

# TREATMENT AND RECOVERY

## Finding Help for Substance Use Disorders

Substance use disorders are a reality for many people in America. As many as 23.2 million people aged 12 or older needed treatment for a substance use disorder in the United States in 2007.<sup>1</sup> The disease ripples throughout communities and families across the country, causing families and loved ones emotional, personal, and health-related struggles.

Treatment and recovery have seen an evolution since **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)** began 20 years ago. In place of the traditional idea of “rehab,” many who are getting support for an addiction are doing so on their own terms. From support groups and therapeutic communities to online programs, there is a solution for anyone who needs treatment and recovery support, including family members.

This year’s **Recovery Month** theme is **“Join the Voices for Recovery: Together We Learn, Together We Heal.”** It emphasizes the need to use all available resources, in our communities and on the Internet, to educate people and their families about the disease and to help those with substance use disorders, and those close to them, get support. It also celebrates the power of community support and understanding. By opening a dialogue about the harmful effects of alcohol and drug addiction on families, friends, and communities, we can provide hope, healing, and better help those struggling with substance use disorders embark on a successful journey of long-term recovery.

Raising awareness about the success people can achieve through recovery is a main goal of **Recovery Month**, now in its 20<sup>th</sup> year. Supported by the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA’s) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT)**, within the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**, **Recovery Month** showcases the true meaning of recovery.

This document walks through the various elements of common treatment avenues and recovery support and offers resources to connect with programs in your community.

### What is Recovery?

Treatment is effective; studies indicate that over the past 25 years, treatment and recovery services have worked to reduce drug use, and new treatments have emerged.<sup>2,3</sup>

To understand addiction, you need to understand the complexity of the disease and its influence on the brain. Addiction is a chronic illness, like any other disease, and living a life free from alcohol and drugs is not just a matter of willpower. As with other chronic diseases, such as diabetes or asthma, it can be successfully managed.<sup>4</sup> Recovery requires commitment and courage by the person with a substance use disorder, as well as the person’s family, friends, and loved ones. It is a process that happens over a period of time and requires a range of interventions and support to address the unique needs of each person and his or her loved ones.



**Tonya Wheeler**

I'm a person in long-term recovery and have not used drugs or alcohol in more than 18 years. As a result of my long-term recovery, I have an amazing relationship with my family and community, and I get the honor of sharing my story with others to show the reality of recovery.

I began using drugs and alcohol at age 12, and by 18 my addiction had progressed to daily use. The consequences of my addiction, which included legal problems, being estranged from my family, and loss of custody of my daughter, began shortly after I started using drugs. The internal consequences of my addiction were worse than the external, including my loss of self-esteem, the inability to feel emotions, lack of personal integrity, and the loss of who I was prior to my addiction.

To my surprise, when I was ready for help, I was turned away from treatment due to lack of insurance coverage. I reached out to my parents who, thankfully, were able to help me enter treatment. There, I began to attend 12-step meetings and learned about the necessity of support from others who had lived in addiction too and have recovery today.

Recovery has not always been easy, but it was always worth it! For the last 18 years, I have continued to attend meetings and have the support of others who are in recovery. I am so grateful for the work I get to do in my community – I get to share the message of miracles that happen in recovery. Today, my life is amazing and I know recovery is a possibility for all!

## Many Paths of Recovery

People experience recovery in different ways.<sup>5</sup> Some people recover on their own; others recover through treatment and/or the assistance of self-help, mutual-aid groups, or medication-assisted therapies. As with most other health conditions, decreasing stress and increasing one's psychological resilience and immunity helps a person – mentally and physically – to better cope and heal.<sup>6</sup>

Over the past five years, policymakers, community service workers, and researchers have focused on holistic and recovery-oriented approaches that use a wide range of age-, gender-, culturally, faith-, and drug-appropriate services to help people recover not just physically, but mentally and spiritually as well. Addressing the mental, physical, and co-occurring issues of a person's addiction can help improve the chances of success.<sup>7,8</sup> Once people stop using alcohol and/or drugs, they begin the process of learning to live life without it, which often means confronting old temptations and repairing relationships damaged through alcohol and drug use.

