

# Characteristics of young substance users and their attitudes towards seeking treatment

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**Taskforce**

Breaking the cycle of addiction & unemployment

# What is the issue?

- Very few young substance users receive treatment\* .

## Why?

- Not motivated\* \* .
- They feel that their substance use is normal\* \* \* .
- etc...

\* (e.g., SAMHSA, 2006, as cited in Simmons et al., 2008; Minnesota Department of Human Services, 1997, as cited in At health, 2007).

\*\* (e.g., Melnick, De Leon, Hawke, Jainchill & Kressel, 1997)

\*\*\* (e.g., Health Canada, 2008)

# Who is TaskForce?

Helping people with...

- drug and alcohol addictions
- social disengagement
- unemployment
- education

# Who are the people who come to seek treatment at TaskForce?

- From July 2009 to December 2010, approximately 169 young substance users aged 14 to 25 years came to TaskForce.

Issues		Referral source			
Unemployed	48.1%	Self	16.5%	Police	5.7%
Mental Health	61.9%	Family	10.1%	Mental Health	5.1%
Unstable housing	48.0%	Service Provider	7.6%	Centrelink	3.2%
Social disengaged	59.7%	School	4.4%	Medical	0.6%
		Youth Services	10.8%	Forensic	24.7%

# Who are the people who come to seek treatment at TaskForce? (continue)

- The drop out rate is 16.9% (11 out of 55)\*.
- Common reasons for dropping out are...
  - Not engaging
  - Did not attend the service

\*People who moved or referred to another service are not included in the drop out rate.

# Case study: Charlotte

# Profile:

- 15 yrs old
- Female
- Lives: Home with mum, dad and older brother (19yrs)
- Referred: Parents to MH service
  1. Abusive behaviour at home
  2. Charged with Armed robbery



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# Assessment: Thorough

## Presentation:

1. Body language closed, one word answers
2. Stated "I don't have a problem with alcohol so I don't need to be here"

## AOD:

1. Alcohol - binge drinking weekends
2. Amphetamines – when available

## Forensic:

1. Court appearance – armed robbery

# Motivation:

- **Court**
- **Parents**

# Barriers:

- Peers
- Development
- Parents
- Memory (reactive)

# Strategies:

## Outreach

### Balance between Formal/Informal

- Language

### Unexpected

- McDonalds

### Safe, non-judgemental

- Confidentiality

### Goal focused

- Court
- Parents
- Harm Minimisation



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# Strategies

- The aim of the first session is to have the second session
- Consider stages of change
- Engagement is the key
- Two steps forward, one step backwards
- Follow up
- Positive experience

**The aim of the first  
session is to have the  
second session**

# References

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