



UPDATE

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Four Winds Partial Programs: How Addiction Education Encourages Patients on the Road to Recovery

The adult and adolescent full-day Partial Hospitalization Programs at Four Winds Hospital offer participants innovative opportunities to be educated and healed in a comprehensive and caring treatment environment.

Pam Walker, a Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC), has brought her years of experience working in hospitals, schools, and outpatient settings to create validating treatment for Partial Program patients. Walker tailors each group she runs individually. She reports that she recognizes that while not all Program participants are struggling with co-occurring disorders, they are all striving to achieve recovery in treatment. For this reason she makes sure that she provides all participants with information about recovery, regardless of what they are recovering from. "Addiction Education group," she explains, "is provided to all participants regardless of whether they have an active substance abuse problem because recovery skills can be used to cope with an addiction of any kind, including, social media, gaming, gambling, and impulsive behaviors." Her goal is to teach participants different skills they can use to engage in self-soothing and self-care. "My whole focus," she states, "is to teach self-care and how to do that in a healthy way."

When creating the curriculum for a specific group, Walker is particularly mindful about the time of day the group will take place. "If I run the group after lunch," she reports, "I like to get participants to move their bodies to get them going." Her groups incorporate Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) based skills. A core component of the treatment is teaching the skill of distress

tolerance. Some of the specific DBT skills taught include: Wise Mind Accepts, PLEASE, Urge Surfing, and Coping Ahead. "I also focus on spirituality and I give participants a lot of information about recovery in order to help them shift the lens through which they see the world." Walker believes in a holistic approach; "So I say you know you are a whole person, this is just part of your work on balancing yourself, so you are not kind of lopsided all the time so you can function better."

Walker reports that participants tend to be very receptive to substance abuse education and learning recovery skills. She highlights that the groups are lively and that participants ask a lot of questions. This results in a real feeling of "give and take within the treatment community." Walker emphasizes that she avoids lecturing participants, especially the adolescents. "I like to engage them," she states, "Here at Four Winds, outside of a school environment there are no barriers to the questions they may want to ask." Walker explains, "What separates the education offered in the Partial Programs, in comparison to what may be offered to the adolescents in a typical health class at school, is that the adolescents have much less social anxiety because here it is a completely confidential setting—not their home community, or school community—it's not with their school peers so it allows the freedom to ask the tough questions about addictions and the things that they might be worried about for themselves, their family members, or their peers." Program participants are provided the opportunity to learn about themselves and those around them. This makes the road to recovery a journey well worth the venture.

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