



DOING YOUR OWN RESEARCH TO IDENTIFY TREATMENT OPTIONS

Just like each of our lessons in The Other PTA courses includes an opportunity for you to reflect on your personal experience with the topic of the lesson, we share some similar opportunities for readers of The Book. This resource ties in with the content discussed in Chapter Two.

We encourage you to complete each one and keep them in a binder or file on your computer so that you can reference them later. Hopefully you won't need them later, but you just never know! The point is for you to do more than just take in the information, but rather to reflect on it, apply it to your own family situation, and think through some answers to specific questions. Obviously doing so is up to you, but we think it will enrich your experience and improve your ability to support yourself and your son or daughter on their recovery journey.

If you are not able to access an independent addiction specialist or independent education consultant to help you choose a treatment program, you need to learn what to ask for and what to prioritize.

In general, we would recommend prioritizing needs over preferences and a treatment program choice that is within a "reasonable budget" for the patient and/or family. But it is likely that even the most comfortable families will be startled by the high cost of care. Unless there are literally NO financial resources, insurance or credit available, we recommend that you start by choosing a treatment program and THEN find out how much insurance will cover, rather than starting your search through your insurance company. You can learn more about the rationale for that in our supplementary resource, *Choosing Treatment: For Love of Self & Others*.

PRIORITIZING NEEDS

- Is there a need for detox? Is there a need for treatment of trauma?
- Is there a need for treatment for one or more co-occurring psychiatric condition?
- Is there a need for treatment that can address legitimate chronic pain?
- Is there a need for incorporating medication assisted treatment in the aftercare plan?

If your answer to any of the above is "yes," then it will be important to inquire when speaking with treatment programs to verify that they are equipped to provide such care. Most do not attend to all of those needs, and some do not attend to any of them!

IDENTIFYING RESOURCES

Treatment and aftercare are expensive. There's no denying it. Treatment for alcoholism or addiction is expensive. Some programs have detox as part of their treatment, while others do not. An unavoidable part of treatment matching is learning how much a family can afford to spend on an episode of treatment. Sometimes those who have insurance are able to get some assistance, but it is not uncommon for insurance to cover a very small percentage (10-30%) and sometimes it covers nothing at all.

It is absolutely possible to find acceptable care for as little as \$150/day, but the most expensive programs may charge over \$2,000/day. Like many things in life, the least expensive programs offer the least and the most expensive programs offer the most, but the most expensive programs do not necessarily offer better clinical services. They may offer more amenities, have a lower staff-to-patient ratio, or serve much smaller numbers of patients at a time.

So, when selecting a treatment program, it's always a good idea to have a solid understanding of your own resources before you begin. Families affected by addiction who have no financial resources at all are not like families affected by cancer. Most non-profit hospitals are committed to treating indigent patients, even for such expensive care as cancer or the ICU level of care. State and federal funds are sometimes available to make it easier for indigent patients with addiction to get treatment, but sober living services as part of aftercare are rarely funded by public funds.

As uncomfortable as these options may be to consider, please keep in mind your son or daughter's addiction could be as fatal as cancer, therefore it might help to reflect on how you'd feel about spending money for your adult son or daughter to get cancer treatment.

- Is there private health insurance? If not, with your help could they get it?
- Is there Medicaid? Is there Medicare?
- Is there a college fund with a positive balance? Is there a trust fund or private savings?
- Is there equity in the family home that you could borrow against?
- Is there a "rich uncle" or other family member who lives a very comfortable lifestyle who could assist with treatment and aftercare expenses?
- Do parents have enough creditworthiness to apply for a healthcare loan?
- Is it permissible to "borrow against" parents' pension or retirement account?

In general, we would encourage parents to consider all other options before tapping into their own retirement accounts. College funds may never be needed if recovery is never established. The same is

true for the intention behind trust funds and private savings. If you can protect your retirement funds, that is strongly encouraged, but we know that often parents' retirement funds are the last resource available. Keep in mind that applying for a healthcare loan through mLend or another healthcare lender could offer your son or daughter the opportunity to contribute to loan payments once they are stable and have more of their own resources invested in their recovery.

