

# The Exchange

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Chester County  
Department of  
Drug and Alcohol  
Services

## Message from the Director

### *Substance Abuse Treatment - What Families Should Know*

Information for this article was adapted from "What is Substance Abuse Treatment? A booklet for Families" published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment ([www.samsha.gov](http://www.samsha.gov))

If you have a family member who is dependent on alcohol or other drugs – you are not alone. In the United States it is estimated that millions of Americans are either abusing or dependent on alcohol or other drugs. One person's addiction has the ability to impact each and every member of his or her family.

#### *What is Addiction?*

The first thing families should understand is that addiction is a disease and needs to be treated as such. Most health care professionals and researchers consider substance use disorders to be a chronic illness just like asthma or diabetes; however, it was not very long ago that many people thought of addiction as a moral weakness or character flaw. Although substance abuse is a chronic disease, it is treatable. Treatment for the disease is a lifelong process and, at times, very difficult for both the individual in recovery, as well as their family members. Treatment can help the addicted individual "accept, manage and live with" their illness.

A family member's decision to seek help for their illness is a positive step toward recovery.

The longer someone stays in treatment, the

more likely it is that they will remain drug and alcohol free.

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Remember - *people with alcohol or drug dependence problems can establish recovery.*

#### *What Will Happen First?*

In order to determine the best course of treatment, including level or type of care (i.e. residential or outpatient), each individual will receive a clinical assessment from a trained professional. An assessment gathers a wide variety of information such as substance abuse history and prior treatment experience (see Page 4) and is initially used to determine level of care.

After the assessment is completed and an initial level of care is determined, the counselor may need to refer your loved one to a different program based on their needs (i.e. a person may require a setting where medical help is available 24/7 while they withdraw from alcohol or drugs they have been using – this is generally known as detox). Since withdrawal from alcohol and other drugs can be life threatening, it is important that the counselor has all the information needed to make the appropriate treatment decisions. With the person's written permission, this may include you, as the family member, answering questions about your loved one's alcohol or drug problem and its impact. Families are often a key component to a successful recovery.

#### *What Happens in a Treatment Program?*

Although there are some variations, the basic components of treatment are very similar and start with the two (2) items mentioned earlier – assessment and treatment planning. Following the initial assessment that determines level of care, additional information is collected via an instrument commonly referred to as a "biopsychosocial". Information collected during this process is used to develop the treatment plan. Treatment plans are based on each person's unique needs and identifies treatment goals and ways to meet those goals.

**Director's Message Continued on Page Two**

Other components of treatment typically include: group and individual counseling, education about substance use disorders, life skills training, testing for alcohol or drug use, relapse prevention training, orientation to self-help groups, family education and counseling services, and follow-up care. Please see Page 3 for further information on these treatment terms.

### ***What About Me?***

Recovery is not just a lifestyle change for the person in treatment, but also for you and other members of your family. Your life has probably been effected in numerous ways due to your loved one's alcohol or other drug problem. Now that he or she has entered treatment, and alcohol and drugs are not part of their life, each family member will need to make adjustments. This may mean dealing with past conflicts, changing routines and establishing new ones, and learning new ways to relate to each other.

There is no "right" way a person in the early stages of recovery will act. Some people may be ecstatic that they are no longer using and see the world before them full of opportunities, while others may have extreme difficulty facing a life without alcohol or drugs. Both of these reactions are "normal", and no matter how your loved one reacts, it is important to take care of yourself and find support. Support can be found through 12-Step programs such as Al-Anon or Nar-Anon. Additionally, treatment providers often offer family education programs and counseling sessions for families understanding that family involvement enhances the treatment experience.

Many professionals view addiction as a family disease and try to treat it as such. The following points are helpful reminders for all family members with loved ones in treatment:

- You are participating in treatment for yourself, not just for the sake of the person who used substances.
- Your loved one's recovery, sobriety, or abstinence does not depend on you.
- Your family's recovery does not depend on the person who used substances.
- You did not cause your family member's substance use disorder. It is not your fault.

If you would like to learn more about dealing with a loved one's alcohol or drug problem, we invite you to attend PRO-ACT's Family Education Program. This program is offered free of charge at the Brandywine YMCA. For registration information please phone 1-800-221-6333. Written information on this topic can also be obtained by contacting the Community Prevention Department at The Coad Group: (610) 363-6164 or 1-866-286-3767.

