Howard Brown Health

Howard Brown Health Addictions Treatment Philosophy of Care

This living document reflects our shared approach to addictions care at Howard Brown Health. It is collaborative and evolving, shaped by the voices and experiences of staff across the organization. Our philosophy is rooted in trauma-informed principles, health equity, and a deep respect for the resilience of the patients and communities we serve.

Guiding Principles:

Patient-Centered & Collaborative

Healing is not one-size-fits-all. We work alongside patients, honoring their goals, values, and definitions of wellness.

We commit to shared decision-making, ensuring that people with lived experience shape the programs and policies that affect them.

No two cases of addiction are alike. We reject universal explanations or treatment approaches. Instead, we center each patient's stance toward drug use and their hopes for the future.

Collaboration means transparency. We share information and choices openly, empowering patients to make informed decisions about their wellbeing.

People who use substances and those in recovery are essential partners in shaping the programs and policies that impact their lives. We are committed to shared decision-making, ensuring that lived experience guides our work at every level.

Affirming & Inclusive Care

We affirm the identities, lived experiences, and resilience of every patient. Our care is grounded in respect for each person's self-knowledge, culture, and story.

We recognize that equitable care requires actively addressing systemic barriers that impact access, treatment, and outcomes. Our addictions practice is rooted in health equity—ensuring care is responsive to the social, economic, and structural determinants of health.

We understand that addiction and recovery exist within complex intersections of identity, power, and systemic inequity.

Racism, transphobia, homophobia, ableism, classism, and stigma are not peripheral issues—they are central determinants of health.
We center gender-diverse communities—including transgender, nonbinary, and gender-expansive individuals—as integral to our understanding of personhood, health, and healing.

We acknowledge that identity-based trauma can increase vulnerability to substance use and create barriers to recovery. Our language, practices, and policies affirm each patient's identity and lived experience, fostering safety and trust.

We honor each individual's right to choose their own recovery pathway. Recovery thrives when every identity is affirmed, and every voice is honored.

Mindfulness & Presence
We approach care with presence, compassion, and non-judgment. Mindfulness is both a clinical tool and a shared practice that deepens empathy, patience, and authentic connection.

We support patients in cultivating awareness, grounding, and resilience—tools that promote healing and reduce retraumatization.

We are mindful that language shapes care culture. We use person-first, non-stigmatizing, and recovery-affirming language in all aspects of care. We avoid words that imply moral judgment, such as "clean" or "dirty." We encourage language that reflects dignity and agency—for example, "person who uses drugs" rather than "addict."

Language is healing. It can transform shame into self-compassion and isolation into connection.

Trauma-Informed & Harm Reduction
We recognize the impacts of trauma, stigma, and systemic inequities. Our practice prioritizes safety, dignity, and reducing harm over rigid expectations of abstinence.

Harm reduction is not simply a set of tools- it is a worldview that honors dignity, autonomy, and the wisdom of lived experience. We understand that every positive change matters. Whether a person seeks safer use, reduced use, or abstinence, we honor their goals as meaningful steps toward wellness.

Our clinical, medical, and outreach practices reflect the harm reduction ethos: offering low-barrier access to care, meeting people where they are, centering consent, and valuing relationships over outcomes. We understand that poverty, racism, social isolation, trauma, and discrimination affect vulnerability to and capacity for managing drug-related harm.

Our role is to cultivate environments where people can rebuild trust; in others, in systems, and in themselves.

We provide non-judgmental, non-coercive services and resources to reduce harm and promote healing.

We recognize that harm reduction is a spectrum which may benefit patients and clinical outcomes at all stages of active use and recovery.

We recognize the multidimensional aspect of recovery and the diverse definitions of recovery some of which do not require one to be completely free of all drugs or substances.

Integrated & Holistic Care
Addiction does not exist in isolation. We integrate medical, behavioral, and social support to address the whole person—mind, body, and community.

Sustainable recovery comes from addressing all aspects of wellbeing. We support complementary and alternative therapies that align with treatment plans and deepen our understanding of healing.

We recognize that substance use and substance use disorders are closely connected to overall health, including increased vulnerability to infectious diseases and HIV. We recognize the interference substance use disorders may present when treating acute and chronic diseases.

We use laboratory and diagnostic testing (such as urine drug testing) to promote understanding of a person's health, use and safety and oppose the use of testing for punitive measures.

An Integrative Approach to Care
We embrace an integrative model that combines conventional treatments—such as medication-assisted therapy, counseling, complementary and alternative medicine —with practices tailored to each patient's needs. This approach:

- Honors patient autonomy and choice
- Supports trauma recovery through non-invasive, empowering modalities
- Enhances engagement and retention in treatment
- Builds a foundation for sustainable wellness and recovery

Continuous Growth & Reflection
This philosophy lives through action. We commit to ongoing evaluation of our programs, guided by patient feedback, community input, and emerging evidence

Accountability is collective—we hold ourselves responsible for upholding these principles in every interaction, policy, and program design.

The Howard Brown Health Addictions Treatment Philosophy of Care is an important inflection point – but is not static. It will continue to evolve to meet the needs of our patients and communities we serve.