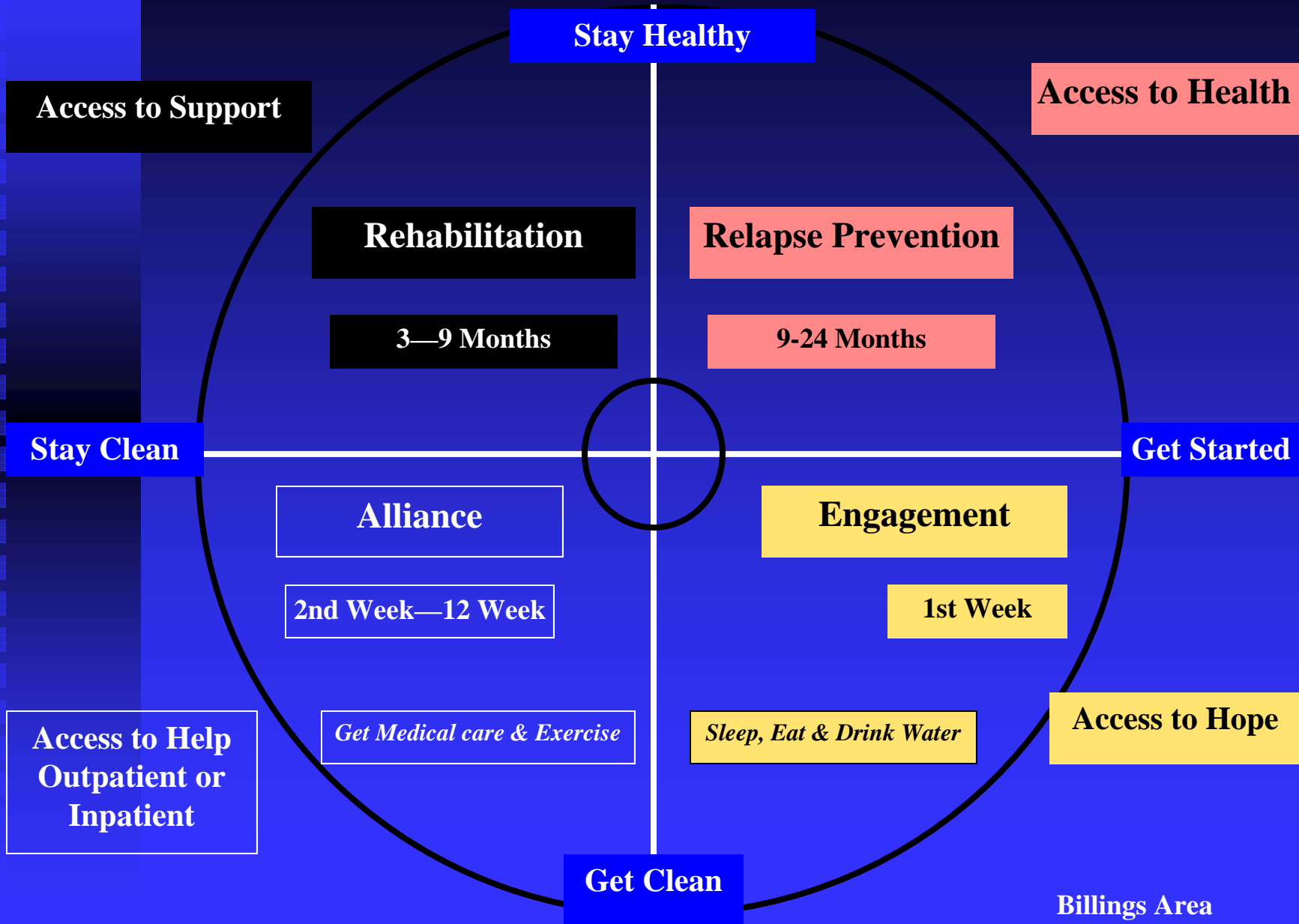


Guide to Recovery from Meth

Draft



Guide to Recovery from Meth

“Know Meth: 2005 Call to Action”

Billings Montana

November 16, 2005

Recovery from Meth is Hard

- People CAN get off meth
- They don't know HOW
- We need to know HOW to help
- We need to KNOW METH

Guide to Recovery from Meth

Four Steps

1. Get started
2. Get clean
3. Stay clean
4. Stay healthy

Step One: Get Started

What do I need to know in order to help a patient, client, friend or loved one start to get off meth?

