



UNDERSTANDING SUBSTANCE ABUSE

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SUPPORTING THEIR CHILDREN

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Introduction

Purpose of This Guide

Substance abuse among teens and young adults is a growing concern, deeply impacting families and communities. This manual is designed as a resource for parents of high-risk teens and young adults, equipping them with knowledge and tools to address substance use and its consequences. Whether you're seeking to understand the nature of substance abuse, identify signs of addiction, or explore treatment options, this guide offers comprehensive, evidence-based insights tailored to the challenges parents face today.



Why This Matters

Substance abuse affects more than just the individual; it influences relationships, health, and future opportunities. For parents, navigating this sensitive issue can be overwhelming. This manual provides a roadmap to:

- Recognize early warning signs of substance use/abuse.
- Understand the underlying factors contributing to risky behaviors
- Learn how substance use affects the body during critical stages of development.
- Communicate Effectively with your child about substance use.
- Explore treatment options to support your child's recovery journey.

What You Will Learn

This manual is divided into six detailed chapters that build a clear and actionable understanding of substance abuse.

1. **An Overview of Substance Abuse:** Definitions, prevalence, signs, and symptoms.
2. **Assessing Risk:** The factors that increase vulnerability to substance use.
3. **The Impact of Substance Abuse:** How drug use affects the body, brain, and behavior.
4. **Communicating with Your Child:** Tips for starting meaningful, productive conversations about addiction.
5. **Treatment Options:** A breakdown of available interventions and their advantages and drawbacks.
6. **Conclusion:** A recap of key takeaways and resources to support your next steps.



How to Use This Guide

This manual is structured to be both an educational resource and a practical tool. Each chapter provides research-supported information, actionable advice, and references to trusted sources. Use it as a starting point to engage with your child, consult professionals, and navigate the complexities of substance abuse and treatment.

Read Chapter by Chapter or Focus on Your Needs

Apply What You Learn

Utilize Embedded Resources

Share Insights with Others

Revisit and Reflect

Seek Professional Guidance

Keep the Guide Accessible



By the end of this guide, you will have the confidence to approach substance use with empathy, knowledge, and a plan for action. You are not alone in this journey —this guide is here to support and empower you.

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT IS SUBSTANCE ABUSE? THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

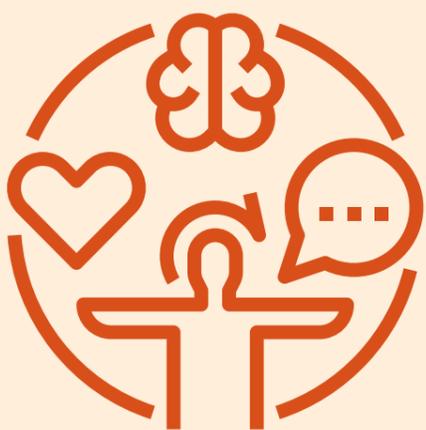


WHAT IS SUBSTANCE ABUSE?

Substance abuse is a combination of physiological, behavioral, and cognitive symptoms leading to the continued use of substances, disregarding the problems, distress, and impairment related to the substance.¹

THE SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

The effects related to substance abuse can arise and range from emotional to physical, and are sometimes hard to point out.



EMOTIONAL OR BEHAVIORAL SYMPTOMS

include social isolation, engaging in risky behaviors, not meeting personal responsibilities, and potential monetary requests.²

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

include sudden weight loss or weight gain, lack of energy, and/or neglected appearance.²



SUBSTANCE ABUSE incapsulates a variety of terms that are essential in understanding the depth of the issue.

