

Understanding the Risks of Cannabis Use

Los Angeles County
Department of Public Health
Substance Abuse Prevention and Control



Describe

three (3) factors associated with cannabis use.

Identify

two (2) physical health risks and two (2) mental health risks with cannabis use.

Learn

three (3) ways to stay informed as an adult that uses cannabis.

Origin and Consumption Methods of Natural & Synthetic Cannabinoid Products

Cannabis Plant



Sold in: Dispensaries.

As: Cannabis product (oil, concentrate, wax, dab, etc.).

Consumed: Smoke, vape, edible, topical, beverage, etc.

Other Plant

(non-cannabis, non-hemp)



Synthetic
Drug

Hemp Plant



Sold in: Health food and supplement stores for humans and pets, in supermarkets, and online.

As: Hemp or CBD product.

Consumed: Supplement, etc.

Sold in: Gas stations and online.

As: Herbal or liquid incense.

Consumed: Smoke, vape, brew, etc.

Synthetic marijuana: a dangerous drug at a cheap price. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/nceh/hsb/synthetic_marijuana.htm. Updated December 12, 2013. Accessed August 14, 2017.

Thant T, Kondrad E, Nussbaum AM. Medical Marijuana: Indications, Formulations, Efficacy, and Adverse Events. In: Compton MT, ed. *Marijuana and Mental Health*. Arlington, VA: Publishing, American Psychiatric Association; 2016:71-94.

Synthetic Cannabinoids (K2/Spice). National Institute on Drug Abuse; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/synthetic-cannabinoids-k2spice. Accessed May 24, 2018.

rx.ph.lacounty.gov/RxCannabis0918

MYTHS OR FACTS?

1. Cannabis is safe for everyone to use because it is legal.

MYTH-IS

2. Cannabis products are safe because they are easily purchased from convenience stores or online.

MYTH-IS

(click anywhere on this slide to review answers)

- Cannabis plants contain many different plant-based chemicals called **cannabinoids**. Some products are chemically made or **synthetic**.
- Different products have different strains of cannabis and chemicals which affect your mental processes and behaviors.
 - **Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)** creates the 'high' that is commonly associated with cannabis.
 - **Cannabidiol (CBD)** doesn't alter mental processes; you can't get intoxicated by it.
 - **Hemp** is used to make commercial and industrial products; can contain CBD or are synthetic. Unregulated hemp products can create the 'high' that is higher than THC.
- **Recognize the risks** associated with consuming cannabis products.
 - Especially for cannabis and hemp products that are NOT regulated and/or lack consumer transparency.
 - *Examples:* False advertising, improper labeling, high concentrates of pesticides and chemicals.

Inhaling Smoke/Vapor

- Hand-held pipe
- Rolling papers
- Hookah
- Vape pen
- Water pipe or bong
- Homemade/1X use device
- Dabbing



Food/ Topical Infusions

- Edibles/Solids
- Drinks
- Tinctures
- Sprays
- Inhalers
- Powders
- Oils & concentrates
- Butter



What's in the vapor?



The cloud is aerosol, not water vapor. Chemicals include heavy metals such as lead, nickel and chromium; formaldehyde; and artificial flavors linked to serious diseases.

IMAGE: shutterstock_226360945.

Dried Marijuana Plant

- Dried flower tops and leaves of cannabis



Source: VeryWell Mind (Stuart Dee/Stockbyte/Getty Images)



