

Breaking The Mystique Supporting Families To Navigate the World of Drug Treatment



Website: www.fds.org.au



- **Phone Support Line – 24 hours/7days 1300 368 186**
- **Support Groups in a variety of locations across Australia**
- **Family information and resources such as ‘The Guide to Coping’ and website (links to other services/partnerships)**
- **Stepping Stones Program – an interactive course**
- **Bereavement Counselling**
- **Other Projects – Youth Drug Support website & Bridging the Divide Project**



The aim of Bridging the Divide Project is to develop partnerships with support and drug treatment services to increase access to information and support for the families, friends and partners of the clients of these services

Treatment services have different levels of involvement depending on needs, the client group, staffing levels, funding and resources

Families and Treatment Helpline

1300 884 186

Mon Tues Wed (9am – 4.30pm)

**Families are defined as partners, parents, friends, children.
Basically anyone who cares!**

(APPROX) CONTACTS WITH AGENCIES
June 2008 – October 2010

NSW	84
TAS	4
VIC	15
SA	43
QLD	18
WA	14
ACT	13
TOTAL	189

WAYS BTD WORKS WITH SERVICES & FAMILIES

- **Individually tailored programs and resources**
- **Memorandums of Understanding**
- **Individual support to families**
- **Web-links and family resources**
- **In-services & worker consultation sessions**
- **Psycho-education for families**
- **Families and Treatment Helpline 1300 884 186**
- **Support and information for workers dealing directly with families**



WHO WE WORK WITH!!	
Pharmacotherapy Units	Supported accommodation services
Residential and Day Rehabilitation Programs	Family Support Services
Indigenous Services	Youth Drug Court/Forum Sentencing
Multi-cultural Services	Juvenile Justice
Community Drug Action Teams	Corrective Services Probation & Parole
Drug and Alcohol Counselling and Support Services	User Groups such as NUAA
Dual Diagnosis Services	CRC (Civil Rehabilitation Centre)
Withdrawal Units	Mental health services
Carer Services and Foster Carer Support Programs	Generalist counselling services
Neighbourhood Centres	Support groups

Increasing evidence shows that family support is a key element in “successful” treatment outcomes

No Rose Coloured Glasses Sold Here!!



We are realistic that it may not always be possible or conducive (for both the family and the drug user) for the family to be involved.

Some families will not be interested or the barriers will be too great e.g. literacy, financial, time, poor health, their own mental health issues and/or drug and alcohol issues, domestic violence, it's all too hard, work and other family commitments e.g. grandchildren, elderly and frail parents

Walking the Tightrope

Common Reactions for families supporting a person through drug use and into treatment





Excitement & Anticipation

Hope

Lots of questions

Belief they will be “fixed”

Fall in a heap

Relief

Anxiety

Shut out

Don't understand

Resentful

Struggle to let the person go

Guilt - experiencing “negative” reactions”





Just as with drug use,
when a person enters
treatment there is often
a ripple effect

Benefits of including & supporting families & friends

- Families are more likely to provide productive support if they understand what is happening in treatment and the importance of their role
- Support aftercare plans
- Find common ground, prior to treatment it was the chaos of drug use
- Work together to reach goals – healing & empowering for both parties
- Take strain off services and workers
- The needs and reactions of young people and children are recognised and addressed
- If families have a positive experience of counselling and treatment services it counter-acts the negative “stories” they have often heard
- (the hard reality is that there is not always a “positive perception” of the sector in the general community)

Treatment is an ideal time to gently encourage partners and families to readjust their focus, recharge and re-evaluate



The world of rehabilitation, counselling and treatment can be a strange and mysterious place. It has its own rules, language and processes which can be confusing for anyone

Practical Strategies For Organisations



Family friendly waiting areas

- Toys for children
- Posters & brochures of support lines, groups
- Family resources library

Cultural awareness training for staff to understand the perception and responses to drug use and the role of family within different cultures

Provide families with information packs

- > Family contact arrangements
- > Receiving of gifts, letters and care packs
- > Disclosure of information
- > Tips for supporting the person in treatment
- > Discharge procedures
- > Self-Care
- > Responding to relapse
- > General service information
- > Referral lists



Include the family in case management, intake & aftercare planning (with client's consent)

Family Practice Audits – use as a starting point to assess how your organisation is doing

Ensure work environments are supportive of workers and their own family commitments

Information for children & young carers

Open days and information sessions



A FEW MORE SUGGESTIONS!!!!

Avoid “rehab speak” and treatment jargon in brochures and information packs

Up-skilling staff including reception staff

- **Managing requests for information and confidentiality**
- **Active listening, clarity about limitations**

Referral lists for reception and counselling staff

Develop & implement family friendly policies and procedures with reviews

Professional supervision to assist managers and workers to be aware of their own reactions, assumptions, value judgements & personal family issues that may impact on responses to families and partners

Web links on websites to organisations: Family Drug Support, Al-Anon, Holyoake, Brighter Futures, Salvation Army and other relevant family support agencies and programs in your area



Challenges for workers & services



- Lack of recurrent funding and resources
- Workloads of case managers and counsellors
- Unrealistic expectations from family and friends
- Worker apprehension – equate family friendly practice with having to provide services i.e. family therapy
- Often “challenging” presentation of family members – angry, demanding, controlling
- Cultural change is slow
- Resistance from workers
- Lack of understanding and support from management
- Unclear boundaries with families
- Stereo-typing of families as the “cause” of the drug problem
- Families are currently “flavour of the month” – attracting funding (similar to dual diagnosis/co-morbidity area)
- Lack of referral options especially in regional and rural areas



Families who are dismissed are a lost opportunity for services to provide truly holistic treatment

(Family Systems Theory)





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