

TIPS FOR FINDING SUBSTANCE USE AND MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Introduction

The decision to seek treatment for substance use and mental health challenges is an important step in the journey to physical and mental wellbeing. Understanding the available treatment options is critical to navigating that journey.

Medications stand at the forefront of effective treatments for substance use disorders (SUDs), and combining them with therapy is an evidence-based approach to supporting a successful recovery. It's important to find a health care provider who is the right fit. Talking with a therapist or other licensed health care provider can help you begin processing traumatic experiences, identify tools to identify triggers, and find healthier ways to cope with stress or anxiety.

Types of Medications to Consider

While evidence shows medications for opioid use disorder (OUD) and alcohol use disorder (AUD) are effective treatment options, medications for treating them are underused.

Medications for opioid use disorder (MOUDs) include buprenorphine, methadone and naltrexone. All three are FDA-approved medications that have shown success in treating OUD. Medications for alcohol use disorder (MAUDs) are available to support both abstinence and moderation, an approach that is unique to treatment for AUD and offers a broader range of options to individuals looking to reduce their alcohol intake. Medications also exist for tobacco use disorder.

At this time, there are no FDA-approved medications for the treatment of other substance use disorders, such as stimulants (e.g., cocaine, methamphetamines), cannabis and benzodiazepines.

Table 1 outlines available medications for MOUD and MAUD.



Table 1. Types of medication for OUD and AUD.

Medication	What it Treats	How it Works	Main Benefits
Buprenorphine	OUD	Partial opioid agonist: It binds to and activates opioid receptors but with less intensity than full agonists. Buprenorphine can be prescribed or dispensed in a physician's office.	- Reduces cravings and the symptoms of withdrawal. - Increases safety in case of overdose. - Decreases the potential for misuse.
Methadone	OUD	Full opioid agonist: Methadone binds to and activates opioid receptors in the brain activated by the drug, but in a safer and more controlled manner. To use, the patient must be enrolled in an opioid treatment program.	- Reduces cravings and the symptoms of withdrawal. - Blocks the effects of opioids.
Naltrexone	OUD, AUD	Antagonist: Naltrexone binds and blocks the activation of certain receptors, reducing the effects of opioids or alcohol.	- Reduces opioid cravings. - Decreases the potential of returning to opioid use. - Reduces alcohol cravings. - Reduces alcohol consumption.
Disulfiram	AUD	Antagonist: Disulfiram blocks the metabolism of alcohol, causing unpleasant reactions when alcohol is consumed.	- Prevents the breakdown of alcohol. - Reduces alcohol consumption.
Acamprosate	AUD	Acamprosate is thought to bind to receptors involved in alcohol use, restoring brain activity that has been disrupted.	- Reduces the symptoms of withdrawal and cravings. - Reduces alcohol consumption.



Always talk with a licensed health care provider to find out what treatments are available and appropriate for you. The resources in Table 2 can help individuals, families and loved ones learn more about treatment options and understand how MOUDs and MAUDs fit within individual care.

Table 2. Educational resources for MOUDs and MAUDs.

Resource	Organization	Description
MOUD/MAUD Education and Digital Resources	PCSS	Fact sheets, videos, infographics, learning modules
Medications for OUD	National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)	Medication explanations, safety, FAQs
Treatment of SUDs	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	Evidencebased overviews
Clinical Resources and Patient Stories of Recovery	American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry (AAAP)	Clinical tools and patient/family education

Types of Providers to Consider

The internet can be a great place to find and learn from different health care providers, but first make sure the people you're following and listening to are legitimate. Try starting with the trusted health websites listed in table 2 and within this document or looking for the listed organizations' official social media accounts. The internet and social media especially can be full of bad health information, so when you're looking for health care providers to follow, make sure they list degrees and licenses related to what they're talking about. A health or mental health "coach" is not the same thing as a medical professional!

Table 3 can help you determine the type of provider you may need and help you navigate finding a provider that works for you.

Table 3. Sample providers and credentials.