Elements of the recovery process may include:

- Receiving medical attention through detoxification and individual and/or group therapy in an inpatient treatment setting
- Focusing on improving overall health and redefining oneself
- Exploring spirituality through faith-based communities
- Changing social interactions and expanding social networks – particularly to include others in recovery and participate in mutual support groups
- Empowering oneself by helping others

A well-rounded recovery support network complements the entire process and is central for successful rehabilitation from addiction. The support of family, friends, employers, and other concerned community members can help make recovery lifelong.<sup>9</sup>

## Treatment: On the Road of Recovery

One way to help someone achieve successful long-term recovery is to find a treatment program designed to help a person cope with the physical and psychological pressures of dependency. More than 11,000 specialized drug treatment facilities in the United States provide rehabilitation, behavioral therapy, counseling, medications, and other types of services.<sup>10</sup> Keep in mind that:

- **Treatment occurs in a number of settings.** The most valuable, well-designed plans provide a combination of therapies and services to target the needs of the individual, recognizing the widespread effect substance use has on a person's well-being, family, and friends.<sup>11, 12, 13, 14</sup>
- **No single treatment is appropriate for everyone.** Issues such as age, employment, health, society, culture, and the substance being used shape a person's addiction and eventual treatment plan.<sup>15, 16</sup>
- **Behavioral and medication therapies are among the central elements of the overall recovery process.** They can be used alone or in combination with each other.<sup>17</sup>
- **Treatment can be long or short term.** Like a chronic disorder characterized by occasional relapses, addiction can involve multiple interventions and attempts at abstinence.<sup>18, 19</sup>

## Common Types of Treatment and Recovery Services

Outlined below are some common treatment options that many access as part of their long-term recovery process.

- **Outpatient treatment** is an environment consisting of a range of programs, which typically emphasize individual or group counseling, for people who visit a clinic at regular intervals. Other programs are commonly offered, such as family therapy.
- **Medication-assisted treatment** is an outpatient clinical program with a focus on individualized patient care.<sup>20</sup> For example, medications such as methadone and buprenorphine, which suppress withdrawal and craving symptoms, are effective for those battling heroin and other opiate addictions.<sup>21</sup> Medications help suppress drug cravings and are often used in conjunction with counseling and other behavioral therapies.<sup>22, 23</sup>
- **Short-term residential treatment** provides an abbreviated, yet intense, 3- to 6-week treatment program that is followed by participation in mutual-support groups or extended outpatient therapy.<sup>24, 25</sup>
- **Long-term residential treatment** consists of highly structured programs that offer care 24 hours a day, with an average stay of 6 to 12 months. A therapeutic community is the best-known example of residential treatment. These programs aim to help people return to a drug-free, crime-free lifestyle.<sup>26, 27</sup>
- **Self-help/mutual aid groups** are recovery support programs that people can participate in with or without the aid of standard treatment. These include 12-step programs, support groups that meet on a regular basis, and peer counseling.<sup>28</sup> Self-help groups often are used in conjunction with specialty treatment; one-third (32.7 percent) of people who attended a self-help group for their substance use during the past year also received specialty treatment for a substance use disorder during that time.<sup>29</sup>
- **Recovery support services** consist of programs that help people get their lives back on track, such as employee-based support services, faith-based groups, and health care support.<sup>30, 31</sup>

## Additional Resources

The following resources can help identify treatment and recovery resources for people in need:

- **SAMHSA's "Find Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment" Web site** – Lists resources about mental health, substance use, and treatment
- **SAMHSA's "Accessing Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Online" Webcast** – Examines how technology has revamped the field of substance use disorder prevention and addiction treatment
- **Addiction and Recovery Guide** – Offers treatment and recovery information online
- **The Sober Recovery Community** – Offers support forums for people in recovery, as well as family and friends

# JOIN THE VOICES FOR RECOVERY

- **eGetGoing** – Helps people new to recovery through online support groups led by certified counselors
- **Shouting Inside** – Helps young adults who misuse substances share their stories and their struggles with like-minded people.

Another important resource is SAMHSA's National Helpline, **1-800-662-HELP**, for toll-free information and treatment referrals in English and Spanish, 24 hours a day.

**For more information and organizations that can help provide treatment and other resources, visit the *Recovery Month* Web site at <http://www.recoverymonth.gov>. Information on treatment options in your area and the special services available can be found at SAMHSA's "**Find Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment**" Web site, a portal that includes a searchable database of more than 11,000 U.S. treatment facilities and additional treatment resources. For additional *Recovery Month* materials, visit <http://www.recoverymonth.gov> or call 1-800-662-HELP.**

**Web sites or event examples mentioned in this document and on the *Recovery Month* Web site are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.**

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