Providing Support for Teenagers Toolkit.

The following toolkit provides an overview of Providing Support for Teenagers, with the aim of guiding you to implement this approach in your community.

1. Providing Support for Teenagers toolkit overview – key points for LDATs

- This toolkit is about evidence-informed approaches to help prevent and reduce alcohol and other drug (AOD) harms in teenagers.
- The key principles, resources and advice outlined in this toolkit are designed primarily for parents/carers of teenagers but can also be relevant to other influencers in the community who work with teens (e.g. coaches, teachers, mentors, etc.).
- Strengthening parents/carers' knowledge and confidence in communicating with teens about alcohol and other drugs can help create family environments that reduce the risk of AOD use.[1]
- LDATs can educate parents/carers and other significant adults on the importance of protecting young people from early substance use, as well as promoting strategies that can help reduce the risk.
- Providing Support for Teenagers can help reduce AOD risk factors and promote protective factors. Examples of these risk and protective factors are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Factors that protect against AOD and factors that increase risk of AOD[1-6]

Protective factors	Risk factors
• Evidence-based drug education for teens • Community building activities • Positive role models including around AOD • Clear rules around alcohol use • Parental/carer monitoring and supervision • Sense of belonging and connectedness to community, school and family • Knowledge of harms/health beliefs that support healthy AOD use and access to appropriate AOD help and support • Participation in positive activities with adult engagement • Involvement in recreational activities	• Family conflict • Teen's lack of engagement in activities with positive adult role models • Mental health issues among teens • Teen's academic failure • Low attachment to school • Low attachment to community • Negative peer influence • Availability and accessibility of AOD • Favourable parental/carer attitudes towards AOD use

Read more about risk and protective factors here: https://adf.org.au/reducing-risk/community-approaches/prevention-strategies/

1.1 Drawing on existing programs

This toolkit focuses on educating parents/carers to prevent AOD harm in their teenagers. It highlights the important role of the parent/carer in harm prevention and shows how parents/carers can positively influence AOD outcomes in their own family.

Unlike other toolkits in this series, the Providing Support for Teenagers approach does not rely on delivering existing programs. Instead, this toolkit may complement other evidence-based approaches, such as Parenting, Peer Support, and Mentoring programs aimed at young people.

For example, your LDAT may run a Peer Support program in the community to engage teens and, at the same time, you may also run parents/carers-only information sessions for parents/carers of the teens taking part in the Peer Support program.

This way, parents/carers get to learn about AOD prevention and can feel more confident talking to their kids about what's going on for them. This is important because talking with teenagers about AOD can be challenging. Often, it's difficult to know how to start a conversation, what information to share, or even how to access reliable information.

Better equipping parents/carers has the potential to reinforce positive outcomes for any programs you may also run for young people. If you do wish to run programs to benefit children and teens, check out the recommendations in the following toolkits:

• Parenting

• Mentoring

• Peer Support.

1.2. Guiding principles

The following principles will guide you to communicate strategies to parents/carers and other influencers around how they can support teenagers to reduce AOD harm.

• LDATs can educate parents/carers on what the 'best-practice' parenting styles are to reduce AOD harm in teenagers. The evidence emphasises the importance of having a warm, responsive approach, and achieving a balance between control and the teen's need to develop some autonomy and independence.[6-8] This includes things like:

  – communicating calmly

  – providing a reasonable level of supervision of teenagers' leisure time

  – taking an interest and being involved in their teenagers' activities

  – encouraging teenagers to develop a range of recreational interests

  – ensuring that they join clubs and groups that don't allow using alcohol and other substances.[6-9]

• LDATs can show parents/carers what responsible role modelling of AOD use looks like, including:

  – if they choose to drink, doing so responsibly in front of their children

  – talking calmly about alcohol and drug issues with teens

  – ensuring teens understand their views of teenage drinking and drug use

  – establishing - and sticking to - family rules for the use of alcohol by their children

  – not providing alcohol to their children

  – not joking about alcohol or drug-related exploits.[10-14]

• LDATs can create and use innovative ways to reach parents/carers who can't be easily reached by standard methods of education, such as face-to-face forums. Instead, you could consider digital delivery of advice and information, including via mobile phones, so that the widest group of parents/carers can have access to the advice.[15]

- LDATs can help adults to recognise when they are a natural mentor for a young person or to recognise when they have an opportunity to be a natural mentor. Natural mentoring is when an older person known to the young person adopts a mentoring role. LDATs could identify sources of information and support for the natural mentor and provide opportunities for them to learn from other people who undertake that role.[16-18]

- LDATs should ensure that everyone involved in educational programs for parents/carers and/or teenagers is involved in the development, recruitment, implementation and evaluation of resources, programs and activities to improve the quality of each stage.[15]

- LDATs should alert parents/carers to quality websites that provide behavioural advice and ideas for talking to children about AOD-related matters, including how to start a conversation. The most useful and accessible websites are Positive Choices and Raising Children.

