

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**PERSPECTIVES ON EFFECTIVE  
INTERVENTIONS WITH SUBSTANCE  
ABUSING ADOLESCENTS IN  
AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND.**

**A THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTERS  
IN  
SOCIAL WORK  
AT MASSEY UNIVERSITY, PALMERSTON NORTH, NEW ZEALAND.**

**ANNA NELSON BSW  
2000**

## ABSTRACT

Specialised adolescent substance abuse interventions are still relatively new to Aotearoa/New Zealand. While over the years adolescents have often experimented with substances and some have had to get help with their use of substances, the interventions used with youth have often been adult focussed techniques and programmes, or have come from overseas experiences. This thesis brings together literature on adolescent substance abuse from around Aotearoa/New Zealand and overseas, qualitative knowledge from interviews with alcohol and drug workers working with adolescents in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and adolescents' own perspectives of adolescent substance abuse interventions. The main objective of this thesis has been to synthesise this knowledge in order to make some clear recommendations about what constitutes effective interventions with substance abusing adolescents in Aotearoa/New Zealand, so that they might be a practical guide for those working with, or intending to work with adolescents in this country.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to give many thanks to all my family especially to my Mum Carolyn, my Dad Russell and to my brothers, Joe and Sam. Special thanks is also due to my friends, especially Liam and Kym for their ongoing support and encouragement throughout the writing of this thesis. Special thanks also for the expertise and guidance of my supervisors, Dr. Mary Nash, and Mervyl McPherson, and the initial support from Ann Flintoft.

I am sincerely grateful to all the participants in this study who have willingly contributed their time, experiences, knowledge and thoughts of the purposes of this thesis. Without all of these people this research would not be complete.

## CONTENTS

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b><u>Chapter One: Introduction</u></b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Research Objectives and Definitions</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Rationale for undertaking the research</b>	<b>3</b>
Effects of substance use and abuse	3
Personal experience	4
<b>Thesis Outline</b>	<b>7</b>
<b><u>Chapter Two: Adolescent Substance Use and Abuse</u></b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Historical Background</b>	<b>10</b>
Aotearoa/New Zealand	
Historical prevalence of substance use in Aotearoa/New Zealand	11
<b>Current relevance of adolescent substance abuse in Aotearoa/New Zealand</b>	<b>13</b>
Prevalence of substance abuse and mental health effects among Maori	17
<b>Other New Zealand specific research on adolescent substance abuse in the 1990s</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Effective Interventions</b>	<b>19</b>
Flexibility	19
Family involvement	20
Day programmes	21
One-stop-shops	22
Assessment	22
Recommendations	23
<b>Youth Experience of Alcohol and Drug Treatment Programmes</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Influences on Adolescent Substance Use Behaviour</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Needs in Aotearoa/New Zealand</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Lack of Relevant Research</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Work in Progress</b>	<b>29</b>

<b>Key New Zealand Initiatives and Programmes</b>	<b>30</b>
Residential programmes	31
Short term group interventions	32
Community initiatives	33
Adventure/outdoor programmes	34
<b>Chapter Summary</b>	<b>34</b>
<b><u>Chapter Three: Theoretical Perspectives on Adolescent Substance Abuse</u></b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Theories of Adolescent Substance Abuse</b>	<b>36</b>
The Disease Model	37
Psychological Theories	38
Behavioural Learning Theories	39
Sociological Theories	40
Biological Theories	42
Eclectic Theories	43
<b>Risk and Protective Factors</b>	<b>44</b>
Biology and genetics	45
Attitude and personality	45
Family	46
Physical and sexual abuse	47
Socio-economic status	47
Macro-economic	47
Coping skills	48
Mental health	48
Peer group	49
Education	49
Age on onset and early labelling	49
<b>Treatment Models</b>	<b>50</b>
The Minnesota 12-step Model	51
Pharmacology	52
Social skills training	53
Family therapy	54
Psychotherapy and group psychotherapy	55
Therapeutic Communities	56
Motivational Interviewing	57
Education	59
Alternative outdoor/adventure models	59
An eclectic approach	60

<b>Further Considerations</b>	<b>61</b>
Abstinence versus Harm Reduction	61
Voluntary versus involuntary	62
Treatment matching	64
Youth alcohol and drug workers	65
Medical considerations	65
Follow-up	65
Barriers to effectiveness	65
<b>Human Development</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Chapter Summary</b>	<b>69</b>
<b><u>Chapter Four: Social Policy and Social Work in Relation to Adolescent Substance Abuse</u></b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Aotearoa/New Zealand Social Policy</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Youth Social Policy</b>	<b>75</b>
Family	75
Learning	77
Working and income	80
Well-being	82
Citizenship	84
<b>Substance Use/Control Policies</b>	<b>86</b>
The Sale of Liquor Act 1989, and Amendments 1999	86
The Misuse of Drugs Act 1975	90
National Drug Policy 1998-2003	93
Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Act 1966	95
<b>Social Policy Summary</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>The Role of Social Work in the Alcohol and Drug Treatment Field</b>	<b>99</b>
<b><u>Chapter Five: The Research Process</u></b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Theoretical Perspective and Methodology</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Research Design</b>	<b>107</b>

