



THE DIVISION OF ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Chemical Dependency Treatment Options for
Minors Under Age 18

A Guide for Parents

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

*What are the consent laws for
inpatient treatment?*

*Do youth runaway from
inpatient treatment?*

*Where do I get
more information?*

Does treatment work?

*Is the consent of the minor needed for a
parent to admit them to inpatient treatment?*

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Introduction:

The Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse (DASA) is a part of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). DASA certifies the chemical dependency treatment agencies in Washington State. DASA provides funding to counties for outpatient youth services, and contracts directly with providers for youth detoxification and inpatient treatment services.

The goals of DASA-contracted youth chemical dependency treatment are to provide each adolescent and their family with a structured, age-appropriate program, which stresses:

- The goal of abstinence from alcohol and other drugs.
- Comprehensive assessment and placement at the appropriate level of service.
- Services, which involve and honor family members, who may include birth, adoptive, foster, and step parents, and other caring adults in the adolescent's life.
- An understanding of adolescent development, including the level of maturity, emotional stability and functioning, educational history, and learning ability.
- Treatment should be provided which respects and addresses the age, gender, language, culture, ethnicity, and sexual orientation of youth and their family members.

We hope this Guide is helpful. Please feel free to contact the staff listed in the last section of this handbook for further information and assistance.

Outpatient/Intensive Outpatient Services:

1. **What is outpatient chemical dependency treatment?**

- It is a state-certified non-residential program for youth age ten (10) to 20, which provides chemical dependency assessments, alcohol/drug free, counseling services, and education, for youth and their families. DASA-funded outpatient services are funded through the counties. These programs are designed to screen, assess, diagnose, and treat youth and their families for misuse, abuse, and addiction to alcohol and other drugs.

2. **What is a chemical dependency assessment?**

- An assessment is a thorough, multidimensional, individualized interview performed by a Chemical Dependency Professional (CDP) to determine the diagnosis and recommendation for the appropriate level of treatment. Most CDPs, at outpatient youth agencies, are trained to work with adolescents, and use screening and assessment tools that can address resistance, denial, and other barriers to “getting the true picture” of what is going on with your child. It should be noted that youth, when given a safe and supportive setting, are often very honest about reporting their drug and alcohol use, as well as other problems associated with the use. Interviews with parents are usually conducted as part of the assessment. Information may also be used from juvenile justice staff, teachers, and other counselors or treatment agencies.

3. **What is the age of consent for outpatient treatment?**

- Youth age 13 and older can *request* outpatient services *without* parental consent. (RCW 70.96A.095)
- Any minor under 13 must have consent of parent for treatment. (RCW 70.96A.095)
- Agency must notify parents of the minor’s request for services within seven (7) days (RCW 70.96A.230) and:
 - Youth must sign release for parental notification.
 - Agency can determine if minor is unable to sign consent.
 - Best clinical practice is to involve the parent/guardian as quickly as possible, unless youth expresses concerns over their safety regarding the notification of parents. For example, sometimes parents who maybe alcoholic themselves, may have threatened youth about going into chemical dependency treatment.

4. **Can a parent take a minor to an outpatient agency for an assessment without the consent of the minor?**

- **YES:** A parent may bring a minor to a certified treatment agency for an assessment to determine if the minor is chemically dependent and in need of *outpatient* treatment (RCW 70.96A.250). The consent of the minor is **not** required.

- In most cases this assessment, without the minor's consent, will happen at an outpatient treatment program or detox. Inpatient programs may not be able to provide immediate assessment and/or up to a 72-hour hold due to the lack of state-funded treatment beds.
- Youth must sign a release of information to have assessment information released to a parent.
- Youth **can refuse** to give consent for results of the assessment to be released to parents. This may present a problem in parents getting information from the assessment, but in most cases, the agency can provide general information about the level of risk. It is also best practice for the outpatient agency to encourage the minor to allow the parents to receive assessment information.

