



The *Admission Bag*

Why helping patients pack the right items matters, and five ways your team can do it this month.

30+

Pennsylvania programs' written packing rules reviewed

9 to 1

programs banning vs. allowing personal blankets

5

fixes your team can make in an afternoon

01

The first hour sets the tone

Admission day is often the first time a patient and family see your program from the inside. What happens to their bag is part of that first impression.

When a family arrives with items you can't accept, someone on your team has to explain the rule, remove the item and log it. Most families take that well. Some take it as a sign they got something wrong at the worst possible moment.

None of that is anyone's fault. It's a packing problem, and it's one your team can largely prevent.

02

Why families pack the wrong things

- **They pack from someone else's list.** Search "what to bring to rehab" and the top results are general guides from national sites. They aren't your rules.
- **Rules vary more than families expect.** Almost every program we reviewed bans alcohol in toiletries. After that, they split.

Nearly all

ban alcohol in toiletries,
including most mouthwash

9 vs. 1

ban vs. allow a personal
blanket from home

Some

require approved brands, or
ban bar soap, pens or Q-tips

- **They have very little time.** Many admissions happen within a day or two of the decision. Families shop fast, under stress, from whatever list they find first.
- **Your list may be hard to find.** Many program websites have no packing list, or a single sentence in an FAQ. Others link to a page or PDF that no longer loads.

03

What it costs your program

- **Staff time at intake.** Every item removed is a conversation, a search, a log entry and often a bag to store or hand back.
- **A harder first conversation.** Taking things away is not how anyone wants to begin.
- **Safety and policy risk.** Many restricted items are restricted for a reason: alcohol content, aerosols, sharps, cords and glass. The fewer that arrive, the fewer that can be missed.
- **Missing essentials.** The opposite problem is just as common. A patient arrives with nothing, and staff or family scramble for basics.

04

Five things your team can do this month

1

Publish one clear list.

One page, two columns: Bring and Don't Bring. Put it on your website where a family will find it from your admissions page.

2

Say why.

A short reason beside each rule ("no mouthwash: most contain alcohol") gets better compliance than a bare list.

3

Send it at the first call.

Make the list part of the pre-admission call or text, not something families discover on arrival.

4

Say what you provide.

If you supply linens, towels, razors or notebooks, tell families so they don't buy them.

5

Date it and keep it current.

When a rule changes, update the page and the handout the same day, and note the date on both.

A one-page list template

Adjust every line to your own policy. Add a third column, "We provide," if you supply items.

Bring	Don't bring
5 to 7 days of comfortable clothing	Clothing with drug, alcohol or violent imagery
Alcohol-free toiletries, new and sealed	Mouthwash, perfume, hand sanitizer, anything with alcohol
Shower shoes	Aerosol cans
Photo ID, insurance and pharmacy cards	Sharps, glass, cords
Current medications in original bottles	Outside food and drinks
<i>Your program's additions</i>	<i>Your program's additions</i>

How Recovery Ready helps

Recovery Ready makes admission kits that are checked against the receiving program's own packing list before they ship. Families order a kit for your program and arrive with nothing you'll turn away.

To make that work, we need your list. Sharing it is free, carries no contract or referral arrangement, and you stay in control: when your policy changes, tell us and we change the kit.

Send your list: support@getrecoveryready.com

Figures from Recovery Ready's review of written packing rules published by, or obtained from, Pennsylvania residential, detox and halfway programs, October 2026. Recovery Ready is not a treatment provider.