

What Are Our Eating Disorder Treatment Options When We Leave CHOP?

Eating disorders are complex illnesses. We often need to “triage” concerns. This means we start with the most dangerous and scary thing first. For a child or teen with an eating disorder, physical health is the first thing we address. This means that your child needs to eat and gain weight. They will need to eat more often than before, and they need to eat more at each meal or snack. They will need to eat foods they have avoided for a long time. They will need to eat “scary” foods and some foods they may consider “unhealthy.” Right now, their body needs nutrition to heal.

Treatment for eating disorders has what we call different levels of care. Your team behavioral health provider and physician will talk to you about what the different levels are and which might be best for your child. Below is a summary for your reference.

Inpatient Treatment

- Inpatient eating disorder treatment is different from the malnutrition program at CHOP. Eating disorder treatment centers offer more therapeutic support for patients. CHOP offers medical care to get your child healthy enough to participate in treatment programs as needed.
- 24/7 care. Your child will live at the inpatient program.
- Each child is different, inpatient treatment is often 2 to 4 weeks.
- Children who are younger (under 14) may have to go to other states for this type of treatment.
- Inpatient programs can manage the eating disorder and other medical complications that occur.
- Treatment includes supervised meals, group therapy, individual therapy, and family therapy. Each program is a little different.

Residential Treatment

- 24/7 care. Your child will live at the residential program.
- Each child is different, residential treatment is often about 4 weeks.
- It may be necessary to go to other states for this type of treatment.
- Residential programs are **not** able to manage medical complications.
- Treatment includes supervised meals, group therapy, individual therapy, and family therapy. Each program is a little different.

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Partial Hospital Programs (Day Programs)

- Your child lives at home during these programs.
- Treatment is usually 5 days a week for 6 to 8 hours a day and lasts 4 to 6 weeks.
- Children who are younger (under 14) may not have this as an option.
- Your child needs to be medically stable to attend this type of program.
- Treatment includes supervised meals, group therapy, individual therapy, and family therapy. Each program is a little different.

Intensive Outpatient Programs

- Your child lives at home during these programs.
- Treatment is usually 3 to 5 days a week for 3 to 4 hours a day and lasts 4 to 6 weeks.
- Children who are younger (under 14) may not have this as an option.
- Your child needs to be medically stable to attend this type of program.
- Treatment usually involves one meal or snack.
- Treatment is primarily group-based but may have some individual or family therapy. Each program is a little different.

Outpatient Treatment

- Your child lives at home and has all meals at home or school (when ready).
- Treatment is usually 6 to 12 months and sessions are weekly for the first few months.
- There are different types of outpatient treatment:
 - **Family-Based Approaches**
 - Recognize that the eating disorder makes it really hard to eat and that we need to prioritize physical recovery.
 - Parents help their child to eat and are key members of the treatment team.
 - Does not focus on why the eating disorder happened but tries to change the things that keep it going.
 - Have the most research supporting how well they work.
 - **Individual Approaches**
 - Often ask the teen with the eating disorder to be responsible for their own meals and snacks.
 - Focuses on increasing motivation to get better, changing thoughts and feelings.
 - May or may not focus on what started the eating disorder.
 - Only **Adolescent Focused Therapy** and **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy – Enhanced** have research supporting their effectiveness.