

The HEALING POWER of a SMILE

Preventing Relapse *by* Providing Comprehensive Oral Health Care *with* Substance-use Disorder Treatment

• **Intended Audience: Treatment Providers and Oral Health Care Professionals serving people with substance-use disorders** •



“If you provide good, comprehensive dental care for patients who are receiving treatment for Substance-use Disorder, their response to their SUD treatment is dramatically improved.”

- Glen R. Hanson, D.D.S., Ph.D.

There is a link between Substance-use disorders (SUDs) and major oral health problems. For individuals with SUDs, it is estimated that as many as 40% have major oral health problems.

Integrating oral health into SUD treatment can have positive outcomes. Those who participated in oral health care as part of SUD treatment compared to those who participated in SUD treatment alone:

- a. had a 3 times higher rate of SUD treatment completion,
- b. were 2 times more likely to be employed, and
- c. were 2 times more likely to report abstinence from substances.

Additionally, for participants who were homeless, receiving oral health care as part of their treatment, almost eliminated homelessness.

There are many factors that may contribute to these positive outcomes; one factor is likely an improved quality of life by:

- Reduced pain in mouth and body (due to eliminating oral infection)
- Reduced stress
- Increased sleep
- Increased confidence

More research is currently being done at the University of Utah School of Dentistry to determine additional ways oral health care can improve SUD patients' quality of life.

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