*Kim P. Bowman*  
Director, Chester County  
Department of Drug and Alcohol Services



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forrecovery

2006  
september National Alcohol  
& Drug Addiction  
Recovery Month

### ***Chester County Proclaims September as National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month***

THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE COUNTY OF CHESTER proclaimed September as National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month in Chester County during their September 7, 2006 meeting. The Proclamation also saluted efforts of recovering persons and those who have helped them on their journey, including the Recovery Expo, PRO-ACT, and local treatment organizations.

The Chester County Commissioners, Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services, PRO-ACT, and the Chester County Communities That Care Coalitions invited all residents of Chester County to participate in National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month.

# ***Glossary of Drug and Alcohol Terms***

*Adapted from "What is Substance Abuse Treatment? A booklet for Families" published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment ([www.samsha.gov](http://www.samsha.gov))*

## **Group Counseling**

During group counseling sessions members are asked to share their experiences and talk about their feelings, emotions and problems. Many times, groups will address specific topic areas such as Coping Skills, Addiction vs. Abuse, Negative Consequences, etc. Group members support one another as they progress through the recovery process.

## **Individual Counseling**

One-on-one counseling sessions with the individual's assigned counselor will include work on a person's treatment plan. Based on an individual's progress on their treatment goals, the plan will be updated and adapted as needed.

## **Denial**

The thought process in which a person does not believe he or she has a problem, despite strong evidence to the contrary. It is a way of protecting oneself from painful thoughts or feelings.

## **Relapse**

A recurrence of symptoms of a disease after a period of improvement; that is, a person in recovery drinks or uses drugs again after a period of abstinence.

## **Relapse Prevention**

Any strategy or activity that helps keep a person in recovery from drinking or using drugs again. It may include developing new coping responses; changing beliefs and expectations; and changing personal habits, lifestyles and schedules.

## **Self-help/12-Step Groups**

Support groups consisting of people in recovery that offer a safe place where recovering people share their experiences, strengths, and hopes. The 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous' (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) help the members recover from addiction, addictive behavior, and emotional suffering. These groups are free and are not supported by any particular treatment program.

## **Treatment Plan**

A plan that provides a blueprint for treatment. It describes the problems being addressed, the treatment's goals, and the specific steps that both the treatment professional and the person in treatment will take.

## **Treatment Team**

A team of professionals (e.g., clinical supervisor, counselor, therapist, and physician) responsible for treating a person and helping his or her family.

## **Trigger**

Any event, place, thing, smell, idea, emotion, or person that sets off a craving to drink alcohol or use drugs.

## **Level of Care**

Specific treatment approach (i.e., outpatient, detox, residential, halfway house, etc.) that is determined through an initial drug and alcohol assessment conducted by a trained professional.

## **Biopsychosocial**

Instrument used by clinicians to collect information from individuals entering drug and alcohol treatment. Components include: a.) biological, medical and genetic factors, b.) psychological and emotional factors, c.) social, familial, cultural and other environmental factors. Information collected during this process is used to develop an individual's treatment plan.

## *Mark Your Calendar*



### **NATIONAL OBSERVANCES:**

**December 2006:** Drunk and Drugged Driving Month - <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/alcohol/StopImpaired/HolidayPlanner/index.htm>

**January 2007:** National Birth Defects Prevention Month - [www.nbdpn.org](http://www.nbdpn.org)

**January 18, 2007:** PRO-Act Information Hour (Open House) - Phoenixville Health Foundation, Phoenixville, PA from 6-8 p.m. Call 1-800-221-6333 for more information.

**February 11-17, 2007:** Children of Alcoholics Week - [www.nacoa.org](http://www.nacoa.org)

### **TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:**

**PA Department of Health, Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Programs:** For complete list of courses offered visit <http://bdap.health.state.pa.us/mrtr/Welcome.aspx>

## *IN VIEW*

### *What is a Clinical Assessment?*

A clinical assessment is completed on each person as they enter treatment for a drug and/or alcohol problem. An assessment gathers personal information and is used to determine what type of treatment will best suit each person's needs. The assessment is administered by a trained professional and asks many questions including the following:

- Kinds, amount, and length of time of substance or alcohol use
- Effects of drug or alcohol use on the person's life
- Medical history
- Current medical problems or needs
- Current medications (including pain medication)
- Mental health issues or behavioral problems
- Family and social issues and needs
- Legal or financial problems
- Educational background and needs
- Current living situation and environment
- Employment history, stability, problems, and needs
- School performance, problems, and needs
- Previous treatment experience or attempts to quit drug or alcohol use.

