

Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (PChAD)

OVERVIEW

April 27, 2006

This document provides an overview of the *Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act* and program development underway in support of this legislation. This information is intended for government and community workers who support children and families.

Background

The Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (PChAD) was introduced as a private member's bill and was unanimously passed by the Alberta Legislature on May 10, 2005. It comes into force on July 1, 2006. Alberta Health and Wellness will administer the act through the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC).

The Intent of PChAD

The intent of PChAD is to

- help minors who are addicted to drugs and cannot help themselves
- provide an avenue for parents to help their children, when all other options for intervention and voluntary treatment have failed
- respond to a need expressed by parents, addicted children, addictions counsellors, teachers and police officers

The purpose of PChAD is to provide an avenue of support to parents and guardians whose children are using alcohol and/or other drugs in a way that severely endangers themselves or others.

PChAD provides parents/guardians the ability to apply to the court to authorize an apprehension and confinement order for a child abusing drugs, for a period of not more than five days in a protective safe house. The parent/guardian may convey the child to the protective safe house, or in situations where that is not possible, the order may also authorize the police to apprehend and convey the child to the protective safe house. Once the child is in the protective safe house, the child may be treated for the effects of alcohol or other drug use (detoxification) and AADAC will assess alcohol and/or other drug abuse. AADAC will work with the family to engage the youth in further treatment. AADAC will also work with the child and family to develop a discharge plan with treatment recommendations.

Program Development in Support of PChAD

AADAC is leading program development and supporting regulation development. Direction for this work is provided by a cross-government steering committee comprising representatives from Alberta Justice and Attorney General; Solicitor General and Public Security; Children's Services; Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development; Alberta Health and Wellness; and AADAC.

As with all AADAC programs, the PChAD program will incorporate AADAC's approach to engage children and their families with respect, and provide an appropriate level of staff support, access to family counselling, psychological services and medical services, as needed.

PChAD is an important addition to an already extensive continuum of services, and may provide a unique intervention opportunity that may not have previously existed. It is an opportunity to reach out and help more children and their families. PChAD is not for everyone—it is for a very specific population of children who are using alcohol and/or other drugs in a way that endangers them or others, and who are not considering or would not consider voluntary treatment.

Addictions counsellors will provide client-centred assessment services, guardian support and, where requested, further treatment planning. AADAC will provide supervised detoxification and assessment in a protective safe house environment that hopefully will result in the child becoming engaged in the treatment process.

Specifically, AADAC will provide

- children and their families with timely and appropriate services based on identified presenting client needs
- children and their families with accurate, reliable information tailored to their specific needs
- seamless detoxification, assessment, referral and discharge services
 - by providing assessment and appropriate treatment options for children
 - by maintaining/promoting a client-centred complementary program approach that engages children and their families
 - by providing mobile counsellors and transitional support to voluntary treatment services for children and their families
 - by providing referrals to voluntary addiction services for children and their families to improve opportunities for long-term success
 - through approachable and supportive AADAC staff who are committed to providing support to families in distress through crisis interventions and counselling
 - by ensuring children, family and the public understand PChAD-related services as part of the continuum of AADAC Youth Services
- protective safe houses located in various communities throughout the province, including Picture Butte, Calgary, Red Deer, Edmonton and Grande Prairie. AADAC will manage the protective safe houses through contracted, outsourced

- agencies that specialize in secure protective facilities for youth. There will be 20 beds dedicated to the PChAD program. Protective safe house service providers will provide detox services and stabilization.
- linkages with relevant ancillary service providers to meet the needs of children and their families such as medical services, mental health services, and family counselling.
 - ongoing tracking and monitoring the success of court-ordered detoxification and assessment.
 - monitoring program success and recommending program improvements.

Services not provided directly by AADAC but within the scope of PChAD include

- safe and secure apprehension and transportation to designated protective safe houses by guardians and police services. AADAC is working with Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security to ensure police services have protocols in place to respond to PChAD court orders.
- assisting guardians in filling out court order forms. If required, the parent/guardian will need to work with Court Services, Alberta Justice and Attorney General in completion of forms and obtaining legal counsel. AADAC is working with the ministry to ensure court forms and procedures are in place to support PChAD.
- referring and transporting children to medical services as required. AADAC has existing working relationships with relevant service providers and will ensure the child receives appropriate services.

