

AADAC Youth Services (AYS) Intensive Treatment Action Program Description

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AADAC

Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
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SERVICES FOR YOUTH

AADAC's Youth Service Centres in Calgary and Edmonton provide a community-based, 12-week, intensive program for young people, aged 12 to 17, who have been involved with drugs, alcohol, or gambling activities in a harmful way.

The program provides a comprehensive treatment experience, which includes individual counselling, group counselling, on-site schooling, recreational activities, family counselling, and residential support (if needed).

Young people in the Intensive Treatment Action Program have an opportunity to explore the effects of substance and gambling abuse on their lives, to increase their awareness about abuse, to learn new ways of coping with stress, and to approach high-risk situations with the necessary skills to avoid substance abuse. The program is divided into three phases: Phase I, Orientation; Phase II, Personal Powers; Phase III, Transition.

In **Phase I, Orientation**, clients explore how substance use has affected their lives. In this three-week phase, youth explore their use history, their triggers, and the consequences of use. They are given information about the properties of various substances, withdrawal and abstinence, which challenges them to reconsider their understanding and values about substance use. Through the daily experiences of group sessions, school attendance, recreation, and family counselling, youth broaden their experience and increase their knowledge of the skills required to make changes in their lives. Clients advance to the second phase depending on their personal commitment to change and their readiness to continue the intensive treatment process.

In **Phase II, Personal Powers**, youth are provided with opportunities to further develop their skills and increase their capacity for a drug-free lifestyle. This six-week phase of the treatment process uses weekly themes, including self-esteem, communication, relationships, peers, leisure/recreation, relapse prevention, self-help, and leadership. Clients focus on their individual treatment goals and the progress made in achieving each goal.

In **Phase III, Transition**, young people focus on reconnecting with community resources and obtaining community supports or self help resources. Individual plans are developed to aid the transition of the clients back to their home community, school, and leisure activities and to support the family during this transition. The typical length of this phase is two or three weeks, but varies depending on the needs of the adolescent.

Components of the Intensive Treatment Action Program

■ **Individual and Group Counselling.** During their involvement in the Intensive Treatment Action Program, each adolescent works closely with an addiction counsellor during one-on-one sessions. The purpose of these sessions is to identify goals, work through problem situations, and share the adolescent's experiences. A great deal of time is allotted for group work, which uses experiential learning activities. Phase I, Orientation, focuses heavily on group work. Group work focuses on various objectives: increasing knowledge about alcohol, tobacco, other drugs and gambling; learning and practising new skills, such as communication or problem solving; discussing issues and feelings in a process-oriented setting.

■ **Leisure/Recreation.** This is an important part of the Intensive Treatment Action Program and time is set aside every day for youth to participate in recreational pursuits. In addition to the wide variety of day-to-day fitness and creative leisure activities that occur on site, there are regular "out-trips" in which the entire program moves to an off-site location and clients participate in additional recreational challenges such as rock climbing, rappelling, and zip-lining. Throughout the program, clients look at ways that they can develop healthy leisure activities that support their recovery process.

■ **School.** School is an integral part of the daily Intensive Treatment Action Program. Two teachers are on site from local school boards to provide instruction in many subject areas to participants in the Intensive Treatment Action Program. Each student receives an academic assessment and is given an individual education program. Youth continue their schoolwork under the guidance of these educators. Adolescents attending the Intensive Treatment Action Program can receive credits while participating in the program. The program teachers work closely with teachers in the community to support the client's reintegration to the community school.

■ **Family.** Everyone in a family is affected by the substance abuse of one of its members. Often communication has broken down, conflict has become chronic, and the whole family has become caught up in the problem. Parent and

family participation in the Intensive Treatment Action Program is essential in order to rebuild communication among family members and to support the positive changes that the adolescent desires to make. Through family counselling, problems and concerns are brought out into the open and new ways of managing old conflicts and communication traps are discovered and practised in a safe environment. In addition, parents can find support and valuable ideas through meeting with other parents at the weekly Parent Support groups. Parents learn important information about drugs, drug and alcohol abuse, the change process, and the recovery process. As a support to the family's journey of recovery, family counselling and parental involvement often extend beyond the adolescent's completion of the Intensive Treatment Action Program.

■ **Residential Support Homes.** Residential Support homes are available for youth who live out of town or for those who temporarily require this additional type of support. Parents in the support home work closely with the addiction counsellor to provide adolescents with a safe "home-base" from which to work on their treatment goals.

■ **Transition.** During the final phase of the Intensive Treatment Action Program, adolescents become involved in reconnecting with their community supports, including school, recreation, self-help, and other resources. The aftercare transition plan is essential since it is well recognized that the process of recovery extends well beyond the safe confines of the structured treatment experience. In addition to the connections with school personnel and community supports, adolescents are reconnected with their addiction counsellor. Working with the counsellor may occur in the youth's home community or at the Youth Services Centre where they can continue to work toward their goals identified in the Intensive Treatment Action Program.

You can take a virtual tour to learn more about AADAC Youth Services Centres in Calgary and Edmonton. Visit www.aadac.com, go to the Parent Website and look at What's Available in Treatment.