ADDICTION is the physiological and physical dependence on the use of substances or activities.³

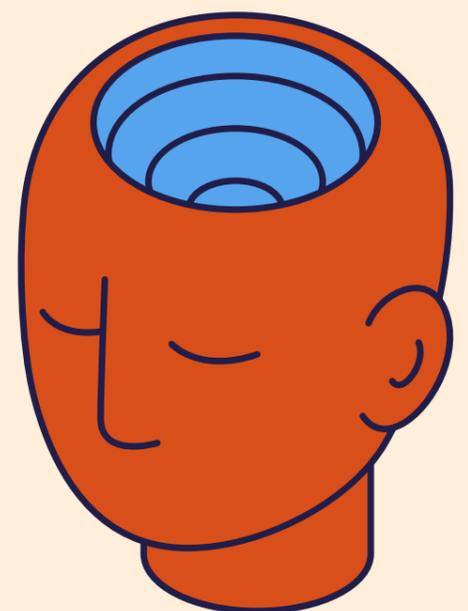
DEPENDENCE is the physical or mental desire to continue use despite consequences.⁴

WITHDRAWAL is the physical and mental symptoms that one has when they stop or cut back the use of an addictive substance.⁵



THE LINK BETWEEN SUBSTANCE ABUSE & ADDICTION

Occasional substance use changes the brain's chemistry with each use. With drugs, each use causes increased **dopamine**, impacting the brain's reward system. The release of **dopamine** excites the body, encouraging further use.⁶



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CHAPTER TWO

UNDERSTANDING WHAT PUTS YOUR CHILD AT RISK



WHY ABUSE SUBSTANCES?

Though reasons vary, most people abuse substances in an attempt to ease the part of their life in which they struggle.¹

In **teens/young adults**, substance abuse typically stems from curiosity or as an attempt to fit in.²



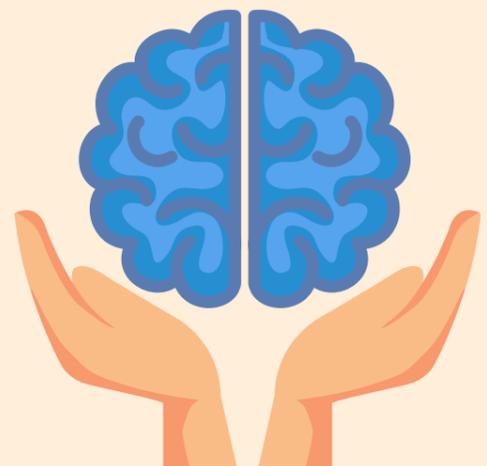
RISK FACTORS



FAMILY HISTORY³



ABUSE³



MENTAL HEALTH³

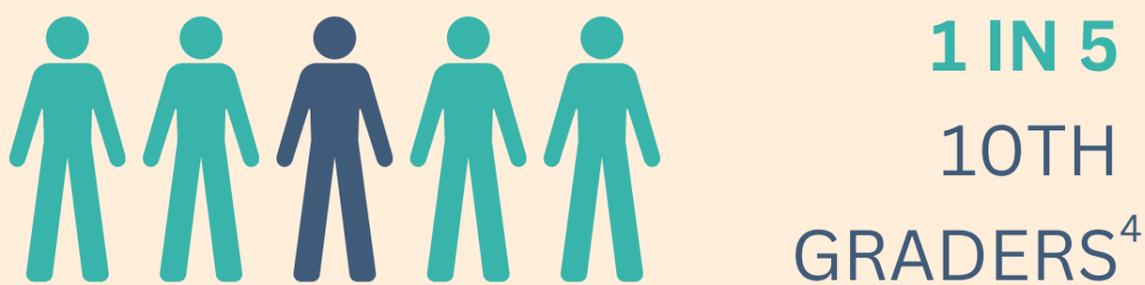
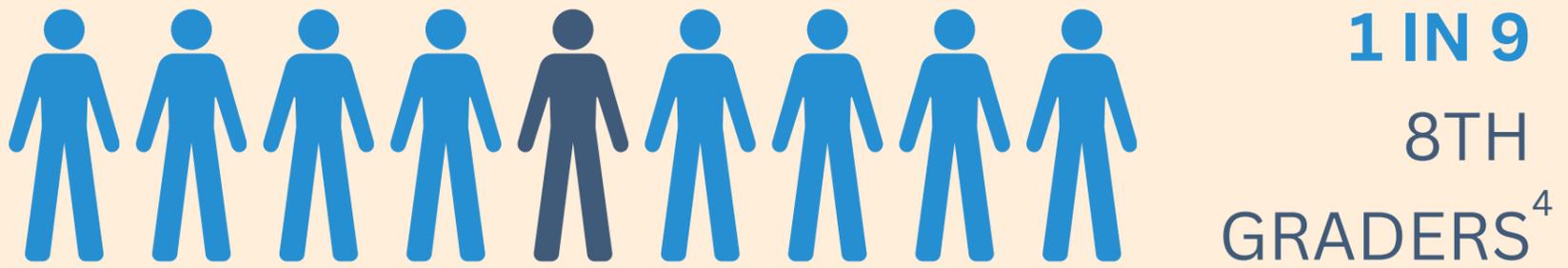


