

TURNING POINTS, TOWARDS BRIGHTER TOMORROWS



CARE
EXPERIENCE



Project title:	Critical moments in responses for children affected by family substance misuse
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Timeline:	December 2024 to June 2028
Location:	National
Partners:	Australian Drug and Alcohol Foundation, Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Uniting, Victoria and Tasmania, Youth Support and Advocacy Service, Monash Health, Queen's University, University of Tennessee



CONTEXT

In Australia, children and young people impacted by their families' or others' alcohol and drug (AOD) misuse often face poorer outcomes in education, welfare, health, and legal matters. For more than a third of children in the child protection system, substance misuse (including both legal and illegal drugs) by the protective parent, perpetrator, or both contributes to more serious harm. These situations typically involve multiple systems, such as child protection, juvenile justice, law enforcement, and family support services. However, in most cases, these systems fail to incorporate data on family AOD use when assessing the needs of affected children and young people. This groundbreaking project seeks to address this gap by identifying critical moments and pathways where timely support can significantly improve the likelihood of positive outcomes for children, young people, and their families.



APPROACH

Misuse of AOD in families is a significant risk for various harms to children and young people, including neglect, emotional and physical abuse, and exposure to intimate partner violence. Building on an initial scoping review with our industry partners, this research takes a broad approach to examine outcomes such as family care, child removal, education, social and developmental wellbeing, and housing. The focus is on identifying which services help or strain parents influencing their ability to provide safe, nurturing, and responsive care, which is vital for children's safety and development. This study also looks at how factors like parents' wellbeing, income, socio-economic status, location, and personal aspects such as gender, culture, and language shape access to and engagement with key services.



OUTCOMES

The findings from this research have the potential to enhance the physical, social, and overall wellbeing of children, young people, and their families in Australia and globally. Our team is conducting a comparative analysis to highlight the Australian experience, and identify key differences and strengths of systems within and beyond Australia. At the policy level, increasing international attention on the importance of support services for children will encourage the development of effective national and international policies aimed at reducing harm from family AOD misuse. By leveraging the expertise of young people with lived experience, researchers, service providers, and policymakers there is a significant opportunity to influence changes in service provision, communication, policy analysis, policymaking, treatment, and prevention.

"By listening to the voices of young people, we can gauge their needs in a modern service context and work with them to develop innovative solutions."

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