



Chestnut Health Systems  
Lighthouse Institute

**A DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL  
OF CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY  
PRE-TREATMENT AND RECOVERY**

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## I. The Pre-Treatment Process/Stages of Engagement:

*Note: Although the individual in question is technically not a client of the treatment center, but rather a potential client, the term client will be used to refer to her. At various times, this client is referred to as the "Project SAFE client. This reference is descriptive of a large group of women who, although they are individuals, share certain core characteristics, chief among which is dependency on alcohol and other drugs (particularly "crack" or "rock" cocaine), and a history of child abuse and/or neglect.*

- Although it is generally accepted that treatment of chemical dependency begins at the point that formal treatment is initiated, a large part of the process of recovery may actually take place before the client formally enters a treatment program.
- The steps which are taken prior to engagement in formal treatment may be termed "pre-treatment". This process is particularly important when attempting to persuade highly resistant individuals with multiple problems to enter treatment.
- The outreach worker is most often the person who is involved with the client in the pre-treatment process.
- In most cases, there are four steps or phases in the pre-treatment process:

### A. Building Relationships with Addicted Women

- Outreach workers, through patience and tenacity, have to transcend attitudes ranging from indifference to open hostility in order to build relationships with clients.
- Early stages of these relationships marked by:
  - distrust and paranoia
  - testing
  - attempted manipulations
  - attempts to self-destruct the relationship
- The most critical roles of the outreach worker during this stage is her:
  - consistent physical and emotional presence
  - willingness to listen non-judgmentally
  - ability to provide some concrete service, e.g., transportation
- The initial position of the client is "What do you want from me?"