Provider Types*	Health Care Services Offered*
Professional Counselor or Therapist	Professionals licensed to provide counseling for mental health and/or substance use challenges. Therapists may have training as social workers, professional counselors, licensed addiction counselors, psychologists and marriage and family therapists. Credentials include CADC, LCPC, LCSW, LMFT, LMHC, LMSW, LPC, LPCC, PhD, PsyD.
Substance Use Professional, Substance Use Counselor, Addiction Counselor	Some health care providers specialize in substance use treatment and can be additionally, or primarily, licensed as a substance use professional. ■ Medical professionals can be licensed as DO, DNP, MD or PA. They may have additional credentials. ■ Therapists licensed as clinical addiction specialists may have additional credentials, including CADC or LCAS. ■ Individuals who aren't more broadly licensed as a therapist or professional counselor, but who have done several years of training and supervision specific to substance use counseling, can become licensed as substance use counselors. Credentials include CSAC, NCAC and QMHP. ■ Individuals in recovery who have lived experience of substance use and/or mental health diagnoses can become certified peer support professionals) or people who help those currently struggling with substance use challenges find assistance and support. They are not counselors but can provide emotional support and empathy because of their own experiences. Credentials can include PRSS and CPSS.
Psychiatrists	Doctors who have both medical training and specialized training in psychiatry. They are qualified to recommend and prescribe medication for managing mental health and substance use disorders and help with medication management. Credentials for this provider include MD, DNP, DO and PA.
Medical Doctors	Doctors licensed to practice medicine can include family medicine doctors and pediatricians. Primary care physicians can also assess mental wellbeing and prescribe medication. Credentials for this provider include DNP, DO, MD and PA.

**This is not an exhaustive list, and provider titles and credentials may vary by state.*



Finding Potential Providers

Finding a health care provider near you can be challenging, but there are dedicated resources available to connect you with providers.

1. Local community organizations, including advocacy groups, health organizations and community centers, may have referrals for health care providers who offer low-cost care or services on a sliding scale.
2. Insurance companies often have online databases with information on health care providers in their network. Policyholders can also call the member services number to connect with an agent who can share more information on coverage.
3. Online directories and databases like the ones in Table 4 list many health care providers and allow filtering for specific needs.

When you are ready for substance use or mental health treatment or support, you can use these questions to help think through what is important to you in a health care provider and to help find a provider who is the right fit.

1. What kind of health care provider am I looking for? What type of service do I need?
2. Are you interested in a provider with a specialty?
 - a. For example, a therapist who is trauma-informed or specializes in grief counseling.

The provider database below can help jumpstart your search!

Table 4. Directories and databases of free, affordable and sliding-scale clinics

Resource	Source	Description	Searchable by			
			Provider Type	Location	Insurance / Payment Type	Other Filters
FindTreatment.gov	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)	Searchable directory of substance use and mental health care treatment facilities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes ¹
Addiction Industry Directory	National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers (NAATP)	Directory of licensed addiction service providers	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes ²
Find A Health Center Searchable Map	Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)	Searchable database of federally funded health centers that are required to adjust their fees based on family size and income	No	Yes	No	Yes ³
National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics Find a Clinic	The National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics	Database of clinics that provide a range of medical, dental, pharmacy, vision and/or behavioral health services for no charge or on a sliding scale	No ⁴	Yes	No	

1 Wide range of filters available to filter by services, treatment type and payment options

2 Searchable by state, treatment type, clinical approach, recovery support services, types of payment assistance available, payment options, and language services

3 Website is searchable by City, State or Zip and can select mile radius

4 Provider types listed, but not searchable

Resource	Source	Description	Searchable by			
			Provider Type	Location	Insurance / Payment Type	Other Filters
Find a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC)	National Council for Mental Wellbeing	Interactive map and PDF directory of CCBHCs, which provide a comprehensive range of mental health and substance use services and are required to provide care regardless of ability to pay or insurance status	No	Yes	No	
Health Care for the Homelessness Grantee Directory	National Health Care for the Homeless Council	Interactive map of health clinics funded to provide care to people experiencing homelessness	No	Yes	No	



Final Note

Deciding to seek treatment for substance use and mental health challenges is not easy, and sometimes navigating treatment options can make it feel confusing. These resources can help make it easier to get started.