

Substance Use Disorder in Texas

Taking a Costly & Devastating Toll on our Citizens, Families, Communities

Substance Use Disorder (SUD)—Substance use issues are the result of using alcohol or other drugs in a manner, situation, amount, or frequency that harms the individual and/or those around him/her, despite consequences.¹ Over time, repeated and hazardous use can lead to changes in brain circuits involved with obsessive thinking, reward, stress response, and executive functions like decision making and self-control.

- » SUD is a chronic disease—like diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and asthma—and it falls on a spectrum from mild to severe. Severe SUD is commonly referred to as addiction.
- » Individuals can and do recover, and symptom recurrence (relapse) rates for SUD (40 – 60%) are comparable to those for chronic diseases, such as diabetes (20 – 50%), hypertension (50 – 70%), and asthma (50 – 70%).²
- » People of any age, gender, or economic status can become addicted to alcohol or other drugs. Certain factors can increase the likelihood and speed of developing SUD: family history, mental health conditions, peer pressure, adverse childhood experiences, and use at an early age.³

Prevalence—Texas is facing a significant, ongoing addiction epidemic, well beyond the opioid epidemic that has received the bulk of the attention and funding in recent years.

- » The Health and Human Services Commission estimates 1.6 million⁴ Texas adults and 162,000 Texas youth have a SUD.
- » 51.1% of Texans use alcohol. Many do so hazardously (binge drink): 34.9% of young adults and 25% of adults over the age of 25. Some develop an alcohol use disorder: 10.1% of young adults and 5.1% of adults over the age of 25.⁵
- » 19.4% of Texans use illicit drugs.⁶ The DEA lists methamphetamine and cocaine as large and growing threats to Texans; causing 915 and 886 deaths respectively in 2018.⁷ Opioids—such as Fentanyl, other prescription drugs, and heroin—killed 1,609 Texans in 2018.⁸
- » At least 25% of the US has a 1st degree family member with SUD, of which 90% live with a person in active addiction.⁹

Preventable and Divertable—SUD is preventable. Scientists have developed a broad range of evidence-based prevention programs and strategies for individuals and communities that positively alter the balance between risk and protective factors.¹⁰ Diversion programs effectively avoid the costly consequences of SUD e.g. emergency services, homelessness, institutionalization, and criminal justice involvement.

- » The costs and benefits associated with various prevention programs range from \$1.61 to more than \$64 for every dollar invested. Substance use prevention programs can positively impact a range of social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes.¹¹
- » Human brains continue to develop until age 25, making the delay of first use so important. More than 90% of adults with SUD started using before age 18; half of them before age 15.¹²



- » In 2018, 27% of Texas high school students used alcohol.¹³ 47% of those who begin drinking before the age of 14 later develop alcohol dependence, compared with only 9% of those who wait until they are 21 or older to start.¹⁴
- » Recidivism rates drop by 30 to 50%¹⁵ when people charged with drug possession are diverted from jail and prison to community based services. Every \$1 spent on SUD treatment saves \$7 in criminal justice costs.¹⁶

Treatable—Treatment for SUD is effective. SUD treatment includes a full continuum of care, effectively matching individuals with needed services based on individual risk factors, life circumstances, complexity of challenges being faced, and the severity of their substance use. For maximum benefit, a full array of treatment services are needed throughout Texas.

- » Treatment improves individuals' productivity, health, and overall quality of life.¹⁷
- » Total savings related to healthcare exceed cost by a ratio of 12:1.¹⁸
- » Treatment pays for itself. The average annual cost of a Medicaid recipient with untreated SUD was \$1,000 higher in 2015 than recipients who did receive SUD treatment. Because untreated SUD drives the cost of other health conditions, SUD treatment lowers overall health costs, even when you include the cost of SUD treatment.¹⁹

Recovery Journey—Recovery is a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. Recovery supportive dimensions include health, home, purpose, and community.²⁰

- » Approximately 2 million Texans have recovered from alcohol or other drug issues.²¹
- » Those with lower internal and external assets and higher problem severity often need greater levels of support and services.²² Free mutual aid meetings (e.g. 12 Step and Faith-based) are a vital resource, but they cannot address all recovery support needs.
- » Recovery housing saves \$29,000 per person due to reduced criminal justice engagement and service utilization,²³ and it improves abstinence, psychiatric symptoms, employment rates, monthly income^{24,25} and the likelihood of regaining child custody.²⁶
- » In 2016, Texas funded recovery coaching saved an estimated \$3,260,464 in healthcare costs while improving home ownership and rentals as well as employment and monthly income.²⁷

Service Gaps—A majority of Texans with SUD do not receive the services they need. Texas has a shortage of substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery workforce and service providers. This is especially true in rural communities.

- » Texas had the third lowest ratio of substance use providers in 2010, compared to other states, at 17.7 per 1,000 adults with SUD. The national average was 32.1 per 1,000.²⁸
- » In 2014, only 6% of Texas adults and 5% of youth with SUD who were eligible for state-funded services received treatment.²⁹
- » In Texas, less than \$1 of every \$1,000 of general revenue spending goes to substance use agencies (the national average is over \$4 per \$1,000).³⁰
- » Only 10.2% of Texas schools (742 of 7,260) are able to access SUD prevention programs.
- » Overdoses are the leading cause of maternal deaths in Texas according to a 2016 report.³¹
- » Substance use is a factor in 68% of child removals by the Texas Department of Family and Prevention Services and a leading contributor to individuals entering the criminal justice system.³²

References: recoverypeople.org/tx-sud-facts

Contact us with any questions and to learn more about supporting substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery services in Texas.

Contact: