



# Accommodations to Look For in Substance Use Treatment Programs

ACCESSIBLE PROGRAMS



DISABILITY EXPERT



CLEAR COMMUNICATION



BEST PRACTICES



Partnering for Better Chronic Pain Management and Safer Opioid Use: A Knowledge Hub for People With Disability and Their Providers

**Introduction** | This resource is for people with disability, their families, and their providers. It includes information on ways that treatment providers can make their programs accessible for people with disabilities. You can use this information in two ways:

- To ask questions and find out if an addiction treatment program is accessible for someone with a disability.
- To talk to program staff about steps they can take to accommodate a person with disability.

## General Approaches to Enable Full Participation

The table below lists ways that providers help people with all types of disability fully participate in treatment programs. Talk with the treatment program staff to learn if they follow these practices.

### Ways Treatment Programs Can Support All Types of Disability

#### STAFF TRAINING

- Train staff on how to work with people who have a disability in a respectful and inclusive way.

#### STAFFING

- Include a disability expert when planning a person's treatment.
- Ask a licensed pharmacist to review the medications a person is taking for interactions with medication to treat opioid use disorder.
- Match the person with a peer counselor who has a similar disability or who has experience with the disability.

#### TREATMENT PLANNING

##### At program start:

- Include a disability assessment as part of the intake process.
- Write down strategies, aids, and tools to support the person's needs in the treatment plan.
- Set small, achievable goals for the person.
- Offer and schedule informal visits with counselors to help the person identify and resolve barriers that may affect their progress.

##### As treatment progresses:

- Hold team meetings, also called *case conferences*, to discuss progress and to tailor care based on a person's needs.
- Carefully write down and update changes in the treatment plan.

## TREATMENT APPROACH

- Pair a person who has a disability with a group member who does not have a disability to help the person get to group sessions and other activities.
  - Use a flexible approach to treatment.
    - Extend the length of treatment for people who need to pace themselves.
    - Replace activities with different ones if the person is unable to participate.
    - Allow more time to complete tasks.
    - Adapt the environment so the person can participate.
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# Disability-Specific Approaches to Enable Full Participation

These practices are specific to people who have disabilities that affect their mobility or communication.

## Ways Treatment Programs Can Support Specific Disabilities

### PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

- Have a process to review and change policies that exclude people with a physical disability. An example is a policy that requires the ability to leave a building without help in an emergency.
- Provide a ramp to the building, automatic doors, and elevators.
- Provide restrooms adapted for people with physical disabilities.
- Allow frequent, small breaks during group sessions.

### HARD OF HEARING OR DEAF

- Train staff on strategies to communicate effectively with people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Make this a separate bullet point.
- Take steps to make sure the person understands what is said in group sessions.
  - Arrange for the person to sit near the group leader or where they can easily read lips.
  - Use a microphone.
  - Limit background noise.
  - Talk with the group about inclusive communication practices, such as one person speaks at a time.
  - Sum up major points during the session.
  - Talk with the person after the group session to make sure they followed what was said.
- Give information in writing.
- Provide access to computer-aided real-time transcription (CART) services, an assistive listening device, or sign language interpreters.

### VISUAL IMPAIRMENT OR BLIND

- Provide materials in large print, audio, or Braille.
  - Use adequate lighting without glare.
  - Give access to magnifiers.
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## Resources on Tailoring Substance Use Disorder Treatment Programs: Meeting the Needs of People With Disability

- [Communicating with People with Disabilities](#) (Villanova University College of Nursing). This tip sheet describes how to communicate with people with all types of disabilities.
- [Mental and Substance Use Disorder Treatment for People With Physical and Cognitive Disabilities](#) (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, or SAMHSA). This resource describes how addiction treatment programs can better serve people with physical and cognitive disabilities.
- [Health Care and the Americans With Disabilities Act](#) (Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA National Network). This fact sheet describes how healthcare organizations can provide equal access to people with disabilities as required in the ADA.
- [The ADA, Addiction and Recovery](#) (ADA National Network). This fact sheet describes scenarios related to substance use disorder treatment and the ADA.



**For more information visit:** Partnering for Better Chronic Pain Management and Safer Opioid Use: A Knowledge Hub for People With Disability and Their Providers | [KnowledgeHub.air.org](https://www.knowledgehub.air.org)

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