

Connecting Patients to Residential Substance Abuse Treatment:

How Health Centers Can Support Access

Introduction

Community Health Centers (CHCs) make up the nation's largest primary care system. There are **more than 17,000 locations** that employ a workforce of **326,000 full-time doctors, dentists, case managers, social workers, therapists, and other medical staff**. These community-based and patient-governed organizations are committed to treating people's medical, dental, mental health, and substance use care needs. In addition to delivering primary care, many CHCs offer supplemental health services, can provide patient support services, and can help with transportation so that patients can access the care they need.

Community Health Centers (CHCs) provide affordable and comprehensive primary care to



52 million
Americans annually¹

which
represents



1 in 7
Americans²

and



1 in 3
in rural areas²



¹ Masselli, M., & Shin, P. (2025, August). [How many patients do Community Health Centers really care for? You'll be surprised!](#) Moses/Weitzman Health System & National Association of Community Health Centers. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Estimates Program (2024)

² [U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Estimates Program \(2024\)](#)

Substance Use Disorder and Person-Centered Care

Since 1971, the **National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)** has been released by the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**. NSDUH is the nation's primary source of statistical information on self-reported substance use and mental health of noninstitutionalized people 12 or older.

In the past month, the survey defines "substances" as



tobacco products



alcohol



vaped nicotine



illicit drugs +
"current use"

For people 12 or older, drug use disorder increased to 9.8%. Among adults aged 18 or older, 33.0% (86.6 million people) reported having a substance use disorder (SUD) or any mental illness (AMI) within the past year.³

- ✓ assess patients
- ✓ provide person-focused treatment
- ✓ patient support services
- ✓ connect patients to residential addiction treatment facilities and services

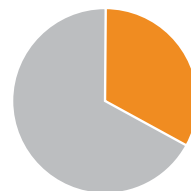
Health Centers provide primary care to 14% (47.6 million people) of the U.S. population and play an important role in improving national health outcomes.⁴ With a robust and multidisciplinary workforce, HCs can assess patients, provide person-focused treatment and patient support services, and connect patients to residential addiction treatment facilities and services.

2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)



58.3%

of people 12 or older reported current substance use. For people 12 or older, drug use disorder increased to 9.8%.



33.0%

of adults aged 18 or older reported having a substance use disorder (SUD) or any mental illness (AMI).



This resource is intended to support health centers with connecting patients to residential substance use treatment.

³ [2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, SAMHSA, DHHS](#)

⁴ [2024 Uniform Data System, HRSA, DHHS](#)

Public and Private Insurance

Private health insurance refers to health insurance plans marketed by private insurance companies or offered by self-insured employers.



Medicaid

A joint federal-state program that provides insurance coverage for low-income individuals, families, and people with disabilities.

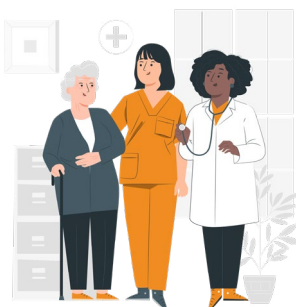
[Learn more about Medicaid](#)



Medicare

A federal insurance program for adults aged 65 or older and young people with disabilities.

[Learn more about Medicare](#)



Veteran's Administration (VA)

An integrated health system with insurance program options for eligible Veterans and their dependents.

[Learn more about the VA](#)

Supporting the Uninsured Patient

There are several options available for uninsured individuals. Knowing these options and understanding how to effectively connect patients to them is a best practice approach that can be deployed by all practitioners and providers.

Individuals and families who do not have health insurance can often access care through

- Community health centers
- Free or charitable clinics
- Medicaid
- Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)
- Other subsidized care programs

These factors can help determine the most effective option for the individual.



age



pregnancy



income



disability



family status



veteran status



Immediate Healthcare Options

- [Community Health Centers](#)
- [National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics](#)



Finding Insurance and Financial Assistance

- [Medicaid and CHIP](#)
- [Health Insurance Marketplace](#)



Additional Options

- [Student health plans](#)
- [Faith-Based Healthcare Programs](#)

Assessing Patient Needs



Documentation

Photo ID, insurance card, list of medications (or bottles), previous provider's contact information, most recent lab values if available, and any recent discharge summaries or provider visit notes.



