Module 12

Working with Intoxicated Young People
Working with Intoxicated Young People

Topic 1

Introduction
Learning outcomes

✓ When learners have completed this module they will be able to:

- describe the principles and models of working with intoxicated young people

- Assess the level of intoxication and potential risks

- identify and respond to behaviour or physical state inconsistent with AOD use (e.g. mental health issues)
Learning outcomes Cont…

- respond to crisis and emergency situations in order to reduce harm to the young person, yourself and others

- monitor and manage intoxicated young people

- implement brief interventions and harm minimisation
Working with Intoxicated Young People

Topic 2

What is intoxication and why is it a problem?
What is intoxication and why is it a problem?

- **Intoxication** is the term used to describe any change in perception, mood, thinking processes and motor skills that results from the effect of a drug(s) on the central nervous system.
Thorley's Model of harm

Dependence

Problems associated with dependence includes:
- Discomfort when refraining from use
- Inability to rest
- Phobias
- Isolation
- Withdrawal
- Anxiety
- Social problems
- Homelessness
- Loss of control
Thorley’s Model of harm  

Regular Use

Continued use over a longer period of time can result in:

- Medical and health problems
- Child neglect
- Withdrawal
- Family problems
- Relationship problems
- Financial problems
Thorley's Model of harm Cont ...

Intoxication

The following problems can arise from a single occasion of use:

- Accidents
- Aggression/Violence
- Marital disputes
- Suicides
- Drink-driving
- Drowning
- Legal problems
Thorley’s Model of harm Cont …

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The Four L’s Model

- Liver - Anything to do with a person’s health (either physical, psychological or emotional health problems)
- Lover - Problems associated with a person’s relationships, family, friends, children, partner etc
- Lifestyle/livelihood - Problems which relate to accommodation, work, finances, education, recreation etc
- Legal - Any problems associated with the law (either criminal or civil proceedings)
Risk and protective factors

- Local community factors
- School and peer factors
- Societal and political issues
- Family factors
- Individual characteristics
Interaction Model

Drug

Drug use experience

Individual  Environment
What is intoxication and why is it a problem?

Summary

✓ A large proportion of all alcohol and other drug related problems are due to intoxication

✓ Intoxication-related death (accident, overdose, self-harm) and injury is very common in young people

✓ A youth-focused systems approach can assist you to identify some of the factors that may influence young people’s experience of intoxication

✓ The drug, the individual and the environment interact to produce a young person’s experience of intoxication
Working with Intoxicated Young People

Topic 3

Assessing the immediate needs of the young intoxicated person
Recognising intoxication

✔ Don’t assume from a young person’s appearance that they are definitely intoxicated. **Intoxication** can be mimicked by:

- Brain injury (e.g. concussion)
- Shock
- Diabetes
- Blood poisoning
- Mental illness
- Heat exhaustion/sunstroke/dehydration
Overdose - extreme case of intoxication

✓ In the event of overdose, when it is clear that the young person is experiencing physical and/or psychological distress (e.g. the person has collapsed, has decreasing levels of consciousness, breathing difficulties or is experiencing hallucinations), the following steps are recommended:

- call an ambulance
- ensure the safety of yourself and others in your care or supervision
- administer first aid
- stay calm, stay with and observe the young person
Overdose extreme case of intoxication Cont…

- talk calmly to the young person to reduce anxiety
- place them in a coma position and check the airway is unobstructed
- observe vital signs (breathing, pulse)
- apply CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) if no pulse, or EAR (expired air resuscitation) if pulse
- arrange for transfer to hospital by ambulance as soon as possible
- thoroughly document the incident and your involvement
- debrief with your supervisor
Assessing the immediate needs of the young intoxicated person

Summary

- The amount of drugs taken
- How recently they were taken
- The route of administration

Overdose can be life-threatening and requires early detection and emergency intervention

- Frontline workers need to recognise the signs of physical distress and overdose
- Frontline workers need to identify and respond to young people experiencing an overdose
Working with intoxicated young people