CONSIDERING PREFERENCES

Although few of us are inclined to get excited about funding a treatment program that looks like a spa or a resort, it truly is important for your son or daughter to experience enough comfort to choose to stay in treatment. The "work" of treatment is often emotionally and sometimes even physically very demanding. Even if a treatment program has a pool or offers massages, make no mistake – Treatment is not a vacation! Treatment regimens require many hours of soul searching, lectures, homework, group discussions, frightening opportunities to experience emotional distress for the sake of developing insight, and many requirements to practice being vulnerable with others.

If it will make a huge difference for your son or daughter to go to a treatment program that has animals, is in a setting they love, allows some indulgences (like nicotine or caffeine), has some amenities (like a fitness center or pool), has animals or even just great food, it might make a huge difference in their willingness to admit to treatment or stay there for the full course of treatment.

Some things to consider would include:

- Comfort with larger groups versus a strong preference for smaller groups
- Separation anxiety could matter a lot if the treatment program is too far away for parents to visit or if the treatment program does not allow family visits
- Preferred environments (i.e. mountains, beach, cities, rural)
- Therapeutic animals (i.e. equine-assisted psychotherapy, dogs, cats or even farm animals)
- Opportunities to reengage in hobbies long forgotten (i.e. music, art, fitness, hiking, snowboarding, rock climbing, surfing)
- Opportunities to learn new things (i.e. music, art, fitness, hiking, snowboarding, rock climbing, surfing)
- Opportunities to engage in some form of work while in the program
- Strong preference to not have to share a room (*NOTE* Room sharing is generally considered therapeutic, therefore many programs do not offer single rooms at all. Those with a trauma history or medical needs may benefit from treatment more if they are not distracted by having to share a room).

RULE-OUTS

We define “rule outs” as those things that could have a negative impact on the treatment and recovery process if not considered.

- Is there some essential reason for the treatment program to be within 100 miles? Because if not, we’d recommend being a little further from home. Treatment is hard, and when things start to get especially challenging (or they start to feel a lot better), learning treatment early is very tempting. The easier it is to leave early, the greater the risk. So being a little further away could be a very good thing.
- Are there any “old playmates” or friends with whom your son or daughter has partied or gotten high with who lives near one of the treatment programs you are considering? If so, you might decide to rule out a treatment program because it is too close to that person.
- Are there communities in which your son or daughter has a long history of partying or using (i.e. college town, vacation town, hometown) that is near one of the treatment programs you are considering? If so, you might decide to rule out a treatment program because it could be too easy for them to find a familiar place to crash if leaving treatment early.
- Is air travel a common excuse to get drunk to relieve anxiety or simply part of the airport culture? If so, consider if you are willing to pay for a sober transport aide to help on both the trip for admission and the trip following discharge. A sober transport aide can provide support, monitoring and accountability for successfully navigating air travel without sabotaging recovery progress made in treatment. If you are reluctant to fund that, you may want to avoid a program that requires air travel.
- Is there a history of leaving treatment prematurely in the past? If so, you may want to rule-out programs that have easy access to public transportation. Many treatment programs are located in more rural settings, thus making it harder to leave prematurely.

Use your answers to the questions above to help you identify the needs, preferences, and rule-outs to continue and to identify the financial resources for treatment, then utilize resources such as those below to identify legitimate treatment options:

National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers: <https://www.naatp.org/resources/addiction-industry-directory>

National Association of Therapeutic Schools & Programs:

https://www.natsap.org/Public/For_Parents/Find_a_Program_or_School/SharedContent/DirectorySearch/Membership_Directory.aspx?hkey=1125596e-c3c0-4e0b-ba49-04e0627b4a11

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-treatment>