Youth Detox/Stabilization Services:

5. *What is youth detoxification/stabilization?*

- The purpose of these services is to provide at-risk, runaway, homeless youth age 13 – 17 a safe, temporary, and protective environment. Youth appropriate for these services are those experiencing a crisis related to the harmful effects of intoxication and/or withdrawal from alcohol and other drugs, in conjunction with an emotional or behavioral crisis.
- Length of stay is usually one to five days. There are seven (7) youth detox sites throughout the state. Contact DASA or your Regional Treatment Manager (*listed on page 14*) for more information.

6. *Can minors admit themselves to youth detoxification services?*

- **YES:** Youth can admit themselves to detox without parental consent. Detox services are not considered “treatment,” therefore parental consent is not required.
- Parental consent is advisable if/when possible.

Inpatient Treatment:

7. *What is inpatient chemical dependency treatment?*

- DASA certifies and contracts with most of the adolescent-specific inpatient programs in Washington State. Inpatient programs are designed for youth age 13 – 17 who have been diagnosed as “chemically dependent.” The programs involve intensive individual, group, and family counseling, education, school activities, recreation, recovery support groups, and connection to continuing treatment in the home community.
- Youth who are under age 13, or age 18 *may* be served through an exception to policy by a youth inpatient program. Contact the individual program or DASA for more information.
- DASA contracts for different levels of treatment, based upon clinical need. **Level 1** programs are appropriate for youth with primary addiction problems who require

less clinical intervention and behavior management. **Level 2 and Level 2 Secure** programs are appropriate for youth who have co-occurring emotional and mental health problems, and for youth who may be resistant to treatment, or have a high probability to run from treatment. DASA also contracts for **Recovery House** services for youth needing a continued residential stay after completing primary inpatient treatment.

- Contact the Washington State Alcohol Drug 24-hour HelpLine, a certified outpatient agency in your area, the Regional Treatment Manager (*listed on page 14*), or DASA for more information about which level of treatment may be most effective for your child.

8. What are the consent laws for minors for chemical dependency inpatient treatment?

- In most cases, only a parent can admit a minor to inpatient treatment.
- The parent has the *primary* consenting power for inpatient treatment.
- Consent of the minor is not required for admission, but is strongly recommended as soon as possible after admission.
- Most minors can be admitted to treatment without additional legal assistance.

9. Can a parent take a minor to an inpatient chemical dependency treatment facility for an assessment w/o consent of minor?

- **YES:** A parent may bring a minor to a certified treatment agency for an assessment of whether the minor is chemically dependent and in need of *inpatient* treatment (RCW 70.96A.245). The consent of the minor is **not** required.
- In most cases this assessment, without the minor's consent, will happen at an outpatient treatment program or detox. Inpatient programs may not be able to provide immediate assessment and/or up to a 72-hour hold due to the lack of state-funded treatment beds.
- **NOTE:** It is always in the best interest of the child to attempt to involve them in coming to a decision to enter treatment. There are times when admitting an adolescent without their consent is necessary, however, gaining their agreement will help empower them to be a part of their own recovery process.

10. Can a parent have a minor child admitted to inpatient chemical dependency treatment if the child is unwilling to consent to treatment?

- **YES:** Becca legislation allows a “parent-initiated” admission (RCW 70.96.A.245) to treatment, **if the following conditions are met:**
 - ➔ Treatment is medically necessary
 - ➔ Youth is on an At Risk Youth (ARY) petition
 - ➔ Youth is at least able to be taken to treatment by parent.
 - ➔ DASA At-Risk Youth Coordinator will review “parent-initiated” admissions.

- DASA contracts for some “secure” treatment beds, which are designed to limit the ability of a child to run from treatment. These programs are not “locked.”
- Parents will need to contact specific treatment programs, DASA, or the Washington State Alcohol Drug 24-Hour Help Line to inquire about state-funded bed availability. Most DASA-contracted programs require an application packet be filled out prior to any confirmation of bed availability or admission date.
- There are usually waiting lists for most inpatient programs. The number of state-funded beds is limited.
- In cases of crisis or emergency issues, consider a youth detox/stabilization admission.
- Upon written notification, a parent may request that the minor be discharged from the program.
- DASA conducts reviews of admissions under this section to determine if the conditions for “medical necessity” have been met. (RCW 70.96A.097)

11. What is required to meet the condition of “medical necessity” for inpatient chemical dependency treatment?

- Medical necessity for inpatient care of a minor is a requested service that is reasonably calculated to: (a.) diagnose, arrest, or alleviate a chemical dependency; or (b.) prevent the worsening of chemical dependency conditions that endanger life or cause suffering and pain, and there is no adequate less restrictive alternative available.

