

Treatment Modalities

There are three primary types or kinds of treatment offered to abusers. They are 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 abuser is weaned 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 will attempt to connect the client to other treatment programs and or self-help groups for continuing recovery after sobriety.

Maintenance: Maintenance is used with the drug heroin. It uses the drug methadone as a substitute for heroin. In controlled doses, methadone satisfies the craving for heroin without producing the high. It has a longer duration than heroin and enables users to function a full day without experiencing the "nod" that occurs when heroin wears off. Because it is taken orally, it eliminates injections and the various infections, including AIDS, which can result from IV drug use. Methadone maintenance is usually reserved 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 Modality: This treatment approach uses no medication. Instead it relies on counseling, behavioral contracts, group therapy, and often urine screens to monitor progress. Many clients by-pass detoxification in the formal sense and get clean in the drug-free program. Most residential, long-term approaches are drug-free. Most drug-free treatment is provided in outpatient settings. Self-help groups are part of the drug-free modality and serve more users than all other treatment programs combined.