

How to Recognize an Effective Drug Addiction Treatment Program

An interview with Ed Hughes, MPS, LICDC-CS



Ed Hughes is a graduate of Ohio University with a B.A. in Sociology. He earned a Master's of Public Service Counseling from Western Kentucky University and is licensed as an Independent Chemical Dependency Counselor for the State of Ohio.

Mr. Hughes served as Executive Director of The Counseling Center, Inc. 1989-2013, and is currently CEO of Compass Community Health & The Counseling Center, Inc. Selected Administrator of the Year by the Ohio Chapter of the National Association of Drug and Alcohol Counselors, he is a sought after lecturer, educator and panelist on drug treatment issues and prevention activities, and has written a companion book, *Baffled By Addiction* with Dr. Ronald Turner, MD.

Drug addiction has had a devastating effect on our community and families. What would you recommend to an addicted person or family member who is looking for a good and effective treatment program?

I would begin by measuring any treatment program by the standards of the National Institute of Drug Abuse. NIDA identifies several important characteristics of a good and effective program.

First, you want a program that views addiction as a treatable brain disease that left untreated eventually impacts every aspect of a person's life. Understanding addiction as a disease allows the addicted person, and their family, to embrace a solution that is based on proven medical science, as well as an understanding that treatment should address the individual's physical, emotional, social and spiritual challenges.

Secondly, there is not one single treatment solution that fits everyone. An effective treatment program

will offer a variety of treatment options focusing on the complex needs of each addicted person. An addiction assessment should focus on determining the appropriate level of care for each person. Treatment options should include outpatient, intensive outpatient, residential, transitional and aftercare services, and on-going relapse prevention support.

These treatment options vary by level of frequency and intensity. Residential treatment is the highest level of care offering the person an opportunity to live in a closely monitored and structured environment outside of their own home. Aftercare services address the chronic nature of this disease by offering counseling and support for as long as needed to ensure a stable foundation and maintenance of sobriety and independence. Most all addicted persons initially underestimate the level and amount of treatment support they need. It is very important that any treatment center have the ability to increase the level of care as needed.

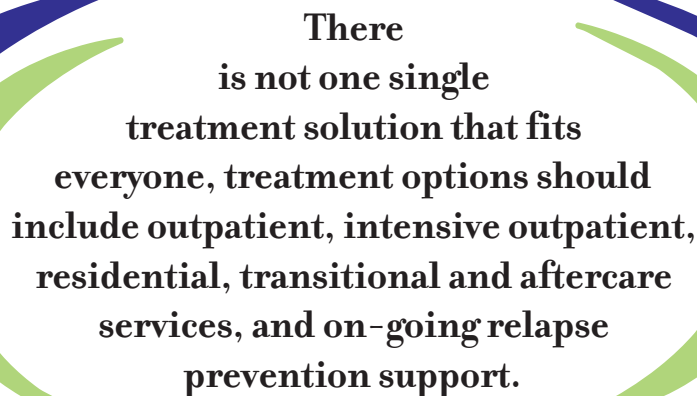
Next, you need a treatment program that addresses the multiple needs of each addicted person. The addiction to the drug is a primary concern, but ongoing recovery may well depend on the level of attention paid to other problems, i.e., mental health issues, need for continuing housing support, assistance with finding a job or engaging educational services. There must also be a comprehensive approach to addressing other health care needs. Most addicted people have not paid adequate attention to their primary care needs and many in addiction treatment are diagnosed with other serious health problems. Failure to address these co-occurring health issues can dramatically affect the potential for success.

There are medications that can assist in the treatment of addiction. These medications are intended to "assist" in the treatment of addiction by reducing the intensity of withdrawal symptoms, or helping to reduce drug cravings. These medications can be effective when provided within a comprehensive counseling and health care program. However, I would recommend avoiding programs that rely primarily on medication, such as Suboxone, offering limited counseling, health care, or other support. These programs are often attractive to the addicted person who is seeking a simple, or quick and easy solution. Recovery from addiction is not simple, nor quick and easy. I am also not supportive of programs that think medication is part of a program for all addicted people. Medication is not an effective tool for many addicted people. I also favor a short-term use of Suboxone as it is itself an addictive drug. Since Suboxone is an addictive drug, long-term use presents the dilemma as how to withdraw the person from the medication. I believe this can be best accomplished earlier in the treatment process whereby the

person is engaged in intensive services and surrounded by greater support to avoid relapse.