Source: Medical News Today



Source: SoundCloud

Hashish

- Dried extract resin from cannabis flowers compressed into bricks



Source: Wikipedia



Source: DEA Museum

Hash Oil

- Viscous mass of concentrated compounds from cannabis extracted with a solvent



Source: Healthline



Source: Healthline



Source: The Health Center

Synthetic Cannabinoids

- Sprayed onto wide variety of plant matter

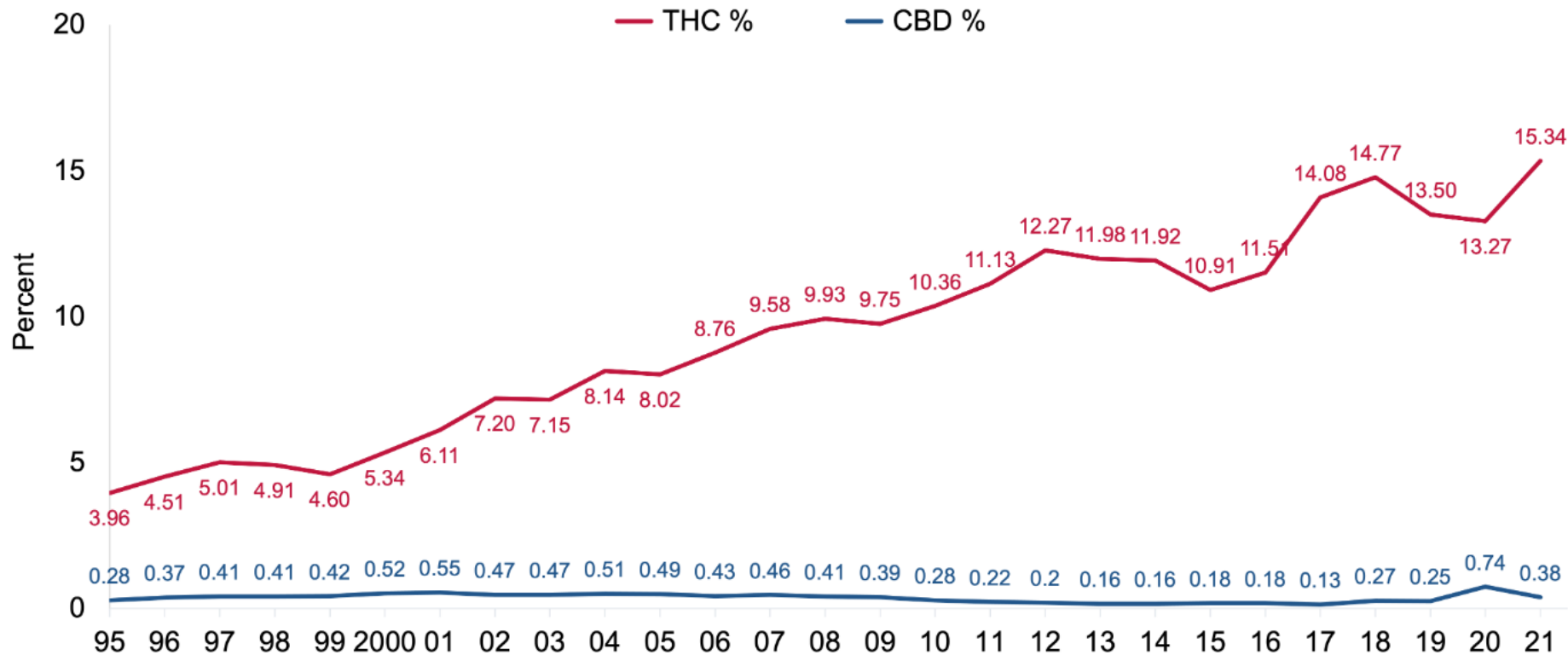


Source: Drug Enforcement Administration



Source: Drug Enforcement Administration

Percentage of THC and CBD in Cannabis Samples Seized by the DEA, 1995-2021



SOURCE: U Miss, Potency Monitoring Project

1. Early Use vs. Later Use

- 1 in 6 people who start using cannabis before the age of 18 can become addicted to cannabis.
- 1 in 10 adults who use THC can become addicted to THC.



2. Increased Potency

- THC concentrations are **3x higher** than they were 25 years ago.
- More THC can lead to higher rates of dependency and addiction.

3. Duration of Effects

- Cannabis products affect everyone differently.
- *Factors include:* how cannabis is consumed, how much is consumed, and the user's body composition.
- The effects of smoking/vaping/dabbing cannabis can be felt in seconds to minutes, and can last for several hours.
- The effects of eating/drinking cannabis products can be felt in 30 minutes to 2 hours, and can last up to 8 hours.

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/faqs/marijuana-addiction.html>

2. <https://www.samhsa.gov/marijuana>

3. GettyImages-94405504

Cannabis is a Schedule I Drug; it cannot be prescribed but can be recommended for medical use by a physician.

