

USING MEDICATION

for

OPIOID USE DISORDER?



a guide to

SURVIVING & THRIVING

in the PITTSBURGH area

Using Medication for Opioid Use Disorder?

A Guide to Surviving and Thriving
in the Pittsburgh Area

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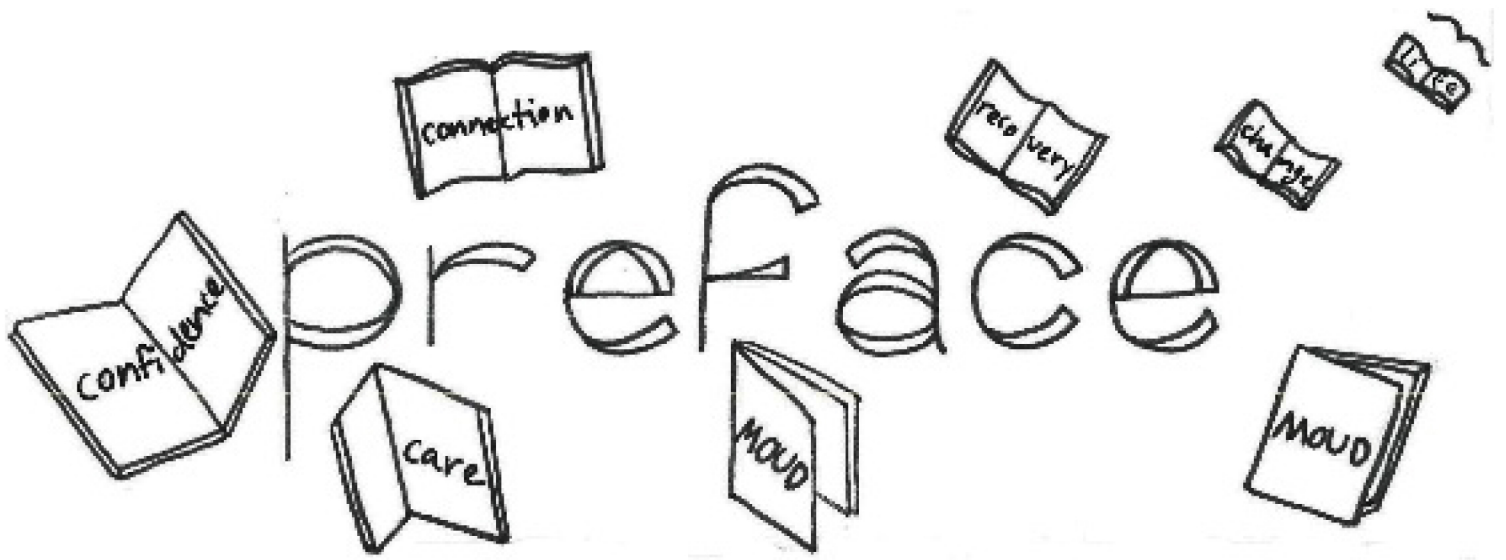
HOW TO CONTACT US

We welcome your feedback, ideas, and interest
in getting involved with our work!
Contact us at moud.pgh@gmail.com.

What is MOUD?

MOUD stands for Medications for Opioid Use Disorder, and includes methadone, any buprenorphine product (like Zubsolv, Suboxone, and Sublocade) and naltrexone products (like Vivitrol). You may have also heard them called "medication-assisted treatment" or maybe even "opioid replacement therapy." We use MOUD because we think it's the simplest way to describe the medications.

MOUD = Medication for Opioid Use Disorder



Who Created This Guide and Why?

This guide was put together by a group of people who live in and around Pittsburgh. Some of us have personal experience with Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD). All of us have been personally affected by addiction in some way, and we have all struggled with judgment and stigma. All of us agreed that the stigma of MOUD creates an additional burden for people who are trying to stay alive and get better. We think it's time for change.