Topic 4

Managing an episode of intoxication
The sobering-up environment

✓ Young people can sober up in a variety of settings, depending on supports. Close supervision is required. Sobering-up settings may include:

- a young person’s home, or a friend’s home in cases of mild intoxication and low risk
- Sobering-up services
- shelters/accommodation services
- hospitals
- police stations
- a sick bay in the workplace
Applying a youth-focused systems approach to managing intoxicated young people

Key issues that you might consider in relation to the young person include:

- What is the young person’s general physical condition?
- Are there any existing or likely health problems?
- Has there been any history of mental health problems?
- What is the young person thinking, feeling and planning?
Applying a youth-focused systems approach to managing intoxicated young people Cont…

- Are they living in stable accommodation and is it safe for them to return?
- What (if any) other high-risk activities are they engaging in?
- Has the young person previously had contact with you or another agency?
- What does the young person want to happen?
Aggression

- Early signs of aggression:
  - agitation and intense frustration
  - fearfulness
  - clenched fists
  - invasion of your personal space
  - ‘eyeballing’
  - banging/pushing furniture
  - facial muscle tension, furrowed brow, tight and quivering lips
Managing an episode of intoxication

Summary

- Always consider the immediate physical and psychological wellbeing of the young person to ensure that minimal harm comes to them.

- Young people can sober up in a variety of settings, depending on supports available and the potential for problems to arise.

- Other factors may also be relevant to better understand the context and events leading up to the episode of intoxication.
Working with intoxicated young people

Topic 5

Beyond intoxication - brief harm reduction interventions
'Brief intervention' means implementing an intervention that takes very little time.

Brief interventions involve raising awareness, sharing knowledge and getting a young person to think about making changes to improve their health and behaviours.
Brief interventions focused on harm reduction

✓ Any encounter with a young person is potentially an opportunity to engage in a brief intervention, once they have started to sober up. The focus of many brief interventions is harm reduction or safer drug use.
Brief interventions focused on harm reduction

The priority for intervention is to reduce the harm associated with drug use. This can be achieved by a combination of:

- gentle advice
- instructional materials on low-risk practices
- access to needle-exchange programs
- self-help manuals
- invitations to call at a variety of treatment agencies and support services
- motivational interview strategies
Harm minimisation

Harm minimisation strategies can be categorised into three areas:

- Harm reduction
- Supply reduction
- Demand reduction
Beyond intoxication - brief harm reduction interventions

Summary

✓ Brief interventions are usually conducted in a one-to-one situation. It is an opportunity to raise awareness and share knowledge with a young person. Brief interventions can help to reduce potential harm.

✓ Harm minimisation is an approach to reduce the harmful health, social and economic consequences of alcohol and other drug use on individuals and society.
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Topic 6

Understanding young people’s experience of intoxication
Environmental factors that influence the experience of intoxication

✓ Drug use and intoxication cannot be thought of as an isolated act but rather one that takes place within the context of the broader environment.

✓ This involves the social setting, the immediate circumstances of use, cultural factors and formal/informal sanctions on use.
Mode of administration

Fastest

• Injecting
• Inhaling
• Snorting
• Smoking
• Swallowing
• Rectal

Slowest
Understanding young people’s experience of intoxication

Cont...

Summary

✓ Intoxicated behaviour can vary greatly in a person from one episode to another

✓ Intoxicated behaviour is influenced by:
  - the setting or environment in which the drug was consumed
  - individual factors related to the user
  - factors specific to the drug
Understanding young people’s experience of intoxication

Cont...

Summary

✓ Many young people use more than one drug at a time which can increase the risk of health harms and complications

✓ Medical advice should always be sought if a young person has been using a combination of drugs.
Working with Intoxicated Young People

Topic 7

Organisational responses to intoxication
Critical incidents

✓ Debriefing critical incidents:

- Contact Manager/Supervisor and debrief
- Log actions, incident reports etc
- Legal measures (follow up any legal issues)
- Debrief with young person