

What Different Levels of Addiction Care Involve

The right setting depends on the care and support you need, not on whether you have “tried hard enough.” Use these descriptions to understand a recommendation and ask how treatment would fit your life.

Keep completed notes private. Use short notes in each box; continue on another copy or separate paper when needed. Save the completed PDF on your device and reopen it to check your notes before closing.

Where Care Happens [1] [3] [4]

Setting	What it usually involves	Question worth asking
Routine outpatient	Scheduled visits, then home the same day. Frequency depends on the treatment plan.	What happens at each visit, and how do I reach someone between appointments?
Intensive outpatient (IOP)	Structured outpatient care more intensive than routine office visits and less intensive than partial hospitalization.	What does my weekly schedule involve, including therapy and medication visits?
Partial hospitalization (PHP)	A structured day program providing intensive outpatient psychiatric care as an alternative to inpatient care.	What clinical support is available during the day, and what is the plan for evenings?
Residential	Living at a treatment program. Its services and length of stay vary.	Who is available overnight, and how are medical needs handled?
Inpatient	Overnight care, usually linked to a hospital or clinic, for people needing 24-hour support.	What need requires this setting, and how will the next step in care be arranged?

Names alone do not tell you everything about a program. Ask for the actual services, staff availability and schedule. A clinician’s assessment can consider physical and mental health as well as substance use; your plan should reflect your circumstances. [2]

Ask About the Recommendation

- What findings from my assessment led to this recommendation?
- Which needs would be difficult to meet in a less intensive setting?
- How will work, school, caregiving, transportation or housing affect attendance?
- How and when will we review progress or change the level of support?
- Who will arrange the next appointment if I transfer or leave this program?

Worked Example: Compare the Schedule

Fictional example: an outpatient program offers evening visits, but its medication clinician is only available during the day. The next question is how those appointments are coordinated. The program's label alone would not have revealed the scheduling problem.

Bring This Back to the Clinician

Recommended care and the reason given

Record the setting, services and the needs it is meant to address.

Practical needs to discuss

Schedule, travel, accessibility, medicines, caregiving or a safe place to stay.

What needs confirming before the first visit

Who will answer, and when you will hear back.

Explore Treatment Settings

Outpatient rehab

<https://www.addictionhelp.com/drug-rehab/outpatient-rehab/>

Addiction treatment

<https://www.addictionhelp.com/treatment/>

Sources

[1] SAMHSA: Treatment Types for Mental Health, Drugs and Alcohol

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-support/learn-about-treatment/types-of-treatment>

[2] NIAAA: 10 Questions for Alcohol Treatment Programs

<https://alcoholtreatment.niaaa.nih.gov/how-to-find-alcohol-treatment/10-questions-for-alcohol-treatment-programs>

[3] Medicare: Intensive Outpatient Program Services

<https://www.medicare.gov/coverage/mental-health-care-outpatient-intensive-outpatient-program-services>

[4] Medicare: Partial Hospitalization

<https://www.medicare.gov/coverage/mental-health-care-outpatient-partial-hospitalization>