Alberta Health and Wellness legal counsel are leading the development of the court order process and court forms, and drafting of the regulations associated with PChAD in consultation with key stakeholders.

AADAC's Continuum of Youth Services

AADAC has provided addictions information, prevention and treatment services in Alberta for more than 50 years. AADAC's approach is based on the belief that when young people have healthy ways of meeting their needs, they are less likely to choose harmful ways of coping such as gambling or using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs.

AADAC's services are offered through a network of area offices and funded agencies in 48 communities across Alberta. Programs and services are based on best practices in addiction prevention and treatment, and reflect input from children through AADAC's Youth Advisory Council.

The following is an overview of AADAC's continuum of youth services:

Information Services

Web-based information, as well as information from AADAC staff through individual and group activities, is available for youth at all of AADAC's offices and Youth Services centres.

Outpatient Services

Youth and families can access individual assessment and counselling as well as parent and family counselling through any AADAC office or Youth Services centre, as well as through 15 funded agencies across Alberta.

Mobile Services

AADAC's outreach counsellors can provide services outside of the office environment where it makes more sense to engage youth differently.

Intensive Day Treatment Programs

Day programs, 12 weeks in duration, are available for youth who need a higher intensity of counselling. These programs are situated at AADAC's Youth Services centres in Calgary and Edmonton and have residential support home placements attached to the programs for those youth who cannot access the program from their current living situation.

Residential Detox

AADAC Residential Youth detox follows a social detox model, providing stabilization and psychosocial services. It is a highly intentional process of engaging youth and their families in a treatment preparation process. Youth detox is generally considered an opportunity for youth to rid themselves physically from the effects of alcohol and other drugs. It is also a short-term intervention model that helps youth to look at their major life areas and begin to form a longer-term treatment plan. The family is strongly encouraged to participate in the development of this plan with their child. Timelines remain flexible and will be assessed with each individual to ensure they are receiving the detox process that best meets their needs. Youth detox is one component of a comprehensive treatment strategy. Planned entry into the residential detox programs is available at AADAC Youth Services centres in Edmonton and Calgary for all Alberta youth.

Residential Treatment Program

The residential treatment program is designed to support teens who require intensive treatment and are facing difficulties with impulsivity, lack of community support, or other challenges that make day treatment inappropriate. Currently AADAC offers two options for residential treatment in Alberta: an urban treatment program in Edmonton to serve youth who would benefit from ongoing access to community supports, and a wilderness treatment program based outside of Calgary for youth who are looking for treatment that is removed from the urban environment. Both treatment programs will deliver the same treatment content, but delivery methods are designed to fit the environment of the treatment program location.

Post-treatment Support

As clients transition out of treatment, AADAC has several continuing opportunities. Clients can engage with aftercare programs (which differ in each community and may include weekly group-based support for teens facing the unique challenges of reintegrating into the community), parent support groups and parent skill workshops. Some youth continue to be actively involved through participation in the AADAC Youth Advisory Council or through peer mentoring opportunities.

AADAC's Approach to Treatment Services

Individuals whose lives have been negatively affected by substance abuse and/or gambling problems have differing and multiple needs for prevention, information and treatment. Research supports AADAC's position that these people are best served when they can access a range of service options spanning the specialized and non-specialized sectors, and linked through a process of case management.

AADAC's solid philosophical framework and expertise in addictions information, prevention and treatment strongly position AADAC to take a distinct leadership role in preventing and treating harm associated with alcohol, other drugs and gambling. AADAC collaborates with local, provincial and national stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive, interdisciplinary and cross-jurisdictional approach to substance use and gambling. For example, AADAC has strong linkages with Regional Health Authorities, Child and Family Services Authorities, and community agencies throughout Alberta, which is key to delivering programs and services that meet the needs of Albertans.

Contacts

If you have questions regarding PChAD, please send them to [**pchad@aadac.gov.ab.ca**](mailto:pchad@aadac.gov.ab.ca) or contact

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