

Rethinking Substance Use Systems to Facilitate Access and Reduce Barriers

What is the R95 Initiative?

We are facing the worst overdose crisis in national and local history, and research has shown that two-thirds of people in the United States have been impacted by addiction in some way.¹ While substance use disorder (SUD) treatment has been proven to save lives, only approximately 5 - 10% of people with SUDs are accessing treatment services, and 95% of people with SUDs who don't access services report either not wanting or believing that they need help.

Data demonstrates that unless we prioritize engaging this 95% of individuals with SUDs, it is unlikely that we will increase our treatment access rates. For this reason, many substance use systems need to take a fundamentally different approach to better address SUDs by ensuring that programs are designed not just for the 5% of people with SUDs knocking on their treatment doors, but that they are also designed to engage the 95% who are not.

The Reaching the 95% (R95) Initiative was launched by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health's Bureau of Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (SAPC) in 2023 to focus on increasing the reach of its SUD treatment system and reshaping the way providers approach care and reshape the way society views these conditions.

Traditional Approach

- Defining readiness for treatment as readiness of abstinence
- Focusing on program rules to define the terms of treatment engagement
- Discharging clients who relapse

R95 Approach

- Being open to admitting people into treatment who are interested in care, even if they may not be ready for complete abstinence
- Focusing on client preferences to inform the terms of treatment engagement
- Looking for ways to maintain clients in treatment who relapse

¹ Sparks G, Montero A, Kirzinger A, Valdes I, et al. KFF Tracking Poll July 2023: Substance Use Crisis And Accessing Treatment. KFF. (2023). <https://www.kff.org/other/poll-finding/kff-tracking-poll-july-2023-substance-use-crisis-and-accessing-treatment/>. Published August 15, 2023.

What does the R95 Initiative look like?

- Communicating - through words, policies, programs and actions - that people with SUD are worthy of our time, resources, and attention, no matter where they are in their recovery journey or their stage of readiness for change.
- Being deliberate about how to better engage people in SUD services in various way – through lower barrier treatment policies, more engaging services that meet people where they are both literally and figuratively, creating settings that are warmer and more welcoming both in aesthetics and spirit, streamlining of intake and other administrative processes, etc.

**"The opposite of addiction is NOT sobriety;
the opposite of addiction is connection."**

Johann Hari, British-Swiss Writer & Journalist

Key Focus Areas of the R95 Initiative

Enhancing Outreach & Engagement

- Expanding field- and street-based services
- Increasing efforts to interface with other areas of health and social systems
- Expanding low barrier and low judgement services such as harm reduction
- Expanding offerings of Medications for Addiction Treatment (MAT)
- Optimizing reimbursable outreach and engagement services for people prior to formal diagnoses or assessments

Establishing Lower Barrier Care

- Lowering the bar of admissions policies to expand the spectrum of readiness levels of people admitted into SUD treatment
- Raising the bar of discharge policies so that there are more nuanced considerations before someone is discharged from treatment because of relapse, which is a symptom of addiction
- Strengthening bidirectional referrals between harm reduction and SUD treatment agencies
- Performing customer experience assessments at the SUD provider level to focus on implementing strategies to make the care environment more inviting

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to learn more about our award-winning mobile-friendly resources, as well as a filterable service locator.

Go to **SUDHelpLA.org**

to locate a treatment provider near you with filters that make searching for specialty SUD services easy.