

## Helping Young People with Drug and Alcohol Problems

**Families are often thrown into chaos when they find that their child is using drugs or abusing alcohol. The situation becomes even more difficult when they are unable to reason with their teenager and, any attempts to discuss the problem is often met with hostility. Old ways of dealing with their off spring seem useless and there is often a gnawing fear that if they don't do something soon things will get worse and may risk losing their child altogether.**

The sense of being powerless is often overwhelming and many parents aggravate the situation by trying to exert control over the user (either physically or verbally), in an attempt to come to grips with the predicament, this often has the reverse effect.

Fortunately, there is help available for families, friends and users. In the ACT it is through an organisation called ADDinc (Assisting Drug Dependents Inc), formerly Drug Referral Information Centre (DRIC). ADDinc is the first step for users and parents of users - either together or separately.

“People don't realise the extent of the problem in the ACT, at our drop in centre in Civic, we see around 300 young people a week,” said Karen Harman, Executive Director of ADDinc.

ADDinc realises prevention and early intervention are the keys to harm minimisation, therefore drug and alcohol education in schools is paramount, as is access to counsellors and support networks.

“We have a program called dric@colleges, which is available at colleges. Counsellors run formal classroom talks and have confidential “drop in” sessions with students,” said Ms Harman.

Teaching staff and counsellors provide an integral link in the school education process. Addinc offers train the trainer and peer education models to foster independent knowledge development and understanding among students.

“Currently, we don't do much in primary schools but we are now seeing more binge drinking and marijuana usage in the upper primary years. Due to our limited amount of funding, we have had to go to where the needs are, therefore most of our work has been in the high school and college sector but we are now reprioritising our programs,” said Ms Harman.

Parents are also very welcome to meet with ADDinc. Parents who are concerned about their child can discuss the problem with a counsellor who will listen to them and help them develop strategies to deal with their situation.

“Sometimes students come to us seeking help for their parents. A young girl, who was a user, came to us for help with her alcoholic mother. It seems that children growing up in an environment where there is drug and/or alcohol abuse are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol themselves,” said Ms Harman.

The reality of the situation is that drugs are in all schools, they are relatively cheap and

accessible. It seems the only defenses that parents have is educating their children from a young age and setting a good example.

“It doesn’t matter if you go to a government school or a private school – drugs and alcohol are equally in both. Even if they weren’t, students tend to gravitate to the same areas outside of school hours and mingle,” said Ms Harman.

For information on ADDinc’s services, people can go to the drop-in centre at 35 East Row, Civic or you can contact ADDinc on Ph: 6248 7677 Fax: 6257 3064 or email [addinc@addinc.com.au](mailto:addinc@addinc.com.au)

*Susanne Witt*

## **How ADDinc Can Help You**

confidential telephone and face-to-face practical assistance on alcohol, drugs and diseases;

intervention options;

on going assistance with family members’ drug use and associated problems;

one off counselling and support;

referrals counselling for blood borne diseases and viruses;

alcohol and drug assessments and reports for Courts and other statutory bodies;

options for the management of withdrawal, cessation and treatment;

needle awareness programs in schools;

peer training in schools;

Late Night DRIC (LND), a program that operates at 33A East Row, Civic between 5.00pm & 9.00pm on Friday & Saturday nights The program offers regular services including:

Medical help

Legal referral

Healthy food Accommodation information and referral

Resuscitation training

Relaxation massage Art and creative activities

Internet access

Videos and music Needle exchange