

Adolescent Outpatient Program: Group Descriptions

Using a variety of approaches including but not limited to education, group discussions, videos, journaling, therapeutic games, expressive arts, role-playing, and movement therapy, the following groups and workshops are included in the Adolescent Outpatient Program:

Daily Assessment/Process Group

Each day begins with patients completing paperwork to assess all aspects of their health. Patients rate changes in their levels of depression, anxiety, psychosis, cravings, trauma symptoms, and/or substance abuse related issues, etc. Patients report on their level of safety. Patients self-report information regarding their food intake, sleep, motivational stage, medication compliance, side effects and efficacy. Patients are encouraged to inform staff of anything else they believe to be relevant to their treatment. The paperwork is collected and reviewed by program staff, which then facilitates a daily process group. During this group, patients are asked direct questions regarding issues disclosed in self-report paperwork and individually encouraged to discuss topics related to their level of functioning and diagnosis as well as challenges. Additionally, in process group patients offer feedback and explore ways to address issues identified.

Diagnosis Education Group

Ongoing education is provided to patients and families to assist them in understanding all aspects of their diagnoses.

Medication Education Group

Ongoing education is provided to patients and their families to support their understanding of all aspects of pharmaceutical interventions, including the need for medication adherence.

Coping Skills Group

Patients are provided with education to recognize the difference between Healthy Coping Skills and Maladaptive Coping Patterns such as denial, dishonesty, cutting, and substance abuse. They are assisted in identifying their own triggers and cues, and are exposed to various coping strategies such as Distraction and Self-Soothing Techniques; Grounding Techniques; Relaxation Techniques; Exercise; Hobbies; and skills identified in recovery/relapse prevention planning. Patients are encouraged to experiment with using different coping skills while in program and to report their effectiveness to their group members and to their family members during family meetings. When specific interventions are identified as useful they are then tailored to support the patient's specific needs and are validated and reinforced by staff and peers. Harm-reduction is emphasized for patients who engage in self-harm.

Stress Management Group

In this group the emotional, physiological, and physical effects stress places on adolescents are explored. Patients are educated on stress management, assisted with personalizing the information, and are encouraged to explore ways to identify triggers and develop strategies to effectively manage stress.

Social Skills Group

Social Skills education is provided, including identifying appropriate social skills for a variety of triggering settings, giving and accepting feedback and exploring the benefits of using appropriate social skills. The program's "Group Agreements" reinforce healthy social interactions and give patients the opportunity to reinforce and strengthen these skills daily.

Self-Esteem Group

Patients are provided with education to understand healthy self-esteem, and to identify its sources and factors that affect it. Ways to improve self-esteem are explored by having patients identify personal strengths and interests. Patients explore ways to recognize barriers to healthy self-worth and negative thought patterns/behaviors. Patients are assisted in developing and utilizing an action plan to foster a healthier self-esteem.

Anger Management Group

Introduction to this topic includes defining anger and discussing its emotional, physical, and physiological impact on an individual and behavior. Patients are encouraged to identify their manifestations of anger internally and externally. Staff supports each patient's understanding of anger as an emotion and assists their development of healthier ways to express anger. Healthy strategies for managing anger are highlighted, and patients are encouraged to identify, explore, and practice these skills while they are in the program, to determine those which would work most effectively for their specific needs.

Treatment/Safety/Relapse Prevention Planning Group

Patients are introduced to the practice of establishing Long-Term and Short-Term Goals. Patients participate in, reflect, and track their progress weekly. Specific treatment and personal goals are identified which then further support healthy and positive treatment outcomes. They develop an individual Safety Plan or a Relapse Prevention Plan, which is also reviewed with family members, to be used in the event of a crisis or relapse.

Relaxation Techniques Group

Education is provided regarding the importance of learning effective ways to relax and decrease anxiety. Various Relaxation Techniques are introduced and practiced, including Breathing Techniques, Progressive Relaxation, and Guided Imagery.

Healthy Boundaries/Healthy Relationships Group

Introduction to this topic includes group discussion about different kinds of relationships common throughout adolescence (family, friends, romantic, professional, etc). Patients learn to recognize aspects of healthy and unhealthy relationships and are introduced to the concept of co-dependency and how co-dependency can further contribute to poor treatment outcomes, relapse, etc. Patients learn about healthy and unhealthy boundaries, across physical, social, and emotional ranges. Patients learn skills to enforce internal and external boundaries and to support self regulation and limit setting in stressful interactions.

Sleep Hygiene Group

Education is provided regarding sleep hygiene, the importance of adequate sleep, and what “adequate sleep” can mean for each individual. Techniques for promoting healthy sleep patterns are introduced and encouraged, including establishing and promoting both a structured night-time relaxation routine and a manageable daily structure.

Cognitive Distortions Group

The concept of “Distorted Thinking” is defined, examples of cognitive distortions are reviewed, and patients are encouraged to discuss their own tendencies to engage in distorted thinking and how they impact their well-being and sobriety. Practical interventions such as identifying Automatic Thoughts and Facilitating Beliefs, Thought Stopping, Reframing Techniques, and challenging distortions are offered as tools to help patients recognize and change negative thought patterns. These interventions support a more balanced and rational way of thinking.

Reality Testing/Grounding Techniques Group

This group provides practical strategies to help patients manage or distract from a variety of overwhelming experiences including psychosis, substance cravings, triggers, urges to self harm, flashbacks of traumatic experiences, anxiety, anger, sadness, and any situation causing emotional distress. Patients are introduced to multiple grounding techniques to engage their senses and cognitions, supporting focus on the external environment, in the present moment, in order to gain control, reduce overwhelming feelings and potential negative behaviors and to promote safety.

