



The impact of parental substance use on the child online course

About this course

The impact of parental substance use on the child provides learners with an introduction to the impact that parental use of alcohol and other drugs has on children. It provides a definition of parental substance use¹, explores the impacts of substance use with other co-existing issues and highlights the impact that it can have on the child's relationships, physical health, and social and emotional wellbeing.

Why was this course developed?

Studies show that around four in 10 Australians either smoked daily, drank alcohol at harmful levels or used an illicit drug in a 12-month period.² Parental substance use commonly coexists with other forms of adversity, such as family and domestic violence, homelessness, trauma, mental health issues and poverty.

This course was developed from evidence which shows the effects of parental substance use on infants and children, from conception to adolescence. It has been created to support practitioners to develop robust frameworks to help them identify and respond to the effects of parental substance use (and other socio-political disadvantages) on children.

How was this course developed?

The course was developed in collaboration with a number of stakeholders from academia, alcohol and other drug services, children and family services, child mental health experts, and with parents with lived experience of substance use and other coexisting issues. A comprehensive literature review was undertaken into the effects of parental substance use on Australian children and the intersection with other societal issues.

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Start course

How was evidence used to inform the course?

The evidence used in this course has come from recent government policy on working with parents who are affected by substance use, as well other coexisting issues. It examines contemporary evidence regarding the effects of these issues on infants and children.

The course has also been informed by the lived experience of parents who have had experience in adult-focused services and who recognise the importance of practitioners asking about their children.

Who is this course for?

This course is designed for all practitioners in adult-focused services who engage with adult and family adversity. It recognises the significant proportion of parents affected by substance use who present to services, and the common coexistence with mental health, trauma, homelessness, financial pressure and child protection issues.

¹ The language used in this suite of resources aims to be strength-based and to avoid further stigmatising an already highly stigmatised population. Therefore, the resources will refer to 'substance use' as a broad descriptor of substance misuse, harmful or problematic use of substances, or dependence or addiction to substances.

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2017). National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016: Detailed findings. Drug Statistics series no. 31. Cat. no. PHE 214. Canberra, ACT: AIHW.