

How to compare eating disorder treatment programs

Ask each program for the same three things: the levels of care it runs, the ages it accepts and how insurance billing works. Compare the answers in writing before you decide.

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Start with the basic facts. Check the address and phone number on the listing. Visit the program's website if it has one, and look for a description of its services. The listing on this site shows what SAMHSA's survey records, but a program may offer more than the survey captures.

Ask each program for the same three things. First, ask which levels of care it runs: outpatient, partial hospitalization, residential, inpatient or a mix. Second, ask which ages it accepts and whether it has separate programming for children or adolescents. Third, ask how insurance billing works: which plans it is in-network with, whether it verifies benefits before admission and what happens if coverage runs out mid-treatment.

Get the answers in writing. Ask for a description of what each level of care covers, the daily or weekly schedule and the total estimated cost with insurance and without. Ask what is billed separately, such as labs or medical visits.

Compare the written answers side by side. Match each line across programs. Note what each one leaves out, and ask about the gaps.

Check your special needs early. If you need a program that treats a specific eating disorder, ask whether it treats that diagnosis. SAMHSA's survey data records that a program serves persons with eating disorders, but does not name the conditions it treats. Only the program itself can answer this.

If you need specific accommodations, ask about them. If you want telehealth, ask whether the program offers it and whether it can serve you where you live.

Ask about emergencies. Ask what the program does in a medical or mental health emergency, during program hours and outside them. Ask whether a physician or nurse practitioner is on the treatment team. Ask who makes the decision about the right level of care, and how the assessment works.

Read the disclaimer on this site. A listing is a record, never an endorsement. Programs are never ranked by claimed outcomes. The survey records what the program told SAMHSA. Services can change. Confirm everything with the program before you decide.

Take your time with each call. Write down who you spoke to and what they said. If a program will not answer a question or put costs in writing, ask who can answer it and when.

This site has a tool that lists questions to ask a program about levels of care. It is not an assessment and it does not diagnose. Use it as a starting point for your calls.

This guide is information, not medical advice. Ask a doctor or other qualified clinician which level of care fits your situation. In a medical or mental health emergency, call 911 in the US, or

call or text 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Frequently asked questions

How many programs should I contact?

This site cannot tell you a number. Contacting more than one program lets you compare answers. Ask each one for the same facts in writing.

Can I move to a different program after I start?

It depends on the program and on what you sign. Ask about this before you agree to anything.

Sources

[SAMHSA FindTreatment.gov, Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator](https://findtreatment.gov/) — <https://findtreatment.gov/>
[FindTreatment API developer guide](https://findtreatment.gov/assets/FindTreatment-Developer-Guide.pdf) — <https://findtreatment.gov/assets/FindTreatment-Developer-Guide.pdf>