

WORKSHOP ON BEST PRACTICES IN TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION FOR YOUTH WITH SUBSTANCE USE PROBLEMS

November 22-23, 2001

BACKGROUND AND OPENING REMARKS



On November 22 and 23, 2001, forty professionals gathered in Ottawa for the Workshop on Best Practices in Treatment and Rehabilitation for Youth with Substance Use Problems. Louise Rosborough, Manager of the Treatment and Rehabilitation Division, Office of Canada's Drug Strategy, Health Canada, opened the workshop and spoke of the goal of the Treatment and Rehabilitation Division which is "to improve the ef-

fectiveness of, and accessibility to, innovative alcohol and drug treatment and rehabilitation programs and services across Canada." She also presented the long term goal of the Office of Canada's Drug Strategy: "to reduce harm associated with alcohol and other drugs to individuals, families and communities."

The Workshop on Best Practices in Treatment and Rehabilitation for Youth with Substance Use Problems builds on the Research Agenda developed by the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Committee on Alcohol and Other Drug Issues. The workshop was structured around the recommendations contained in the report *Best Practices: Treatment and Rehabilitation for Youth with Substance Use Problems* published by the Division.

The workshop had three objectives:

1. To disseminate knowledge across Canada on the best practices on substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation for youth;
2. To network and exchange information on issues pertaining to the best practices on substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation for youth; and
3. To identify how best to apply the best practices to treatment and rehabilitation programs and services for youth within respective provincial/territorial jurisdiction.

The workshop was interactive, allowing participants to share innovative practices and engage in discussions on common issues. Discussions revolved around four main topics:

1. Outreach, Contact and Engagement
2. Screening and Assessment
3. Case Management, Client Retention and Aftercare
4. Family Involvement

The full report on the *Best Practices: Treatment and Rehabilitation for Youth with Substance Use Problems* is available at <http://www.cds-sca.com>.



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Speakers



The workshop participants and staff of the Treatment and Rehabilitation Division of the Office of Canada's Drug Strategy, Health Canada, are grateful for the time and effort taken by the following five participants in preparing their presentations. These presentations raised key issues and provided starting points for discussions.

- *Ari Blatt on Outreach, Contact and Engagement*
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Ontario.
- *Elsbeth Tupker on Screening and Assessment*
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Ontario.
- *Cheryl Houtekamer on Case Management*
Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, Alberta.
- *Bruce MacPherson on Client Retention and Aftercare*
Victoria Treatment Centre, New Brunswick.
- *Debra McDougall on Family Involvement*
Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, Alberta.



PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS

Participants noted that the workshop provided excellent opportunities for networking, sharing experiences and new ideas, and forging new partnerships. More specifically, the participants explored ways to develop and maintain a strong national identity with respect to substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation. Participants felt that the workshop validated “that what we do is a part of our collective best practices,” and provided ideas and approaches to apply in practice.



Outreach, Contact and Engagement

▶ *Key Best Practices on **Outreach, Contact and Engagement** outlined by guest speaker, Ari Blatt.*

- The *location of services and accessibility* are critical factors to the success of any treatment and rehabilitation program. It is important to create an environment that is “youth friendly”, allowing for a positive “first contact and feedback”, e.g. flexible hours of operation, drop-ins. Effective programs are accessible to youth as needed, e.g. neighborhood, satellites, community-based.
- *Program approach and philosophy* are key elements for effective programs. Youth are not a homogeneous group. Effective programs are staffed by service providers who enjoy working with youth. Successful interventions are based on values of acceptance, non-judgmental approaches, respectful interactions, and are sensitive to cultural differences. Service providers must carefully adjust the contact and engagement process to their client’s needs.
- *Specific outreach and information strategies* go beyond the traditional means of supplying promotional materials and information. It is important to have a spectrum of outreach activities, e.g. prevention activities, workshops and training. This includes seeking youth in youth venues, e.g. malls, schools, and community centres.
- Initial *engagement activities* include recreation, community-based activities, assessment, case management and brief treatment.