Intake and Exam

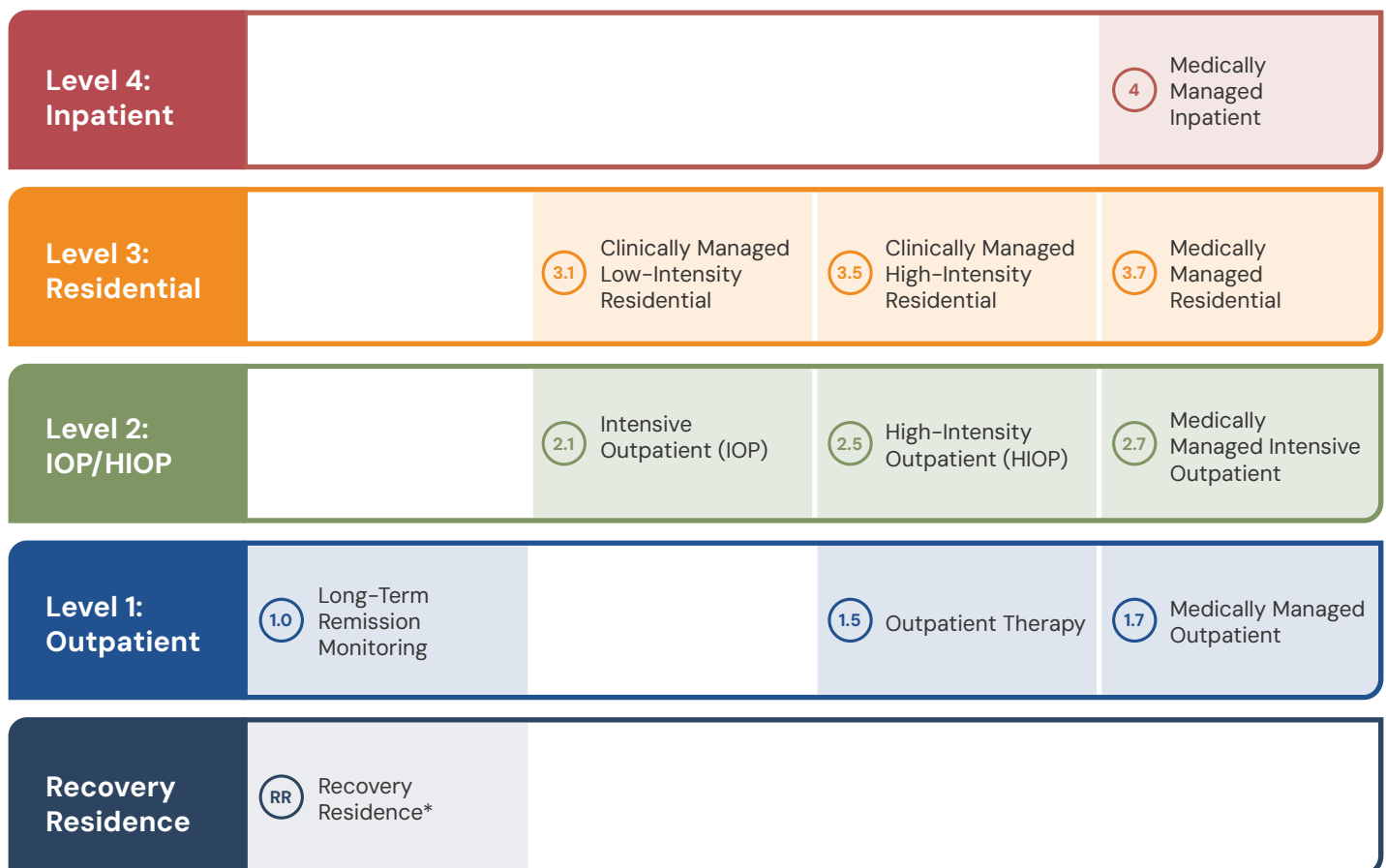
Review of medical, family, and social history, including diet and lifestyle; general examination to establish a health baseline; discuss and authorize records request from previous providers.



Goal Setting and Special Services

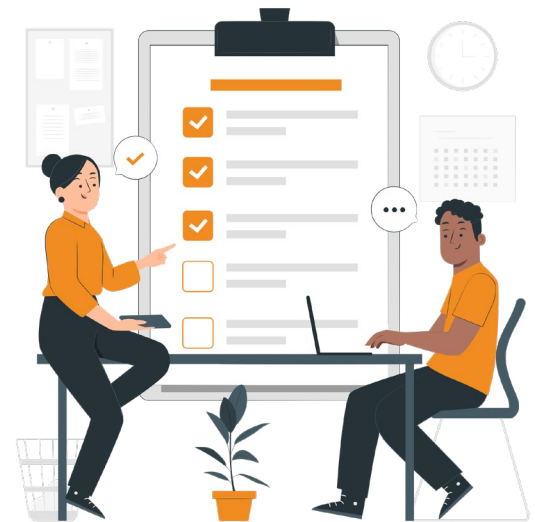
Share any immediate concerns, discuss health goals, and identify specialized care needs (e.g. behavioral health).

The ASAM Criteria Continuum of Care for Adult Addiction Treatment



Action Steps

- ✓ Confirm the patient's insurance coverage or support patient with insurance enrollment
- ✓ Determine if the patient is covered by Medicaid, Medicare, the Veteran's Administration, or private insurance
- ✓ Identify the behavioral health services covered by the patient's insurance
- ✓ Become familiar with the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) criteria for Residential Levels of Care
- ✓ Identify who in your agency is qualified to assess the substance use treatment level of care needed.
- ✓ Learn about your state's Medicaid program to confirm it covers Residential Substance Abuse services
- ✓ Find information on treatment services offered in your state and locate treatment facilities at [Findtreatment.gov](https://findtreatment.gov)
- ✓ Confirm the patient's health insurer will authorize coverage of the program



Additional Resources

- [Medicaid Waiver Tracker: Approved and Pending Section 1115 Waivers by State | KFF](#)
- [State Residential Treatment for Behavioral Health Conditions: Regulation and Policy | ASPE](#)
- [American Society of Addiction Medicine \(ASAM\)](#)
- [Findtreatment.gov](https://findtreatment.gov)

Disclaimer

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