Characteristics of young substance users and their attitudes towards seeking treatment

By Danny Alcock and Azusa Umemoto
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Referral source</th>
<th>Police</th>
<th>Mental Health</th>
<th>Centrelink</th>
<th>Medical</th>
<th>Forensic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstable housing</td>
<td>Service Provider</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social disengaged</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth Services</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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
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-judgmental
- Confidentiality

Goal focused
- Court
- Parents
- Harm Minimisation
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


