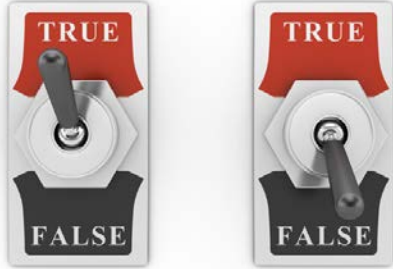
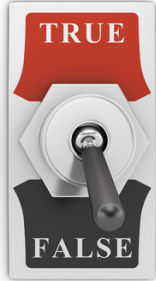


Myth Buster Quick Reference Tool

	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medications used as part of medication assisted treatment (MAT) typically create a pleasurable or euphoric feeling in the user.	

FACTS:

- Opioids (e.g., heroin and prescription painkillers) go right to the brain and narcotize the individual, causing sedation and euphoria (a “high”).
- In contrast, properly prescribed methadone and buprenorphine have gradual onsets of action and produce stable levels of the drug in the brain. As a result, patients maintained on these medications do not experience a rush, and also experience a markedly reduced desire to use opioids.
- Methadone and buprenorphine are opioid-based and result in physical dependence but are fundamentally different from dangerous short-acting heroin and prescription painkillers.
- Patients taking opioid treatment medications do not experience the physiological or behavioral abnormalities from rapid fluctuations in drug levels associated with heroin/opioid prescription misuse.
- As a result, MAT allows individuals to get back on their feet; to obtain and maintain employment; to get and keep housing; to achieve greater social stability; and to lead fully productive lives.

- In fact, scientific studies show that the most significant health consequence of long-term methadone treatment is a marked improvement in general health. As further research on buprenorphine and naltrexone are completed, the same is likely to be demonstrated of those treatment medications as well.
- MAT saves lives – they help to stabilize individuals, allowing treatment of their medical, psychological, and other problems so they can contribute effectively as members of families and of society.

If a parent with whom you work appears to be “high,” and says they are on MAT, please double check a few things:

- 1. Are they still enrolled, or did they “drop out” of treatment and not tell anyone?
- 2. Unless the parent is in the induction phase of MAT where their individualized dosage is being determined/adjusted, there is a significant possibility the parent is using other drugs (e.g., benzos).

	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant opioid-using women should receive <u>medically-supervised withdrawal</u> to prevent fetal distress. 	

FACTS:

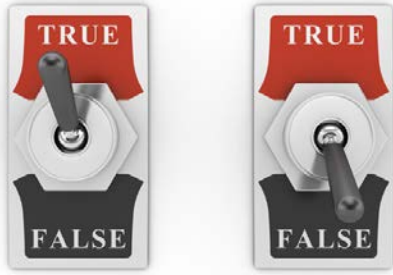
- Pregnant women with an opioid use disorder should be offered MAT (consisting of pharmacotherapy with methadone or buprenorphine), and evidence-based behavioral interventions.

- This approach is preferable to medically supervised withdrawal (because withdrawal is associated with high recurrence of use rates, which lead to worse maternal and fetal outcomes).
- Pregnancy is a time of great potential for positive change. A woman with OUD may be motivated to enter treatment not only out of concern for the health of the fetus, but also because during pregnancy she can envision a different future for herself and her child.

	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using medications like methadone and buprenorphine is simply replacing one drug addiction with another. 	

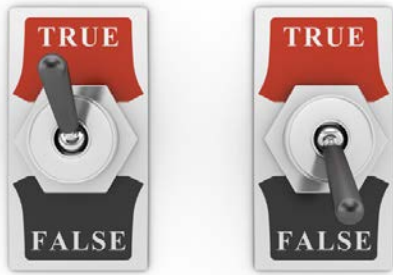

FACTS:

- As used in MAT, buprenorphine and methadone are not heroin/opioid substitutes.
- They are prescribed or administered under monitored, controlled conditions, and are safe and effective for the treatment of opioid addiction when used as directed.
- Detoxifications and drug-free modalities (although appealing to an understandable desire for recovery without medications) produces only a five-to-ten percent success rate. That means 90-to-95 percent of persons with OUD do not achieve success in abstinence-only programs or approaches.
- Numerous studies have shown that MAT reduces illicit drug use, disease rates, and criminal activity among opioid-addicted persons.

	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lower dose of methadone or other opioid treatment medication is preferable to a higher dose. 	

