

# What Is A Substance Use Disorder?

A Substance Use Disorder is the continued use of a substance despite serious substance-related problems, such as loss of control over use, health problems, or negative social consequences. The justice-involved population has an elevated burden of substance use disorders: two-thirds of incarcerated people and about one-third of adults on probation or parole meet clinical criteria for a current substance use disorder, compared to 9 percent of adults in the general population.

## ⚠️ Signs of a Substance Use Disorder ⚠️

### Loss of Control Over Substance Use

- Using more of the substance than intended
- Difficulty reducing substance use
- Significant time spent obtaining, using, or recovering from substance
- Having **cravings**: strong desire to use substance

### Social / Occupational Problems

- Not fulfilling major obligations at work, school, or home
- Social problems caused by continued use of substance
- Decreasing or giving up important social or occupational activities

### Risky Use

- Using the substance in situations where it is physically dangerous
- Physical or psychological problems caused by continued use of the substance

### Physical Effects

- Building **tolerance**: needing more of the substance to achieve desired effect
- Experiencing **withdrawal**: physical or psychological symptoms when not using the substance

## Treatment for a Substance Use Disorder

### Individual Therapy

A therapist helps change substance-related thoughts and behaviors and increase motivation for change.

### Group Therapy

Led by a therapist, members encourage and support one another in making meaningful life changes.

### Support Groups

Meet with peers who are also in recovery and participate in a social environment free of substances.

### Medication

Used in specific cases for symptom management, medication is most effective when paired with therapy.

- National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
- AA and NA offer remote meetings (Google search)
- <https://www.smartrecovery.org/>
- Remote NA Chat: <https://www.neveraloneclub.org/>
- NA by phone: <http://www.nabyphone.com/>
- Cocaine Anonymous: [https://www.ca-online.org/?page\\_id=834](https://www.ca-online.org/?page_id=834) (email)  
[https://www.ca-online.org/?page\\_id=841](https://www.ca-online.org/?page_id=841) (voice)