

**Frequently Asked Questions About Substance Use Disorders**

1. **What is the definition of a substance use disorder?**

Substance use disorder refers to recurrent use of alcohol and/or drugs causing clinically and functionally significant impairment, such as health problems, disability, and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home[[1]](#endnote-1).

1. **What is the difference between substance use disorders and addiction?**

Substance use disorders are a cycle of drug and/or alcohol use that negatively impacts one’s health and relationships as well as one’s ability to work and fulfill commitments. Substance use can lead to addiction.

Addiction is a complex and chronic brain disease characterized by compulsive craving, procurement, and abuse of alcohol and/or drugs. Long-term use can affect the brain and behavior.

1. **Who experiences addiction?**

No one is immune to addiction. It can happen to someone at any age, in any socio-economic group, in rural parts of Idaho as well as in urban centers. While one person may use a drug once or many times and with little to no severe repercussions, another person may be particularly vulnerable and become dependent.

1. **How many Idahoans experience addiction?**

The number of Idahoans struggling with addiction is staggering and growing yearly. The most recent estimates conclude that 9% Idahoans aged 12 and older reported illicit drug usage in the previous month, 7.6% have a substance use disorder, and 14% of high school students admitted to abusing prescription drugs in the last year. The highest percentage of addiction rates are for those 18-25, in which more than 14% report substance dependence. In 2017, female, Hispanic, and 11th grade students were most likely to report prescription drugs use. In 2016, nearly 17% of adult Idahoans report binge drinking in the previous 30 days.[[2]](#endnote-2)

1. **How many Idahoans with addiction receive treatment?**

For those 12 and older who report dependence on alcohol and/or illicit drugs, **only 1/3 receive the treatment they need**.[[3]](#endnote-3) Like mental illness or any chronic condition, higher recovery rates are dependent upon early intervention and treatment.

1. **What substances are common in Idaho?**

For decades, methamphetamines, marijuana, and alcohol were the main substances abused by Idahoans. However, the recent crisis brought on by wide spread opioid use has been especially destructive.

1. **What is the impact of untreated addiction?**

In addition to the misery surrounding drug and alcohol dependence, the financial impacts affect individuals, families, and society. Substance use disorders are associated with lost productivity, child abuse and neglect, crime, motor vehicle accidents, increased emergency room visits, and premature death. It is estimated that the yearly national **economic impact of alcohol and substance misuse and disorders is $442 billion**.[[4]](#endnote-4) **Accidental drug-related deaths have doubled** in the last five years in Idaho[[5]](#endnote-5). In 2016 alone**, impaired driving** crashes cost Idahoans **$1,035,673,537—about $615** per citizen.[[6]](#endnote-6)

1. **What kind of barriers prevent Idahoans from seeking or getting treatment?**

There are many reasons Idahoans may not receive treatment for their addiction. Stigma, cost, time away from work and family make up just some of the attributing reasons for lack of treatment. **Lack of access due to coverage, particularly for more rural areas of Idaho**, poses one of the greatest challenges to individuals seeking treatment. **28% of people living in rural Idaho are without insurance**, because they are more likely to work seasonally and for small businesses, which typically don’t offer insurance.[[7]](#endnote-7) Expanding coverage for Idahoans who don’t have access to mental health treatment is a critical step in taking on this challenge.

1. **How effective is substance use disorder treatment?**

Like other chronic illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension and asthma**, recovery is possible with appropriate treatment and community services and supports**. While not the only forms of recovery, scientific research on substance use disorders has led to development of evidence-based treatment and recovery services such as medication, behavioral therapy, counseling, and peer support. Approximately **40 - 60%** of individuals who complete addiction treatment and participate in ongoing therapy can **resume full lives in recovery**.[[8]](#endnote-8)

• Every dollar invested in prevention achieves a savings of up to $7 in areas such as substance use treatment and criminal justice system costs[[9]](#endnote-9)

Because substance abuse and addiction—both of which are mental disorders—often co-occur with other mental illnesses, patients presenting with one condition should be assessed for the other(s). And when these problems co-occur, treatment should address both (or all), including the use of medications as appropriate.

1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Substance Abuse Prevention Needs Assessment, Idaho 2017 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Substance Abuse Prevention Needs Assessment, Idaho 2017 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Surgeon General, Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General’s Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health. Washington, DC: HHS, November 2016 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Public Health, Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics *Drug-Induced Deaths: Idaho Residents, 2016 Summary* [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Substance Abuse Prevention Needs Assessment, Idaho 2017 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. 1 Georgetown Center for Children and Families and the University of North Carolina NC Rural Health Research Program: “Health Insurance Coverage in Small Towns and Rural America: The Role of Medicaid Expansion” September 2018. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. National Institute on Drug Abuse [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s Briefing on Substance Use Treatment and Recovery in the United States [↑](#endnote-ref-9)