1.3 Considerations for planning and delivery

Attention to **how** a program is delivered or implemented is just as important as **what** is delivered, when it comes to your project's outcomes.

Implementation considerations for Providing Support for Teenagers

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The 5Ws

Being clear about what you want to do and the outcomes you want to achieve will enable your LDAT to deliver Providing Support for Teenagers messaging in your community in a safe and effective way, as well as track your success. Consider the 5Ws:

- **What** do you want to happen? (activity)
- **Who** will it happen with? (direct audience)
- **Why** will it happen (outcome e.g. improving an identified gap for that audience)
- **When** will it occur? (time frame e.g. over 6 months)
- **Where** will it occur? (location).

Measuring success

Once you know what you want to achieve you need to measure the success of your activities so that you know how effective they were. Do this by evaluating your activities using process and impact measures.

- **Process measures:** these relate to how your activity is being delivered. In other words, they help you to monitor if the implementation of your activity went according to plan, e.g. did you reach the targeted number of attendees at your event? Did you run the targeted number of workshops that you originally planned?

- **Impact measures:** these relate to the short-term difference your activity has made on the community. Impact measures seek to increase protective factors, decrease risk factors, or change how people think about AOD harms, e.g. did people report having more knowledge of AOD harms after attending your event? Did people report feeling more connected to their community after participating in your workshop?

Working with community

LDATs may work with a variety of community partners to deliver activities to support teenagers. Partners can support your activity in different ways, including leading the activity, promotion, recruiting parents/carers, providing expert trainers and financial support. Partners may include:

- individual parents/carers
- secondary schools and their staff, including principals, teachers, student services consultants (counsellors) and administrative staff
- family support services
- school parent/carer groups
- GPs
- community health centres and neighbourhood houses
- health services and hospitals
- sporting clubs
- arts organisations (e.g. music, dance, drama)
- libraries
- local employers and workplaces
- local council/s
- foster care and kinship care organisations
- specialists organisations who provide 24 hour safe housing, support and care to young people.

For further information see: https://community.adf.org.au/run-activities/partnerships/

Resources required

Below is an indicative list of resources required to deliver community activities that support teenagers. LDATs may be able to provide some of these resources or you could partner with other community organisations who may provide additional support. Resources might include:

- parent/carer participants
- experienced workshop facilitator/s – this may be someone from the LDAT or a partner organisation, who can help a group to gain skills and knowledge. They don't need to be an AOD expert
- someone with expert alcohol and other drug knowledge – having an expert presenter ensures the workshop is factual and informed by evidence
- personnel time to liaise with community organisations and organise events
- police checks/Working With Children Checks (these are mandatory when working with young people)
- workshop venue – this may include in-kind use of a meeting room from a partner organisation, local library, school, or community hall. Your local council will have a list of available places for community use. It is not appropriate for workshops to be held in people's homes
- basic administrative tools – access to stationery and office supplies, printers, phones, a workspace for administrative duties
- knowledge to design and publish workshop resources, promotional or other material
- insurance and liability coverage (where appropriate).

Cultural considerations

LDATs will need to take into account communities where there are various cultural approaches and family structures. This can impact which parent/carer approach is considered most effective in Providing Support for Teenagers to prevent AOD harm.[2]

Strengths-based messaging

The literature depicts young people who experience family conflict, feel alienated from their parents/carers, or have trouble at school as being more vulnerable to drug use.[19,20,21,22] However, it's important to avoid messaging which implies that high risk young people are 'fated to drug use'.

Instead, it might help to emphasise that adolescents who experience these types of risk factors can benefit from LDAT programs which build protective factors to increase resilience in young people. This includes providing young people with a constructive model of adulthood, mentoring, pathway building, and other positive activities.

2. Delivering Providing Support for Teenagers: key activities and measuring success

The below section outlines the key activities associated with delivering and evaluating Providing Support for Teenagers activities.

You will need to deliver at least one of these activities and evaluate it using process and impact measures (see 1.3 Considerations for planning and delivery, above). This will allow you to determine whether your LDAT has achieved your intended outcomes. You can also tailor your approach by adding additional activities that suit your community's needs and evaluating them using additional process and impact measures.

Key activities for delivering and evaluating a Providing Support for Teenagers program are:

- **Training or workshops**
  An event that is held for the specific purpose of training community members in a new skill set, and/or delivering a structured presentation aimed at increasing knowledge about risk and/or protective factors associated with an AOD health issue.

- **Campaigns or awareness raising activities**
  A coordinated series of targeted messages delivered across one or more platforms (e.g. social media, pamphlets, radio commercials, etc.) that are aimed at minimising risk factors and/or increasing protective factors associated with AOD use.

