What Different Levels of Addiction Care Involve

Some treatment happens through appointments. Other programs offer daytime care or a place to stay. This guide explains the differences and gives you questions to ask about the care your clinician recommends.

Where Care Happens

Type of care	What it usually involves	What to ask
Routine outpatient	You attend scheduled visits and go home the same day. How often you attend depends on your treatment plan.	What happens at each visit? Who can I contact between appointments?
Intensive outpatient (IOP)	Scheduled outpatient care with more support than routine office visits and less than partial hospitalization.	What would my week look like, including therapy and medication appointments?
Partial hospitalization (PHP)	An intensive daytime mental health program that can be an alternative to overnight psychiatric care.	What care is available during the day? What support will I have in the evenings?
Residential	You live at the treatment program. Services and length of stay vary.	Who is there overnight? How will I get any medical care I need?
Inpatient	You stay overnight for 24-hour support, usually in a hospital or clinic.	Why do you recommend this care for me? Who will help arrange care after I leave?

Ask each program about its services, staffing and schedule. Two programs with the same label may offer different care. Your clinician can help you choose a plan that takes account of your substance use, physical and mental health, and daily life.

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Talk Through the Recommendation

- What did you learn from my assessment that led you to recommend this care?
- What help would I miss in a less intensive program?
- How can we make treatment work with my job, school, caregiving, travel or housing?
- When will we talk about how treatment is going and whether I need a different amount of support?
- Who will arrange my next appointment if I move to another program or leave this one?

An Example: Checking the Schedule

Imagine a program that offers evening therapy, but its prescriber only sees people during the day. If you need both, ask: "How can I fit the medication appointments into my schedule?" Asking about each service helps you see whether the plan will work for you.

Notes to Discuss With Your Clinician

Keep your notes private. Write short notes, then save the PDF and reopen it to check your answers. Use another copy or separate paper if you need more room.

The care recommended for you

What kind of program, which services, and why your clinician recommends them.

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Notes to Discuss With Your Clinician (continued)

What you need to make it work

Think about your schedule, travel, accessibility, medicines, caregiving and a safe place to stay.

Questions before the first visit

What do you still need to know? Who will answer, and when?

More About Treatment

Outpatient rehab (addictionhelp.com)

Addiction treatment (addictionhelp.com)

Sources

SAMHSA: Treatment Types for Mental Health, Drugs and Alcohol (samhsa.gov)

NIAAA: 10 Questions for Alcohol Treatment Programs (alcoholtreatment.niaaa.nih.gov)

Medicare: Intensive Outpatient Program Services (medicare.gov)

Medicare: Partial Hospitalization (medicare.gov)

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