▶ *Best practices highlighted by workshop participants in follow-up to the presentation on **Outreach, Contact and Engagement**:*

- *Working from where the client is...* Effective outreach, contact and engagement strategies includes developing trust and being available and accessible in non-traditional venues. This includes school-based approaches which engage youth who would not otherwise be receiving services through traditional means. Decentralization of services increases the effectiveness of outreach services, for example, spending time hanging out in schools, parking lots or recreational facilities.
- *Strengthening outreach efforts* by partnering with other relevant health professionals creates essential support networks which service youth best.
- *Ensuring a youth-friendly environment.* Have candy, food and other items that are attractive to youth readily available and ensure that the location is safe and comfortable.
- *Enhancing engagement with assessment* recognizes that clients are able to make choices to improve their treatment and rehabilitation plan.
- *Involving youth.* The creation of student support programs such as youth-peer counseling training programs are effective outreach mechanisms.

Screening and Assessment

▶ *Key Best Practices on **Screening and Assessment** outlined by guest speaker, Elsbeth Tupker.*

- The functions of *effective screening and assessment* are to engage youth, identify their concerns, highlight their strengths, lay the foundation for the treatment plan, allow for appropriate referrals, provide feedback to the client, and collect data to measure outcomes. While these functions all need to be addressed it is not necessary to do them all during the first interview.
- Service providers must identify the *youth's needs and barriers* to treatment throughout the client's intake and at subsequent appointments. Assessment can be accomplished in a variety of ways, e.g. over the phone, face-to-face, in groups or via computer.
- A *variety of youth friendly tools*, questionnaires, and checklists, developed for the youth population and adapted to the youth's literacy and language levels, are to be used. Objective measures should be normed for youth populations. Other methods such as direct observation and open ended interviews are also valuable.
- Besides the young person it is useful to *involve the people* who can contribute to resolving problems in the assessment process, e.g. family, siblings, community members.
- Drug use *history and consequences*, physical and mental health, family functioning, peer relations, school and work performance, leisure activities and spiritual life are all important domains that should be considered in the client assessment.

▶ *Best practices highlighted by workshop participants in follow-up to the presentation on **Screening and Assessment**:*

- Service providers must *value and respect youth*. The service provider must be totally “present”, flexible to the youth requirements and adaptable to their needs and circumstances.
- *Collaborative approach*. Assessment is an ongoing and collaborative youth-focused process that takes place over time.
- *Comprehensive assessment* is done over a period of time and is typically a combination of standardized instruments, collaboration with collateral professionals and structured interviews. A wide variety of approaches need to be applied as different youth respond to different methods at different times. Often “staged assessments” are undertaken to provide the time needed for the development of trust. Screening, assessment and treatment are not distinct entities, but rather integrated and overlapping parts of the whole process.
- *Simplifying the process and the paperwork* are key to building trust and establishing a strong relationship with the youth. Service providers should adjust to the need and context of the situation.
- Offer *education and awareness groups* as a way to familiarize youth with the process. It will help engage youth in a fun way prior to assessment and will help develop a rapport and a sense of trust with staff. It is important to explain to youth what to expect in the assessment process and what benefits they will likely gain.
- *Gender sensitivity* is an important dimension in the screening and assessment phase. Appropriate gender-matching between client and service provider will accelerate the development of a trusting relationship and will ensure client and service provider's safety.



Case Management, Client Retention and Aftercare

▶ *Key Best Practices on **Case Management**, outlined by guest speaker, Cheryl Houtekamer.*

- Case management begins at client intake and is a *continuous process*.
- Maintaining the *same case manager* is a preferred practice. This allows for the case manager to gather relevant information from the youth and other significant people in the youth's life and facilitates the development of a trusting relationship. The information gathered allows for a more holistic intervention, the identification of other challenges and access to other required resources.
- The case manager's role includes *maintaining contact with other resources* and ensuring that they are all working together.
- When preparing youth for their return to the community, it is important for case managers to *maintain constant communications* with service providers and representatives from community organizations regarding progress, behaviors and challenges.
- Successful treatment programs *integrate family, leisure, education* to ensure seamless delivery of service.



▶ *Key Best Practices on **Client Retention and Aftercare**, outlined by guest speaker, Bruce MacPherson.*

- *Ensuring flexibility* by matching treatment to the youth's specific needs throughout the treatment plan, is an important element for client retention.
- Be non-confrontational, be accessible, share program information, and chase youth for appointments are all *key elements for client retention*. A harm reduction approach is often the most viable strategy.
- Ambivalence, and in some cases, resistance to treatment are to be expected. In assessing the client readiness for change, it is important to focus on all relevant areas of the youth's lifestyle (not just substance abuse) in order to maintain a *youth-centered approach*.
- The term continuing care is preferred as opposed to aftercare. The purpose of continuing care is to *maintain and enhance positive lifestyle changes* made by the youth in critical periods of their life including life transitions, periods of unusual stress and personal crises.
- *Relapse is to be expected* and should be used as a learning opportunity.
- *Remaining committed to the youth* increases success.