SOCIAL ISOLATION³



FAMILY REJECTION³

HOW MANY ARE AFFECTED?



2.08 million of 12- to 17-year-olds have used drugs in the last month⁶

13.6 million of 18- to 24-year-olds have used drugs in the last year⁵

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CHAPTER THREE

THE EFFECTS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE ON YOUR CHILD'S BODY



Substance abuse can have a profound impact on both the short- and long-term health of young people, affecting every major organ system. It is crucial to understand how various substances can damage the body and brain, especially during the critical stages of adolescent and adolescent development.

THE IMPACT ON:

Brain Development

Drug use, particularly during the critical period of brain development in adolescence, can hinder growth in regions related to memory, decision-making, and emotional regulation. It can affect cognitive functions, such as memory retention, learning capacity, and problem-solving skills. Long-term use can reduce brain volume and impair the prefrontal cortex, which controls planning, judgment, and impulse control.^{1,2}



Mental Health

Substance use, particularly stimulants and alcohol, can worsen or trigger anxiety and depression in youth, leading to long-term mood disorders.

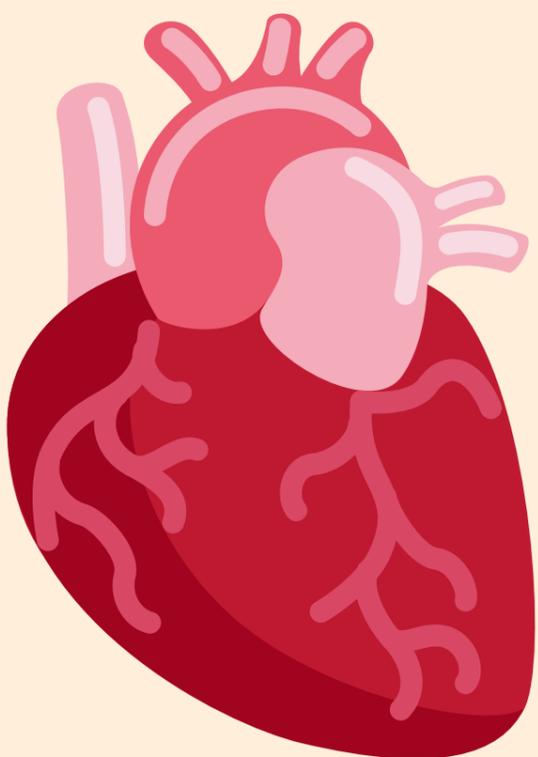
Substance use may cause episodes of anxiety, paranoia, and, in some cases, psychotic breaks. It can also exacerbate symptoms of depression and lead to suicidal ideation. Other effects include drug use induced psychosis and drug induced schizophrenia.³



THE IMPACT ON:

Sleep

The use of certain drugs, like stimulants, can lead to insomnia, poor-quality sleep and disrupted circadian rhythms. The use of alcohol and depressants may initially cause drowsiness, but ultimately disrupt REM sleep cycles that can lead to long term sleep disturbances.⁷