MOUD = Medication for Opioid
Use Disorder

In 2022, our group got a grant from the Life Unites Us campaign to try and help people using MOUD to recover. Under the grant, we had three meetings in 2022, and decided to create this guide. We also discussed our vision for a better future. Some of our visions were:

“Enthusiastic permission to tell my story in all places” - Sarah, who has used methadone and suboxone in her recovery and hasn't always been open about it

“All people seeking recovery have a community where they are able to hear and tell stories” - Dave, who is in recovery and provides peer support for anyone struggling with opioid use

“Normalize the use of medication for OUD, just like any other disease. I want people to have confidence in their medication.” - Cambria, who currently uses methadone in her recovery, and works as a peer support person for pregnant women using MOUD

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What are Your Stories?

Here are some of our recovery stories, in just a few lines.

I stopped using heroin in 2005 with the help of methadone and suboxone, both of which were amazing tools in the deep toolbox of my recovery. I've rarely felt comfortable sharing that part of my recovery story in traditional 12-step groups for fear that the stigma MOUD carries would exclude me from making lasting relationships or bonding with people in those spaces. Slowly, as more people take advantage of the life-saving opportunity available with MOUD (and are willing to do it openly!), the stigma is decreasing.

- Sarah Shotland

I became addicted to opiates at the age of 19. A year later, I knew that I wanted to quit for good and yet it took me over 10 years to finally sustain my recovery. During that time, I was on methadone and suboxone twice and both times they helped save my life and bring some a sense of normalcy to it. The stigma, shame and guilt I felt for being on these medicines kept me recovering in the shadows. If I could go back in time knowing how everything worked out for me, I would have recovered loudly and proudly out loud. I encourage anyone utilizing MOUD to do just that!

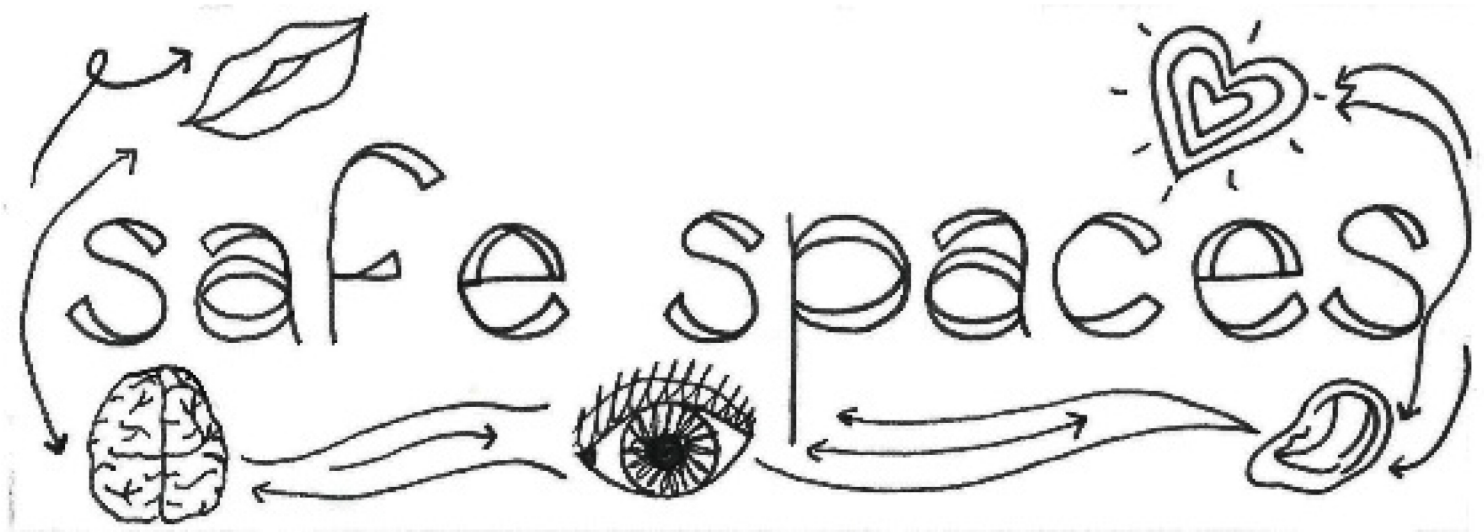
- Ken Clowes

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I came to a crossroads in my life where I had to embrace and accept methadone as being a positive part of my recovery and also a part of myself as a good mom. For a long time, I felt like I had to hide it because using medication would have reflected negatively on me as a mother. Now I believe both things can be true: I can use MOUD for my recovery and be a good mom. And in my work, I want to instill that feeling in other people who feel forced onto this medication due to pregnancy. Back when I started on the medication, I wish I had someone to give me security and understanding about this path to recovery.

