

1. Inpatient/residential facilities are those where a client will stay 24/7 for a month or up to a year or more.
2. Outpatient and Intensive Outpatient facilities are places where the programs are attended certain hours during the week (daily, 3 times a week, once a week) but the client lives somewhere else, usually at home.
3. Methadone Clinics provide Medically Assisted Treatment usually with counseling and support.
4. Also, there are therapists with private practices that can help

At this time the main model and option in Surry County is Outpatient/Intensive Outpatient Programming.

When someone arrives at a treatment facility usually the first thing that happens is a full assessment. Questions like: How does your SUD affect your daily life? What is your current living environment? Do you have any legal or financial problems? Are you employed? Drug use history. Medical history. Etc.

To get as full a picture as possible, sometimes, if available, the family is invited to contribute to the assessment. Often, each assessment turns up different results, perceptions are different. The professionals learn from evaluating both parties. After the assessment the professionals (social worker, counselor, medical professional, etc) get together to develop a treatment plan. As a part of the original assessment there can also be medical care provided which can include screening/treatment for HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, tuberculosis, women's health issues.

The treatment plan will include things such as goals developed together with the client, treatment activities to help meet these goals, measurements for meeting these goals, and a

time frame for meeting the goals. All of these are constantly reevaluated during time in treatment. Individuals are sometimes given reading and writing assignments or suggestions of trying new behaviors. Education about Substance Use Disorder is provided. There is usually life skill training (employment skills, social skills, anger management, goal setting). There is regular and random drug and alcohol testing. Another important part of treatment is Relapse Prevention Training. Clients are given tools to use for handling things like cravings, stress, and emotions.

During treatment the client is also provided orientation to self help philosophies and introduced to local self help/support groups.

If during the initial assessment a person is determined to need to be detoxed he/she will often be sent to a detox facility, hospital, or in facility detox area for a few days before beginning treatment. Also, if during initial assessment it is determined that the client might be suffering from a mental health issue (as well as SUD), they can be treated for these while in the program. These would include things like anxiety, depression, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Often these would be evaluated after 3-4 weeks drug free during treatment to determine if these issues are not related to the SUD.

As I said, this is just a general overview of what you might find offered as a part of a treatment program. In later letters I will give you more detailed information about each offered part of the programs as well as opportunities for families to be educated and involved.

We are working diligently to have more treatment and program opportunities here in Surry County. There are private therapists, Support Groups for both those suffering from SUD as well as for families, and more Treatment Programs becoming established in the County. Please check out the resources on our website: www.surrycountycares.com

Again, thanks for this important question.
Denise Krochta