# Substance Use Disorder (SUDS)

1. **How do I know if my substance use is a problem? Do I need help?**

Are you wondering if you might have an issue with drugs or alcohol? Here is a brief screening that is anonymous you can take online to find out if you might need help: <https://screening.mentalhealthamerica.net/screening-tools/alcohol-substance-abuse>

If you need help this screening will have an option to read about the most common questions related to substance abuse including “How can I stop using? What do I do if I hate myself? Now what? Etc.”

1. **I have a substance abuse problem. What is the first step to getting help? What if my child has a substance abuse problem?**

Some people can quit on their own, and others need help quitting. Studies show that people are more successful when they have help- but, you can decide what will work for you. Here are the first steps to getting formal help or treatment. You also would follow these steps if your child is displaying symptoms of substance abuse. In addition, you may want to call the school and talk with a school counselor about the issue so that they can identify a plan to support your child in the school setting.

1. Find an organization that can complete a Substance Use Assessment (also called a \*Rule 25) by calling your insurance company and asking what is in network. A Rule 25 is required to get into substance use treatment. Don’t have insurance? Call your county human services organization and ask who can complete a Rule 25 assessment (for those without insurance).

\*A Rule 25 is an “interview” done by a professional. This person will ask you questions about your substance use to help determine which treatment will be best for you.

1. Once you complete your Rule 25, you will receive a recommended treatment plan. This could include: outpatient, intensive outpatient, inpatient, or other treatment options. Once you know this, then you can ask your insurance company which services are in your network. Call the organizations and ask if and when they are accepting new patients. Make an appointment to get started. If you don’t have insurance, see the list of organizations on this website to find one that offers a sliding fee scale. These organizations will offer services that are income based.

Not ready for formal help, but wanting to talk to someone? **1-800-622-4357** is the national drug abuse hotline, or **1-877-404-3190** is the Minnesota Warm line open from 5-10pm on Monday-Saturday. You can also text “Support” to 85511.

1. **I can’t afford counseling or don’t have insurance. Can I still get help?**

If you need help but don’t have insurance call your County Human Services and ask them how to complete a Rule 25 Assessment. **A Rule 25 Assessment is needed before you seek treatment.** You may qualify for low cost or free services depending on your income.

1. **How can I talk to my kids about substance abuse?**

Everyone is impacted by the effects of drugs or alcohol. Also, kids are curious, and if they don’t get answers from you they may seek answers elsewhere that are less reliable, or if they are not informed they are at greater risk for engaging in unsafe behaviors. The rule of thumb is- start talking to them when they are young (even at 3-4 years old they can understand some basics) and keep talking to them about it throughout their childhood. Here is a guide based on what is age appropriate to say: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/talk-about-drugs.html>

1. **What behaviors and/or signs might indicate that my child has a substance abuse problem?**

Many teenagers effectively hide their drug or alcohol consumption from their parents, but other behaviors that result from substance use may be noticed first. These may include skipping school frequently, performing poorly in school, changing friends, and dropping activities or former interests. Other signs include dangerous behavior like getting in fights or driving while impaired. One does not need to be addicted to have a substance use problem.

Parents of children with mental health disorders should know that their kids are particularly vulnerable to substance problems. Even normal teenage experimentation can become risky for someone with an anxiety or mood disorder. Use of alcohol or drugs, even when it’s limited, can worsen symptoms of panic attacks, trigger a manic or depressive episode, and induce psychosis. It is important to know that using substances will also interfere with the efficacy of prescribed medications.

1. **Can I force someone into getting substance abuse treatment?**

Maybe they don’t believe that they’re sick. They don’t believe that anything’s wrong. It takes a big wakeup call to get through the addiction, and to the person that we all know is still inside, screaming to be let out. It’s a long hard road, but here are some tips to help in the situation when someone is refusing help:

1. Educate yourself: do the research to understand the specific drug or alcohol issues that they are going through so you can better understand the signs, symptoms and information associated with it. Try to identify where they are in their use- are they using on occasion, or heavily addicted and spiraling out of control? Depending on where they are at depends on what your approach should be.
2. Offer Support, Not Funding: Don’t provide funds as it may feed their habit. However, without stating the obvious, let the addict know that you are there for them no matter what. It’s very easy to have a conversation with someone, and keep the subject matter silent, while both of you know what’s going on. By avoiding bringing it up in direct words or unveiling anger, you’re showing them that you’re not being judgmental, that you just want to help.

After enough of these timid, non-confrontational discussions, you may notice positive changes in behavior. When an addict is truly trying to fight through their addiction and they begin to show it, you’ve hit a pivotal point in the recovery process. It can be a make-or-break situation. If you’re still showing the same level of support and they are responding appropriately, there may come a time when they openly tell you about their addiction and that they need help. This is going to make the entire process easier and eliminate the need for an intervention.

1. Positive Encouragement: They need help, and you can encourage them to seek help far better than anyone else can if you’re an important and influential figure in their life. Offer to drive them to an appointment, to answer the phone when they are struggling, or over for dinner on a Friday to keep them busy. Just don’t use guilt or ultimatums as they are unsuccessful in dealing with addiction.
2. Intervention: This is almost your last resort. People want to be in control of their life, and it’s hard to hear that you have a problem. There are no surefire ways to reach a person, and you can try an intervention to sit and tell your loved one they need help, but at the end of the day, they need to want to get better and make it their choice if they are going to be successful. If you plan an intervention you should consult with a therapist or counselor first to make sure your message is coming through in a constructive manner.

1. Civil Commitment: This is the absolute last option available. If your loved one has been hospitalized to an inpatient facility multiple times for addiction or mental illness this might be an option for you. Call your County Human Services agency to see if this option is available to pursue.
2. **If I (or my child) am in substance abuse treatment, do I also need to see a mental health counselor?**

Roughly 50% of individuals with severe mental health disorders are affected by substance use. In fact, alcohol and drugs are often used to self-medicate symptoms of mental health problems, can increase the underlying risk for mental health disorders, and can make symptoms of mental health worse. Although it’s not required, it is recommended.

The best treatment for a co-occurring disorder (mental health and substance use treatment) is an integrated approach where both the substance abuse problem and the mental health disorder are treated simultaneously. Whether your mental health or substance abuse problem came first, long-term recovery depends on getting treatment for both disorders by the same treatment provider or team.

Depending on your specific issues, treatment for your mental health problem may include medication, individual or group counseling, lifestyle changes, and peer support. Treatment for your substance abuse may include detoxification, managing of withdrawal symptoms, behavioral therapy, and support groups to help maintain your sobriety.

1. **I have questions. Who can I call?**

The national helpline for substance abuse is **1-800-662-4357** and they offer information on addiction and free referral services 24 hours per day.