

WHAT 15 YEARS OF WORKING WITH PEERS HAS TAUGHT US

Authors:

McConnell, C¹ Westmacott P¹

¹Parent Drug Information Service (PDIS), Western Australia (WA)

Introduction / Issues:

The PDIS Peer Support Network (PSN) was created in 2000 in response to an overwhelming call from parents to expand access to services for families and an appeal to contact other parents with lived experience. Peer volunteers were comprehensively trained to take calls in their homes from parents in crisis via the Alcohol Drug Information Service (ADIS). Peer support has grown to include the Adult Drug Court and a Peer Support Group. Fifteen years on, we reflect on; the types of challenges faced by parents, what has enabled us to sustain a robust peer led service and what challenges lay ahead.

Method / Approach: Empirical

Key Findings: Recent evidence suggests that peer intervention can be just as if not more beneficial than professional intervention. Peer led services are a cost effective means of support when peers are provided adequate training, supervision and Governance. Continued parent & family peer support is vital recognizing that well supported parents and families cope better. This then results in better outcomes for the AOD user and less incidence of mental health problems and medical interventions for families,.

Discussions and Conclusions: Good Governance and sound policies and procedures go a long way in sustaining an effective peer led service. The current and ongoing challenge for our service is to engage with and work more effectively with Aboriginal parents and families.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: Nil