

PROBLEMATIC TECHNOLOGY USE IN YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

CLINICIAN INFORMATION

DEFINITION



There is a lack of consensus in the literature on what constitutes "problematic use." Based on focus groups conducted at Rideauwood Addiction and Family Services, problematic use is best defined by the **relationship with tech**, rather than the amount of time spent using. Understanding **why use is occurring** is necessary to know whether it is problematic.

ASSESSMENT

There is no gold standard for the assessment of problematic tech use. Problematic use must be assessed by information obtained primarily from youth, supported by other stakeholders (e.g., parent, teacher) with a focus on the **relationship with tech**, rather than time spent using.



INTERVENTION

Intervention is most successful when using a **harm reduction approach**, integrating motivational interviewing techniques and involvement of parents/guardians, when appropriate. CBT interventions such as psychoeducation, problem identification, teaching healthy communication and cessation techniques, and increasing internet awareness, are effective approaches for treating problematic use.

To have successful parental involvement, **psychoeducation** on harm reduction and effective **modeling** of healthy technology use is necessary.



Research suggests that prevention programs appear to be effective. Education on impacts and risks, promoting protective factors, enhancing skills and competencies, and using peer-to-peer training are particularly useful.

Due to the purposefully addictive design of various technology, prevention efforts at the **policy level** are needed to reduce the negative impact of problematic use.



FUTURE DIRECTIONS



More research and training is needed on best practices for treating problematic technology use in younger adolescents (<12) and for those with co-occurring mental health conditions.

[FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE SEE THE TECHNICAL REPORT PREPARED FOR RIDEAUWOOD ADDICTION AND FAMILY SERVICES](#)

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