

Evidence-Based Online Training and Support Courses for Caregivers of Youth with FASD.

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Introduction and Aims: Australia has limited services to help families where FASD is an issue. Dr Anita Gibbs developed a 7-week online course, in collaboration with NOFASD. The course utilised evidence-based best practice and expert guidance from North America, and Australasia.

The course enables caregivers to: increase their knowledge of FASD, and its impacts and challenges across the lifespan; be equipped in the knowledge of successful strategies and interventions to help their families; consider successful approaches to apply to the systems in their environment; and to foster peer-support relationships with others who share the lived-experience of FASD.

Approach: The course is underpinned by empowerment and peer mentoring orientations. Dr Gibbs has lived experience as a caregiver. NOFASD Australia provides a national helpline as well as online resources for caregivers throughout Australia. The online courses have attracted interest from over 100 people, with 12 caregivers participating in an initial pilot course. A programme of talks, exercises, and interactive discussions focused on the course aims. Final session evaluations have been undertaken alongside eleven in-depth semi-structured interviews.

Results: Caregivers overwhelmingly valued both the content and process of the training. A strength of the training was the delivery by experienced, professionally trained caregivers of children with FASD. Participants valued the opportunity to spend time with peers in similar circumstances who understood the challenges of parenting a child with FASD.

Discussions and Conclusions: Short evidence-based specialist online training courses for parents and caregivers, with an empowerment and peer support orientation, are viewed as helpful and supportive by participants.