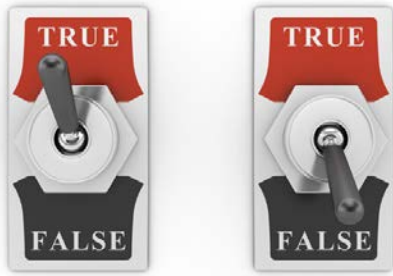
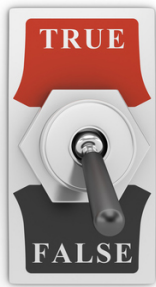
FACTS:

- The key is to prescribe the appropriate “effective” dosage based on the presenting needs of the individual. The use of substandard dosages is countertherapeutic since the patient will continue to use opioids if the maintenance dosage is too low.
- Dosing is an individualized medical decision (e.g., with methadone, most patients require a dose of 60-120 milligrams per day).
- Studies show that patients on higher doses stay in treatment longer and use less heroin and other drugs than those on lower doses.
- SAMHSA recommends a “phased approach,” beginning with stabilization (withdrawal management, assessment, medication induction, and psychosocial counseling), and moving to a middle phase that emphasizes medication maintenance and deeper work in counseling.
- The third phase is “ongoing rehabilitation,” when the patient and provider can choose to taper off medication or pursue longer-term maintenance, depending on the patient’s needs.
- For some patients, MAT could be many years, or indefinite.

	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Using naloxone (e.g., Narcan) to reverse an opioid overdose encourages/enables opioid users to keep using. 	

FACTS:

- Such an idea is like saying we should not perform rescue efforts for a person who has been in more than one car accident, as they will just keep driving recklessly.
- People are overdosing in the streets, at the mall, and at home in front of their children. Mothers, fathers, sons, daughters of every race, every socioeconomic class, and every religion have been affected by the opioid epidemic; and they are all worth saving...EVERY TIME!

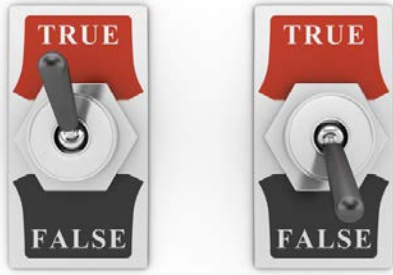

	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treatment programs, and child welfare and judicial systems should consider limiting MAT to 12 months or less to reduce enabling addiction. 	

FACTS:

- It is generally accepted that a minimum of 12 months is required for methadone maintenance to be effective, and 9 and 5 months for buprenorphine and naltrexone respectively.
- Longer treatment is typically recommended.
- The detrimental consequences of leaving MAT are dramatically indicated by greatly increased death rates following discharge.
- Until more is learned about how to improve post-detoxification outcomes for MAT patients, treatment providers and regulatory/funding agencies should be very cautious about imposing disincentives and structural barriers that discourage or impede long term opioid replacement therapy.

Medications combined with behavioral counseling and recovery support:

- Decrease opioid use, deaths, criminal activity, and infectious disease transmission.
- Increase social function and retention in treatment.
- **IMPROVE CHILD PERMANENCY OUTCOMES.**

	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child welfare systems and courts are in the best position to make decisions about whether MAT is an appropriate option. 	

FACTS:

- Just as child welfare professionals or judges would not decide that a person should treat her diabetes through exercise and diet alone and instruct her to stop taking insulin; child welfare systems and courts are also not trained to make medical decisions with respect to medically-accepted addiction treatment. This is like practicing medicine without a license!
- Deciding the appropriate treatment for a person with opioid addiction is a matter of physician discretion, taking into consideration the relevant medical standards, and the characteristics of the individual patient.
- Moreover, if a parent's OUD resulted in their child being placed in out-of-home care, and the parent was not informed about MAT (or discouraged or prohibited from participating in MAT), the parent and his or her attorney might argue they were not afforded "reasonable efforts."

References and Resources

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- <https://www.acog.org/Clinical-Guidance-and-Publications/Committee-Opinions/Committee-on-Obstetric-Practice/Opioid-Use-and-Opioid-Use-Disorder-in-Pregnancy>; SAMHSA Clinical Guidance for Treating Pregnant and Parenting Women with Opioid Use Disorder and Their Infants HHS Publication No. (SMA) 18-5054, Rockville MS 2018; Fact Sheet 2, p. 25; <https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA18-5054c/SMA18-5054.pdf>
- <https://www.csam-asam.org/methadone-treatment-issues> and MADY CHALK ET AL., TREATMENT RESEARCH INSTITUTE, FDA APPROVED MEDICATIONS FOR THE TREATMENT OF OPIATE DEPENDENCE: LITERATURE REVIEWS ON EFFECTIVENESS AND COST-EFFECTIVENESS (Jun. 2013) at 8, 11, 24-25, available at: https://www.asam.org/docs/default-source/advocacy/aaam_implications-for-opioid-addiction-treatment_final
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- The American Society of Addiction Medicine, the ASAM Criteria: Treatment Criteria for Addictive, Substance-Related, and Co-occurring Conditions (David Mee-Lee, ed., 2013).