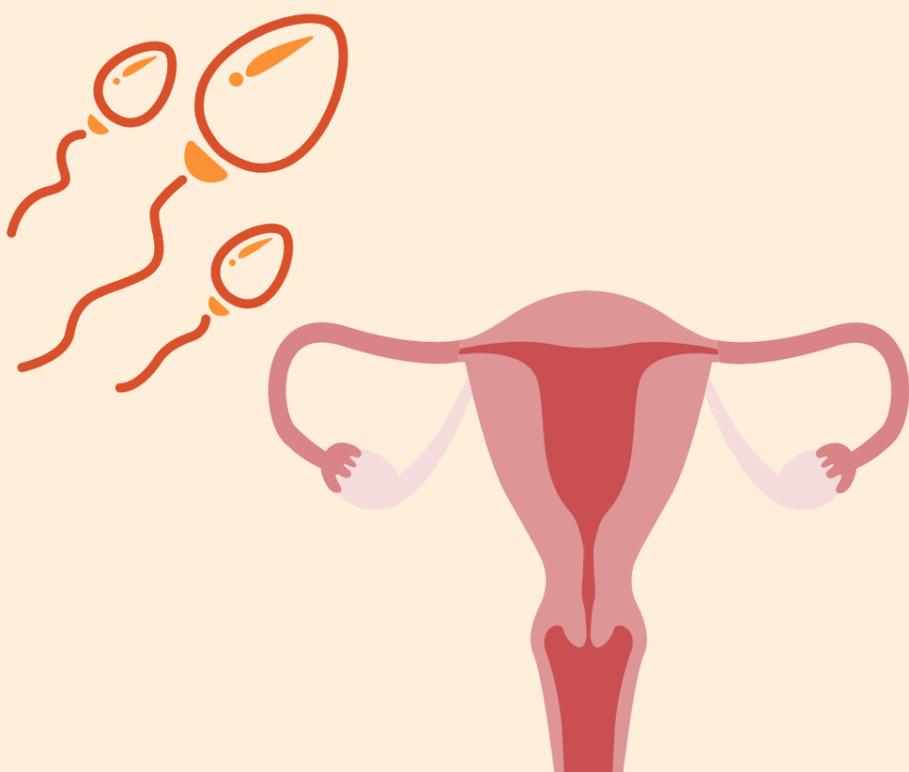
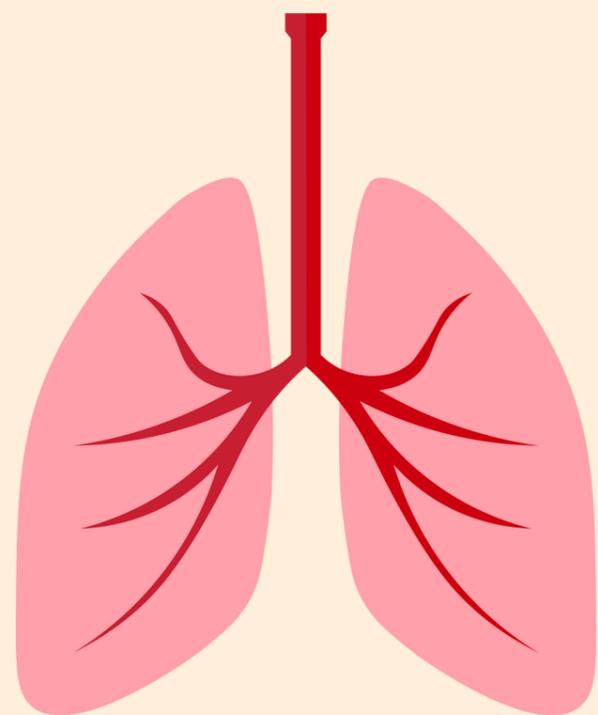
The Cardiovascular System

The use of stimulants can lead to high blood pressure, rapid heart rate (tachycardia), heart palpitations, and, in severe cases, heart attacks or stroke. Nicotine use increases blood pressure, restricts blood vessels, and can contribute to heart disease even in young users.⁴

THE IMPACT ON:

The Respiratory System

The use of substances, especially inhalants, can cause chronic cough, wheezing, bronchitis, and heightened risk of respiratory infections. Inhalants can also cause serious lung damage, respiratory arrest, and sudden death.



