

What Kind of Help Am I Looking For?

Start with the question you want answered, not a treatment label you think you should already know. More than one kind of support may be useful.

An assessment can help a professional understand your needs and develop an individual treatment plan. Questions about your health, circumstances and goals belong in that conversation. This map does not choose a level of care. [1]

Choose a starting conversation

What I need today	Who I could ask	A useful first question
Understand what is happening	A healthcare professional or treatment program	Can you arrange an assessment for substance-use concerns?
Understand a treatment option	The clinician or program providing it	How would you decide whether this service fits my needs?
Get to an appointment	A trusted person or the program's support staff	Who can help me work through transport, access or cost questions?
Talk with people with related experiences	A peer-support group organizer	Who is this meeting for, and what happens at a first meeting?
Be heard before making a decision	Someone I trust	Could you listen while I explain what has been difficult?

Original worked example

"I want help" becomes "I want a clinician to help me understand why I am struggling, and I need a ride to that appointment." Those are two requests. One trusted person might help with the ride while the clinician handles the assessment.

SAMHSA encourages a specific request and allows starting with a smaller conversation. Support can include help finding a professional, making an appointment, or simply having someone listen. [2]

Keep notes private. Write or type short notes. Use another copy if you need more room. Save and reopen the PDF to check your answers.

My first connection

The question I want answered

Choose one row or write a different need.

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Person or service and next action

Name/contact; what I will ask; another contact if this one cannot help.

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If an answer is unclear

Ask what the service can and cannot provide, who will see you, and what happens next. You can ask for an explanation without committing to that program.

Sources and Further Reading

[1] [NIAAA: Questions for Alcohol Treatment Programs](https://alcohol.treatment.niaaa.nih.gov/) (alcohol.treatment.niaaa.nih.gov)

[2] [SAMHSA: How to Ask for Help](https://www.samhsa.gov/help) (samhsa.gov)