- Cannabis has chemicals that may help symptoms for some specific health conditions:
 - Chronic Pain
 - Chemotherapy
 - Multiple Sclerosis
- There are 4 FDA-approved cannabinoids to address health conditions:
 - Seizures
 - Adverse effects from chemotherapy
 - AIDS

Gonzalez, et al. (2018) *The Evolving Science and Policy of Cannabis: What Health Professionals Need to Know*

<http://rx.ph.lacounty.gov/RxCannabis0918#FDAbox>

Retrieved October 12, 2022

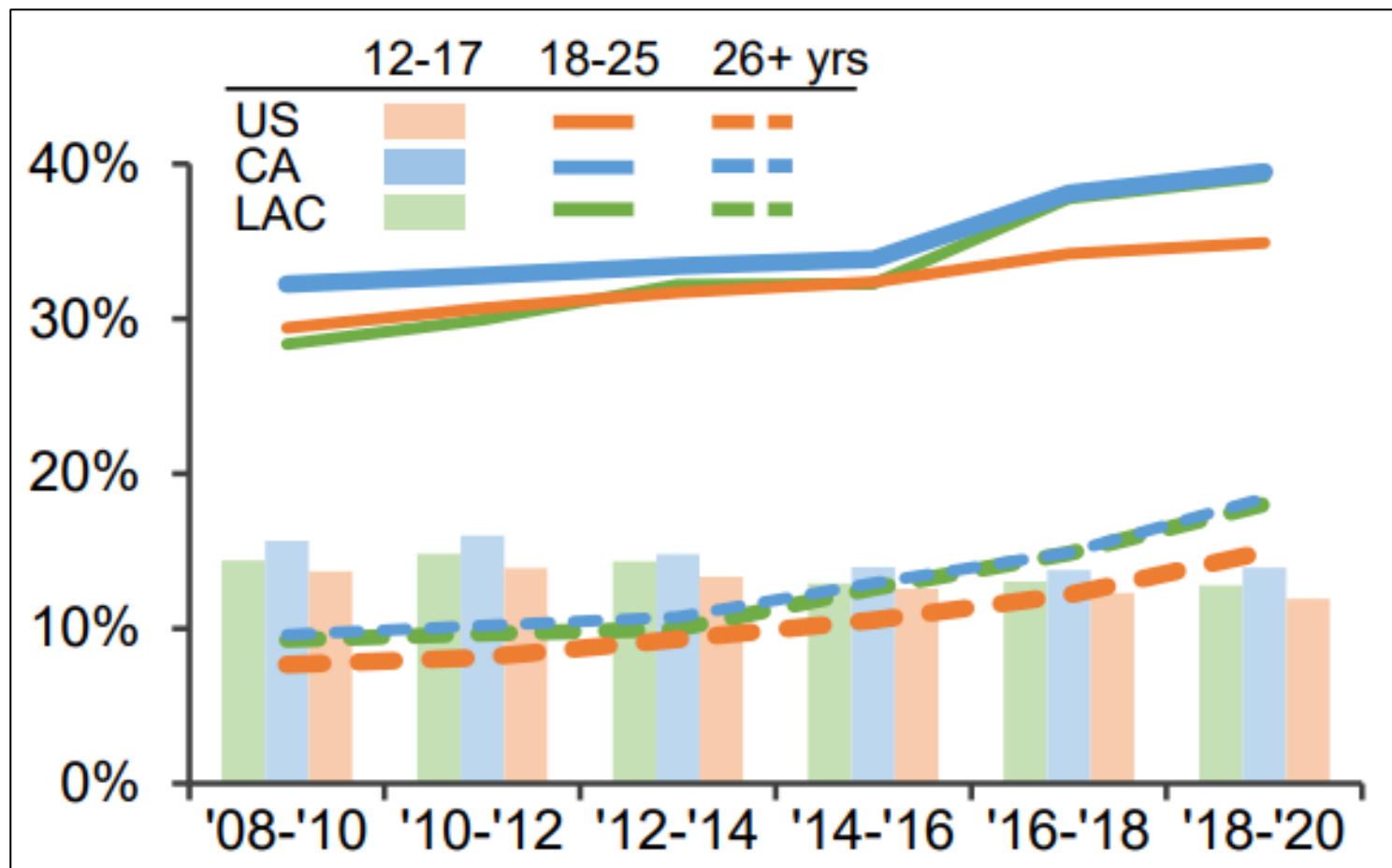
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Some synthetic, hemp-derived cannabis products like **Delta-8 THC** can give you a 'high' like traditional THC products can. Because these products are not FDA-approved and are unregulated, there can be harmful pesticides and chemicals in Delta-8 THC products that are **unsafe for use**. Contaminants have already been reported. Many are sold at traditional tobacco stores like smoke shops, gas stations, and other locations.

