

From Juan Navarro, Executive Director  
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**NEW YEAR, NEW ATTITUDES ABOUT MAT?**

There's something inherently wonderful about a brand-new year. At the stroke of midnight, we receive 365 shiny new days -- each bringing an opportunity to be a better version of who we are. It's about hope.

People in 12-Step groups find hope by living the new year one day at a time. The first group, Alcoholics Anonymous or AA, was founded in 1935 by two men who anchored themselves with twelve unifying principles and leaned on each other to generate hope for recovery from alcoholism. The process, *12-Step Facilitation Therapy*, has been so successful it was designated an evidence-based practice of modern addiction treatment by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Yet, this incredible resource -- successful, virtually no-cost, and accessible almost everywhere -- is being denied to some. People who need medications assisted treatment or MAT to recover from opioid addiction are often shunned from participation in AA or NA. The common myth is that "you're replacing one addiction with another." MAT uses buprenorphine, naloxone, or methadone to assist in opioid addiction recovery by staving off withdrawal symptoms, decreasing physical cravings and deterring use of other opioids by preventing the experience of their effects.

May we all approach the New Year with a goal to find the opportunities hidden in each new day.



People in MAT who seek the support of a 12-Step fellowship are often met with a lecture or worse: denied the ability to speak during meetings. As a result, many MAT patients keep silent about their treatment.

Honesty and community support are essential to addiction recovery. Forced secrecy about MAT compromises an addicted person's recovery by causing him or her to repeat patterns of deception implemented during active addiction. We know that change begins one person at a time. In this New Year, I encourage members of 12-Step support groups to include people on MAT in the fellowship of peer recovery -- they greatly need you.

**Clients Corner: LUIST.**

"My name is Luis and today I'm in the Medications Assisted Treatment program. I was that guy who HATES needles, shots, you know. Me, I was never going to be a junkie -- booze, pot, and pills, that was not for me. I work construction and back pain is pretty normal. At first, it was easy to get pain pills from the doctor and my buddies. The doctor eventually cut me off, so I got them from the dentist. When that didn't work anymore, I started snorting street heroin. To be honest, it turned into shooting up pretty fast. I sold my car to get it, sold my guitar, all my tools, and anything else I could turn into smack. I even sold my niece's bike. That was cold, man, but I didn't care -- I needed my high. In the addiction, I became homeless, in and out of shelters. I was arrested for burglary. But when I look back my real prison was addiction. Thank God I found L.A. CADA. Today, I am in recovery and I have hope for a future." What would I say to others? I would say man-up and get into a program. It will save your life!"

**THE EVIDENCE IS IN: Medication-Assisted Recovery Anonymous (MARA)**

*As the opioid epidemic continues to grow, more people are turning to medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorders. Now there's a new 12-Step group on the rise to give them support: Medication-Assisted Recovery Anonymous (MARA). MARA was formed in response to stigma against medication-assisted treatment (MAT). This 12-Step program was designed and modeled similarly to others such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. But unlike abstinence-based 12-Step programs, MARA embraces the use of addiction medications, and with good reason. Studies have repeatedly shown that medications like methadone and buprenorphine reduce opioid addiction-related deaths by 50% or more. MAT also increases treatment retention, and decreases infectious disease transmission and criminal activity. Officially, AA and NA consider medication an "outside issue," but at the local group level, the use of medications is subtly (and sometimes explicitly) discouraged. A recovering addict in Philadelphia started MARA to combat this stigma with the hope it will quickly expand to other cities in the nation. L.A. CADA enthusiastically supports the use of MARA groups as an adjunct recovery tool, and we welcome MARA members to establish groups in our treatment programs.*