Managing Impulsive Behavior Group

Impulsive behavior is defined, and patients are educated on ways to manage impulsivity through the skill of identifying triggers, self-awareness, and self-regulation. Patients are encouraged to

realistically rate their own level of impulsivity, what behaviors are considered “impulsive” such as cutting, substance use, etc., and to identify personal triggers/situations leading to it. Patients learn about how impulsivity negatively affects their own goal achievement and personal relationships. In group they are given opportunities to practice ways to modify impulsive behaviors and offered feedback from peers and staff.

Risky Behavior/Risk Assessment Group

The benefits of healthy risk-taking and the negative consequences of unhealthy risk-taking are explored. The need for healthy risk-taking for adolescents is validated. Patients are provided with tools to evaluate level of risk and impulsivity, and offered alternative choices to support positive outcomes.

Stages of Change Group

Patients are introduced to the Stages of Change Model and possible barriers to change. Patients are engaged empathically and encouraged to identify their current stage of change as it relates to their readiness for recovery and its relation to problem behaviors and treatment goals. Patients are encouraged to identify internal and external barriers to change and identify their perceived risks/benefits of progressing to more advanced stages. Patients who are preparing to implement change while in treatment are assisted in developing actions plans and support systems for short term and long term progress.

Problem-Solving Group

In this group practical problem-solving and decision-making skills are introduced and developed. Patients are provided with opportunities to practice these skills with their current challenges, are invited to share the results with the group and are able to receive feedback from their peers and staff.

Healthy Lifestyle Group

Education is provided as well as ongoing group dialogue regarding various aspects of balanced living; including nutrition, physical activity, sleep hygiene, exploring personal interests, hobbies, interpersonal relationships, self care, boundaries and goal setting. Once identified, these can also be incorporated as healthier coping skills and strategies.

Chemical Dependency Education Groups

Education is provided on prevention, signs of substance abuse and addiction, consequences of substance abuse and recovery. Patients participate in groups covering willingness to change, taking responsibility, communication and refusal skills, interpersonal effectiveness, relapse prevention and maintenance. We offer group discussions covering specific substances, self-medicating, and patients are encouraged to identify factors that influence their use of drugs and

alcohol. We offer groups that explore the negative effects drugs and alcohol can have on an adolescent's mental, physical, academic, and social development. Healthy alternatives, treatment options, and community referrals are provided.

Understanding Addiction Group

Patients are introduced to the emotional, physical, and psychological aspects of addiction and are encouraged to apply this information to their own experience. Patients are educated on addiction as a brain disease and are invited to explore what underlying needs they may be trying to meet through the use of drugs, alcohol and/or addictive behavior.

Relapse Prevention/Hurdles to Recovery Group

Patients and their families are provided with individual, family, and multi-systemic approaches to relapse prevention. The concepts of core, anticipatory, and permissive beliefs are explored as they relate to addiction. In groups, patients are encouraged to identify their triggers, high risk situations, positive and negative feelings, and possible social pressure in relation to relapse. Patients are then supported in developing an individual relapse prevention plan. The group participates in discussions on ways to avoid high-risk situations, identify harmful defenses, manage cravings by using coping skills, increase impulse control, and to ways to support positive social involvement.

Expressive Arts Workshop

Patients participate in a weekly group lead by an Expressive Arts Therapist, who utilizes creative modalities such as art, music and play to encourage self expression and participation. Patients are supported in creating outer forms to express inner thoughts and feelings. Themes addressed may include self esteem, individuality, confidence, social skills, boundaries, decision making, and healthy coping skills.

Movement Therapy Workshop

Patients participate in a weekly group lead by a Movement Therapist. Patients are lead through a series of movements to better recognize and manage somatic aspects of mental illness and emotional stress. Patients are taught breathing, stretching, and relaxation techniques as they engage in healthy play, dance, and socialization within their group milieu.

Nutrition Workshop

Patients receive education about healthy teen nutrition and the benefits of a healthy balanced diet. Patients may meet with a Dietician or hospital Chef to learn and prepare simple recipes.

Academic Instruction

During the academic school year and summer session, patients can meet with a credentialed teacher from the Mount Diablo School District for one hour per day. Patients may use the hour to work on personal assignments from their own school, with or without assistance from the teacher, or the teacher can supply them with grade-appropriate activities to work on. School credit is available under certain circumstances

Multifamily Support Group/Family Meetings

Caregivers are included in all aspects of the treatment process. Patients and caregivers participate in a weekly family meeting with a licensed therapist, and caregivers are encouraged to participate in a weekly psycho-educational support group. Other family-based needs can be accommodated on an as-needed basis. Caregivers are involved in the treatment planning, safety and relapse prevention plan, and discharge planning process, and they are encouraged to follow through with after-care treatment recommendations.

Individual Therapy

While the majority of treatment is provided through group therapies, patients meet individually with clinical staff as needed. Individual counseling sessions can help patients address specific aspects of their treatment, prepare for family meetings, and work towards discharge.

Discharge Planning

Discharge Planning begins at admission and continues throughout the treatment process to identify when a patient might be ready to discharge and to further identify patient/family needs when leaving this program. Patients and their families are supported and provided appropriate resources to ensure outpatient follow-up providers are in place prior to discharge.

Psychiatric Evaluation and Treatment Recommendations

A psychiatrist will meet with each patient regularly and communicate with their families and other members of the treatment team, as appropriate, to determine diagnosis and treatment recommendations. They will discuss with the patient and their families a biopsychosocial formulation, which will include mental/emotional difficulties and substance use difficulties. Treatment recommendations will be discussed as a team and shared with the patient and their families. In addition to the above topics, additional groups and workshops are facilitated as needed, to individualize patient care and address specific needs of the current group milieu.