

ACTION ITEMS TO IMPROVE SUD TREATMENT FOR BLACK PATIENTS

In 2022, the Grayken Center for addiction launched 4 day-long convenings with addiction treatment experts including people with lived experience of SUD from across the country to review information gathered from prior focus groups and literature reviews and to draw conclusions about the findings from this work. The intent was to gather input on how to interpret these findings, and to translate them into recommendations. Below is a table describing recommendations that treatment organizations can make to improve the experiences of Black people struggling with substance use disorders. Examples of organizations include but are not limited to clinics, short-term and long-term residential programs, and outpatient programs. For more details, see SUDA Final Report.

CHANGE ADDICTION TREATMENT ORGANIZATIONS	Require leadership commitment and hold leaders accountable
	Change organizational operations to promote equity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold staff accountable for experience of Black patients • Demonstrate that treatment is designed to meet the needs of Black patients • Alter the physical environment to convey warmth and hope and to reflect the presence/culture of Black people • Create a treatment environment that feels welcoming, kind and empathetic for Black patients
	Change the way that staff are hired, trained, and supported <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire more Black people and POC • Hire more staff who are trained and can provide high-quality counseling interventions • Prioritize front-line staff who have lived experience of SUD • Educate staff and treatment providers about how to work effectively with Black patients • Engage staff in professional development activities to help them become anti-racist
	Empower and support patients <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a system of self-governance to allow the patient group to collectively respond to individual patients who violate behavioral norms • Offer options to help Black people feel a sense of community and belonging in a treatment setting
CHANGE ADDICTION TREATMENT	Reshape addiction treatment with a less punitive, more strength-based approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deconstruct approaches in which patients are judged/not trusted and replace with an approach based on positive reinforcement • Make care truly patient-centered • Invite Black patients to evaluate their care, and use their feedback to improve care • Make peer-based care a cornerstone of treatment • Implement a proactive system to ensure that all patients are informed of all available treatment options (including medication and non-medication options) • Incorporate elements of religion/spirituality as an optional treatment component, while recognizing that this will not work for all patients • Incorporate art, music, drama, martial arts, spoken word into treatment • Provide non-medication treatment options, such as acupuncture, massage, Reiki • Honor the importance of family and provide family support • Help people address shame and internalized stigma • Foster an environment that creates trust
	Address trauma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the capacity to treat trauma, including racial trauma • Implement trauma-informed approaches throughout treatment • Select a method to increase organization’s focus and capacity related to trauma
	Remove barriers to receipt of mental healthcare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen for co-occurring mental health problems • Combine treatment of co-occurring disorders with all SUD treatment
	Address social/practical barriers to care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addiction treatment programs should screen patients to assess basic needs • Residential programs should ensure that patients have practical items that they need in order to participate comfortably