Starting to get off meth

- We need to be ready to respond when the user is ready to stop.
- Getting off meth can be started at home, in the hospital, in a treatment center, in jail, as long as meth isn't around

“Don’t meth users have to be detoxed?”

If detox means getting the drug out of your system, then the answer is: “Yes.”

If detox means being in a hospital or detox center, getting medication, then the answer is: “It depends.”

Brain damage and Brain healing

- Meth poisons the brain
- Meth takes away the ability to feel “OK”
- It takes about 2 years to heal the brain

Withdrawal symptoms

- Feeling sad, depressed, and/or suicidal
- Extremely tired and sleepy
- Stimulant cravings
- Hard to concentrate
- Anxiety
- No energy
- Don't care about anything (apathy)

What to do in Step One

Keep as far away from meth as you can.

Don't be around people who use.

Tell someone you trust that you are going to stop using.

You need a safe place, and support for a few days to a couple of weeks to do this safely.

When is medical care needed?

- Can't eat or drink
- Seeing things/hearing voices/paranoid
- Awful anxiety
- Feels like killing his/herself
- Scaring other people/violent

When should police be called?

- Methamphetamine causes paranoia
- People can hurt themselves and others

Hope: a strong medicine

- You and the meth user need to know that it is possible to get clean from meth.
- Studies show that up to 30% of meth users can be clean and sober a year following treatment that is specific for meth.

Step 2: Get clean

- After the first week or two, you feel better
- Step 2 is all about not using meth.
- Craving is the enemy.

Getting Clean: What do I do now?

- 2 weeks to 3 months off meth
- You need structure
- Schedule your days
- Get medical care
- Get dental care
- Get inpatient or outpatient addiction treatment.

What to do in Step Two: Getting Clean

Get rid of reminders of meth

Stay away from drug-users

Craving: “drug hunger”

- If you were starving, and you knew where you could get some food----that’s what craving feels like
- Getting clean from meth means learning how to stay away from the drug and people who use it

Getting clean: get rid of reminders of meth

- Clean up your environment

Are there any drugs around?

Any paraphenalia? (light bulbs,
needles)

Ask a non-using friend or family
member to help you collect and throw these
away.

CSAT, 1999

Getting clean:

Stay away from users

- Stay away from your using friends/dealers.
- Get rid of their phone numbers.
- ~~Maybe~~ Maybe you need to get rid of your cell phone.
- Avoid high-risk areas: neighborhoods, houses, bars, anywhere you used to get or use drugs.

CSAT, 1999

Triggers:

You need a plan

- Triggers are reminders of using meth.
- They can lead to craving, and use.
- Triggers can be internal or external.
- You need a plan to deal with triggers.
- Plan how to avoid them
- Plan what to do if you start thinking about using.

CSAT, 1999

Withdrawal symptoms can come back

- They can come back weeks or months later
- This is delayed stimulant withdrawal
- People can get through this
- It helps to be in a recovery (treatment) program

Meth and Depression

People who use methamphetamine may become depressed when they stop.

Depression feels like fatigue, apathy, sadness, and hopelessness.

What helps depression?

- Exercise at least 3 hours a week
- Good nutrition
- Non-using friendships
- Spiritual support/practices
- Cultural activities

What about medication?

- There is no one medication that can “cure” people from meth addiction.
- People who are significantly depressed while recovering from meth may be helped by medication.

Step 3: Stay Clean

- 3-9 months off of meth
- Some days are better than others
- Craving is less
- Risk of relapse still high
- Depression may return

Step 3: Avoiding Relapse

- Don't use alcohol or other drugs
- Don't go back with drug-using friends
- Don't go back to drug-using sex
- Watch out for triggers
- HALT
- “Get a (positive) life!”

from Havassy et al., 1993

Boredom: a trigger to use

- Boredom can result in craving.
- The community can help by organizing clean/sober activities.
- Exercise
- Sweat lodge
- 12 Step or other recovery groups
- Helping others

Step 4: Stay Healthy

- It takes up to two years for the brain to heal from meth
- Holistic wellness
 - Physical
 - Mental
 - Social
 - Spiritual wellness

Summary

- Methamphetamine is toxic to the brain
- Brain healing starts when use stops
- Healing can take up to two years
- Medication may be needed
- Addiction treatment helps
- Family/community support is crucial.

CSAT T.I.P. #33, “Treatment for Stimulant Use Disorders,” SAMHSA, 1999 is the primary source for this information.

Thanks to Leeann Johnson, Pat Calf Looking, and all those who contributed and/or reviewed the contents.

This is a work in progress.

Your comments are welcome.