I strongly believe that an effective treatment program makes every effort to include families in the treatment of their addicted loved one. Too often families are left out of the treatment process, which not only misses a tremendous opportunity to educate and develop the family as a helping resource, but it also leaves the family vulnerable to continued manipulation by the addicted person.

Lastly, but just as important as anything I have previously mentioned, you want a treatment program that takes a very active approach to linking clients to community 12 Step recovery programs, Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. These programs are vital to the long term maintenance of sobriety, and provide explicit directions regarding the development of good character and the healing of damaged relationships. Addiction is a chronic disease with no cure. Lifelong abstinence is possible when the addicted person is equipped with the tools and support for daily maintenance of sobriety.



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If a person is addicted to one drug can they safely use other drugs as long as they avoid the drug that has gotten them in the most trouble?

No. Addiction is a brain disease. Continued use of other mood-altering drugs will lead to an addiction to those drugs or will lead the person back to their original drug of choice. The ability to control ones drug use is the obsession of every addicted person. Switching drugs is a common attempt in continuing the pursuit of the "high" while avoiding the consequences created by addiction. A primary goal of recovery is to embrace the need and desire to attain, and maintain, abstinence from all mood-altering drugs. To this end, frequent drug testing is another characteristic of an effective recovery program.

What happens if someone relapses after a period of sobriety?

Relapse is an issue with any chronic disease, similar to a reoccurrence of cancer, or when a diabetic deviates from their diet and exercise plan. Relapse is a common reality for those making their initial efforts to get clean and sober. The potential for relapse and the steps to take to get back on the right track must be a big part of the counseling process. An effective treatment program will work hard toward relapse prevention, but will also help prepare the addicted person, and their family for the potential of relapse. Most people in long-term recovery have benefited from multiple episodes of treatment.

Are treatment agencies licensed by the state or other governing organizations?

Yes, and I would highly recommend asking any program you might use whether they are licensed by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, or have a national certification such as CARF (Commission on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities). This can assure that the program is following certain best practices and standards, and is subject to regular reviews and audits.

What about the cost of treatment?

There are a lot of variables regarding the cost of treatment, but first let me point out that addiction treatment is, in most cases, very affordable when compared to other health care services. However, families need to be very careful when considering payment for addiction treatment. As I mentioned previously, most successfully recovering people have experienced multiple episodes of treatment. It is wise to seek advice from a local, certified and licensed treatment agency before committing financial resources to a treatment plan that may have been selected by the addicted person.

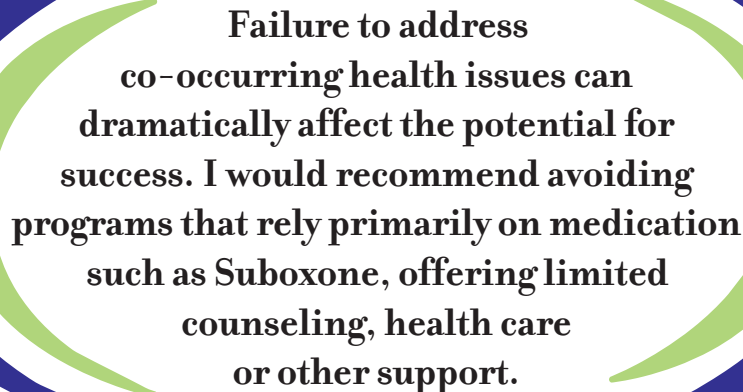
A certain consideration is to select a treatment provider that accepts health insurance as a payment for services, and avoid those that are "cash only".

What does recovery look like?

A recovering person has accepted the realities of their disease and has taken personal responsibility for his or her life. Taking personal responsibility will involve not only abstinence, but also efforts to become a fully functioning, independent person who is working to heal broken relationships, addressing continuing emotional, health and spiritual issues, and using their experiences to help others. There are many, many people in long-term recovery who are making a significant contribution to their family, employer, church, and community.

Are you hopeful the community is making progress in dealing with our addiction problems?

I am very hopeful and certain that people can enjoy a full and joyful recovery from drug addiction. I witness people getting well and putting their lives back together. I am blessed to see families rejoice in the sobriety of their loved ones. I am also realistic. We have never been faced with an epidemic in our community so devastating and broad as this opiate problem, and as difficult as the prescription drug problem has been, the heroin problem is worse. We must remember that we are all in this together, the addicted person, their family, those trying to treat the addicted person, the health care community, law enforcement, churches, employers...we are all working together to heal our community, one person at a time.