12. Is the consent of the minor needed in order for a parent to admit them to inpatient chemical dependency treatment?

- **NO:** The minor will be encouraged to sign a consent to treatment at the time of admission or shortly thereafter. It is clinically recommended but not required that the youth consent to treatment. Some youth may need a period of engagement and support to cooperate with this process.

13. What if a parent is unable to bring a minor child to an inpatient chemical dependency treatment program due to running away or severe behavior problems?

- Although many youth reluctantly agree to enter treatment, there are those youth who may be very resistant, defiant, and running away, whose parents have been unable to get them into treatment.
- Parents with youth who have a history of running away and being harmfully involved with alcohol and other drugs may wish to file an At Risk Youth (ARY) petition to assist them in the intervention process.

- Outpatient treatment services, family support groups, and private counselors may also assist in the intervention process.
- Some youth may have legal involvement with courts, probation, or parole, which may support a parent's efforts to intervene with inpatient treatment admission.

14. Can school district personnel refer a minor to a chemical dependency inpatient treatment program?

- **YES:** School district personnel who refer minors to an inpatient treatment program **must notify the parents within forty-eight hours**. In most cases, it is best to involve the parents regarding any referral to inpatient treatment, since the parents are required to provide consent to treatment.

15. How does DASA help parents and minors who have an At-Risk Youth (ARY) petition?

- The ARY petition may be a helpful tool for parents of minors who may be on the run and resistant to going to treatment. The DASA At-Risk/Runaway Youth Coordinator (*phone number on page 14*) can assist parents in filing the petition and in finding treatment resources.
- DASA also reviews “parent-initiated” admissions of non-consenting minors to determine if they meet “medical necessity.”

16. Can a minor admitted under RCW 70.96A.245 (parent-initiated admission) petition superior court for release from inpatient chemical dependency treatment?

- **YES:** The minor admitted under this section may petition to superior court for release from the inpatient facility. (RCW 70.96A.255)
- **DASA is not aware of any case in which a minor has petitioned superior court to be released from treatment.** Youth are usually on waiting lists to enter inpatient treatment, have thoroughly met medical necessity, and under RCW 70.96A.235, do not hold their own right to consent to inpatient treatment. The right to consent is held by the parents.

17. Are chemical dependency treatment programs required to admit non-consenting minors who are brought to treatment by parents under the “parent-initiated” admission process?

- **NO:** Treatment providers are not obligated to provide treatment to a minor under RCW 70.96A.245.
- Admission of a youth needing state funding requires the assessment of clinical needs, financial eligibility, whether the program is able and willing to admit the youth, and may involve waiting for an available state-funded bed.

18. What do “secure” inpatient chemical dependency treatment programs contracted by DASA provide?

- DASA-contracted inpatient treatment programs designated as “secure” are required to have monitoring systems in place within the building that prevent the youth from leaving the building without notification of staff. This usually involves alarmed windows and doors, and a secure or monitored perimeter.
- These programs have higher levels of security for youth who have been recently admitted, and are at highest risk to run. Youth who have moved beyond this initial stage may leave the facility with staff supervision on outings and for other treatment activities.

19. Can a youth sign themselves out from an inpatient chemical dependency treatment program without the involvement of the parents?

