*When I worked for the LA County Department of Health Services Homeless Outreach and Street Medicine Program, we decided to implement a new incentive program to help homeless people struggling with methamphetamine misuse. I felt tha if we were going to be successful with this difficult group of people, we should embed the financial incentives for clean urine tests in a more holistic, person-centered recovery program. We designed several tools to assist with this effort – a baseline assessment, goal setting, and desirable areas of recovery information, and a staff outline to create informational modules. For a variety of administrative issues, including my departure, these tools were never used. Nonetheless, I feel they are worth preserving as a model for what other programs might do.*

*Notice how these tools go beyond an “illness assessment” of a person’s use, misuse, dependency, and negative consequences of methamphetamine to a “person centered” assessment of the story of how methamphetamine usage has become integrated into their entire lives. This rather comprehensive questionnaire is designed to be able to “meet people where they are at” and build an understanding of their individual situation in a nonjudgemental way. The conversations this assessment generates can lead into harm reduction and motivational interviewing strategies. It can also prepare the way for the next steps of creating a hopeful, believable, motivating vision of a better future, and giving empowering information to support a recovery process.*

**Person-Centered Methamphetamine Recovery Tools**

**(2023)** by Mark Ragins MD

**Meth baseline questionnaire:**

You are enrolling in an incentive program to try to help you get off meth. Different people use meth for different things. We want to get an idea of how you are using meth to see what challenges you may face as you try to stop and how we might assist you in your efforts to stop.

For each item rate as past, currently, or not me.

1. I use prescription stimulants (Ritalin, Adderall, Vyvanse, Concerta, etc.) for ADHD
2. I use other people’s prescription stimulants from time to time to function better
3. I use meth to feel good and get high, to have some enjoyment
4. I use meth because it’s the cheapest most available drug to me
5. I use meth to improve my sex drive and/or enjoyment of sex
6. I use meth to stay awake and alert on the streets, especially at night
7. I use meth to escape the everyday reality of my life
8. Using meth is how I socialize
9. I use meth to lose weight or avoid weight gain
10. I use meth just to be able to function and feel normal, to have any energy and not sleep all day
11. I’ve become addicted to meth and can’t function if I stop
12. I ‘ve become addicted, I could stop, but I keep going back anyway
13. I have to stop and start meth because if I just stayed on it, I’d be lost
14. Meth can make me more irritable or moody, or argumentative
15. Meth can make me not sleep for days and then I start to have other problems
16. Meth can make me paranoid and/or hallucinate
17. I use meth to numb and/or block out feelings like grief or loss or depression
18. I use meth to avoid feeling suicidal
19. I use meth to deal with childhood trauma
20. I use meth to calm down my flight / flight / freeze reactions to threats or danger
21. I use meth to focus my thinking
22. Meth works backwards on me. I calms me down and makes me less irritable
23. I use meth to counteract the sedating effects of other drugs I use (like heroin, fentanyl)
24. I use other sedating drugs and/or alcohol to keep the meth from getting me too hyper
25. I’m ashamed of using meth
26. I’ve had legal problems from using meth
27. Meth is affecting my blood pressure and/or my heart
28. Meth has caused medical problems for me (including skin)
29. Meth has caused me to lose weight and become unhealthy thin
30. Meth enhances my spiritual experiences
31. I used meth when I was pregnant
32. I lost custody of a child because of meth

What differences do you think it would make in your life if you could stop meth (good and bad)?

Hope is crucial to recovery. What can you concretely and realistically hope for and reach towards as a better future?

1. Health:
2. Relationships:
3. Mental health:
4. Legal Issues:
5. Functioning:
6. Homelessness:
7. Anything else:

**Recovery Information:**

When we see you for your urine screens and incentives, we’d also like to work with you on topics that will make you better able to get meth out of your life and keep it out.

What areas would you like to learn more about?

1. How does addiction work? Why doesn’t the meth work the way it used to? What is withdrawal? Why can’t I seem to stop even though I know I should?
2. How is meth effecting my body? My heart, lungs, skin, weight? Are there ways I can use more safely?
3. How does meth effect fetuses? What happens if they’re born addicted? How can I go to prenatal doctor appointments even if I’m still using meth? What can I do if they take my baby away for testing positive when I give birth?
4. How can I deal with poor attention and concentration besides using meth?
5. How can I learn to deal with emotions better, so I don’t need the meth? How can I stop burying childhood trauma and other bad feelings? How can I deal with grief and loss in better ways (including losing my children)?
6. How can I deal with anxiety besides using meth?
7. How can I deal with hearing voices or getting paranoid? Can the meth be causing psychosis?
8. How can I improve my relationships with other people? Can I do better with isolation, irritability, mistrust, paranoia?
9. How can I function better on a daily basis?
10. How can I get back to work?

**Staff outline of recovery information sessions:**

1. Drug use / Addiction issues
   1. Stages of addiction
   2. Harm reduction
   3. Challenges to stopping
2. Health Issues
   1. BP and heart
   2. Injections and skin
   3. Smoking and lungs
   4. Weight
   5. Effect on fetus
3. Hyperactivity / attention issues:
   1. Distractibility causes – inside head and outside head
   2. Adaptations to distractibility
   3. Medications – prescription stimulants, meth, Wellbutrin
4. Emotional issues
   1. Impact of childhood experiences / trauma
   2. Impact of repressing feelings
   3. Learning and growing through suffering
   4. Grief and loss
   5. Coping with anger and irritability
   6. Dealing with having a child taken away
   7. paranoia and hallucinations
   8. Anxiety
   9. Medications – antidepressants and antipsychotics
5. Anxiety issues
   1. Self soothing / calming
   2. Grounding
   3. Anxiety as a “red flag” warning
   4. Anxiety form repressing other emotions.
   5. Anxiety in our bodies
   6. Anxiety as a fire alarm – is your house on fire?
6. Relationship issues
   1. Inability to be alone
   2. Seeing each other’s point of view
   3. Trust issues
7. Being more functional
   1. Structuring day – building good habits
   2. Handling money
   3. Following up with tasks – being more responsible
   4. working