- Cambria King

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In our experience, it can be helpful to find a safe space (or more than one) if you are trying to heal from addiction. Keep in mind: the term "safe spaces" has different meanings for different people. You decide what feels safe for you.

Below are some of our suggestions for groups (both online and in-person) that may feel safer and more helpful if you are using MOUD.

Meetings

Pittsburgh Medication-Assisted Recovery Anonymous (MARA) - Weekly discussion group intended for those using buprenorphine (Suboxone, Sublocade) or methadone. Allies welcome. Multiple meetings, some with a hybrid format (you can join in person or online). Located in Pittsburgh. Contact Dave for info and location: email DAS348@pitt.edu

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SMART Recovery - SMART Recovery meetings occur all over the country, including the Pittsburgh area. SMART specifically supports the use of prescribed medications for addiction. Visit smartrecovery.org and type "Pittsburgh" into the meeting locator.

All Recovery - All Recovery meetings occur all over the country, including the Pittsburgh area. Typically, they embrace all pathways to recovery, and often include people affected by a loved one's addiction. There are a handful of All Recovery meetings in our region, both in person and online.

Contact Brian for info and location: call or text 470-263-5725

Also contact Sage's Army, Lost Dreams Awakening, and Unity Recovery for additional options (see below for contact information)

Harm Redux/Recovery Punx - Group that supports any positive change related to drug and alcohol use. Meeting(s) located in the Oakland neighborhood of Pittsburgh.

Contact malcolm@pppgh.org for more info

Online Meetings - If you are more comfortable with online meetings, Medication-Assisted Recovery Anonymous (MARA), SMART Recovery, and All Recovery meetings are available online, and may include people from all over the country.

Search "online meetings" on marainternational.org

Visit unityrecovery.org/digital-recovery-meetings

Visit meetings.smartrecovery.org and select "online" under "type"

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12-Step Meetings - Many 12-step programs have historically been unwelcoming for people who use MOUD, but that is changing, and some meetings may feel safer than others. Tons of 12-step meetings are available in-person and online.

Online Forums

Facebook Group: Pittsburgh Recovery Support & Services - Members typically support multiple paths to recovery and work in the addiction/recovery field.

Search Facebook for "Pittsburgh Recovery Support & Services"

Facebook Group: Moms on MAT Support - Moms who have used methadone and/or Suboxone for their recoveries

Search Facebook for "MoMATS Moms on MAT Support"

Reddit Forum: r/suboxone - International forum for people who previously or currently use(d) Suboxone

Visit [reddit.com/r/suboxone](https://www.reddit.com/r/suboxone)

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Community Centers

Our region is home to several Recovery Community Organizations, which provide resources and support to anyone impacted by addiction. They support multiple pathways to recovery, including the use of addiction medications.

Lost Dreams Awakening - Located in New Kensington

Visit recovery.supportservices.net or call 724-212-7899

Unity Recovery - Located on Pittsburgh's Southside

Visit unityrecovery.org/contact-us or call 412-586-5372

Sage's Army - Located in Greensburg and Irwin

Visit www.sagesarmy.com or call 724-863-5433

Your Safe Spaces

Feel free to add any spaces that feel safe for you:

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Despite the effectiveness of MOUD, there are many myths and misconceptions about this treatment approach that can prevent people from seeking the help they need. You can help stop the spread of misinformation. Here are some possible responses to common MOUD myths.

