

2017

Addiction & Mental Health Terminology Guide



The Purpose of this Guide

People and media have used different terms over the years when referring to addiction and mental health issues. Sometimes it's been helpful, such as describing mental illness and addiction using "people first" terms (e.g, a person living with a mental illness). But some terms have been used interchangeably with others, when they may actually mean something different to different people.

The organizations listed on the cover of this guide have put it together as a reference guide as a means to a better understanding of these issues affecting millions of Ohioans. It will be an "evergreen" document that will be reviewed and updated periodically. We hope this guide helps to bring clarity and understanding of addiction and mental illness, in addition to the needs of those who live with and are recovering from these issues.

Mental Health and Addiction Terminology

Shared list of terms

Abstinence – refraining from alcohol and/or drug use

ADAMHS – Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services. Many county boards are referred to as ADAMHS boards.

Addict – a slang term for a person with an addictive disorder. Note that using the term “addict” is a stigmatizing term (e.g., “People who are homeless are always addicts.”)

Addiction Assessment – usually a paper document, this is used by therapists and counselors to determine the extent of addiction and/or mental illness and to help with diagnosis

Addiction Treatment – a service or program that aims to reduce the addiction that a person is living with

Adverse Reaction – a reaction to a drug that is not the desired one

Affinity – a drug’s strength allowing it to bind to a receptor

Bioavailability – a drug’s ability to enter the body

Ceiling Effect – an outcome in which there is no difference in effect of increased dosage of drugs

Central Nervous System – the brain and spinal cord make up the central nervous system in our bodies. It is one of the primary areas affected by addiction.

Cirrhosis – chronic liver disease

Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale (COWS) – used to determine the severity of opioid withdrawal

Craving – a powerful and strong urge for some substance. Craving is a symptom of abnormal brain adaptations that result in addiction.

Crisis Intervention – An action taken when usual coping resources are inadequate or pose a threat to how a person or family unit functions

DOC – drug of choice

Doctor shopping – when a person looks for care from multiple physicians at the same time without the other’s knowledge, in order to get more or larger amounts of a medication(s)

Endorphins – opium-like substances that that brain produces naturally; natural painkillers

Evidence-based Treatment – approaches to treating addiction that are scientifically validated

Harm Reduction – considered a first stage of addiction treatment. Therapy that focuses on reducing the potential for harm instead of stopping a behavior

Intoxication – a state of being drugged or poisoned; the result of abuse of alcohol and/or drugs

Maintenance – stabilization of a patient when he/she is on the lowest effective dose of a medication indefinitely

Naloxone – an opioid antagonist that blocks the effects of opioid agonists

Naltrexone – a narcotic antagonist that blocks opioid effects

Off-Label Use – a use of a drug by a physician that is other than what the label says is the drug’s intended use

Over-the-counter drugs – legal non-prescription drugs

Polysubstance Abuse – concurrent abuse of more than one substance

Rapid Detox – detoxification that is helped by anesthesia

Recovery – the state of reducing or ending substance use. Being “turned around” through supportive services, programs and/or environments

Recovery Rate – the percentage of addicted individuals in treatment who are abstinent in their first year of recovery

Screening – a tool to measure the extent of a person’s addiction, such as a questionnaire or lab test

Self-help group – a group that is dealing with a similar issue and meets regularly to support each other and share helpful information

SUD –Substance Use Disorder. This term replaces “AoD” (Alcohol and Other Drugs)

Therapeutic Community – a setting where people with similar issues can support each other’s recovery

Trigger – a physical or environmental factor/occurrence that induces substance use

Withdrawal – abrupt decrease or removal of regular substance doses

Withdrawal symptoms – sometimes severe or excruciating physical and emotional reactions to being without opiates or other substances; examples may include loss of appetite, vomiting, shaking, irritability, jitters, watery eyes)

Mental Health Terminology

Access – the extent to which a person needing services is able to get them; the availability of services, cultural appropriateness, location, hours, cost, availability of transportation

Accessible Services – services that are affordable, close to home, and open at hours convenient for individuals needing services and programs

Alternative Therapy – an approach to therapy for a mental health issue that is different from traditional counseling or medication-assisted therapies. Sometimes emphasize the interrelationship between mind, body, and spirit.

Anxiety Disorders – an unshakable, disruptive, exaggerated fear that can result in avoiding everyday activities. Sometimes have underlying biological causes and can run in families.

Assessment – a professional review of child and family needs completed when first seeking services from a caregiver. Usually includes a review of physical and mental health and behaviors in the community.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) – a neurobiological condition that is characterized by a developmentally inappropriate level of attention, concentration, activity, and impulsivity.

Behavioral Therapy – focuses on changing unwanted behaviors through means such as rewards, reinforcements, and desensitization.

Biomedical Treatment – a form of treatment that combines medication with psychotherapy to treat emotional, behavioral, and mental disorders.

Bipolar Disorder – also known as manic depressive illness, bipolar disorder causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, and ability to carry out day-to-day tasks

Borderline Personality Disorder – a mental illness characterized by pervasive instability in moods, interpersonal relationships, self-image, and behavior.

Caregiver – a person who has received special training to help people living with mental health problems. Examples include, social workers, teachers, even family members.

Case Manager – an individual who organizes and coordinates services and supports for clients with mental health problems and their families.

Clinical Social Worker – professionals trained in advocating for clients to assist them with information, referral, and direct help in dealing with local, state, and/or federal government agencies. Sometimes serve as case managers.

Cognitive Therapy – used to identify and correct distorted thinking patterns that can lead to troublesome, self-defeating, or self-destructive feelings and behaviors.

Community Services – are provided in a community setting and not in an in-patient setting.

Consumer – any person who receives services for mental health and/or addiction issues. May be specialized to include client, customer, recipient, eligible member, or patient.

Continuum of Care – a progression of services that a consumer can move through, one service at a time, toward recovery. Can also mean comprehensive services or wrap-around services.

Crisis Residential Treatment Services – short-term, 24-hour help in a crisis usually in a non-hospital setting. Helps to avoid inpatient hospitalization toward stabilizing the person and determining next steps.