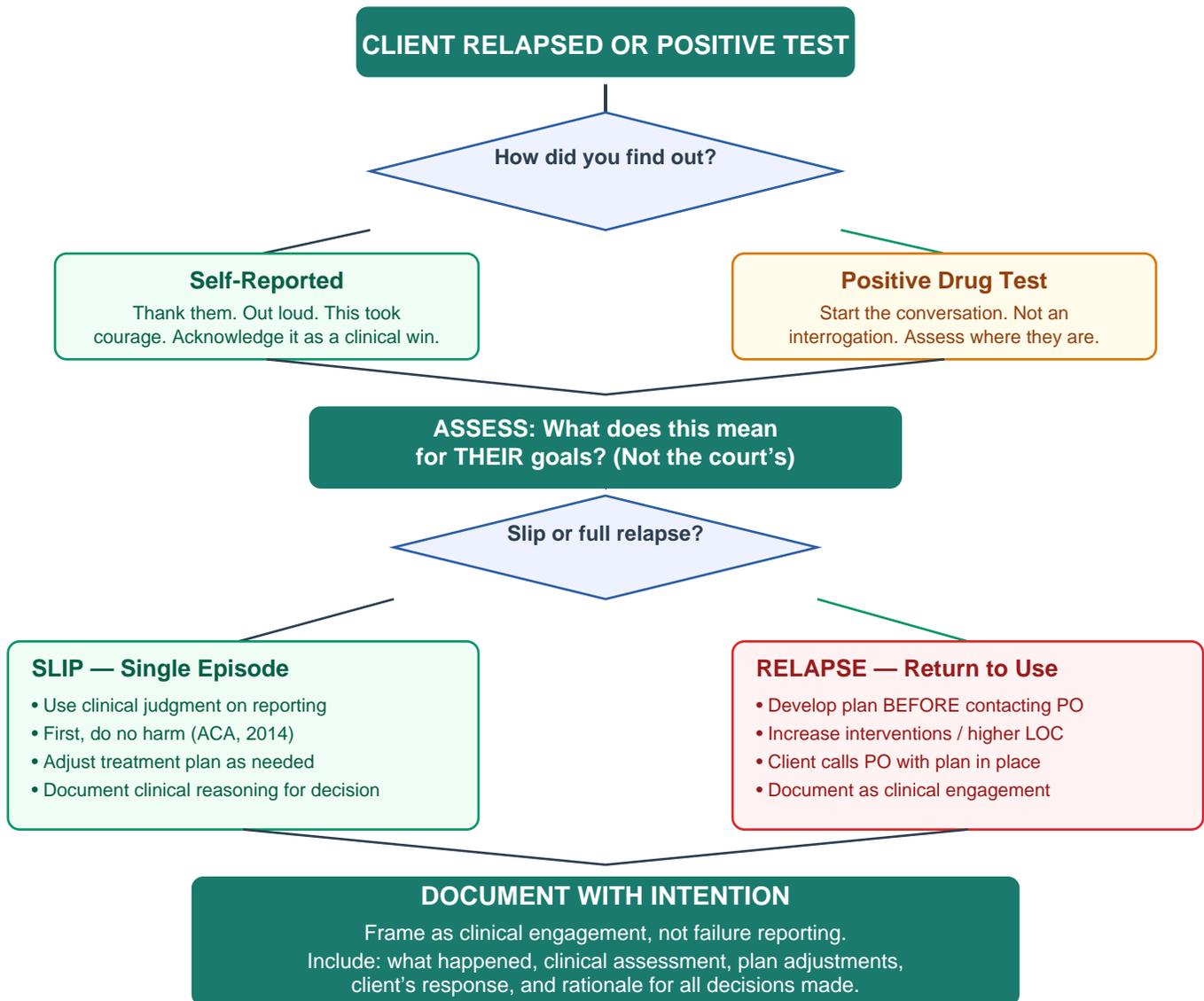


Relapse Response Decision Tree

A Visual Flowchart for the Moment It Happens

How to Use This Tool

When a client relapses or returns a positive drug test, start at the top and follow the branches. Each decision point leads to a specific clinical action. Print this and keep it where you can grab it fast. This is not a reporting checklist — it's a clinical reasoning tool.



Relapse Response Decision Tree

Quick Reference: Key Questions at Each Decision Point

When you first find out:

- Is the client safe right now? Any immediate medical concerns?
- Did they self-report or was it a positive test?
- If self-reported: acknowledge the courage it took to tell you.
- If positive test: initiate conversation, not interrogation.

When assessing the situation:

- What does this mean for the CLIENT's goals? (Ask them first)
- Are they disappointed? Frustrated? Shut down? Each tells you something different.
- Is this a single episode (slip) or a return to a pattern (relapse)?
- What was happening before the use? Triggers? Stressors? Environment?

When deciding about reporting:

- Does this require reporting per court agreement? Check the actual order.
- Is the client willing and able to try again toward their goals?
- Would reporting this slip cause more harm than the slip itself?
- Document your clinical reasoning regardless of what you decide.

When a full relapse requires reporting:

- What increased interventions are you recommending? Get specific.
- Can the client call the PO themselves with the plan already developed?
- How will you frame this in documentation? Clinical engagement, not failure.
- What does the updated treatment plan look like? Write it before the call.

Red flags that change everything:

- Client is in immediate physical danger (overdose risk, DUI, violence)
- Client is completely unwilling to engage or make any changes
- Client's use has escalated to a level requiring higher level of care
- Safety of others is at risk — prioritize immediate intervention

*Remember: The key question is never "did they use."
The key question is "what does this use tell me about where they are, and what do they need next?"*