Myth: You're replacing one drug for another

- MOUD are medications for a specific purpose, like insulin for diabetes. They are designed to address the physiological effects of opioid addiction, such as cravings and withdrawal symptoms, in order to make it easier for people to focus on their recovery.
- These medications are way safer than drugs you buy on the street. If you use opioids, treatment with methadone or buprenorphine has been shown to reduce your risk of dying by about 50%.

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Myth: I know people who have recovered from OUD without medication, so that's the path for everyone.

- While some people may be able to recover from opioid use disorder without medication, this is not the case for everyone. Every person's experience with addiction is unique, and what works for one person may not work for another.

- For many people, MOUD can provide the support and treatment they need to overcome their opioid addiction and to build a healthy and sustainable recovery.

Myth: People using MOUD are less stable than those who are pursuing 'abstinence-based' recovery

- The myth that "people using MOUD are less stable than those who are pursuing 'abstinence-based' recovery" is not accurate. In fact, the opposite is often true. MOUD has been shown to be effective in reducing opioid use, improving treatment retention, and reducing the risk of overdose and other negative outcomes associated with opioid addiction.

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Myth: People using MOUD threaten the safety/comfort of those who are pursuing 'abstinence-based' recovery

- It is important to recognize that different people may find different treatment approaches to be most effective for them, and that what works for one person may not work for another.
- Some people recover by going to meetings. Some don't. Some people recover by connecting with a Christian God, or a more abstract Higher Power, or another form of spirituality. Some don't. Some people use medical marijuana or other prescribed medications in their recovery. Some don't. With so many recovery pathways, it makes more sense to accept (and even celebrate) different stories, rather than insist that all recoveries look alike (they won't).

Myth: Methadone and other MOUD rot your teeth (or bones)

- There's not good evidence that MOUD damage teeth and bones. This myth may have come about because for some people, methadone can cause a dry mouth. A good response to dry mouth is to drink lots of water and take care of your teeth and gums.

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Myth: If I am using MOUD and I have a baby, that baby will be born addicted.

- Babies cannot be “born addicted.” They can (and often are) born physically dependent on medications that the mother takes during pregnancy, but there are well-established protocols for helping newborns taper off of medications, including methadone and Suboxone. The word “addiction” refers to continued substance use despite consequences, and babies don’t have the ability to use drugs or alcohol themselves.

Your Myths and Responses

Feel free to add any myths that you’ve heard and responses that work for you:



For a long time, there has been discrimination toward people who take medications for opioid addiction. For example, people have been blocked from these medications when they are in jail or prison. Truck drivers, doctors, and other workers have been forced to give up MOUD to keep their jobs. People giving birth in hospitals have been prevented from bonding with their babies. In many cases, this treatment is not just unfair, it is also illegal.

These are organizations that may be able to help if you are facing injustice because of your use of MOUD.

Legal Action Center

Based in New York City, the Legal Action Center offers help nationwide for people ordered off their addiction medicine, or forced to lower their dose. This could be from a judge, parole officer, child welfare agency, or other entity.

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MOUD Advocacy Toolkit

<https://www.lac.org/resource/mat-advocacy-toolkit>

Form to request legal help: <https://legalactioncenter.wufoo.com/forms/forced-off-medicationassisted-treatment/>

National Alliance for Medication-Assisted Recovery

The national advocacy organization is comprised of, founded by, and in existence for individuals whose recovery paths are supported by MOUD. You can contact them directly through their website.

More info and contact form: namarecovery.org

Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project

PILP is trying to make sure that all people can access MOUD in jails and prisons. They have a one-page guide to advocating for your rights to receive medication while incarcerated and are willing to help, at no cost, if your rights have been violated.

More info: pilp.org/moud Contact: (412) 434-6004

Your Helpful Organizations

Feel free to add any organizations that you know are supportive:

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COMING
OUT AS A
MOU STORYTELLER



How To Come Out?

- If you have personally experienced opioid addiction and have received MOUD as part of your treatment, it can be powerful to share your lived experience with others. This can help shed light on the realities of opioid addiction and the effectiveness of MOUD in treating it.
- Coming out doesn't have to be a big public announcement (although it can be). Sharing your story with a loved one can be extremely powerful. There are many ways to come out.
- When sharing your lived experience, it can be helpful to reflect on the challenges you faced and the ways in which MOUD helped you overcome them.

