

Treatment Modalities

Three primary types of treatment exist that individuals offer to those with substance abuse concerns. They include detoxification, maintenance, and drug-free approaches. Treatment specialists often refer to them as modalities.

Detoxification:

During this generally short-term (three to seven days) regimen, the treatment attempts to wean the individual off alcohol or other drugs under the supervision of treatment specialists as well as physicians, who administer various medications to ease the patient's withdrawal discomfort. Detoxification is only the first step on the road to recovery. Good detoxification programs attempt to connect the client to other treatment programs and/or self-help groups for continuing recovery after sobriety.

Maintenance:

The Maintenance modality uses the drug methadone as a substitute for heroin. In controlled doses, methadone satisfies the craving for heroin without producing the high. Methadone has a longer duration than heroin and enables users to function a full day without experiencing the "nod" (where a person almost falls to sleep) that occurs when heroin wears off. Because the patient takes it orally, the drug eliminates injections and the various infections, including AIDS that can result from IV drug use. Treatment providers usually reserve methadone maintenance for adults who have been unsuccessful after a number of attempts at sobriety. There is nothing comparable to methadone maintenance for alcohol or drugs other than heroin.

Drug-Free:

This treatment approach uses no medication. Instead it relies on counseling, behavioral contracts, group therapy, and often urine screens to monitor progress. Many clients bypass detoxification in the formal sense and get clean in the drug-free program. Most residential, long-term approaches are drug-free. Most individuals provide drug-free treatment in outpatient settings. Self-help groups are part of the drug-free modality and serve more users than all other treatment programs combined.