Alcohol and Drug Use Education

Treatments · https://www.gmuace.org/appropriateness-statement-package/treatments/alcohol-and-drug-use-education/

Alcohol and Drug Use Education – Not an evidence-based practice

Summary of the Evidence

- Alcohol and drug use education (ADE) is educational but does not provide clinical services. It is not an evidence-based practice.
- There is evidence that ADEs may reduce both alcohol and drug use for youth, but the effects are small.
- ADE is often a component of in-patient and out-patient treatment, but it is not a replacement for clinically based drug treatment services. The goal is to provide an understanding of the neurobiological impact that substance use has on behavior and functioning.

What Is Alcohol and Drug Use Education?

- ***Alcohol and drug use education (ADE)*** is a strategy meant to prevent, delay, or reduce alcohol and/or drug use by providing knowledge of the consequences of such use and/or abuse.
- ADE programs typically have two components: education and skill development.
  - The first component covers knowledge about the consequences of using and abusing substances.
  - The second component teaches coping strategies to resist social pressures to use.
- ADE is an intervention that typically targets young people, but that is often included as a part of most in-patient and out-patient SUD treatment services to increase awareness about the neurobiological effects of using substances.
- ADE programs are based on the following assumptions:
  - People use drugs because they do not have adequate knowledge about the consequences of using. If they did have such knowledge, they would make the rational choice not to use.

- People experience a great deal of social pressure from certain peers to use drugs and alcohol.
- There are skills individuals can learn to help them resist this pressure to experiment or use substances.

How Is It Used?

- ADE is most often delivered in community settings such as clinics, school settings for youth, and over the internet. Within the community supervision setting, ADE is typically included as a part of a client's in-patient or out-patient treatment.
- ADE programs aim to do the following:
  - provide information about the neurological and biological effects of substance use to help individuals understand how the brain operates and why substances can be addictive
  - provide information about the negative consequences (social, physical, cognitive) of alcohol abuse and illicit drug use
  - educate individuals on the nature of social pressures to use alcohol and drugs
  - teach a set of personal and social resistance skills to help individuals resist pressure from peers
- Within community supervision, ADE is considered an intervention aimed at reducing substance use because most individuals in the criminal legal system (the "criminal justice" or "legal" system will be referred to as the criminal legal system in this document) have used drugs and alcohol before entering the system.
- ADE is effective when it is a component of a broader health and personal development curriculum concerned with an individual's social and mental health well-being.
- Effective ADE programs often include an interactive curriculum that engages participants in learning problem-solving and critical thinking skills. These skills can be used to craft strategies for real-world situations.
- ADE is most effective when it is responsive to the specific cultural and social needs of the individuals.

How Can It Be Used to Monitor Compliance?

- ADE is not a tool to monitor compliance.

How Can It Be Used as a Supervision Tool?

- ADE is by nature a rehabilitative tool meant to assist clients in reducing drug use and, subsequently, recidivism.
- As a change agent, officers can recommend ADE to their clients as a part of treatment services.

What Are the Costs of Alcohol and Drug Use Education?

- ADE is often included in in-patient and out-patient treatment; there are considerable costs tied to ADE.

What Do Supervision Staff Think?

- Supervision staff report that ADE is
  - sometimes appropriate for all low-risk clients and
  - sometimes appropriate for all medium- to high-risk clients except those who are gang-involved or in an intimate partner violence special population, for whom it is always appropriate.

Compliance Level

- Supervision staff report that a psychological sanction such as ADE is
  - sometimes appropriate for low-risk clients who are in low, medium, and high compliance with their supervision conditions,
  - always appropriate for medium- to high-risk clients in low compliance with their supervision conditions, and
  - sometimes appropriate for medium- to high-risk clients in medium and high compliance with their supervision conditions.

What Should You Expect When Using Alcohol and Drug Use Education?

- Most evaluations of ADE have focused on its impact on youth.
- ADE has been shown to reduce alcohol and illicit drug use among youth, although the effects are considered small.
- The most evaluated ADE program is the DARE program, and these results have been mixed.

- Because it is often included as a component of a larger intervention, it is difficult to isolate the specific effects of ADE.

Is Alcohol and Drug Use Education an Evidence-Based Practice?

- No. The evidence supporting the effect of ADE is inconclusive—there are both positive and harmful effects.
- There is some evidence that ADE can reduce use and extend the time before first use, but there is also evidence that ADE can increase use.

What Do People Formerly Involved in the Criminal Legal System Think About Alcohol and Drug Use Education?

- People with lived experience in the criminal legal system report that ADE is
  - sometimes appropriate for all low-risk clients and
  - sometimes appropriate for all medium- to high-risk clients.

Communication That Strengthens the Officer-Client Relationship (Messaging)

- Officers should discuss the results of substance use assessments or evaluations (see substance use evaluation statement for more information) openly with their clients.
- Officers should reinforce abstinence from substance use during interactions with their client.
- Officers should offer treatment services that include ADE as a response to difficulty a client is having living alcohol and drug free.
- Officers should discuss and use the concepts and skills taught in ADE with their client.

Special Considerations When Using Alcohol and Drug Use Education with Subpopulations

Gang-Involved

None

General Violence

None

Intimate Partner Violence

None

Serious Mental Illness

None

Substance Use Disorder

ADE is mainly a preventive intervention. It is often included in in-patient and out-patient SUD treatment but is not an effective as a stand-alone intervention.

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