

Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP), Counseling and 12-Step Recovery

An intensive outpatient program (IOP) is a program that is used to treat addiction with individual and group therapy. These programs, if not combined with a partial hospitalization program (PHP), are generally reserved for people with less severe addiction that does not require continuous supervision or detox. A counselor will help determine if you need IOP alone or in combination with PHP.

IOP's allow people to live at home and continue on with their normal lives without the disruption of having to stay at a facility. These programs generally consist of three to four visits a week for about three hours per day. The length of the program is similar to PHP in that it will generally last four to six weeks. The visits may be in-person, online, or a combination of the two. It is almost always suggested that this type of program be combined with a 12-step program and ongoing counseling afterward. The ongoing counseling may be in the form of an individual therapist, aftercare (a weekly check-in provided by a recovery center), or a combination of the two. The section titled "Counseling and 12-Step Recovery" covers this in greater detail.

Every program is different, but you will generally have the opportunity to have both individual and group therapy. The individual therapy provides an opportunity to focus on your unique recovery issues and personal struggles. This may expand on issues brought up in group therapy and allow you to delve deeper into root causes for your addiction. The therapist will help you develop a relapse prevention plan and assist you with developing a daily schedule. Maintaining a routine schedule can be very useful in helping you to break old habits and develop new, healthy routines.

The group therapy is a very useful piece of your recovery and may be the main focus of your IOP program. Group therapy can have several components including: developing new skills for dealing with addiction, educational lectures, role playing, problem-solving, dealing with past and current problems that may contribute to your addiction, and group processing that allows for feedback from both the counselor and the group. The group processing is an important tool that allows you to practice being open and honest with the group. It is a place where you can share your problems in great detail and feel comfort in knowing that it is safe place to do so. Remember, you are all in the same boat.

You may start the session by having a daily check-in. This a go-round format in which each person will share what is currently on their mind, struggles and successes with recovery, stressors that may cause a relapse, etc. It is a sort of discussion format. It is important to let each person share without interrupting, but the group can provide feedback at the end of the share. After everyone has completed the check-in the therapist may share helpful insights and provide educational tools or skills to work on in your recovery.

IOP will prove to be a useful extension of your time at the recovery center or the beginning of your treatment. It is also possible that you will be able to start a network of sober friends and connections during your time in IOP. Make good use of this time. It will go fast. I remember enjoying my time in IOP. It was a nice transitional period from when I left the recovery center to daily normal life. I still keep in touch with some of those people today and I hope you will have the same positive experience.