To avoid potential harms and risks of using Delta-8, it is recommended to avoid all unregulated THC products. Talk to your doctor before consuming any substance.

Marijuana use in the past year, by age, 2008 – 2022¹



Rates of marijuana use among youth, young adults, and adults in Los Angeles County (LAC) were higher than in the US and lower than in California.

Tracking Patterns in Cannabis Use Over The Years

21%

Past year use of cannabis
among adults (2023)

18%

Ever use of cannabis
among youth (2022)

55%

Perceived great risk of harm
for youth regular use (2022)

28%

At work/school under the
influence of cannabis (2022)

36%

Ever DUI of cannabis
among ever users (2022)

3,269

Primary cannabis
ED visits (2022)

237

Primary cannabis
hospitalizations (2022)

4,239

Primary cannabis treatment
admissions (FY2223)

Physical Health Risks

- Poor muscle coordination
- Slurred speech
- Breathing problems
- Severe nausea and vomiting
- Fertility issues
- Cardiovascular complications
 - Increased heart rate
 - Rapid heartbeat
 - Increased blood pressure
 - Heart attack
 - Stroke

Mental Health Risks

- Poor memory and ability to learn
- Difficulty in thinking and solving problems
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Extreme confusion
- Hallucinations and/or delusions
- Paranoia
- Psychosis
- Suicide risk

- **Secondhand and thirdhand smoke** increases community risk similar to tobacco (respiratory infections, behavior problems, and cancer).
- **Problems with child development** include brain development, mental illness, lower birth weight, and attention/memory issues.
- Synthetic hemp products are unregulated and may contain **unsafe amounts of pesticides and chemicals**.
- **Driving while high** may increase risk of getting into a crash by 25-35%. Causes lane weaving, poor reaction time, and divided attention.
- **Cannabis (specifically THC) use during pregnancy and/or breastfeeding** can be harmful to the developing baby. THC passes through the placenta and bloodstream, breastmilk, and secondhand smoke.



<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/can-marijuana-use-during-pregnancy-harm-baby>; <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/pdf/marijuana-pregnancy-508.pdf>; <https://www.mifactcheck.org/pregnancy>

Posis, A., Bellettiere, J., Liles, S., Alcaraz, J., Nguyen, B., Berardi, V., ... Hovell, M. F. (2019). Indoor cannabis smoke and children's health. *Preventive medicine reports*, 14, 100853.

doi:10.1016/j.pmedr.2019.100853

thinkstockPhotos-538616945

Cannabis & Pregnancy

Cannabis (*specifically THC*) use during pregnancy can be harmful to the developing baby.

THC passes through the placenta, which can negatively affect the baby's development.



Using cannabis during pregnancy may impact your baby's development.



About 7% of pregnant persons in the United States report using cannabis while pregnant.



The chemicals in any form of cannabis may be bad for your baby. That includes eating or drinking, creams or lotions applied to skin, smoking, vaping, and dabbing.



If you're using marijuana and are pregnant or are planning to become pregnant, talk to your doctor.

Cannabis & Breastfeeding



No matter how you use cannabis, one of the main active components in cannabis, THC, will reach your baby in three ways:

- 1. Through your bloodstream and into the placenta** (the organ that feeds your baby during pregnancy).
- 2. Through your breast milk.** “Pumping and Dumping” doesn’t work. THC is stored in fat cells and is slowly released into your breast milk over several weeks.
- 3. Through secondhand and thirdhand smoke** that enters your baby’s lungs.

Cannabis & Youth

Cannabis use under the age of 21 can be harmful to your mind and body.

There are many unique risk factors that can negatively impact youth, with both short and long term consequences.

Attention and Learning:

- Studies have shown that full brain development is not complete until age 25.
- Using cannabis under 21 can negatively impact attention, memory, learning, decision-making, and school performance.

Mental Health Issues:

- Using cannabis at an early age and the frequent use of cannabis with higher THC content can increase their risk of depression, anxiety, and serious mental illnesses like psychotic disorders.

How To Talk to Youth and Young Adults In Your Life

- Start the conversation early.
- Focus on the facts and how cannabis may impact their developing brain.
- Talk with your children about having an “exit plan” if they’re offered cannabis.
- Be aware of your own attitudes and behaviors.
- Set expectations and communicate them clearly.
- Encourage questions, be nonjudgmental, and listen to their ideas.
- Keep calm. Let them know you are there for them.