Reproductive Health

Substance abuse in females can lead to irregular menstrual cycles, hormonal disruptions, and risks during pregnancy if substance use continues. In males, some substances can lower testosterone levels, decrease sperm count, and contribute to sexual dysfunction.

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CHAPTER FOUR

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD



One of the most influential factors during a child's adolescence is maintaining a strong, open relationship with a parent or guardian. Creating a supportive and nurturing environment will allow children to make better decisions and also feel comfortable with talking about their struggles. Not talking about substance use still sends a message to your child. Here are some tips to foster a conversation surrounding substance use with your child.

Set The Stage

- **Don't start the conversation if your child is under the influence**
- **Avoid all interruptions while talking with your child. Turn off all cell-phones and step away from other distractions.**
- **Reflect on your goals for the conversation and consider writing them down to review how effective the conversation was later.**
- **Put any panic or anger aside to ensure a calm environment.**



Remain Calm

- **Avoid overreacting to what has already happened and focus on what you want for your child in the future.**
- **Body language counts. Keep a relaxed, open posture and avoid large gestures or crossed arms.**
- **Recognize when you don't have the energy to be a good listener.**
- **Listen as much as you talk, make sure the conversation is back-and-forth, not a lecture.**



Communicate with Care and Concern

- Express how much you care and emphasize how you want your child to be healthy, safe, and happy.
- Let your child know you value their honest and are willing to listen without judgement.
- Ask open ended questions and avoid questions that only prompt a “yes” or “no.”
- Be aware that your child could be hiding their true feelings out of fear or embarrassment.
- Offer empathy and compassion! Demonstrate understanding and show your child that you understand.
- Thank your child for talking with you regardless of how the conversation went.
- Ensure that they know you are willing to help them and give them any resources they may need.



Remember: Any conversation is a good conversation. Continue to foster conversations and build a trusting relationship with your child.

Tips for Future Conversations

- **Be Direct, but Non-Judgmental**
- **Be Prepared for Emotional Reactions**
- **Provide Accurate Information About Substance Use**
- **Discuss Reasons Behind Substance Use**
- **Express Clear Expectations and Boundaries**
- **Offer Support and Help**
- **Engage in Continuous Conversations**



Quick Resources to Share During Conversations with Your Child

SAMHSA's National Helpline

1-800-662-HELP (4357)

SAMHSA'S Online Treatment Locator

Text your Zip Code to 435748 (HELP4U)

These services are completely confidential, free, and available every day all year. There are services in both English and Spanish.

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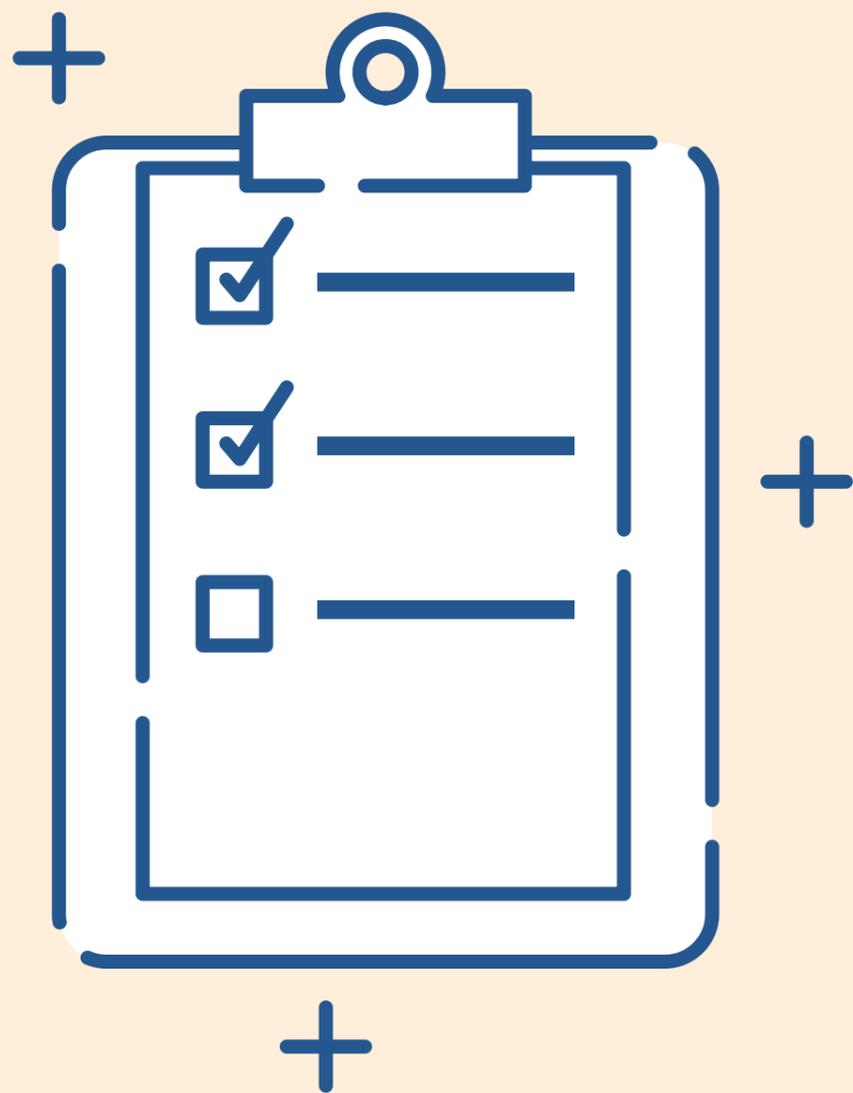
CHAPTER FIVE