- **NO:** A minor, admitted on the consent of the parent, **cannot** leave the program without parental notification and permission.
- Any minor who leaves the facility in an “unaccompanied” or unauthorized manner will necessitate that the treatment center staff contact the parents and in most cases the police.
- A minor who is admitted as a “**self-consenting**” patient may leave on their own, but usually a legal guardian is involved, and The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) will be contacted for possible placement. (See Question #23)

20. Do youth sometimes run away from inpatient chemical dependency treatment programs?

- **YES:** Youth may be able to run away from most facilities, even those that are designated “secure.” DASA contracts require vigilant line of sight supervision, but youth may still run away from treatment.
- When this happens, all efforts are made by the treatment program to contact parents, police, probation, and other entities, to work towards supporting the safe return of the youth to the inpatient treatment program.
- Often the treatment bed is held in order to provide immediate re-admission for a youth who is “on the run.” Youth who may have used substances while on the run may be referred to a temporary youth detoxification stay prior to re-admission.

21. Is a “parent-initiated” admission considered the same as an “involuntary admission” to chemical dependency treatment?

- **NO:** DASA does not consider “parent-initiated admissions” as “involuntary” since the minor does not possess the right for consent to inpatient treatment. The **minor cannot admit him or herself**, so the admission by a parent is considered “voluntary” and not against the minor’s will.

22. *If a “parent-initiated” admission is not possible, can the parent force a minor into involuntary chemical dependency treatment?*

- **YES:** The parent or referring agency may file for an *Involuntary Treatment Act* (ITA) admission. (RCW 70.96A.140)
- Contact the county-designated ITA assessment agency.
- A limited number of counties allow ITA petitions.
- Youth must meet ITA requirements.
- **NOTE:** A County Designated Chemical Dependency Specialist must assess whether a minor is “incapacitated by alcohol or other psychoactive drugs,” which means that the person, as a result of the use of alcohol or psychoactive chemicals, has his or her judgment so impaired that he or she is incapable of making a rational decision with respect to his or her need for treatment, and presents a likelihood of serious harm to himself or herself, to any other person, or to property; or that the person has twice before in the preceding year been admitted to detox or other chemical dependency treatment.
- DASA will prioritize and assist parents with ITA admissions.
- DASA has “secure” facilities, but not “locked” ITA facilities.
- Most ITA youth have “stipulated” (voluntarily been admitted after an ITA admission) upon or shortly after admission to treatment. Treatment staff will work with youth to engage them in treatment.

23. *Can minors admit themselves to inpatient chemical dependency treatment?*

- **YES:** Becca legislation allows a minor age 13 – 17 to “self-consent” to inpatient treatment if the minor meets the definition of a “Child In Need of Services” (CHINS). (RCW 70.96A.235).
- Youth that meet the definition of a CHINS would be those who have been living “on the street,” is in limited contact with family, and whose parents **are unwilling or unable** to provide consent for admission to treatment. A “self-consent” minor would be in crisis and meet the medical necessity criterion, and would be motivated to seek help on their own.
- Inpatient treatment centers **can** admit these youth, but the staff must document that all reasonable attempts have been made to contact, notify, and involve legal guardian.
- The DASA ARY Coordinator (*phone number on page 14*) is notified by agencies of “self-consent” admissions.
- All attempts should be made by treatment agency to involve DCFS to provide temporary legal custody.
- Youth admitted on their own “self-consent” may refuse to have parents be notified of their admission. Clinical best practice will encourage youth to provide connections with parents under safe and controlled situations.

24. *Is there financial assistance to help pay for inpatient chemical dependency treatment?*

- **YES:** Each DASA-funded inpatient treatment provider is responsible for determining eligibility for funding assistance and other arrangements to help you pay for treatment. DASA provides full funding for those families who are considered indigent, or low-income. Those families whose child is already on medical coupons are eligible for full DASA funding. Other family resources such as insurance or personal funds may be used in combination with partial DASA funding. Arrangements can be made directly with the treatment provider. The eligibility requirements are available from any of the DASA funded agencies.

25. *Is there financial assistance to help with the transportation of youth to inpatient chemical dependency treatment?*

- **YES:** Since DASA-funded inpatient programs are a statewide resource; often parents may have to travel some distance to access services. Financial assistance is available to those parents who qualify for DASA funding, and who have to travel more than 50 miles one way. The assistance can cover reimbursement for mileage, bus fare, ferry costs, overnight lodging, and in some cases airfare. This funding is called “Family Hardship”, and is designed to assist those families in greatest need to participate fully in the treatment of their child. Priority is given for travel that is clinically required, including admission and discharge sessions and home passes.

