

Prevention Pathways

Online Courses

FACT SHEET

Where Women Can Go for Help

Treatment and counseling programs can help women who have substance abuse problems, problems with violence—or both. Since services available will vary depending on the problem, it is important to first have a clear understanding of the problem or problems.

Treatment for Violence

Women in abusive relationships need to feel safe and to be able to live their lives without fear. They need to learn what their options are and what resources are available to them.

Most programs that treat the effects of violence use support groups and one-on-one counseling. Support groups can help each woman realize that she is not alone and that other women in similar situations experience the same feelings. Most groups meet for 6-8 weeks, although many offer the option to continue counseling for a longer period.

One-on-one counseling addresses a woman's personal circumstances and considers her individual emotional and mental health needs. This counseling can be short-term or ongoing, as needed.

Many local governments or nonprofit agencies offer treatment for violence at a reduced fee. Studies have shown that women who are able to have their needs met by attending both a support group and individual counseling sessions do better overall.^{1,2}

Treatment for Both Violence and Alcohol Abuse

To find a treatment center near you, go to the Center For Substance Abuse Treatment's "[Treatment Locator](#)" service or www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov.

Treatment centers vary from city to city. However, most alcohol abuse treatment centers provide:

- Drug treatment, if appropriate—such as Antabuse ([disulfiram](#)) for alcohol addiction
- Counseling, using tools such as role-playing and therapy with the client and her family
- Alternative therapy, such as acupuncture

- Twelve-step support groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
- Social learning techniques (that help women remain drug-free and sober)³

Addicted women have individual needs. Some have had their addiction for years; others have recent problems. The available types of care include:

- Inpatient or residential detoxification
- Residential treatment and rehabilitation
- Outpatient treatment services
- Self-help/support groups

Treatment for Both Violence and Alcohol Addiction

Women who are abused and have an addiction need services that address both problems.

Unfortunately, women have a difficult time finding one place that can address both needs at the same time. Many women's shelters do not accept women who are drunk and do not offer 12-step programs to overcome addiction. Conversely, many addiction treatment programs have no policy or guidelines to protect women's safety.

Many drug treatment centers don't offer services for children, such as group counseling or day care, which can ease the victim's recovery.

The goals of domestic violence programs and treatment programs for drug and alcohol abuse frequently are not the same. The first concern of a shelter or other domestic violence program is the woman's safety, whereas a drug treatment facility aims to get and keep a woman sober.

How You Can Help – Treatment for Alcohol

A person who is abusing alcohol is also likely to deny the problem. Encouraging treatment is challenging and painful. Although you cannot force an adult into treatment, there are steps that can help a person accept the idea.⁴ You can:

- **Stop rescue missions.** Do not try to protect the person from pain or from the consequences of his or her drinking.
- **Time your intervention.** Talk to the person when he/she is sober, but do so immediately after an incident, so the feelings are fresh.
- **Be specific.** Cite specific times and dates when alcohol caused problems. Do not simply describe general behavior.
- **State the consequences.** Tell the person that you will not go to parties and other places if he/she drinks. Make sure you follow through with the threat.
- **Be ready to help.** Be willing and ready to go with the person to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting or to an initial meeting with a therapist.

How You Can Help – Treatment for Violence

All intimate relationships have problems from time to time. Sometimes it's difficult to know when it is the right time to get involved. A friend in trouble

cannot always ask for help. Your friend may need help if you notice any of these signs:⁵

- **Has she offered different explanations for visible injuries,** such as black eyes, bruises, or broken bones?
- **Does her partner control most of her activities?** Does she seem nervous or scared after a conversation with him? Does he need to know where she is all the time?
- **Does her partner insult her or put her down a lot?** Does he ignore her ideas or suggestions? Can she make decisions on her own, or only with him?
- **Does she seem scared or more isolated than before?** Is she more anxious? Does she seem depressed or distracted?

For more information, go to

www.samhsa.gov/preventionpathways and click on “courses” to find Module 9 of the online course, “It Won’t Happen to Me: *Substance Abuse and Violence Against Women.*”

References

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- ¹ Fazzino, PA; Holton, JK, and Reed, BG. (1997). Substance abuse treatment and domestic violence. Treatment improvement protocol series 25. (DHHS Publication No. SMA 97-3163). Rockville, MD: Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.
- ² Wilson, K.J. (1997). When violence begins at home. Salt Lake City, UT: Publishers Press.
- ³ Fazzino, PA; Holton, JK, and Reed, BG.
- ⁴ National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, National Institutes of Health. (2001). Frequently asked questions on alcohol abuse and alcoholism. Bethesda, MD: Author. Available at www.niaaa.nih.gov/faq/faq.htm
- ⁵ Family Violence Prevention Fund. (1999). The workplace responds to domestic violence: A resource guide for employers, unions and advocates. San Francisco, CA: Author.