- **Events or forums**
  One or more planned occasions where community members and/or relevant stakeholders come together, either face-to-face or virtually, to share ideas, learn new information, and connect with one another over ideas or activities aimed at minimising risk factors and/or increasing protective factors associated with AOD use.

Evaluation is a critical component of delivering your program and needs to be factored in at every stage of planning and delivery. You'll find more detailed information on effective evaluation measures in our essential guide for LDATs: Evaluation Measures Guide. Your LDAT will also be guided to select appropriate process and impact measures when you're developing your Community Action Plan (CAP) online.

3. Delivering Providing Support for Teenagers programs: key steps

The key steps involved in working with parents/carers and other influencers of teenagers are provided below as a useful starting point for developing your Community Action Plan activity. Note: these steps are an indicative guide only and it's important to tailor your approach to your local community.

Step 1: Identifying partners

Engage relevant community organisations with access to parents/carers and other influencers of teenagers and encourage them to help prevent alcohol and other drug-related harm amongst teenagers by partnering to implement the activities suggested above. You could start with the following:

- Establish key contacts/gatekeepers in organisations who will have an interest in helping to champion the issue by promoting the activity you choose to do.
- Discuss the importance of Providing Support for Teenagers with these community organisations, by outlining the benefits of prevention and educating parents/carers.
- Establish 'what's in it' for the community organisation, e.g. the parents/carers who participate will learn drug-related information to build their confidence when talking with their children about alcohol and other drugs.

For further information see: https://community.adf.org.au/get-started/community-consultation/

Step 2: Linking parents/carers and other influencers to quality information and resources

A number of reputable organisations produce evidence-informed information on alcohol and other drugs for parents/carers. Through the support of partner community organisations, you can distribute resources and information to parents/carers in a number of ways, including:

- workshops
- community events (e.g. secondary school open days, community festivals)
- local media (e.g. local paper, radio station)
- partnerships and networks (e.g. inclusion in partner newsletters, speaker at workplace events).[23]

LDATs can also use information from quality resources to help with content for your workshops.

Quality sources of information are:

- Parenting Research Centre: https://www.parentingrc.org.au/
- Parenting Strategies: https://www.parentingstrategies.net/
- Positive Choices:
  - general information for parents/carers: https://positivechoices.org.au/parents/
  - specific information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teens: https://positivechoices.org.au/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/
  - specific information for multicultural teens: https://positivechoices.org.au/culturally-and-linguistically-diverse/
- Youth specialist organisations such as YoDAA https://ydir.com.au/resources/yodaa or headspace https://headspace.org.au/explore-topics/supporting-a-young-person/alcohol-and-other-drugs/
- ADF Drug Facts pages: https://adf.org.au/drug-facts/
- Information specific to LGBTIQ+ teens:
  - https://thorneharbour.org/services/alcohol-and-other-drug-services-aod/
  - https://www.queerspace.org.au/

Step 3: Delivering workshops

LDATs can work with community partners to run workshops that provide parents/carers and other influencers with quality information and resources on Providing Support for Teenagers. LDATs should not deliver workshops unless their team has appropriate expertise. If you don't, your primary role should be to support suitably qualified community organisations to deliver the workshops.[23, 24]

Choosing the workshop venue

Consider the following when selecting the location for your workshop:

- what is the most appropriate venue for local parents/carers?
- what is the venue capacity? (how many people are attending?)
- what are the associated costs?
- is there easy access for all? (e.g. parking, close to transport, wheelchair access?)
- how will the room be set up? (does there need to be room for people to move around?)
- do you need to provide chairs, tables, catering?

Promoting the workshop

Consider how you'll spread the word to promote the workshop and attract parents/carers and other influencers. This might include:

- local papers
- radio stations
- community noticeboards
- school newsletters
- social media
- sporting clubs
- partner organisations
- local community champions.

When promoting the workshop, include information that informs parents/carers and key influencers of the purpose of the workshop, how they can register to attend and the benefits that they will get from attending.[23, 24]

Running the workshop

- Consider cultural sensitivity – perform an Acknowledgment of Country at the start of the workshop, for example, or provide a translator (if a specific language is spoken by the group).
- Be clear about the aims of the workshop and focus on respect and building a safe space for discussion about AOD, which is a sensitive and often taboo topic.
- Provide information that is factual and backed by high quality evidence.
- Encourage participation through activities/discussions and provide opportunities for group reflection and learning.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on strengths and challenges to their own parenting/caring approach.
- Prepare information to share at the end of the session that parents/carers can take home to further their knowledge/understanding.
- Make sure you use Section 2 of this toolkit and the ADF's essential guide for LDATs: Evaluation Measures Guide for your workshop.[23, 24]

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