

## Seeking Safety: A Treatment for Substance Use and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Clinical Guideline

MVP Health Care, as part of its continuing Quality Improvement Program, adopted Seeking Safety: A Treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder guideline. The full guideline is available at: [Women's Treatment for Trauma and Substance Use Disorders | NIDA Archives \(drugabuse.gov\)](https://www.drugabuse.gov/women-treatment-for-trauma-and-substance-use-disorders)

### Impact of The Condition

- Stress is a well-known risk factor in the development of addiction and in addiction relapse vulnerability. Studies show up to 80% of women seeking drug treatment report lifetime histories of sexual and/or physical abuse. <sup>[1]</sup>
- Trauma informed approach to care is needed in the assessment and treatment planning of substance use
- Developmental trajectories may be altered due to prolonged substance use, making the treatment process more difficult for PTSD.

### Summary of the Guidelines

Seeking Safety is an Evidence Based therapeutic intervention for PTSD and Substance Use, developed in 2002. The risk of impulsive and potentially self-endangering behaviors is high for people with co-occurring symptoms of PTSD and substance use. The emphasis of this model is development of safety skill for the management of emotional dysregulation related to PTSD symptom. There is a focus on Cognitive-Behavioral approaches recognizing the interactions between emotional states, cognitions and behaviors. There is therapist training, handbooks, handouts and mobile app. It is based on five central principles: Safety as an ongoing priority in treatment, Integrated treatment of PTSD and substance use, focus on restoring ideals, focus on cognitions and behaviors, and attention to therapist process. Primary goals are to improve function in everyday interactions by identifying themes of safety in relationships, interactions, and behavioral choices. What is absent is: exploration of past trauma or psychodynamic interpretations. The sessions are highly structured: there is a review of symptoms, behaviors, substance use, discussion, reinforcement for positive choices, review of commitment to safety, handouts on coping skills, affirmations, and an opportunity for feedback. Therapists are attuned to the overt and nuanced manner in which PTSD can manifest in relationships, interactions and function. The greatest strength of Seeking Safety is the instillation of hope and empowerment that recovery can occur.

Additional tools to assist providers with educating their patients on behavioral health conditions are available on the MVP Health Care website by following the link below.

[Quality Programs and Initiatives | MVP Health Care](#)

In conjunction with these guidelines, MVP Health Care offers Case Management for members with behavioral health conditions. If you would like to refer your patients to the Case Management program, please call the MVP Case Management Department at **1-800-852-7826**.

This guideline is not intended to replace the role of clinical judgment by the physician in the management of this, or any other disease entity. It is an educational guideline to assist in the delivery of good medical care. All treatment decisions are ultimately up to the physician. Where medication recommendations are made, please refer to each health plan's formulary for coverage considerations.

MVP Health Care updates its clinical guidelines at least every two years. The review process is also initiated when new scientific evidence or national standards are published. Practitioners are alerted via the web site and by written notices from the plan via fax or newsletter. A hard copy of the clinical guideline can be requested by calling the MVP Quality Improvement Department at **(800) 777-4793 extension 1-2247**.

#### References

1. [Women's Treatment for Trauma and Substance Use Disorders | NIDA Archives \(drugabuse.gov\)](https://www.drugabuse.gov)
2. Najavits, L. M., (2002) Seeking Safety A Treatment Manual for PTSD and Substance Abuse. New York: Guilford.
3. Seeking Safety Website: [training - Treatment Innovations \(treatment-innovations.org\)](https://www.treatment-innovations.org)
4. [Seeking Safety: A Model for Trauma and/or Substance Abuse | National Institute of Corrections \(nicic.gov\)](https://www.nicic.gov)