What To Do If Your Child Is Using Cannabis:

- Stay calm and try not to overreact.
- Talk about your concerns. Give the facts and positive reasons for wanting them to stop using cannabis. Focus on the impact that cannabis can have on the developing brain, and that cannabis is much more potent than in the past.
- If they have their driver’s license, remind them not to use cannabis and drive.

Structural Community Factors for Cannabis Use



Cannabis dispensaries near schools, parks, libraries, and youth centers



Overconcentration of cannabis dispensaries in under-resourced communities



Cannabis representation in the media (TV, social media, movies, radio)



Public health safety (e.g. safe housing, transportation, and neighborhoods)



Access to healthy foods and exercise, healthcare, clean air and water



Violence, racism, trauma, and discrimination



Education, job opportunities, and income

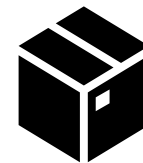
Check For The Check

- Look for the sign at retailers that indicates all appropriate licenses, permits, or authorizations are granted from State and local governments.



Be Safe and Considerate

- Avoid smoking in public places, including around people who are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- Securely store any cannabis products, including paraphernalia, and keep out of reach of children and pets.



Don't Drive and Use

- Consumption of any cannabis products can impair judgment and ability to safely operate a car or other motor vehicle.
- Driving while high can put you and others at risk of accident, serious injury, or death.



Go Low and Slow

- Cannabis affects everyone's body and brain differently. If choosing to consume cannabis, start with the lowest possible dosage and monitor how your body responds.
- Be aware of your environment and mental health when using.



Know Your Limits

- Avoid mixing cannabis with other substances such as alcohol, medications, or illicit substances. Effects of using cannabis can increase risk for negative physical and/or mental effects, injury, and death.



Legal Cannabis Dispensaries...

- Are licensed by the state and follow strict guidelines of operation
- Require a licensed physical location
- That are adult-use cannabis stores are limited to people 21+ years
- That are medicinal retailers are limited to people 18+
- Ensure that products must leave the premises in opaque packaging
- Ensure that packaging is child-resistant, resealable and tamper-evident
- Prohibits the sale of expired cannabis goods
- Are only allowed to operate between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.
- Requires ID verification
- Must have valid certification of cannabis dispensary insurance

Illegal Cannabis Dispensaries...

- Avoid licensing and operating rules and operates outside the legal requirements
- Have bags and/or jars of cannabis on shelves instead of individually packaged products
- Offer free samples
- Have suspiciously low prices
- Allow customers to touch/smell the buds
- Have products weighed in front of customers instead of pre-packaged
- Do not require ID verification
- Operate outside of legal hours

Purchasing cannabis products from the regulated cannabis market is safer than buying unregulated products. When you buy legal products, they are lab-tested and labeled accurately with the information that you need.

Verify that a cannabis business is licensed by visiting the State Department of Cannabis Control's website: <https://search.cannabis.ca.gov/retailers>



Look for this emblem to know it has been inspected by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health*.

****Note: Look for the "Emblem" in the unincorporated areas of LA County and certain contracted incorporated cities:***

<https://dcba.lacounty.gov/cannabisemblemprogram/>

Be cautious of adverse physical and mental effects such as:

Increased blood pressure	Increased heart rate	Delusions
Extreme confusion	Increased anxiety	Severe nausea
Vomiting	Headache	Psychosis

If you or someone you know has symptoms that might suggest they overconsumed, call the Poison Control Hotline: (800) 222-1222. If the symptoms are severe, call 9-1-1 or seek immediate medical care. If you are struggling with cannabis or substance addiction, you can seek medical/professional advice and/or call the Substance Abuse Services Helpline: (844) 804-7500 (available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

Signs of addiction can look like:

- Taking more cannabis or for longer periods of time than originally intended
- Taking more cannabis to get the same effect that previously required less of the substance
- Inability to cut down or eliminate use even for short periods of time
- Constantly craving cannabis
- Not engaging with friends, family, work or school due to cannabis use
- Using cannabis in dangerous situations (such as driving while high)

Resources



Substance Use Prevention Services



Delta-8 THC



'Bigger Choices' Cannabis Media Campaign



Cannabis Emblem Program



Harm Reduction Resources

LA County Department of Public Health Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (SAPC)

Harm Reduction

Harm Reduction | Top 5 Myths | Overdose Epidemic | Accessing Naloxone | Finding Services | Resources | FAQ | Contact Us

Harm Reduction and Overdose Prevention Resources

Community-based organizations and individuals may utilize the following resources and information designed by SAPCs Harm Reduction Unit to support efforts to expand access to harm reduction and overdose prevention services.

