Adolescent Treatment

11 million teens need treatment for drug or alcohol abuse — that's 1 in 7 teens and young adults! You are not alone.

Find help for your child

- Treatment ebook
- Rehab after School
- Young Adult Track at Betty Ford meets the unique needs of young adults ages 18-25.
- Recovery Schools: Find a high school or college that has a comprehensive recovery programs for those battling addictions.

Teens Have Unique Needs

- **Teens tend to be very resistant to admitting they have a drug problem.** Holding an intervention or invoking the Marchman Act can help get your teen into treatment. Treatment does not have to be voluntary to be effective. (NIDA)
- **Teens are more likely to abuse multiple substances, which may complicate treatment.** (HBO Addiction)
- **Adolescence is a period of developmental change.**
  - Changes occur in the body, brain, and hormonal systems into the mid- to late-20s
  - Substance-abusing teens often experience delayed development. (Adolescent Substance Abuse)
  - Teens are developing impulse control, coping skills, as well as their own identity.
  - They are shifting from concrete to abstract thinking.
- **High relapse rates** are common and they generally require several interventions.

Components of Effective Treatment for Teens

- Comprehensive assessment, treatment, case management, and family-support services that are developmentally, culturally, and gender-appropriate.
- Involve parents, integrate school, and recognize the importance of peers.
- Least restrictive environment that is clinically appropriate.
- Individualize modality and format (e.g., group, individual, and family).
- Flexible in matching needs to services.
- Comprehensive services, including:
  - Targeted sessions (anger management)
  - Psychiatric (assessment, medication management)
  - Family (parent education, multi-family counseling, home visits)
  - Education (on-site if residential)
  - Healthcare (contraception, sexually transmitted diseases)
  - Recreational activity (physical activity, sober activities)
  - Other (transportation, case management)
Emphasize retention (Up to 50% of teens drop out in the assessment phase or the first few treatment sessions. The average duration of adolescent treatment is about 6 weeks; 90 days is recommended.)
  - On-site screening and smooth transfer to service providers
  - Motivational interviewing
  - Materials targeted to adolescents
- Continually evaluate the level of care and services, and adjust as appropriate.
- Increased supervision, monitor daily structured living, and appropriate activities.
- Focus on plans for productivity and self-sufficiency.
- Emphasize new skills and lifestyle patterns that promote positive, independent behavior.
- Emphasize continuing care and long-term monitoring:
  - Assess the appropriateness of the recovery environment and support
  - Check how old lapses were handled and develop new approaches
  - Encourage early re-intervention if necessary
- Address staff and systems issues, including:
  - Diversity of experience (substance abuse treatment, juvenile justice, psychology, social work), education level and personality (young, enthusiastic, mature, wise, love working with adolescents, good parent boundaries), recovery experience and demographics.
  - Training in adolescent assessment, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, adolescent management techniques and crisis intervention
  - Regular clinical supervision and team meetings (Intensive Outpatient: 1-2 per week; Residential: 3-5 per week)
  - Clinical back-up for emergencies and problem solving
  - Match strength of staff with job
  - Client/staff ratio: (Outpatient: 20-25:1, Intensive Outpatient: 10-15:1, Residential 4-8:1

(Adolescent Substance Abuse: A Public Health Priority) (Betty Ford)

Hitting bottom is an old idea, still imposed upon families as if it were an absolute. “Some people sadly believe that they must wait for the alcoholic or addict to hit bottom. They rarely stop to consider that this means years of unhappiness and devastation. Do alcoholics/addicts ever hit bottom and then climb their way up into sobriety? Of course they do. But we never know who’ll be the lucky ones or who will go to prison, go insane, or die. Hitting bottom should never be our first strategy; it is a strategy of last resorts.” Debra Jay, No More Letting Go

Family Support
Having a child who suffers from substance abuse can be the most terrifying, stressful, and baffling situation a parent could ever face. It can cause family conflict, emotional and physical distress, isolation, and financial ruin. Often there are more questions than answers, leaving parents in utter despair. Well-meaning people may offer their views, but unless one has been

Manatee County Substance Abuse Coalition
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there, it is almost impossible to relate. Others spare no words and are quick to place blame. (Drugfree.org)

Parents and siblings may benefit from counseling or attending Al-Anon or another self-help group.

Additional Support
- Parents Toll-Free Helpline: 855-378-4373 Mon - Fri, 10:00 am - 6:00 pm EST
- Community of parents concerned about their teens’ alcohol and drug use.
- Special program to help 7 to 12-year-olds who have been hurt by addiction.