Failure to address co-occurring health issues can dramatically affect the potential for success. I would recommend avoiding programs that rely primarily on medication such as Suboxone, offering limited counseling, health care or other support.

For more information visit www.TheCounselingCenter.org

The Loved Ones Group began as a response to calls and questions Ed Hughes received as an alcohol and drug counselor. Parents, spouses, grandparents and friends would call him in the depths of despair, hoping that there was something they could do to make their loved one stop the insanity of abusing drugs or alcohol. With each call, he knew that there was a need to offer education, practical tips, and more importantly, hope to the loved ones caught in the grip of family addiction. The Loved Ones Group curriculum developed as a result of years of work in the field of family and individual counseling, and meetings provide free, confidential, usable information to help combat the baffling disease of addiction.

Loved Ones Group for Teens - www.L1GTeen.com is an informational website for teens dealing with addiction in their family. The website features videos to explain coping strategies and educational links.

Huntington, WV
 First Presbyterian Church
 1015 5th Ave.
 (Rear entrance)
 Tuesdays @ 6:00 pm
 Contact: Cary Dixon,
 304-633-9632 or
 Margie 304-736-6488



Point Pleasant, WV
 Main Street Baptist Church
 1100 Main St.
 Thursdays @ 6:00
 Contact: Greg Kaylor
 304-675-6100;
 pvhdme@pvalley.org

Logan, WV
 First Baptist Church of
 Logan
 423 Main St.
 Mondays @ 7:00 pm
 Contact: 304-752-4071

South Charleston, WV
 Thomas Memorial
 Hospital
 4825 MacCorkle Ave.
 South Wing Group Room
 HADDAD Building
 Thursdays @ 6:00 pm
 Contact: 304-766-4560

South Webster, OH
 Pinkerman Community
 Church
 37 Carmicheal St.
 Thursdays @ 6:00 pm
 Contact: Sandy Smith,
 740-357-5334

Wurtland, KY
 First Church of Nazarene
 619 Fulton Ave.
 Contact: Joe Barnett
 606-920-2046
 joe.barnett@ky.gov

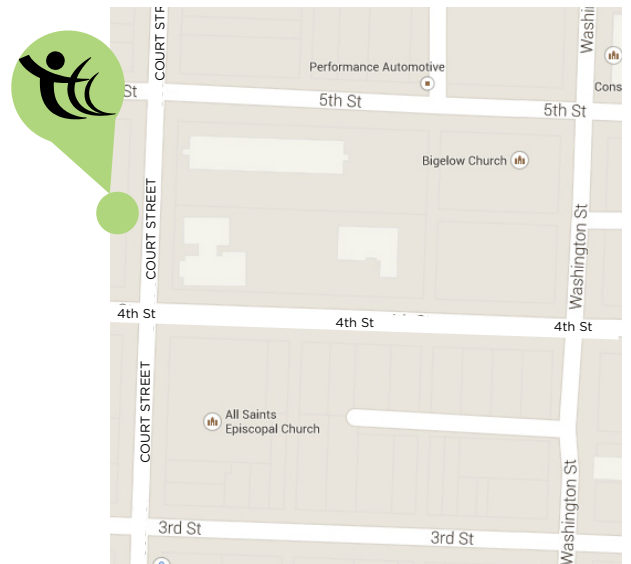
Portsmouth, OH
 Compass Community
 Health Care Center
 1634 - 11th St.
 Wednesdays @ 6:00 pm

Now in its 14th year, The Loved Ones Group offers free, confidential, education-based information. Please call toll free 1-800-577-6685 for more information.

West Union, OH
 210 N. Wilson Street
 The Counseling Center of
 Adams County
 Mondays @ 6:00 pm
 Contact: 937-544-5218



For more information call:
 (740) 354- 6685
 411 Court Street
 Portsmouth, Ohio



**Commission on Accreditation
 of Rehabilitation Facilities**

Outpatient Treatment: Integrated Alcohol and Other Drug/Mental Health Services for Adults, Children and Adolescents.

Prevention/Diversion: Integrated Alcohol and Other Drug/Mental Health Services for Adults, Children and Adolescents.

Residential Treatment: Alcohol and Other Drug/Mental Health Services for Adults

Case Management/Services Coordination: Integrated Alcohol and Other Drug/Mental Health Services for Adults, Children and Adolescents.

The Counseling Center is certified to provide alcoholism and addiction services by Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services (OMHAS).

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