[Fentanyl Resources](#) +
[Xylazine Resources](#) +
[Naloxone Resources](#) +
[Training and Presentations](#) +
[Local, State and National Resources](#) +

Scan the QR Code to visit the
Harm Reduction Webpage



For more information, resources, and training, please contact the Harm Reduction Unit at HarmReduction@ph.lacounty.gov

ph.lacounty.gov/sapc/public/harm-reduction/

15AUG2023



Scan QR Code to Access Fentanyl 101 Presentation
Or [Click This Link on PDF Handout to Access Presentation](#)

Youth, young adults and adults can access **no-cost** (**no fees**) substance use treatment services at any provider in the network if they meet the following criteria AND meet medical necessity:

**Los
Angeles
County
Resident**



Medi-Cal Eligible or Enrolled

(active benefits are not required at time of screening, referral, or intake)

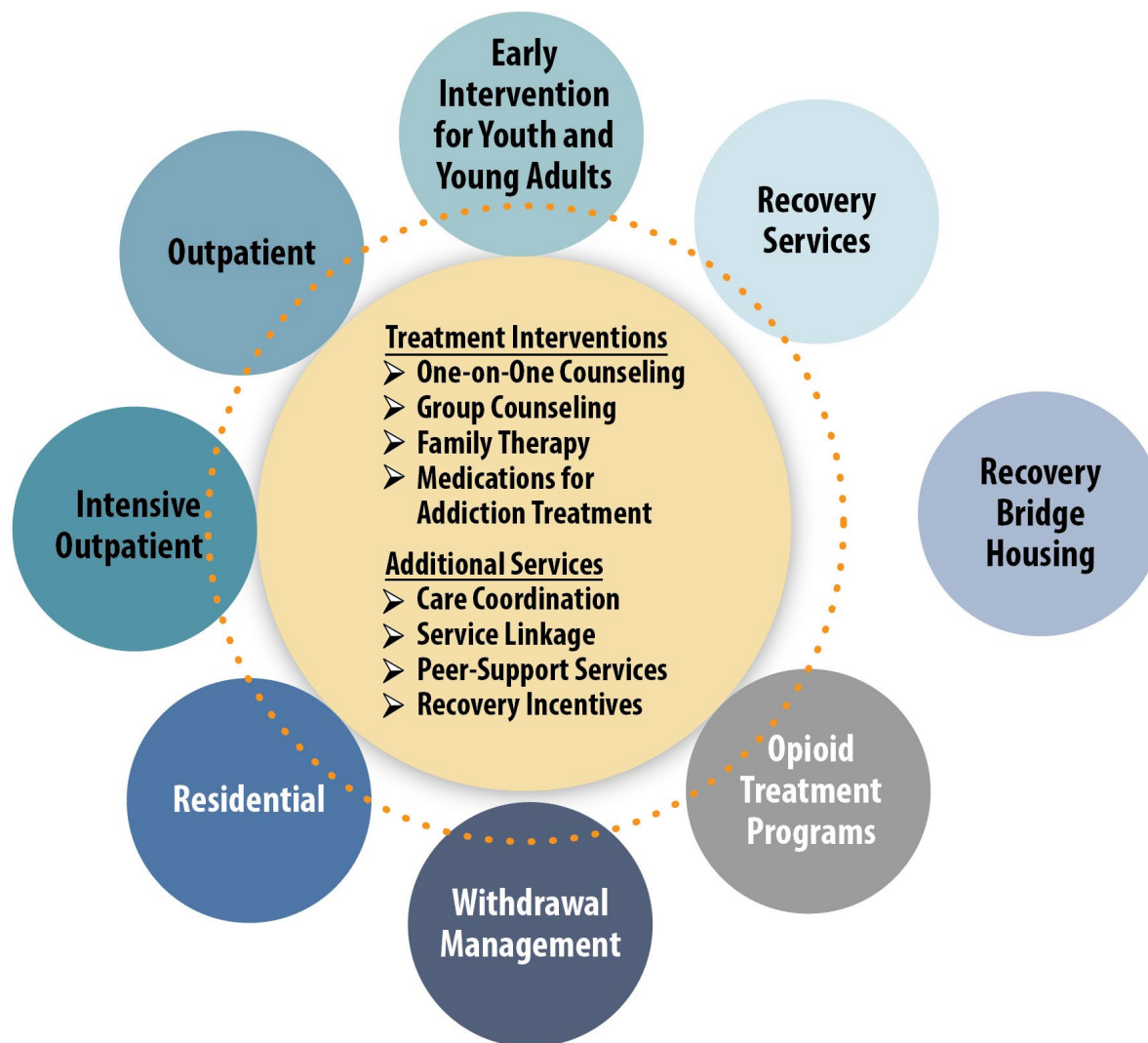
OR

Other County-Funded Program Participant

(such as AB 109, Drug Court)

There are also fee-for-service options for patients that do not meet these eligibility criteria.