### *Frequently Asked Questions About Substance Use and Treatment Programs*

Reprinted, from "What is Substance Abuse Treatment? A booklet for Families" published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment ([www.samsha.gov](http://www.samsha.gov))

**Q:** My husband says that he is an addict. How can that be possible when he still has a good job?

**A:** Understanding how a person can be dependent on alcohol or drugs and still keep a good job is difficult. The media often portray people with substance use disorders as unemployed, unproductive, criminal, and homeless. However, many people who are dependent on alcohol or drugs do not fit this stereotype; they have jobs and live with their families. The disease does tend to worsen over time. Eventually, your husband's drug use may increase and, with no help, he may begin to experience more serious problems. The earlier your husband can get treatment, the better chance he has of recovery.

**Q:** My wife just started treatment. I called the program yesterday to ask the counselor some questions. The counselor said that she "could not confirm or deny" that my wife was even there! What's that about?

**A:** Federal and State laws protect an individual's privacy in treatment. Before the counselor can talk to anyone (including you) about your wife's treatment, the program must first have her permission *in writing*. Even if the counselor knows that you know your wife is there, she still can't say that your wife is in that program until your wife signs a "release of information" or "disclosure authorization" form. You may want to talk to your wife and be sure she understands that you would like to be involved in the program.

**Q:** My brother is in a residential treatment program. He says that he can leave the program at any time. Is this true?

**A:** Yes. Everyone has the option of leaving. All alcohol and drug abuse treatment is voluntary, although there may be consequences for leaving if the person is in treatment, for example, as part of probation or parole. If your brother chooses to leave and treatment has not been completed, the treatment staff may ask him to sign papers stating that he is leaving against medical advice. The staff also will try and find out why he wants to leave early and will try to address any concerns he has.

**Q:** My partner says a lot of people in his group have relapsed. What does this mean?

**A:** Not all people in recovery are able to stay sober. When they cannot, it's called relapse. Many people relapse a few times. As with other chronic illnesses, such as diabetes or asthma, the symptoms can come and go. Most treatment programs discuss relapse openly and often. It is important that the person who relapses return to treatment right away, learn more about his or her relapse triggers, and improve his or her coping skills. Returning quickly is a sign of health (rather than something to be ashamed of) and a desire to begin working toward a life free of alcohol and drugs. It is important to understand the concept of relapse. It means that a person who had stopped drinking alcohol or taking drugs for a period has started to drink alcohol or use drugs again. Relapses may be very disheartening. However, a relapse does not mean that your family member will not recover.

**Q:** My father is the one who drinks too much alcohol. Why do the counselors want to talk with me?

**A:** Treatment professionals know that substance use disorders affect the whole family. It makes sense, then, to offer help to the whole family. Some programs offer education, and others involve the family or couples in counseling sessions. It's hard to grow up with a parent who uses alcohol or drugs. It can be helpful if you learn more about the disease and the effect it has had on your family and you. Talking to someone who understands substance use disorders can make a big difference for you.

The Chester County  
Department of Drug and Alcohol Services  
P.O. Box 2747  
601 Westtown Road, Suite 325  
West Chester, PA 19380-0990

## *The Exchange Winter 2006*



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For more information or to be on the mailing list for this newsletter, contact the Community Prevention staff at: The Coad Group, 930 East Lancaster Avenue, Exton, PA 19341, 610.363.6164 or 1.800.917.1117

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*The Department of Health and Chester County Commissioners specifically disclaim responsibility for any analyses, interpretations, or conclusions herein.*

## Resources

### *Looking for Help in Chester County?*

#### AA Web Site

[www.aachesco.org](http://www.aachesco.org)

#### Al-Anon/Ala-Teen

1-888-4AL-ANON

#### Al-Anon/Ala-Teen Web Site

[www.al-anon-alateen.org](http://www.al-anon-alateen.org)

#### Alcohol and Drug Information

– Personal & Confidential 1-866-286-3767

#### Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

215-923-7900

#### Crisis Intervention

1-877-918-2100

#### Domestic Violence

1-888-711-6270

#### Health and Human Service Agencies

[www.referweb.net/chesco](http://www.referweb.net/chesco)

#### Narcotics Anonymous (NA)

215-629-6757

#### NA Web Site

[www.na.org](http://www.na.org)

#### Welfare Office

610-466-1000

You can view or print this newsletter by visiting Chester County's Website: [www.chesco.org](http://www.chesco.org) and following the links for Human Services to Drug & Alcohol Services.