

Alcohol Fact Sheet

Assessment of Addictions

The goal of the assessment process is to determine the priorities for treatment planning.

Once a person has been referred for treatment, clinicians use assessment techniques to charac-

terize the problem and develop a treatment plan.

Reaching a chemical dependency diagnosis can be a complex process. To do it well there needs to be a thorough examination of all the major areas of a person's life.

Normally, an in-depth professional evaluation cannot take place effectively in a one or even two hour screening session.

An assessment is an ongoing, interactive process which identifies an individual's problems and is used in the development of a treatment plan



Assessment: A Foundation

Assessments perform at least four important functions:

1. To aid in the formal diagnosis of the patient's alcohol problem
2. To establish the severity of the addiction problem
3. To guide the treatment planning process
4. To define a patient's data baseline, to compare their future health condition.

A variety of methods are involved in a comprehensive patient assessment, including medical examinations, clinical interviews, and standardized tests.

Every patient entering treatment presents a unique combination of medical and psychological characteristics.

Questionnaires and tests relating to addiction problems can be used to assess beliefs about the effects of use. Testing can help determine degrees of severity of addiction and resources that will aid in recovery.

General psychological instruments are normally used to assess personality, cognition, and neuropsychological characteristics.

Inside this issue:

Assessment: A Foundation	1
Adolescents and Adults Pose Different Challenges	2
Evaluating the "Whole Person"	2
The Path to Healing	3

A clinician's perception and judgment can be enhanced by the application of formal testing instruments

Adolescents and Adults Pose Different Challenges

Adolescents striving to become independent are especially sensitive to confrontations with authority figures. This is an important reason why the assessment process must be an objective one.

It is essential to help young people identify the consequences of their chemical use. They need to feel as if they have a major ownership in the process, both in the assessment and the treatment plan.

While adults normally have been using fewer drugs than adolescents, their use has usually created concern among employers and family. Their pattern of abuse is usually more chronic and subtle in its effects compared to a younger person.

Ultimately it is the comprehensive assessment that provides the key to good treatment

Another fundamental difference between young and older patients

is the level of physical debilitation caused by their alcohol or other drug use.

According to Mona Sumner, Rimrock Foundation's Chief Operations Officer, **"With adults, you often have to discuss with them medical information that says they must stop using or they will die. With young people, that isn't always necessarily true"**.

Young people are in the prime of their lives and most likely strong and healthy and, therefore, needing to identify their recovery as a "freeing process". They need to see treatment as a process of being healthy, free and having more friends. Young people need to feel able to make positive choices.

Adolescents bring a collection of complex developmental issues to the assessment process. Adults have usually used alcohol or other drugs for longer periods with more negative consequences than their youthful counterparts. With adults, it is often easier to establish patterns of abuse linked to a loss of control over extended periods of time.

Conversely, adolescents, abuse can be situational. It can include sporadic use of chemicals in dealing with life's problems. Also, it can be the result of outside peer pressures. The challenge is to determine to what extent problems are due to chemical use or to normal adolescent struggles.

The assessment process should provide a range of options from psychometric testing to speaking with a patient's family and friends.

The challenge is to determine to what extent problems are due to chemical use or to normal adolescent struggles

When completed, the assessment furnishes patients, families and treatment professionals with a complete picture. Also, it should identify the tools they will need to move a person forward with the task of treatment and recovery.

Evaluating the "Whole Person"

Ideally, the in-depth assessment should be an independent process that evaluates the whole person.

The evaluation is best conducted by a multi-disciplinary team consisting of chemical dependency counselors, physicians, psychologists, and clinical therapists. Each team member collects information according to their area of expertise.

Normally, a comprehensive assessment will include a complete review of the person's chemical history. Included is their emotional/behavioral history, physical



health, family history, educational and vocational profile, spiritual and social life. Possible signs of physical or sexual abuse, depression and low self-esteem need to be evaluated. Finally, the team members will pool their information to create a complete patient profile.

Ultimately, the assessment determines whether the individual is chemically dependent or experimenting with drugs. In most cases, it builds an action plan necessary to address the substance problem and other related issues.

The Path to Healing

Reaping the benefits of treatment begins by recognizing the signs of addiction. This step is best facilitated by having a comprehensive assessment by a qualified healthcare professional. Although addiction can be diagnosed by primary care physicians, most often the physician will refer the patient to a psychiatrist, psychologist, counselor, or other professional specializing in addictions.

Treatment is a partnership between the patient and the healthcare provider. It is important that informed consumers understand their treatment options and discuss all concerns with a treatment provider as they arise.

A key element of Rimrock's treatment is the active involvement of patients in the management of their own illness.

Empowerment is developed through the use of patient education, skills training and a strong emphasis on encouraging the individual patient to accept responsibility in managing their own condition. Along with the empowerment of our patients, is the emphasis on a treatment regimen which includes comprehensive clinical assessments and individualized patient plans.

Another important part of Rimrock's program is the emphasis we place on the integration of a broad spectrum of community, health and human services for the benefit of the patient. This includes addressing



the patient's physical, psychological, social and economic needs, which improves the likelihood of a successful treatment experience.

Healthcare services should be readily available to those persons needing treatment for addictions, since taking advantage of opportunities when they are ready for treatment is often crucial. Many times, patients can easily be lost in red tape if treatment is not immediately available or is not readily accessible.

Counseling, including both individual and group and other behavioral therapies are critical components of effective treatment for addiction. In therapy, patients address issues of motivation.

They build skills to resist drug use, replace drug-using activities with constructive and rewarding non-drug-using activities, and improve problem-solving abilities. Behavioral therapy also facilitates interpersonal relationships and the individual's ability to function in the family and community.

Successful recovery principles in addiction treatment are characterized by the integration of personal, family, professional and other community resources toward the goal of enhancing the duration and quality of life of those we serve

For further information about treatment for Alcoholism or Drug Abuse, please call Barbara Hansen, Rimrock Foundation Admissions Supervisor at 1-800-227-3953 or 1-406-248-3175.

Rimrock Foundation

1231 North 29th Street
Billings, Montana 59101

Phone: 406-248-3175
Fax: 406-248-3821
Email: comm@rimrock.org

We're on the Web!
www.rimrock.org

Disclaimer: This Fact Sheet is designed for educational purposes only. The information contained herein is not intended to substitute for informed medical advice or training. This information should not be used to diagnose or treat a health problem without consulting a qualified healthcare provider.