

Supporting Your Loved One IN TREATMENT

Substance abuse affects the whole family, not just the individual who is addicted.

When your loved one is in a residential program (meaning your loved one will be living in a treatment community), home passes can be an option for your loved one to spend time outside of the treatment facility. It is crucial to communicate with the counselor about how things go during home passes as these reports can be important tools for the treatment process (e.g. assist with teaching appropriate ways to cope with stress in the home, highlight any successes).

Here are some things you can do to support your loved one through treatment and into recovery:

Be present.

Help your loved one stay committed to treatment by showing steady support, encouragement, and fully participating in the treatment process. Request additional family sessions, if needed.

Be ready to learn.

Most treatment programs cover the basics of addiction including: effects of drugs (physical, mental, and emotional), the process of change (it doesn't happen overnight), family dynamics and ways you can support your loved one. Be sure to ask questions.

Be flexible to make changes at home.

Home life has a significant impact on the person in treatment, even small details are important. Inform the counselor of changes that occur in the family and be open to suggestions that the counselor may give.

Be prepared to implement, alter, and follow rules.

Work with your loved one's counselor to develop appropriate rules for the home that will support the work that is being done in treatment. It is important that the rules are followed by all members of the family; not following the rules may send a confusing message to your loved one and creates room for manipulation.

Praise successes.

Encouragement from family members may motivate progression toward recovery and may keep your loved one engaged in treatment.

Re-think personal drug and/or alcohol usage.

Family members can help by removing any drugs and/or alcohol from locations where your loved one may have access. Ask all family members to not use substances when your loved one is present. Recovery is a delicate process; it may be difficult for your loved one to cope with the temptation and stress that accompanies watching others use substances.

Work with the counselor.

Identify relapse warning signs for your loved one while they are in treatment and learn ways to support your loved one through events/activities that may trigger relapse.

Don't ignore relapse warning signs.

If you see warning signs, report them to the counselor or treatment facility as soon as possible. The same is true if you suspect or know that relapse has occurred. The longer these signs are ignored, the harder it is for your loved one to get back on track.

Know that recovery is a lifelong process.

Recovery isn't a guarantee for any individual who participates in treatment for substance abuse. Staying sober involves a lifelong commitment, consistent support, keeping on top of routines and schedules, and seeking help/support when cravings or other life issues threaten to derail recovery.

You cannot keep your loved one sober.

Family participation in treatment services is important, but families cannot do all of the work. Your loved one has to put time, effort, and energy into recovery in order to be successful.

Seek support for yourself.

Just as recovery from addiction requires ongoing support, so does family recovery. Join and participate in family member support groups such as Al-Anon meetings. Many family members also choose to seek outside professional counseling to work through some of the tough issues that may come to the surface while participating in treatment with their loved one.

