

Contacts

For more information contact 1300 368 186

Family Drug Support

PO Box 7363

Leura NSW 2780

Phone (02) 4782 9222

www.fds.org.au

Other Services

- Limited counselling and family therapy
- Family support groups
- Bereavement contact
- Drug education kits
- Referral to drug and alcohol treatment
- Rehabilitation programs



Drug Services

Drug and alcohol services in Australia provide a range of services with different approaches so that all people who are drug affected can be encouraged to receive education, attend treatment and have appropriate help and assistance. Services are of five types:

1. **Education and information services**
2. **First contact services that provide education, information, screening**
3. **Treatment services**
4. **Rehabilitation Services**
5. **Support and self help services**

1. Education and information services

A number of services provide a range of drug education for the community. Most NSW public schools hold some form of drug awareness sessions for parents to explain what is taught in their school curriculum. A range of material has been produced and can be downloaded via the Internet or through contacting ADIS. For people from culturally diverse backgrounds a range of material in community languages can be downloaded from Multicultural Health Communications. For further information check their website at www.health.nsw.gov.au/health-public-affairs

2. First Contact services

Some people are happy with the way things are and are not yet ready to change their behaviour, it is very important that health and support services can make contact with this group. These drug users can expose other people to the risk of infection particularly if they inject the drugs they use or have a sexual relationship with someone without using safe sex practices.

To effectively link with people who are in this stage means that a harm minimisation approach is required. Harm minimisation seeks to make people aware of the risks of their behaviour and encourage them to change their attitudes and behave in a healthier and safer way.

This approach recognises the importance of providing people with:

- Accurate education and health information
- Creating doubt and encouraging them to think about changing their behaviour
- Promoting the use of safer health practices such as using condoms, not sharing needles, disposing of drug equipment in a safe manner

- Counselling, nursing care and medical services
- Providing clean injecting equipment and condoms to reduce the spread of infections such as Hepatitis C, HIV (AIDS)
- Social support that encourages people to maintain good nutrition
- Keep in contact with non drug users who can provide a positive role model
- Reconnect and repair family breakdown

3. Treatment services

Once drug users are in the 'planning' or 'action stage' services are needed that help them make and maintain changes. These services include detoxification, treatment and support services to help people avoid lapsing back into old behaviours.

Hospitals usually provide an in-patient, outpatient and home support detoxification service. Local GP's, and other non-government agencies also provide home based detoxification support services.

For some people maintaining a drug free lifestyle is very difficult due to their level of physical and psychological dependency. Pharmacotherapy maintenance treatment is then a useful treatment option that can help people to begin necessary lifestyle changes.

- Services such as the Needle Syringe Program and Streetwork Services, provide different support services and encouragement to drug users to work through the change cycle so that they can rethink their drug lifestyle and get to the 'ready to take action stage'. Pharmacotherapy treatment means a doctor can prescribe a legal medicine as a substitute drug that is less harmful to the body. The person has to take the prescribed drugs in a controlled and supervised manner to help them stabilise their behaviour. This will often help the person remove themselves from crime (eg: stealing to pay for their drugs) and begin to improve their health as they can start to eat properly and gain weight, and their sleep and thinking patterns begin to improve. Drugs are usually given to the person at a hospital based special outpatient drug clinic that they attend on a daily basis. This is because the body will also develop tolerance to these drugs and the person's health still needs to be monitored. The person and the amount of the drugs they need to take are supervised by medical, nursing and other health staff.

- Only when the person is considered to be doing well can they collect their drugs from a local pharmacy with a prescription. Once the person has become stable on their prescribed drugs they may then plan with their doctor the appropriate way to reduce and withdraw to eventually become drug free. The best known replacement drug for people who have a drug dependence on heroin, is methadone. Newer drugs are now also being tested in Australia: these are buprenorphine and naltrexone. People may stay on the methadone maintenance program for a long time without any long-term risks to their health. All drugs however do have side effects and people are encouraged to keep regular appointments with their doctor to ensure they remain as healthy as possible. Services such as WHOS (we help ourselves) and MTARS (methadone to abstinence) are available to help people who are stable on methadone to then become drug free.

4. Rehabilitation and ongoing support

Maintaining new lifestyle behaviours may be difficult, so sometimes people need extra support to gain further confidence, training and skills. Drug taking behaviour for a long time often means people have lost their confidence in making friends and knowing how to communicate and they may not have many skills they can use to gain a job. Rehabilitation and supported work training programs can assist people to not lapse back into old behaviour and help them to gain new skills and make new friends. Programs may be run in the community where people attend on a daily basis or may be residential where people live in for a few months or longer.

Rehabilitation centres prolong the period between detox and going back to the real world. They provide time for the person to come to terms with their new life at a slower pace and equip them with coping skills to deal with triggers. Most rehab centres use an AA and NA 12-step approach. This suits some people but not all. Another therapeutic approach used is cognitive behavioural therapy, which makes people more aware of their behaviour and how to rethink their situation, determine their triggers and be better able to control their impulsive behaviour. A big problem families face is the long waiting lists for rehabilitation places, as there are too few of them and they are under-funded in Australia. Check our website for where to start. Many families find the mandatory waiting period can also be a problem.

5. Support and self help for families

This is available through our own service, Family Drug Support, that runs a phone service, support meetings and educative groups. Other groups such as Al Anon, Nar Anon and a range of others also provide services through their support meetings.