

Substance abuse counseling family roles and dynamics

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In research conducted, it was found that children who were subjected to parental divorce can lead to a child's risk of substance use. It was found that over 50% of teens whose parents had divorced were likely to drink alcohol than those who had both their parents (The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2005).

Unique Characteristics Of and/or Complications within Families of Substance Abusers

Members of the family of substance abusers regularly live in constant fear that their flimsy surroundings could collapse. Those families affected by substance abuse are usually characterized by marital problems, increased exposure to diseases, child neglect or abuse, inconsistent childcare, exposure to crime, social isolation, children's academic problems, domestic violence, shifting family roles, and financial difficulties. In financial problems, substance abusers are exposed to long-term unemployment, injuries/accidents at work, and job instability; this puts their families under intense financial pressure (The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2005).

For instance, time spent assisting a substance-abusing family member can minimize the time available for work and this ultimately minimizes family earnings. In another instance, substance abuse in a family increases the probability of divorce and unhappy marriages. It is suggested that substance abuse in a family can influence its quality. Poorer relations in a marriage are more likely in alcoholic men than in non-alcoholic men. Male alcoholics and their spouses report more sexual dysfunction and less sexual satisfaction particularly in impotence reports (The National Center on Addiction and

Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2005).

Potential Ethical and Legal Concerns Related To Counseling Families of Substance Abusers

Working in the field of substance abuse treatment presents dilemmas related to individual beliefs, values, and judgments. Ethical concerns can be personal or societal in nature. There is a constant struggle between implementing morality for the good of the public and fighting to maintain the person's right to autonomy. It is such concerns that bring an issue from the personal level to the societal level. For instance, the syringe exchange programs (SEPs) present such ethical dilemmas. In 1998, it was suggested that SEPs could become effective strategy tools to prevent HIV. An issue arose as to whether providing clean syringes may encourage or sanction illegal drug use (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2000).

The principle of justice assumes equality and impartiality. Counselors may find it difficult and challenging to deal with the growing numbers of substance abusers affected by HIV/AIDS. In such situations, it is normal to be biased, but it is crucial to know how and when it influences an individual's capability to practice within the boundaries of the principle of justice. In other words, there is no client who is discriminated against or refused access to treatment. At times, it may be hard for the provider to treat each equally, and therefore, there are safeguards that providers and agencies can enact to ensure an unbiased level of service (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2000).

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