<b>Recruitment of Participants</b>	<b>107</b>
Access to adolescent participants	107
Access to alcohol and drug worker participants	109
The adolescent interviews	109
The worker interviews	111
Data processing and analysis	111
<b>Ethical Issues</b>	<b>112</b>
Ethical considerations relating to adolescent participants	113
Informed consent	113
Anonymity and confidentiality	114
Potential harm to participants	114
Influence of researcher	115
<b><u>Chapter Six: The Interview Data</u></b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>The Adolescent Data</b>	<b>117</b>
Onset use	118
Substance of concern	119
Seeking help	119
Experience of intervention	121
The ideal intervention	124
Residential and day programmes	124
Family history of substance abuse	125
Current use	125
Most important thing learnt	126
Adolescent data summary	126
<b>The Alcohol and Drug Worker Data</b>	<b>129</b>
Introduction	128
The agencies	129
The workers	131
Referrals	133
Specific needs of adolescent substance abusers	134
Philosophy, theories and models of adolescent substance abuse	135
Difference between age groups	137
Seeing under-sixteen-year-olds	139
Effective interventions/approaches	139
What's so special about Aotearoa/New Zealand?	142
Frustrations and benefits of working in this area	144
Ideal intervention	145
Worker data summary	146



<b><u>Chapter Seven: Synthesis and Interpretation of Findings</u></b>	<b>152</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>152</b>
<b>Age of Onset Use</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>Influence on First Use of Substances</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>Substance of Concern and Other Substance Use</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>Reasons for Seeking Help and Referral Services</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>The Importance of Schools and Education Providers Being Involved</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>Services Provided</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>The Most Helpful Elements in Adolescent Substance Abuse Intervention</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>Family Involvement</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>Worker Attributes</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>Frustrations</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>The Ideal Intervention</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>Chapter Summary</b>	<b>162</b>
<b><u>Chapter Eight: Conclusions</u></b>	<b>164</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>The Research in Context</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>Recommendations for Effective Interventions with Substance Abusing Adolescents in Aotearoa/New Zealand</b>	<b>166</b>
Theory	166
Assessment	166
Components	166
Providers	167
<b>Social Policy Recommendations</b>	<b>168</b>

<b>Other Key Findings</b>	<b>168</b>
Adolescents	169
Providers	169
Interventions	169
Aotearoa/New Zealand	170
Social policy	170
Social work	170
<b>Limitations of the Study</b>	<b>170</b>
<b>Suggestions for Further Research</b>	<b>172</b>
<b><u>Bibliography</u></b>	<b>174</b>
<b><u>Appendix A</u></b>	
<b>Consent Form and Information Sheet for Adolescents</b>	<b>208</b>
<b><u>Appendix B</u></b>	
<b>Interview Guidelines for Adolescents</b>	<b>211</b>
<b><u>Appendix C</u></b>	
<b>Consent Form and Information Sheet for Workers</b>	<b>212</b>
<b><u>Appendix D</u></b>	<b>215</b>
<b>Interview Guidelines for Workers</b>	
<b><u>Appendix E</u></b>	
<b>Consent Form and Information Sheet for Parents/Caregivers</b>	<b>216</b>
<b><u>Appendix F</u></b>	
<b>Maori to English translations</b>	<b>219</b>
<b><u>Appendix G</u></b>	
<b>Copies of Alcohol and Drug Assessments and Screening Tools (ALAC, July 1996)</b>	<b>220</b>
<b><u>Table Contents</u></b>	
Adolescent Data.	
Table 1 - Age of onset use	118
Table 2 - Influence on first use of substances	118
Table 3 - Substance of concern	119
Table 4 - Other substances used excluding substance of concern	119

Table 5 - Problematic use indicated by	120
Table 6 - Major contributing factor	120
Table 7 - 'Most helpful'	122
Table 8 - The ideal intervention	124
Table 9 - Most important thing learnt	126
Worker Data.	
Table 10 - Worker and agency profile	129
Table 11 - Type of service provided	130
Table 12 - How could the service provided be improved?	131
Table 13 - Type of highest qualification	131
Table 14 - Type of previous experience	132
Table 15 - Position held	132
Table 16 - Reasons for working with youth	133
Table 17 - Referral sources	133
Table 18 - Specific needs	134
Table 19 - Type of assessment tool used	136
Table 20 - Types of theories and models used	137
Table 21 - Differences between the ages	138
Table 22 - Effective interventions/approaches	141
Table 23 - What makes Aotearoa/New Zealand so special?	143
Table 24 - Frustrations	144
Table 25 - Benefits	145
Table 26 - Ideal intervention	146
Combined Data.	
Table 27 - Effective/ideal intervention	161