NAVIGATING TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR YOUR CHILD



Types of Treatment Options

- **Community treatment centers**
- **State funded treatment centers**
- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**
- **Medicaid and CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program)**



Non Profit Organizations

The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army provides drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs for little to no cost for those who cannot afford inpatient treatment facilities. The program is a 180 day work based therapy program that focuses on spiritual and social healing.



Teen Challenge

Teen Challenge USA is a nonprofit Christian organization that offers faith-based rehabilitation programs for teenagers and young adults struggling with addiction, abuse, and other life-controlling issues. It provides residential treatment centers across the U.S., where participants receive counseling, education, vocational training, and spiritual guidance to help them overcome their challenges and lead healthier, more fulfilling lives.



Outpatient Addiction Treatment Facilities

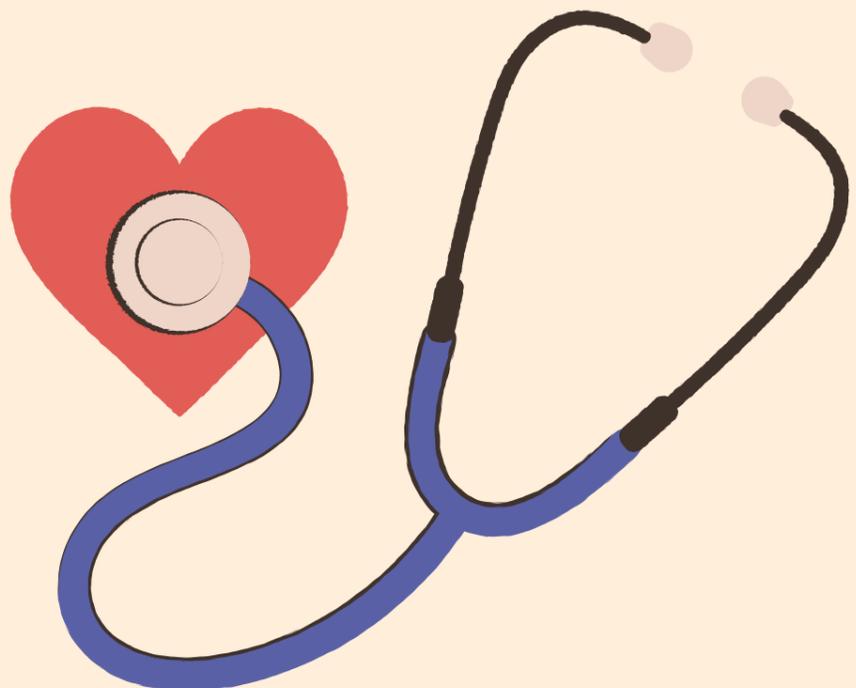
Outpatient care can provide assistance in addiction that is flexible to an individual's schedule, as it is appointment-based. Care can be continued for long periods of time and can be useful after inpatient treatment