Los Angeles County's Available SUD Benefits



SAPC | Substance Abuse Prevention and Control

Prevention First • Treatment Works • Recovery is Possible

A 24/7 toll-free helpline to provide screening, resources, and referral directly to a treatment provider.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICE HELPLINE
 **1.844.804.7500**



CORE Centers offer sites throughout L.A. County where staff provide education, resources, and in-person screening and linkage to treatment.

 **COREcenter**
Connecting to Opportunities for Recovery and Engagement



CENS Staff serve as liaisons between state, county, and city agencies and providers conducting in-person navigation, screening, and linkage to treatment.

CENS
Client Engagement
and Navigation Services



Any person (or their representative) can contact treatment providers directly or by using www.SUDHelpLA.org

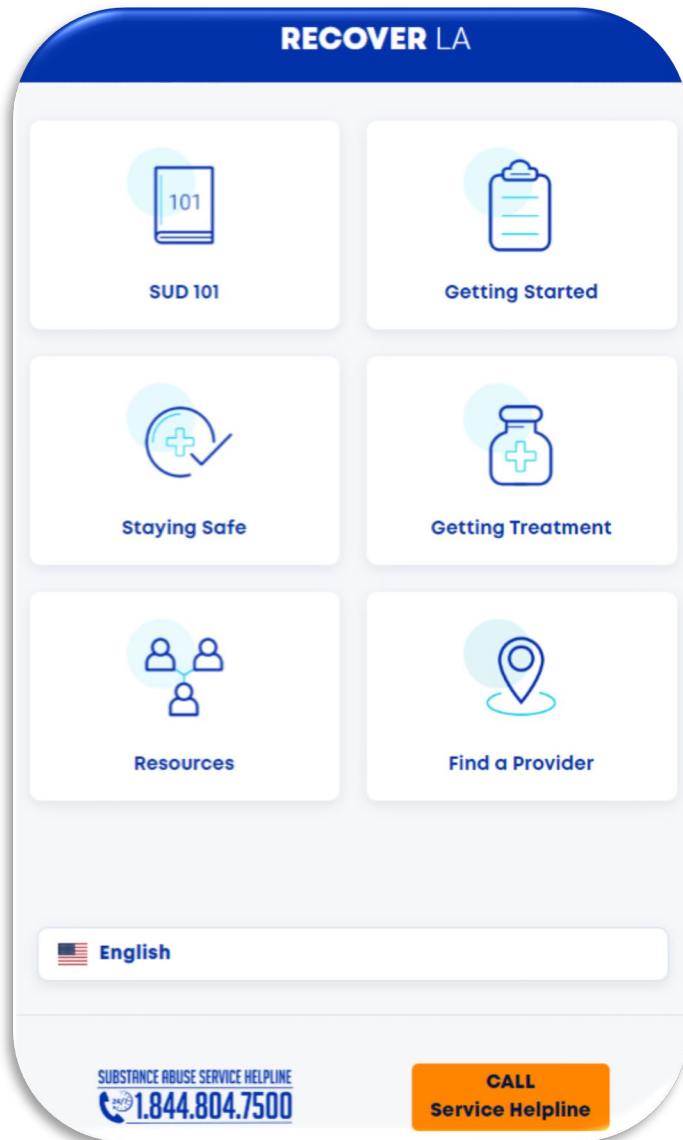
**Service Bed and
Availability Tool
(SBAT)**



[No Wrong Door Pathways to Access Alcohol/Drug Treatment](#)



