

CHAPTER 7



How to Get Help/Treatment

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INTRODUCTION

If you, your child, or someone you care for are experiencing difficulty with substance use - whether it's misuse, dependence, or addiction - there are many highly effective treatments available.

1 Consult a qualified mental health professional.

Only a professional can diagnose a substance use disorder. They can also help you understand how to talk to your child about their substance use in a way that prompts openness rather than defensiveness.

2 Understand your options.

There are several kinds of treatment and prevention programs and what you choose depends on your situation. You and your child know the details of your context best and should have frank and honest conversations with a doctor when choosing one of the more intensive treatment options below.

- **Prevention programs** often live within a town's youth service bureaus, local schools, public libraries, or other youth-oriented groups. These programs are appropriate for all young people and, as the name suggests, focus on preventing substance use, misuse, dependence, and addiction. They're often staffed with prevention professionals with training in the field who promote drug-free lifestyles for youth through events, after-school programs, and workshops or training. They often have programs and information for parents and caregivers; it's worth reaching out to find one near you.

- **Outpatient treatment** can be in-home or at a doctor's office but has a specific focus on reducing and eliminating substance use. If you know your child is experimenting with substances or using regularly, this is a good place to start. The treatment center staff can help you identify the appropriate level of care for your child.



• **Intensive outpatient treatment** is often in-home and occurs several times per week. These treatment programs allow youth who are using substances to stay in the community with their full social support system but engages them actively in getting to the root cause of substance use and replacing those behaviors with effective, non-substance-related coping mechanisms.

• **Residential treatment** takes place outside of the home and community, often in an effort to change the child's environment and reduce triggers, temptations, and unhealthy situations. These programs are especially effective for young people who haven't found success in outpatient treatment programs, whose caregivers find it challenging to supervise their behavior, or who are at heightened risk for overdose.



3 Go through with it.

All the research in the world won't help your child unless you put it into action. Reach out to someone who will understand and support you, but make it happen.

It can be daunting to choose a treatment program, especially if your child is resisting the need. Keep in mind the compounding effects of drug use on their developing mind and body, and remember that recovery is absolutely possible. Prevention professionals often understand better than anyone that the person using substances to cope with life challenges must want to recover and that sometimes that desire lasts a very short

time. Even if you don't choose a treatment option immediately because your child isn't yet ready, having these details worked out in advance can ease the process when they do decide it's time.



Treatment Evaluation CHECKLIST

Not all treatments are created equal. The checklist below represents recommendations from the Journal of American Medical Association (Brannigan et al. 2004) and can guide your choices between treatment centers. Use the questions below to interview potential providers. Take good notes and review them with your child to decide.

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- Is this program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) and/or the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCHO)?
- Does this program conduct comprehensive intake assessments that cover all aspects of a child's life, including possible co-occurring mental health issues, family functioning, medical issues, learning disabilities, and others?
- Is the treatment comprehensive and also offering support for all areas of a child's life?
- Will family be involved in treatment?
- Is the program targeted specifically for teens, addressing their unique developmental needs?
- How does the program engage and retain participants? Is there trust between staff and participants?
- What qualifications are required for staff? Are they trained in adolescent development, substance use treatment, and in addressing co-occurring mental health illness?
- Does the program accommodate distinct cultural and gender differences? If so, how?
- What continuing care resources will be provided - by the program, your family, or in the community?
- What are the treatment, outcomes of the program, and how are they measured?