

THE HEALTHCARE PROVIDER'S ROLE IN SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER RECOVERY



As a healthcare provider, you know that a substance use disorder (SUD) is a disease. It should be treated, managed, and cared for as with any other diagnosis.

SUDs are often associated with other diagnoses, such as mental health disorders. Some physical symptoms your patient presents with may be due to withdrawal instead of some other condition. A patient's substance use may inhibit treatment effectiveness for some conditions or make them worse. It is helpful to consider all of these issues along with a patient's SUD to promote their recovery.

The recovery process is not linear. Your patient may come to you at any point in their substance use, treatment, or recovery process. It is useful to recognize where they are in the process so you can provide appropriate help. For patients who need referral to treatment, FindHelpNowKY.org is an ideal tool to help you help your patients find a program that is right for them.

STAGES OF CHANGE AND YOUR ROLE IN RECOVERY

The following six stages come from the Stages of Change¹ model. The chart below will help you identify which stage your patient is in and your role in helping them get to the next stage of change.

Stage of Change	Your Patient	Your Role
Pre-Contemplation	They have not begun to consider changing their behavior and are often unaware that their substance use is hurting their health.	Build rapport and trust and let your patient know about your concerns. You want them to start thinking about changing their behavior.
Contemplation	They recognize concerns about their substance use and are considering changing, but they still have doubts.	Normalize their doubts and develop pros and cons based on their beliefs to help tip the scales toward change.
Preparation	They have decided to change their behavior and begin the process of treatment; however, they're still unsure how to go about it.	Discuss with them all the available treatment options, help them decide which option would be best for them, and use FindHelpNowKY.org to find the appropriate services.
Action (Treatment)	They are in treatment but have not reached a stable point in their recovery.	Explain that you know treatment can be difficult, but encourage them to stay in treatment and help them set goals to get to recovery.
Maintenance (Recovery)	They are out of treatment and trying to maintain sobriety.	Maintain contact with your patient, reassure them that they made the right choice, and help them make new short and long term goals for their health. Also keep in mind the clinical prescribing guidelines for medications with addiction potential.
Recurrence (Relapse)	They have slipped back into their old substance use behavior.	Support any desire to re-enter treatment and help them develop a new plan to enter the recovery stage again.

¹Prochaska, J. O., DiClemente, C. C., & Norcross, J. C. (2009). In search of how people change: Applications to addictive behaviors. *Addictions Nursing Network*, 5(1), 2-16. DOI: 10.3109/10884609309149692

NOTE: This guide is based on three documents: (1) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2015). *Talking with your adults patients about alcohol, drug and/or mental health problems* (3rd ed.). Rockville, MD. (2) US Department of Health and Human Services. (2005). *Helping patients who drink too much: A clinician's guide*. Washington, DC. (3) US Department of Health and Human Services. (2001). *Enhancing motivation for change in substance abuse treatment*. Washington, DC.