

Issues of Substance 2009 Conference

Facilitated *Pathways and Bridges to Change* Discussion Session

Session Report

Session Topic:

The Need for Specialized Youth Services

Date:

Wednesday, November 18, 2009

Facilitator:

John Weekes

Summary (brief abstract of session):

The topic for this lively, well-attended Discussion Session was chosen by the conference participants through a participant involvement process that took place during the conference. Not surprisingly, the responses and discussion stressed the strong need for greater attention, additional resources and more specialized prevention and treatment services targeted at the special needs of youth.

1. Coming out of this conference, what are the key issues and concerns that have emerged for you?

- More research on youth is needed
- Challenge to raise awareness, interest and priority from government; need leadership from funding services to facilitate the integration of services; increased funding for youth
- Need for more peer mentoring/giving youth a voice/including youth/empowering youth
- Need for increased focus on prevention and early intervention
- Develop a five-tiered model specifically for youth
- Standardization of assessment and treatment approaches
- Development of effective youth detoxification
- Need for more available information on gender-specific assessment, treatment, and services; lack of male presence in discussions of women's treatment issues
- Increased cooperation, collaboration, and partnership among agencies (e.g., mental health, justice, etc.)
- Paucity of treatment centres to meet the unique needs of Aboriginal youth



- Reduce marginalization and stigmatization of youth; build communities that will support young people; help with reintegration
- Youth services are a specialty service with unique training and expertise
- Enhanced outreach support to rural areas; decentralization of support systems; localized services; school- and community-based treatment
- Address public policy—particularly regarding alcohol (e.g., advertising to children, adolescents and women)
- Separate alcohol from all other drugs in terms of prevention and treatment efforts
- Enhanced training for addictions and mental health staff who work with youth
- Family-centred care

2. Pathways and Bridges to Change:

a. What big changes need to be made in the next 10 years?

- Eliminate alcohol and other drug use among youth
- Every province implement youth prevention, treatment and detox
- Increase the age range for the definition of “youth”
- Increase coordination among youth service providers
- Ban alcohol advertising
- Increase messaging that alcohol is an addictive substance
- Better targeted education efforts—youth and community
- Political changes encouraging youth to become engaged in the political process
- Increased programs and services (youth and adults)
- Increase accessibility to youth—needs enhanced fiscal resources and government funding
- Decentralized treatment
- Enhanced aftercare—strengthened continuum of care models
- Mobilize community involvement and engagement with youth, including schools to assist in education and prevention initiatives
- Enhanced staff training to work effectively with youth
- Need programs to address youth online gambling

b. What big steps need to be taken to produce the desired changes?

- Youth theme for next IOS Conference
- Youth participation at next IOS Conference
- Organize society to address youth-specific issues
- Fully and completely understand the needs of youth in Canada
- Youth input to share their views and needs as opposed to government-determined



- Enhanced government understanding of the complexities of youth drug use and abuse
- Bring awareness to the impact and costs of not adequately addressing the issues of substance abuse among youth
- Front-line organizations collaborate to advocate for change
- Create a tiered model for youth services
- Connecting science and practice
- Improved communication and understanding between clients and service providers
- Common electronic charting to improve communication and availability of information
- Creative paths to addressing the issue of mental health and addiction among youth
- Increased parental involvement (where appropriate)
- One-stop shopping for services
- Distribute funding to priority and evidence-based programs
- Evaluation research to determine effectiveness of services
- Increased knowledge transfer and knowledge mobilization
- Innovative and creative ideas for securing funding and resources

c. What changes can you make to move us further along the way to change?

- Create an advocacy network with government and NGOs
- Lobby government
- Pass a motion at CCSA to focus on alcohol and other drugs
- Ban alcohol advertising
- Engage in dialogue with politicians and other decision-makers and policy-makers
- Activate a “voice” at all levels
- “Humanized” stories
- Change our language and perception
- Create stronger linkages to communities
- Support young families, increase supports, decrease isolation
- Increase representation on Community Health Boards
- “Remember when” thinking—thinking young again
- Let go of assumptions about our jobs and careers—don’t let public perceptions interfere
- Learn from youth—embrace technology (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, texting)
- Employ more youth in services
- Be creative and flexible—get out to where youth are (e.g., schools, youth groups, etc.)
- Enhance information-sharing about programs and services among agencies
- Keep advocating for youth



- Shift programming towards the community
- Identify and engage collaborative partners
- Forge connections among the entire community
- Connect with parents
- Become more open-minded within the agencies we are affiliated with to forge collaborations and develop creative and innovative initiatives
- Apply the same skills to our own colleagues
- Change needs to start small (e.g., staff meetings, etc.)

