

**To: FARR Certified Residence Owners, Directors, and Staff**

**Re: Best Practices for Medication-Assisted Recovery (MAR) and Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)**

## **Introduction**

Substance use disorders (SUDs) continue to be a significant public health challenge, requiring comprehensive, multifaceted approaches for treatment and recovery. The Office of Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorders (OBHSUD) advocates for evidence-based interventions, including Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) and Medication-Assisted Recovery (MAR). These approaches have demonstrated efficacy in reducing relapse rates and enhancing long-term recovery outcomes.

For Florida Association of Recovery Residences (FARR) certified residences, there is an increasing need for education and the implementation of best practices regarding MAT and MAR. This white paper provides a detailed guide on how owners, directors, and staff of recovery residences can effectively incorporate these interventions while adhering to state guidelines and national standards.

## **Background**

The OBHSUD has consistently supported the use of MAT and MAR as part of a comprehensive treatment plan for individuals struggling with opioid use disorder (OUD) and other substance-related issues. MAT involves the combination of FDA-approved medications (such as methadone, buprenorphine, and naltrexone) with behavioral therapies, while MAR focuses on long-term recovery support using medications in conjunction with holistic care.

FARR-certified residences provide structured environments to support individuals in early recovery. However, some residences face challenges in integrating MAT/MAR into traditionally abstinence-based models. This document aims to clarify how these treatments can be incorporated effectively and safely, using evidence-based strategies.

## **Importance of MAT/MAR in Recovery Residences**

1. **Improved Recovery Outcomes:** Research demonstrates that combining medication with behavioral therapy significantly increases the chances of sustained recovery. MAT helps reduce cravings, manage withdrawal symptoms, and lower the risk of overdose, while MAR supports individuals through long-term recovery stabilization.
2. **Reducing Stigma:** One of the primary barriers to MAT implementation in recovery residences is the stigma surrounding the use of medications for recovery. Educating staff and residents about the science and efficacy of MAT/MAR is crucial in creating a supportive, non-judgmental environment.
3. **Compliance with Legal and Ethical Standards:** SAMHSA and OBHSUD guidelines endorse MAT as part of recovery services. FARR-certified residences must comply with state and

federal laws, including Florida Statute §397.487(13) (effective January 1, 2025), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), ensuring the rights of individuals using medications in recovery are upheld.

## **Best Practices for MAT/MAR in FARR-Certified Residences**

### **1. Comprehensive Training for Staff and Residents**

- **Education on MAT/MAR:** All staff members, including owners and directors, must undergo training on the benefits and proper implementation of MAT/MAR. Training should cover the pharmacology of MAT medications, common side effects, and the long-term role of these treatments in recovery.
- **Stigma Reduction:** Incorporate empathy-based workshops to reduce stigma, challenge misconceptions, and promote a non-judgmental, inclusive approach to MAT/MAR.
- **Behavioral Therapy Integration:** Encourage the integration of behavioral therapy which is often paired with MAT for optimal results.

### **2. Developing Individualized Recovery Plans**

- **Person-Centered Approach:** Develop individualized recovery plans that address each resident's medical, psychological, and social needs. These plans should be created in collaboration with healthcare providers who prescribe MAT and reviewed regularly to ensure effectiveness.
- **Collaboration with Prescribers:** Maintain strong communication between residence staff and MAT prescribers, ensuring medication management is a central part of the resident's ongoing recovery plan.

### **3. Medication Management and Safety Protocols**

- **Secure Storage and Dispensation:** Medications should be securely stored, with clear protocols for dispensation to prevent misuse.
- **Monitoring and Accountability:** Regular monitoring of residents using MAT is crucial. Ensure progress is tracked, side effects are addressed, and adherence to treatment plans is maintained.

### **4. Inclusive Environment for Residents on MAT/MAR**

- **No Discriminatory Policies:** FARR-certified residences should not implement policies that discriminate against individuals using MAT/MAR. Banning medications as a condition of residency is not in line with best practices.
- **Fostering Peer Support:** Encourage an inclusive community that supports MAT/MAR, offering peer groups and 12-step meetings that welcome MAT participants. Tailor support networks for individuals on MAR.

### **5. Data-Driven Approaches**

- **Ongoing Evaluation:** Continuously assess the effectiveness of MAT/MAR programs through data collection. Use this data to make necessary adjustments and improvements.
- **Outcome Tracking:** Track relapse rates, resident satisfaction, and health outcomes for individuals using MAT compared to other recovery strategies to measure success.

## 6. Legal and Regulatory Compliance

- **Adherence to FARR Standards:** Ensure all MAT-related practices comply with FARR standards.
- **Compliance with Florida Law:** Be aware of the legal requirements under Florida Statute §397.487(13), effective January 1, 2025, to ensure full compliance.
- **Understanding the ADA:** Ensure that policies do not discriminate against MAT participants, respecting ADA protections and providing equal access to services.

## Challenges and Solutions

1. **Resistance from Peer Recovery Models:** Peer recovery communities rooted in abstinence-only models may resist MAT integration. Educating staff and residents on the diversity of recovery pathways and facilitating discussions can reduce resistance and foster inclusion.
2. **Access to Medication Providers:** In some areas, access to MAT prescribers is limited. Establish partnerships with local healthcare providers or use telemedicine services to bridge this gap.
3. **Insurance and Cost Issues:** Medication costs can pose a financial burden for residents. Help them navigate insurance coverage or locate grant programs that can subsidize medication expenses.

## Conclusion

Integrating Medication-Assisted Recovery and Medication-Assisted Treatment into FARR-certified residences offers a powerful opportunity to improve recovery outcomes. By adopting the best practices outlined in this white paper, recovery residence owners, directors, and staff can create an inclusive, evidence-based, and comprehensive approach to recovery.

As OBHSUD continues to emphasize the importance of MAT/MAR in substance use disorder treatment, it is essential that recovery residences align with these strategies, fostering an environment that supports all recovery pathways.

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