Serenity Grove



Athens Addiction Recovery Center

Georgia Addiction Recovery Center



Inpatient Addiction Treatment Facilities

a hospital care setting or prolonged care setting where the patient stays overnight, usually for multiple days, and is under 24/7 observation by medical staff

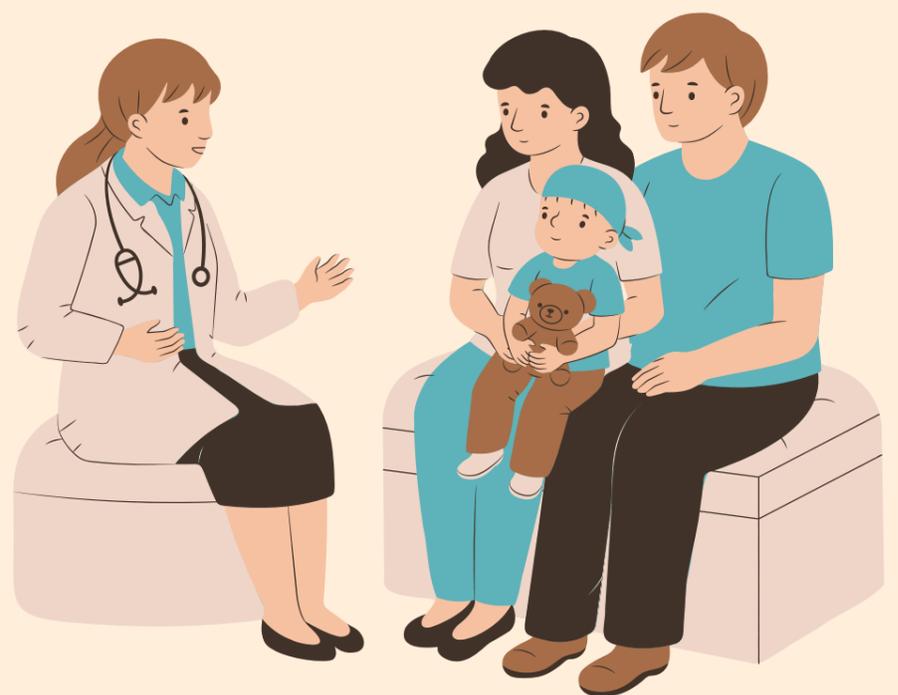
The Carter Treatment Center

Ambrosia Treatment Center

Golden Road Recovery

**The Freedom Center
Addiction Treatment**

Newport Academy



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CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion & Resources



Chapter Overviews

Chapter one:

- **Substance abuse is a combination of physiological, behavioral, and cognitive symptoms contributing to the continued use of substances, disregarding the problems, distress, and impairment related to the substance.**
- **Symptoms include social isolation, engaging in risky behaviors, not meeting personal responsibilities, sudden weight loss or weight gain, lack of energy, and/or neglected appearance.**

Chapter two:

- **Risk factors include family trauma, abuse, mental health issues and social isolation**

Chapter three:

- **Substance abuse and addiction has a significant amount of negative effects on the body, namely the brain, cardiovascular system, respiratory system, ones mental health, and sleep.**

Chapter four:

- **When attempting to communicate with your child regarding their addiction, be sure to remain calm and use a non-hostile tone. Approach the situation with care and concern rather than from an accusatory point of view.**

Chapter five:

- **There are many different options for treatment facilities, with each one varying depending on the specific needs of the individual (ex. inpatient vs. outpatient)**
- **Speak with your doctor and/or child to see which one would be the best fit for their situation**

Resources

SAMHSA's National Helpline

1-800-662-HELP (4357)

**SAMHSA's Online Treatment
Locator**

**Text your Zip Code to
435748 (HELP4U)**