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
Public Health



- Free mobile app
- Provides education and resources for those seeking substance use services for themselves or others
- Available in 13 languages

Visit RecoverLA.org or use the QR code below to access the app



Install this webapp on your phone:
Tap  and then Add to Homescreen








Additional Resources

Name	Description	Call Toll free	Web Address
Los Angeles County Substance Abuse Service Helpline (SASH)	24/7 helpline screening and referral of free substance use disorder treatment services in Los Angeles County.	(844) 804-7500 24 hours per day/ 7 days a week	Web based tool of available Substance Use Disorder Treatment Services in Los Angeles County: http://sapccis.ph.lacounty.gov/sbat/
988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline)	988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress.	988 Call & Text 24 hours per day/ 7 days a week Línea de Prevención del Suicidio y Crisis 988 For TTY Users: Use your preferred relay service or dial 711 then 988.	Lifeline (988lifeline.org)
Department of Mental Health (DMH) Access Hotline	24/7 Mental Health Services include screening, assessment, referral & crisis counseling.	(800) 854-7771 24 hours per day/ 7 days a week	List of Mental Health Services: https://dmh.lacounty.gov/our-services/
Department of Public Social Services (DPSS)	To apply for Medi-Cal, food stamps and income support for low-income families and individuals.	(866) 613-3777 Monday-Friday 7:30am - 5:30pm	http://dpss.lacounty.gov/wps/portal/dpss
Office of Immigration Affairs (OIA)	Connection to free or low-cost attorney if you have questions regarding the “public charge” test and your immigration status.	(800) 593-8222 Monday-Friday 8:00am-4:30pm	oia.lacounty.gov

Additional Resources - Continued

Name	Description	Call Toll free	Web Address
Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)	Peer supported program for people in recovery from alcohol use disorder who meet regularly.	(800) 923-8722	www.AA.org
Narcotics Anonymous (NA)	Peer supported program for people in recovery from other illicit substances who meet regularly.	(800) 974-0062	www.NA.org
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)	Provides education support & advocacy to improve the lives of those living with mental illness.	(800) 950-6264	www.nami.org
Nicotine Anonymous	Peer supported program for people in recovery or who need support to stop use of tobacco and nicotine products who meet regularly.	(877) 879-6422	https://www.nicotine-anonymous.org/
Al-Anon Los Angeles	Members who are worried about someone important to them with a substance use issue.	(888) 425-2666 (818) 760-7440 - Los Angeles	www.al-anon.org
Medication-Assisted Recovery Anonymous (MARA)	Peer supported program for people in recovery that utilize medication-assisted treatment.	N/A	California MARA International (mara-international.org)
Los Angeles Helpline	Central source for providing information/referrals for all health and human services in LA County.	211 24 hours per day/ 7 days per week	www.211la.org

Resources for Youth

Name and Description	Website	
L.A. County Youth Suicide Prevention Project	https://preventsuicide.lacoe.edu	
National Crisis Text Line	https://www.crisistextline.org Text HOME to 741741	
Trevor Project Lifeline Provide support to LGBTQ+ youth and allies in crisis or in need of a safe and judgment-free place to talk	https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help 1-866-488-7386	
LA-HOP L.A. County Homeless Outreach Portal	https://www.lahsa.org/portal/apps/la-hop	
Addressing Teen Mental Health Challenges A mental health toolkit for teens	http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/pie/Education/MentalHealthToolKit/toolkit-teen.htm	

How to Locate These Resources:

Step 1

- Visit the link provided below:
- [LA County Department of Public Health - Substance Abuse Prevention and Control - Reaching the 95% \(R95\) Initiative](#)



Step 2

- Scroll to the bottom of the page where it says Learn More (see screenshot below) and click on the links below the title “SUD 101 and Accessing Substance Use Treatment in L.A. County Resources.”

Learn More

SAPC is a state leader in launching innovative SUD tools and programs to enhance access to services by individuals who may need treatment, community stakeholders and the SUD workforce.

Click the [RecoverLA](#) link to learn more about our award-winning mobile-friendly platform that provides SUD service and overdose prevention resources, as well as a filterable service locator.

Click the link to the [Service and Bed Availability Tool \(SBAT\)](#) to locate a treatment provider near you with filters that make searching for specialty SUD services easy: <https://sapccis.ph.lacounty.gov/sbat/>.