

How to Pick a Treatment Facility: Research, Question and Confirm

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RESEARCH

Decide if you need to find a facility in your immediate area. If the answer is yes, begin your search by identifying facilities by geographical location and determining what type of program you or your loved one need.

FACILITY TYPE

- Outpatient – Designed to assist local residents, these facilities generally treat individuals who are not long-term substance users. Participation is usually part-time so clients can continue with their daily lives at work or school. Each of the following organizational structures elevate the level of care provided.
- Short-Term Residential
- Long-Term Residential
- Methadone Treatment
- Hospital Day Treatment
- Hospital Inpatient

SERVICES OFFERED

- Intervention
- Detoxification
- Treatment for co-occurring disorders
- Medical Treatment

QUESTION AND CONFIRM

FACILITY / PROGRAM

- Is the facility licensed?
 - Look at their certificate. Does it have their name? Does it list the address of the facility? Is the date current? Who is the licensing agency?
 - Check with the licensing agency to see if any formal complaints have been filed against the facility, when they were filed, what they were filed for, and what actions were taken to correct the problem.
- Is the program accredited by one of the three national accrediting organizations?
 - Council on Accreditation (COA)
 - Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations (JCAHO)
 - Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission (CARF).

Check their paperwork and call the accrediting agency to see if any complaints have been filed, why, and what was done to correct the problem.

- Ask about their program completion rate. Do not trust advertised "Success Rates". Success rates are difficult to determine and are frequently over exaggerated as a marketing tool. It is more reliable to ask about their completion rate. They should be able to tell you how many of their enrollees complete the program. Completion rates are accepted as a good indicator of success.
- Ask how long it takes an average enrollee to complete their program.
- Ask what percentage of graduates relapse and return?

- Read their web site for information and ask questions. Is all of the information still current? Do they offer all of the services listed on their web site?
- What type of program (or mix of programs) do they offer?
 - Recognized treatment models (modalities) are:
 - 12-Step
 - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
 - Motivational Enhancement Therapy
 - Multisystemic Therapy
 - Multidimensional Family Therapy
 - Therapeutic Community Model
 - Be wary of treatment programs that use a “unique” program that is supported by their high success rate.
- Do they have professionals qualified to diagnose co-occurring disorders like depression, anxiety, behavior problems (includes aggression, posttraumatic stress and learning disabilities) and/or health problems? All problems should to be competently addressed. If the facility you are considering does not have the ability to treat co-occurring disorders, do they have other professionals they call-in to accomplish that during, not after, the course of their program?
- How do they work with specific populations and their individual needs? Do they have special considerations for:
 - Women’s needs?
 - Cultural differences?
 - Religious convictions?
 - Psychiatric problems?

- Do they offer counseling and how often? Counseling is important to recovery.
 - Group
 - Individual
- Do they offer medications? Many new drug therapies are now available to alleviate cravings, help with withdrawal, or treat co-occurring disorders like depression, anxiety, panic attacks, obsessive-compulsive disorder, attention-deficit disorder, bi-polar disorder, etc.
- What will they be learning and how do they spend their day? Do they offer classes on drug facts to educate enrollees on the consequences of drug use? Not all do.
- How do they handle relapse? Relapse can be an unfortunate part of the disease of addiction. Avoid treatment centers who believe relapse is a willful misbehavior to be punished or proves a lack of motivation by the person relapsing.
- Do they include the family in the healing process? Facilities that address family dynamics and treat the family unit as a whole are more successful in helping the abuser reach and maintain sobriety.
- Do they offer after-care? What type and for how long? Do they make community referrals and help individuals establish a support network both inside and outside the facility? After-care is critical to reinforce and maintain new behaviors.
- Do they offer legal assistance if needed? What type? Parole reports, transportation to/from court?

ADMISSION / SCREENING

- How is screening done prior to admission to determine appropriateness of their program and services?
- Do they use industry-accepted, standardized screening tests?
 - Typical screening tests for teens are:
 - SASSI – Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory
 - POSIT – Problem Oriented Screening Instrument for Teenagers
 - PESQ – Personal Experience Screening Questionnaire
 - CASI-A – Comprehensive Addiction Severity Index for Adolescents
 - GAIN – Global Assessment of Individual Needs
 - Typical screening tests for adults are:
 - CAGE – Named after letters in the questionnaire
 - CAGE – AID – Adapted to include drugs
 - DAST – Drug Abuse Screening test
 - MAST – Michigan Alcohol Screening Test

STAFF

- What percentage of their counselors are certified?
 - Which certifying agency in California certified them?
 - Check with those certifying agencies to see if the counselors ARE certified and if any complaints have been filed against them. If yes, what were the complaints for and what actions were taken to remedy the problem?
- Are counselors required to have any qualifications other than certification? A bachelor's degree? A master's degree?
 - What length of time are counselors or staff required to be sober prior to hire date? There is NO state requirement for this in California – each credentialing organization and/or facility can set

- requirements. Look for facilities that require at least two years of sobriety prior to hire.
- What is the average turn-over rate of their counselors? Of staff? Longer term, experienced counselors and staff create a more stable environment important to recovery.
 - Do they have other types of professionals on staff?
 - Nurses - are they registered?
 - Clinical Social Workers – are they licensed?
 - Doctors, Psychologists, Therapists, etc. – check their credentials and find out if they are available on a daily basis or an on-call basis.
 - What qualifications do their administrators have? If the majority of the staff members, or at least key employees, have a Masters Degree or a Doctorate that is always a good sign.

COST

Ask for all cost information discussed to be provided to you in writing.

- What is the cost for the total program or per day? Does the cost of the program cover all costs involved or are there additional charges?
- Is their program covered by health insurance and which ones?
 - Call your health insurance yourself to verify coverage for services
- Do they have a “sliding scale” and what qualifies someone for that concession?
- Can they offer any other types of cost assistance?
- What is their policy regarding relapse?
- Under what conditions are refunds given?