

Introduction to Substance Abuse

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Treatment Options

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Treatment for Substance Abuse

Finally, let's take a look at the treatment options available for substance abuse and dependence.

Speaking very generally, there are two types of organized care available: peer-support programs and professional treatment programs.

Peer support programs include the many types of 12-step programs available to addicts and their loved ones. Examples are AA, NA, and CODA.

Professional programs are run by trained mental health, medical, and/or substance abuse professionals. Examples are outpatient programs, residential programs, and inpatient programs.

Peer Support Programs

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). A 12-step program is designed for anyone with a desire to stop drinking. Look in your local telephone directory or call: (212) 870-3400

Cocaine Anonymous (CA). 12-step program focusing on cocaine. Call the Omaha referral line at: (402) 978-8881

Narcotics Anonymous (NA). 12-step program for all drugs of abuse.

McCook

345-5839

Scottsbluff, Gering, & Sidney

(866) 466-3673

Lincoln

474-0405

Omaha

660-3662

Peer Support Programs

Codependents Anonymous (CODA). A program designed for people in relationships with addicts, and to help end the enabling. Call the Fellowship Services Office at (602) 277-7991.

Al-Anon. Designed “To help families and friends of alcoholics recover from the effects of living with the problem drinking of a relative or friend.” National service line at 888-4AL-ANON.

Al-Ateen. “A fellowship of young Al-Anon members, usually teenagers, whose lives have been affected by someone else's drinking. National service line at 888-4AL-ANON.

Spotlight: 12-Step groups

We've looked at some of the different 12-step groups you're likely to find in Nebraska.

- ❖ All the 12-step programs are confidential and pledge to protect your identity. Most organizations have meeting throughout the state; the larger cities may have dozens of meetings. Some meetings are open to the public (including non-addicts), while others are open only to members.
- ❖ Some meetings focus on readings (such as from AA's "Big Book"), some on speakers, and others more on fellowship. The important thing is for the addict to find a meeting he or she finds comfortable. If one doesn't work, try another.

Spotlight: Finding a sponsor

Most 12-step groups operate on the sponsor system. A sponsor is an individual (same sex, as a rule) who “coaches” the addict through recovery.

The sponsor is a recovering addict who has at least several years of sobriety and some experience in helping.

All sponsors are not alike. Some require a disciplined program, such as checking in every day. Others are more casual and play-it-by-ear.

Some 12-step meetings have lists of available sponsors. Sometimes the addict just has to network or ask around.

Formal Treatment Programs

We will look at the more common types of formal treatment in Nebraska, from least to most restrictive.

Education Classes. These are brief educational seminars offered by professional staff. They are recommended for people just beginning to show a pattern of abuse (not dependence).

Outpatient Treatment. Outpatient treatment meets usually 2-3 times per week, in the form of groups led by a credentialed therapist or counselor. It consists of education about substance abuse and some counseling. They are recommended for people with an established pattern of abuse (not dependence).

Formal Treatment Programs

Intensive Outpatient Treatment. This form of treatment takes the form of a group that meets usually 4 or more times per week. It emphasizes counseling and treatment more than just education, and provides more “structure” than just outpatient treatment. It is for people with substance dependence who are otherwise able to live independently.

Residential Treatment. This is a structured program in which the addict lives in a supportive environment, usually with highly structured days including treatment and education episodes. There is usually access to a professional staff who may offer multidisciplinary services.

Formal Treatment Programs

Inpatient Treatment. This form of treatment requires hospitalization of the addict. The person receives round the clock monitoring and structure, and a trained staff is always on hand. This type of treatment is indicated for people who are too disorganized or dangerous to themselves to live independently, or who suffer from psychiatric or physical problems that prevent minimal functioning.

Obviously, the more restrictive the setting, the fewer resources are available. Outpatient programs of various types are more common than inpatient facilities, of which there are only a handful around the State of Nebraska.

Spotlight: 12-step vs. Treatment

Q. What's the difference between going to a 12-step program and going to treatment?

A. 12-step programs are especially useful for social and interpersonal support. A sponsor may be there for you day and night, while the clinic is closed. Treatment programs are useful when when the consequences of using have become too severe to handle with meetings alone.

Keep in mind: formal treatment AND 12-step meetings are a powerful combination. Many treatment programs even require 12-step participation.

Spotlight: 12-step vs. Treatment

Q. How do I know if a person needs more than 12-step meetings, and should go to treatment?

A. Many addicts and abusers end up in formal treatment because of a referral (for example, from a physician, attorney, case worker, or probation officer). In general, the more harmful and disruptive the behavior has become, the more necessary it is to seek formal treatment. Ask an expert.

Once in formal treatment, the abuser or addict is more likely to get access to skilled help that may be necessary (mental health care, medication, case management, etc).

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