

BEST PRACTICE

PROJECT EVIDENCE for Treatment of Mental Disorders. The project coordinator is Dr Allan Mawdsley. The version can be amended by consent. If you wish to contribute to the project, please email admin@mhyfvic.org

[6] Standard Treatment

- a) Outpatient psychotherapies, medication and procedures
- b) Inpatient psychotherapies, medication and procedures
- c) Ancillary support services

[6 a] Outpatient psychotherapies, medication and procedures

All disorders in childhood require wholistic management involving caregivers. See PE4 for a general outline of case identification and assessment and PE2a(i) for infant mental health. See PE6a(ix) for a general outline of case management for young people.

BP6a (ii) Substance abuse disorders

The general principles of clinical assessment and case planning mentioned in the preceding paragraph are modified in each of the subgroupings because of the need for specialist expertise in the management of specific disorders. This is described in the Project Evidence subsections.

Substance misuse is the harmful use of drugs or alcohol for non-medical purposes. Often associated with the use of illicit drugs, legal substances can also be misused, such as alcohol, prescription or over-the-counter medication, caffeine, nicotine and volatile substances (e.g. petrol, glue, paint). Most people with a substance use disorder are using alcohol.

Substance abuse and addiction can have short-term and long-term impacts on physical, mental, social and financial health. Referral is indicated for:

- **Physical health** - nausea, aches and pains, sleep problems, weight gain/loss, infections, accidents, illness or chronic disease.
- **Mental health** - depression, anxiety, paranoia, psychosis
- **Personal relationships** - family problems, arguments, relationship breakdowns, loss of friends
- **Work or financial** - job loss, trouble at work or study, debt, unemployment
- **Social impacts** - loss of interest or time to do things you like, reduced participation in social activities, criminal problems, anti-social behaviours, isolation

It is difficult for substance abusers to accept that there is a problem and to ask for help. When concerned that a child is using substances it may be helpful to consult a clinician such as a psychologist to discuss how to broach the subject with the child. Whilst external limits have some role, the main solution to substance misuse depends on strengthening the internal locus of control through the person "owning" the need for change. For success it is necessary for the affected person to:

1. **Recognise that substance use has become a problem** - realizing and accepting that one is abusing or addicted to substances is the first step to finding help.
2. **Seek support** - getting through this solo can be difficult. Talk to friends, family, your doctor, other health professionals or a telephone helpline about the substance use.
3. **Investigate options for help** - manage and treat substance misuse and addiction through counselling, medication, rehabilitation centres, self-help programs or support networks. A number of options might need to be tried before finding what works – it's important to keep trying.
4. **Find alternative coping strategies** - if using substances to cope with life or escape personal problems, other ways are needed to manage the situation and deal with life's stress and pressures. Dealing with other problems can make it easier to recover and not relapse.
5. **Deal with setbacks and keep going** - Recovery can be a long and difficult road. Expect some setbacks and don't focus on failures. Focus on plans and understanding triggers and how to best respond to them in future.

Evidence based psychological treatment guidance includes:

- Psychoeducation for child and family
- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), which applies learning based approaches to modify behavior and cognitions and increases confidence and empowers families and children
- Groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous who offer 12 step approaches and support for family members /carers and programs for young people.

Two online sources of information and treatment options are:

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/alcohol-and-drugs/aod-treatment-services>

<https://www.lifeline.org.au>

<https://aamelbourne.org.au/>

For a discussion of the prevention of mental disorders due to substance abuse, see PE3a(iii).

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