26. *Are there waiting lists for inpatient chemical dependency treatment services?*

- **YES:** There are only a limited number of publicly funded treatment beds for the state. DASA-contracted agencies will address the needs of your child and will advise you of possible waiting times so you can realistically plan for the treatment admission. Sometimes parents will contact more than one appropriate treatment program to place their child’s name on the waiting list.
- It may be helpful to contact a local outpatient chemical dependency agency for intensive outpatient treatment services if more immediate intervention is needed.
- For crisis situations involving drug/alcohol use and related concerns, accessing youth detoxification/stabilization services may be appropriate.
- Whenever possible, DASA and the contracted inpatient providers will prioritize admissions for youth who are pregnant, intravenous drug users, homeless, without an available legal guardian, and requiring direct transfer from a youth detox/stabilization bed.

27. *Are there specific inpatient programs for special populations?*

- **YES:** DASA contracts for inpatient program for the following special populations:
 - ➔ Gender specific programs.
 - ➔ Co-ed programs.
 - ➔ Programs for Native American youth.

- Culturally sensitive programs for ethnic minority youth and other diverse populations.
- Programs for pregnant and/or parenting female youth.
- Secure programs.
- Programs for youth with mental health and behavior problems.
- Recovery house programs for youth needing recovery support after inpatient services.
- For more information, see question 29.

28. Does chemical dependency treatment for adolescents work?

- **YES:** Studies done in the state of Washington and nationally document positive outcomes for youth treatment programs.
- Intensive inpatient treatment services for at-risk or runaway chemically dependent youth have been shown to work.
- Research conducted in Washington State has demonstrated significant declines in levels of depression, criminal behavior, and problems in school.
- In 1999, a University of Washington study indicated that more than half (54%) of “Becca-type” youth receiving treatment abstained from the use of alcohol and other drugs two months after treatment, and a majority reported substantially decreased frequency of use. Delinquent behavior and arrests declined significantly.
- Residential treatment is positively associated with improved educational performance, increased school enrollment, and dramatic decreases in school expulsions and suspensions.
- A National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) study of more than 1,100 adolescents who received substance abuse treatment in residential, inpatient, or outpatient programs found improvement in rates of drug use and social behavior.
- The adolescents in the NIDA study, comparing the year before treatment with the year after treatment, the adolescents showed significant declines in the use of marijuana and alcohol.
- Adolescents also reported fewer thoughts of suicide, lower hostility and higher self-esteem.
- In the year after treatment, more adolescents attended school and reported average or better-than-average grades.
- This study confirms that community-based drug treatment programs designed for adolescents can reduce substance abuse and have a positive impact on many other aspects of their life.

29. Where do I get more information and assistance regarding treatment resources?

- Contact the Twenty-Four Hour Alcohol Drug Help Line at (206) 722-4222 **TOLL FREE** (WA only) 1-800-562-1240

- Contact the DASA Regional Treatment Manager for your region:

Regions 1 and 2: Steve Brown (509) 225-6232
Region 3: Edie Henderson (360) 658-6862
Region 4: Bob Leonard (206) 242-0319
Region 5: Pamela Sacks (253) 476-7058
Region 6: Ruth Leonard (360) 438-8079
(Also for assistance with Becca/ARY issues)

- Stephen Bogan, DASA Youth Services Lead - (360) 438-8089
- Sue Green, DASA Women's Services Lead - (360) 438-8087 For assistance with pregnant/parenting youth)
- DASA Toll-free phone number: 1-877-301-4557
- DASA TTY: (360) 438-8203
- DASA Website: <http://www-app2.wa.gov/dshs/dasa>

If you have comments, questions about this "Guide For Parents". Please contact Stephen Bogan, DASA Youth Treatment Lead at bogansp@dshs.wa.gov or (360) 438-8089.

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