

Do most Americans know how to help loved ones battling addictions? New poll says yes

August 31 2023, by Cara Murez



If a loved one were living with addiction, a majority of Americans say

they would know how to get help.

About 71% of 2,200 respondents to an American Psychiatric Association poll said they would know how to assist a friend or [family members](#).

Most, about 73%, would refer that loved one to treatment, and 74% would talk to them about their addiction.

"It's promising, especially during Recovery Month, that Americans show such openness to talking with loved ones who may have [substance use disorders](#) or behavioral addictions," said APA President [Dr. Petros Levounis](#).

"The public's recommendations for treatment indicate a level of familiarity with certain methods of recovery —mutual help groups, Alcoholics Anonymous, for example, or rehab—which are well-known in popular culture," he said in an APA news release.

"This is good news, but at the same time, physicians like me need to continue to educate patients and families about other safe and effective methods of treating addiction, such as medications and [cognitive behavioral therapy](#)," said Levounis.

When asked about the treatment they would recommend to a loved one, only 6% cited medication-assisted treatment and just 4% singled out cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), a type of talk therapy.

Meanwhile, more than 20% said they would recommend in-patient treatment and [support groups](#) like Alcoholics Anonymous. Nineteen percent didn't know what treatment they would recommend.

Less-common answers were out-patient rehabilitation, 8% and

interventions, 7%. Detoxing or quitting cold turkey was preferred by 6%; digital therapeutics, 1%; and other, 1%.

The Healthy Minds Monthly poll asked a number of questions about addiction and recovery, defining addiction as substance dependence, noting it sometimes applies to behavioral disorders, including sexual, internet and gambling addictions.

The poll, conducted the second week of August, also found that 65% of adults said that recovery from [substance use disorder](#) or mental illness meant "being able to function better in life."

More than half the respondents said they would reach out for help to a doctor (53%) or their family (51%). A smaller but sizable number cited local community resources, friends or online resources. About 1 in 5 said they would look to a church or clergy for assistance, while 8% cited social media and 4% thought they would turn to a university or other school. Other respondents didn't know or chose "other" as an option.

A person's age had some impact on their answers. Younger adults were twice as likely to know someone struggling with addiction, 44% for those 18 to 34 compared to 22% for those 65 and older.

Young adults were also more likely to start the conversation with someone who's struggling with addiction.

Among [young adults](#), 80% said they would refer a struggling person to recovery treatment and 81% would initiate the conversation about [mental health](#) or addiction.

Those younger adults and their slightly older peers were also more likely to turn to social media for information, with 13% of those age 18 to 34 and 15% of those 35 to 44 saying they would use that as a resource.

"Reaching [younger generations](#) with credible, evidence-based information on [social media](#), particularly about subjects like [mental illness](#) and addiction, is critical," APA CEO and Medical Director [Dr. Saul Levin](#) said in the release. "The trends in the poll absolutely support that organizations like ours have a role to play in ensuring medically accurate information is available and widespread on these channels."

More information: The U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse has more on [drug misuse and addiction](#).

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