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- You can also discuss any obstacles you encountered in accessing MOUD and how they were addressed.
- It's important to remember that everyone's experience with MOUD is unique, and not everyone may have had the same positive experience that you did. Find ways to be respectful of others' experiences and not dismiss their concerns or experiences.
- By sharing your story in a way that is open and understanding, you can help others see the value of MOUD and its potential to help those struggling with opioid addiction.

Support For Coming Out

Organizations

The organizations Pittsburgh Recovery Walk, Life Unites Us, and Faces and Voices of Recovery are all looking for individuals who are willing to share their stories about their experiences with MOUD. These organizations are dedicated to raising awareness about the effectiveness of MOUD in treating opioid addiction and promoting its availability to those who need it.

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Pittsburgh Recovery Walk, for example, is an annual event that brings together people in recovery, their families and friends, and others who support the recovery community. As part of the event, they are looking for people who are willing to share their stories about their experiences with MOUD and how it has helped them in their recovery journey.

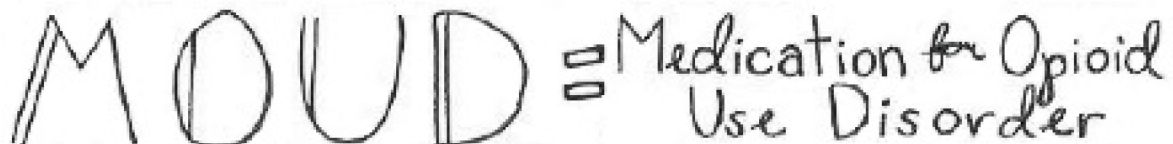
Website: pghrecoverywalk.org

Life Unites Us is another organization that is looking for MOUD storytellers. This organization is focused on providing support and resources for individuals and families affected by addiction. As part of their work, they are looking for people who are willing to share their stories about their experiences with MOUD and how it has helped them in their recovery.

Website: lifeunitesus.com

Faces and Voices of Recovery is a national organization that works to promote recovery from addiction and to reduce the stigma surrounding it. As part of their work, they are looking for people who are willing to share their stories about their experiences with MOUD and how it has helped them in their recovery.

Website: facesandvoicesofrecovery.org



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Hashtags

One way to raise awareness about MOUD and its effectiveness in treating opioid addiction is to use hashtags on social media.

By using relevant hashtags, you can help your posts about MOUD reach a wider audience and engage others who may be interested in the topic. Some popular hashtags that you could use when talking about MOUD include #MOUD, #opioidaddiction, #recovery, #recoverychallenge, #recoveroutloud, #wedorecover, #recoveryposse, and #addictionrecovery.

Your Ideas on Coming Out

Feel free to add any ideas or goals that you have for sharing your story:

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How to Respond to Overdose

Overdose: Not Just Narcan

If benzos or xylazine (tranq, sleepdope) are present, naloxone may not be enough, what do you do?



If they aren't breathing:

1. Give naloxone to reverse fentanyl/opioid overdose. 1-2 doses.

2. Naloxone takes 3-5 minutes to work.

- Breathe for them (rescue breaths).
- Take a deep breath, pinch their nose, cover their mouth with yours, blow into their lungs like blowing up a balloon.
- 2 breaths to start then 1 every 5 seconds.

3. Keep checking their breathing

- Put your ear near their mouth and nose.
- Feel, look, listen for breathing, check for color returning. Recovery position.
- Call 911 if they don't start breathing!

Check their breathing.
If not breathing, continue rescue breaths, CALL 911, ask for EMS!!

If they are breathing, but don't wake up, there may be other drugs involved like benzos or xylazine (Tranq/Sleepdope).

More naloxone won't help.

If breathing, but still unconscious, roll them into Recovery Position. On left side, with left arm and leg straight, right arm and leg bent. So they stay on side and don't aspirate if they vomit. Keep airways clear, make sure they aren't lying on arm or leg.



Image credit: Prevention Point Pittsburgh

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