



## ECHO Idaho: Counseling Techniques for Substance Use Disorder CASE RECOMMENDATION FORM

**Presenter Credential:** CADC

After review of the case presentation and discussion of this patient's case among the ECHO Community of Practice, the following suggestions have been made:

**Summary:** A 39-year-old female has lived in a sober house for 20 months as house president. She has a GED, some college, and works part-time. Diagnosed with bipolar and schizoaffective disorder, she engages in therapy and recovery groups. Her substance use began at 16, with marijuana, meth, and alcohol as primary substances. Abstinent since early 2023 due to legal involvement, she denies needing help with substances and plans to resume alcohol use post-probation. With limited social support, she aims for stable mental health, financial independence, and probation completion.

**Question:** Support is needed to improve community engagement and prevent relapse triggers.

### Recommendations:

#### Building Trust and Relationships

- Given her history of attachment wounds and distrust, interventions should focus on building trust.
- Even if she remains resistant, continued presence and support from her recovery coach and therapist are crucial. Simply showing up and maintaining a steady relationship—even if she doesn't actively engage—reinforces trust.
- Checking in with her regularly, acknowledging small progress, and respecting her boundaries while still offering opportunities to engage can help her feel supported without feeling forced.
- Helpful book to recommend to her: *Securely Attached: Transform Your Attachment Patterns Into Loving, Lasting Romantic Relationships* by Eli Harwood

#### Gradual Social Integration

- Encourage social engagement
  - Since she prefers isolation, gradual exposure to social settings may help. For instance, instead of large group meetings, she could start by attending a small, casual coffee meetup with peers from her sober house.
  - Walking therapy sessions or meeting in a neutral setting like a park may also make conversations feel less formal and more comfortable.
- Finding alternative ways to increase engagement through shared interests may be beneficial.

#### Long-Term Stability and Independence

- Transitioning out of a structured program like the problem-solving court can be challenging, so helping her identify what will keep her well when she is fully in control of her decisions is key. Testing these strategies now can empower her to sustain progress independently.
- Consider framing the work you are doing with her as trying to figure out the least amount of treatment she needs to be successful in her life. For some people, when they finish the problem-solving court, they do not need any support. For a lot of people, they stay connected with their counselor to continue individual work.
- Consider encouraging her to maintain therapy sessions post-probation to help navigate life changes.

#### Balancing Support with Autonomy

- Instead of pressuring her into engagement, framing treatment as a way to maintain her independence may be more effective.
- Qs to ask her:



## **ECHO Idaho: Counseling Techniques for Substance Use Disorder CASE RECOMMENDATION FORM**

- How can we help you so that the next time you find yourself in a tough situation, you will maintain control of your life and make decisions that align with your goals?
- What do you think will help you stay well when nobody else is making decisions for you (after the conclusion of the problem-solving court)?

**Consider presenting follow-up for this patient case or any other patient cases at a future ECHO Clinic session.**

Shannon McDowell, Program Manager. Office: 208-364-9905, [sfmcowell@uidaho.edu](mailto:sfmcowell@uidaho.edu)