Case Management, Client Retention and Aftercare [continued]

▶ *Best practices highlighted by workshop participants in follow-up to the presentations on Case Management, Client Retention and Aftercare:*

Workshop participants discussed best practices through three case scenarios. Although each scenario highlighted different circumstances and challenges, many participants shared key best practices.

● **Case Management:**

- *Relationships and networks* are important to develop between youth and other health professionals. To build a strong relationship you need to work from where the youth is, e.g. street, school, community centres, etc.
- Case management should be viewed as a *team effort* which can include locating and engaging the youth's family in reaching successful treatment.
- The case manager needs to create a link to the *youth's home community*, specially for those youth living on the streets in major metropolitan cities as well as youth from rural communities, and different province or territory.

● **Client Retention:**

- The service provider must be *flexible and creative* in setting appointments and in determining locations that suit both youth and family. In particular, if the youth is living on the streets, the service provider needs to ensure that the youth's basic needs are met.
- Service providers must be prepared for *expected relapses*.
- A *comprehensive approach* take into consideration issues such as school, sex, family and substance use issues.

● **Aftercare:**

- Most participants *preferred the term* “continuing care” or “ongoing care” to aftercare.
- The establishment and maintenance of a *support network* is critical to aftercare. The use of peers and peer groups could create good support networks.
- Service providers must *review youth's past successes* and build on existing strengths regardless of challenges and setbacks they encounter.

Family Involvement

▶ *Key Best Practices on **Family Involvement**, outlined by guest speaker, Debra McDougall.*

- Service providers need to make *contact with families and engage* them right from the start of the treatment process.
- There are enormous advantages to building an *alliance with parents* based on affirming parental strengths and values as opposed to highlighting faults.
- *Parent-to-parent support groups and networks* are effective means to assist families.
- Working with families in a *collaborative approach* optimizes treatment outcome. Service providers often spend considerable effort in educating families in areas such as adolescent development, drugs and patterns of substance abuse.



▶ *Best practices highlighted by workshop participants in follow-up to the presentation on **Family Involvement**:*

- *Adult or mentor support* was clearly identified as key to successful youth rehabilitation. This support could be from any individual trusted and respected by the youth, not just immediate family members.
- It is important to *educate the youth's family* with respect to substance use problems. There is a need to support not only the youth but the parents and family as well. Many participants talked about the merits of parent/family support groups as a key success factor in the rehabilitation process.
- *Sensitivity to cultural differences*. Need to consider ways and means to adapt programs to reflect the cultural norms and practices of Canada's multicultural landscape. It is important that service providers' practices understand the cultural norms of the family.

Building a Partnership for Dissemination of Best Practices

Participants were asked over the course of the workshop to reflect on ways that further dissemination of best practices could be achieved, both through Health Canada and by participants themselves.

▶ *What can Health Canada do to further disseminate best practices and the knowledge obtained during this workshop?*

Below is the response to the key suggestions received from the participants:

- Health Canada will compile, prepare and distribute a list of screening and assessment tools used by the provinces and territories.
- Health Canada will continue to work with the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) on its database of Canadian substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation services and organizations, which is available on their Website (www.ccsa.ca) under the National Clearinghouse on Substance Abuse.
- The report of the Workshop on Best Practices in Treatment and Rehabilitation for Youth with Substance Use Problems will be disseminated and made available electronically (PDF format) at www.cds-sca.com.
- Health Canada will continue to host a series of activities and workshops to promote knowledge dissemination regarding best practices in treatment and rehabilitation of substance abuse.

▶ *What can participants do to help disseminate best practices and the knowledge obtained during this workshop?*

Below are the key suggestions provided by the participants:

- Many participants indicated a desire to host post-workshop activities “back home.” Some suggested holding an annual, bi-annual or quarterly meeting with key stakeholders (enforcement, education, mental health and other government and non-government agencies involved with youth). The purpose of these meetings would be to share information, identify unmet needs, and determine how they can be fulfilled.
- Participants also noted that they have a role to play in ensuring that other health professionals working with youth have accurate and up-to-date information on issues of concern and best practices regarding all areas related to youth treatment and rehabilitation on substance abuse.

