

# SNSWLHD Alcohol and Other Drugs Services

**Alcohol and other drugs problems often occur in conjunction with mental illness, and can have serious adverse effects on many areas of life, including work, relationships, health and safety. If you care for someone who is using alcohol or other drugs and has a mental health problem you may have lots of questions or be unsure of what to do.**

## What are the main types of drugs?

- **Stimulants** such as speed, ecstasy, ice. They are called stimulants because they cause your brain to be more active (stimulated). They can keep you awake, make your pupils bigger and make it hard to sit still.
- **Depressants** such as Alcohol, Valium, OxyContin, Heroin and Cannabis. They have the opposite effect to the stimulants slowing down your pulse and your breathing, slowing down your brain's activity, often making it harder to do things. Eventually they will make you go to sleep.
- **Hallucinogens** such as LSD, Cannabis and magic mushrooms. These drugs change the way you see and understand the world around you.

The effects of these drugs will depend on many things, such as how much you take, how you take them and your mood when you take them. Also any physical or mental illness that you may already have can directly affect your experience with the drug.

## Why do people use drugs?

People use drugs for many reasons. These include curiosity, boredom, to feel relaxed, confident or energetic, to fit in with friends, to escape from their worries, to try and reduce distressing symptoms of their mental illness, or even feelings such as guilt, anger or shame.

## What is the downside to using drugs?

It is understandable that people with a mental illness use alcohol and other drugs in the hope or belief it will help them feel better.

However using alcohol and other drugs can:

- Undo the positive effects of medication.
- Can interact with medication in a bad way
- Delay the recovery process.
- Produce desirable feelings that are false and short lived.
- Hide problems/symptoms that return once the effects of the drug have worn off.
- Cause physical health problems to bodily organs such as the heart, lungs, liver and kidneys.
- Result in risk taking behaviours that affect relationships and can include violence, crime and accidents.

## What Help is available?

Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services employ Drug and Alcohol Clinicians who provide evidence-based services in line with harm minimisation philosophy. Some of the services provided by the Community Alcohol and Other Drug clinicians include:

- withdrawal services
- opioid substitution treatments like methadone and buprenorphine
- other pharmacological treatments
- community counselling
- psychosocial interventions,
- community education and health promotion.

In addition, Drug and Alcohol clinicians provide consultation liaison to other clinical streams, for example when consumers are admitted to medical services for a complex detoxification. Limited opioid substitution treatment dosing is provided through the Emergency Departments.

Depending on severity, a person with both mental health and drug use problems (Dual Diagnosis) may see both mental health and drug and alcohol clinicians. Both Mental health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Services work together to improve outcome for consumers.



## How do I Access SNSWLHD Drugs and Alcohol Services?

Access to SNSWLHD Alcohol and Other Drugs service is through the Drug and Alcohol Line **1800 809 423. Available 24 hours daily, 7 days a week.**

SNSWLHD Community Alcohol and Other Drugs services are co-located with the Community Mental Health services with the exception of Queanbeyan.

### **Bega Valley**

#### **South East Regional Hospital (SERH)**

Level 2, 4 Virginia Drive,  
Bega NSW 2550  
Phone: 02 6491 9300

### **Eurobodalla**

#### **Community Health Centre**

#### **Moruya Community Health Service**

River Street, Moruya NSW 2537  
Phone: 02 4474 1561

### **Goulburn**

#### **Community Health Centre**

130 Goldsmith Street, Corner Goldsmith & Faithful, Goulburn NSW 2580  
Phone: 02 4827 3257

### **Queanbeyan**

#### **Killard Centre**

103 Crawford Street  
Queanbeyan NSW 2620  
Phone: 02 6150 7820

## What Treatment Programs are available for my family member/friend?

### *Managing Withdrawal*

Withdrawal may occur in people who are dependent on drugs and/or alcohol who stop or considerably reduce their drug use. In certain circumstances it can be dangerous to abruptly stop drinking alcohol.

Withdrawal management can occur in a variety of settings depending on a person's situation e.g. in-patients settings, in the community with support or in a specialised withdrawal unit.

### *Opioid Treatment Program (OTP)*

The NSW Opioid Treatment Program (OTP) seeks to reduce the social, economic and health harms associated with opioid use. The OTP delivers pharmacotherapy and associated services to opioid dependent patients in NSW.

OTP clients are required to attend appointments with their prescriber at a minimum of 3 monthly. Dosing of pharmacotherapies occurs at a number of community pharmacies throughout the area.

### *The Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment Program (MERIT)*

MERIT provides an opportunity to link people into drug and alcohol treatment during their bail period so the court can consider rehabilitative improvements at sentencing. This may reduce sentences or divert people away from the criminal justice system. MERIT has benefits for the individual, their friends and family, and the community more broadly.

To be eligible for MERIT a person must have charges pending in the Magistrates Court. MERIT is focussed on people for whom illicit drugs are the primary drug of concern. Currently MERIT services are available at Queanbeyan and Cooma Magistrates Court.

## ***Involuntary Drug & Alcohol Treatment Program (IDAT)***

The Program provides short term care, with an involuntary supervised withdrawal component, to protect the health and safety of people with severe substance dependence who have experienced, or are at risk of, serious harm and whose decision making capacity is considered to be compromised due to their substance use.

The *NSW Health Drug and Alcohol Treatment Act 2007* (the Act) provides the legislative basis for IDAT.

The Act aims to ensure that involuntary treatment is only used when it will be in the best interests of the individual and when no other less restrictive means for treating them are appropriate. A Dependency Certificate, which allows a person to be involuntarily admitted, may only be issued if the Accredited Medical Practitioner (AMP) at the Treatment Centre is satisfied the person meets the following criteria:

- The person has a severe substance dependence, meaning they:
- have a tolerance to a substance
- show withdrawal symptoms when they stop or reduce levels of its use
- do not have the capacity to make decisions about their substance use and personal welfare primarily because of their dependence on the substance AND
- The care, treatment or control of the person is necessary to protect the
- person from serious harm, AND
- the person is likely to benefit from treatment for his or her substance dependence but has refused treatment, AND
- no other appropriate and less restrictive means for dealing with the person are reasonably available.

Referrals will be accepted from all over the state as long as the person is 18 years or older.

## **Referral to IDAT**

Health workers, family members and other concerned parties, in consultation with a Medical Practitioner (MP) or an Involuntary Treatment Liaison Officer (ITLO), can identify a patient as potentially suitable for IDAT and seek to have a comprehensive assessment conducted for IDAT eligibility. On determining eligibility, the identified person must then be referred by a MP to **an Accredited Medical Practitioner (AMP) for an assessment for a Dependency Certificate.**

## **Counselling**

The objectives for counselling are to:

- build rapport and a therapeutic relationship with the client
- engage the client in developing treatment goals and harm reduction strategies
- directly treat presenting issues
- support self-efficacy and develop skills
- develop relapse prevention strategies