

# Professional Liability in the Addictions Field

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Addiction is one of the most misunderstood areas of mental health. Alcoholism and drug abuse counselors are a brave group who battle the damaging grip of narcotics, prescriptions and illegal substances. Over 10% of people over the age of 12 in the US today suffer from addiction, and addiction IS an illness. Since it is both difficult to treat and understand, it is easy for the victims of drug abuse to claim negligence, misrepresentation or inaccurate advice of their treatment counselor.

## ***The Hazards of Addiction Treatment in the Mental Health Care Field***

### **Emotional Hardship**

Professional Liability Coverage protects addiction treatment counselors from the unpredictable. Most treatments require long term, and it's important when a patient claims emotional hardship from the physician for falling back into the powerful cycle of chemical dependence.

### **Patient Pain Pills**

Recently, Buprenorphine has been discovered as a threat to mental health treatment. Medication or drug? This mild opiate has often been prescribed to recovering addicts to limit the painful withdrawal process. Unfortunately, this drug itself has been subject to abuse by patients, and the prescribing physician is too-often to blame.

### **Patient Brokering**

Some groups in the substance abuse and mental health field still operate on a referral payment program. In Florida and many other states, offering referral incentives is illegal and can get your practice in a lot of trouble!

These are just a few of the hazards to watch out for as a professional in the addictions and drug abuse treatment field. Stay safe! The influx of patients this month should be met with awareness of both the options and hazards. [Malpractice](#) is always a threat, especially in fields where the treatment is highly individualized - and April is Alcohol Awareness Month.