

Information and support service needs of family and friends of people who use AOD

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Introduction / Issues OR Introduction and Aims: Family and friends (F&F) of people who use alcohol and other drugs (AOD) can be significantly impacted by their loved one's AOD use. This research aimed to:

- 1) understand the information and support service (ISS) needs of this cohort
- 2) measure the demand for ISS (type and channel) among F&F
- 3) Identify gaps and quality in ISS currently available.

Method / Approach OR Design and Methods: A survey of 510 Australians aged 18+ concerned about a friend or family member's AOD use participated in this research.

The survey focused on the role (relationship), level of concern, information/support needs, and barriers experienced by F&F when help seeking.

Key Findings OR Results: Key findings from the research include:

- 29% had ever sought out information/support
- 49% were extremely concerned about their loved one's AOD use – 66% had been concerned for 12 months+
- 25% didn't know the right questions to ask
- 20% felt embarrassed to ask for help
- 32% who sought information/support did so via an AOD-focused website, 29% asked their GP
- Among those who had not sought help, 37% said they would approach family or colleagues first and 34% would seek information via Google.

Discussions and Conclusions: There are significant unmet needs by F&F of those who use AOD. Two specific needs raised were how to support their loved one and how to start conversations with them about their AOD use. This research highlights the information/support needs of F&F and identifies the gaps and barriers that prevent help seeking.

Implications for Practice or Policy: There is a general lack of awareness of the information and support services available for friends and family wanting to support their loved ones. Stigma and shame, and the fragmentation of the AOD sector generally, impact their help seeking behaviour and limit the help and support they receive.

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