

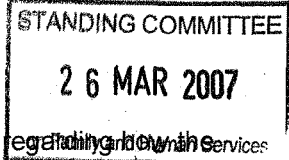
Submission No: 135

Supp to Sub:

AUTHORISED:

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KS



Dear Secretary,

If any written information in this submission below can be of any assistance regarding how the government can help families who are dealing with a loved one who is using an illicit drug I have no problem with its use.

I am a member of an organization called **FAMILY DRUG SUPPORT (FDS)**. The reason I am involved with FDS is because my/our son was a drug user.

I am going to answer point 3 of your Terms of Reference first.

3. Ways to strengthen families who are coping with a member(s) using illicit drugs.

The answer to this is :

Simply please support the FDS. Keep this organization going. Help FDS financially if you can. This life saving organization needs to be supported by good public awareness. Let them be seen on T.V. When I/we didn't know where to turn too for help the FDS put us on the right road on the long journey ahead. Their knowledge was my/our salvation. The volunteer members of the FDS provided me/us with the strength and support to help our son. I couldn't tell you how often I would ring and always find an "angel" at the other end of the phone line, any time of the day, listening to me in between my tears. I am crying as I write this email because I remember how wonderful these volunteer people were to me/us. To me mostly because in the beginning my husband was in denial. Their booklet "A Guide to Coping" should be in every school i.e. Primary and High School as well as in every Doctors surgery. The information in "A Guide to Coping" is just outstanding. This booklet actually helped us to know what words to use when speaking to our son about his drug problem. That may sound simple, but when you are dealing with a son/daughter who is under the influence of a drug, but trying to communicate to them in a calm and compassionate manner is a very, very difficult task. FDS helped me/us survive.

2. Impact of harm minimization programs on families:

Our son didn't use the MSIC because he was lucky in that we as a family, through the help of FDS, were able to help him. He did go to rehab. and that most definitely turned him around. However, what about the ones that don't have family support for one reason or another, closing down of the Kings Cross Injecting Centre would leave them with no where to go in order to have access to health and treatment services. How could we even think of closing the Centre down? We need to trust the people advising us on keeping the MSIC open because THEY are the ones who are helping these drug dependent individuals.

1. The financial, social and personal cost to families who have a member/s using illicit drugs, including the impact of drug induced psychosis or other mental disorders:

Finanically: Cost us thousands of dollars when our son was on drugs.

Socially: As a family we felt we were **failures**. We use to think.... "our friends who are like us in their value and moral beliefs have children who are not on drugs. Where did our parenting go wrong? Where did we let our precious son down?" That is a heartbreaking feeling as a parent. We felt **isolated**. No-one we new had a son or daughter doing drugs. We also felt **ashamed**. We felt **helpless**. We so wanted to help our son but didn't know what to do. We felt **torn apart** as a family. My husband and I would argue over our son. We felt **guilty** because we were neglecting our daughter. We felt **frightened**. Frightened what was going to happen to our son.

Personally: At the time... it now seems like a life time ago thank God... I thought I was going out of my mind. At the worst time that our son was on drugs I was fighting breast cancer. I was on

chemo. and radiation. The only thing that I believe kept me going was the will, **a sense of mission**, if you like to save our son from this horrible parasite that had taken a hold of him. I hated the drug. I still do because it robbed me/us of our son for a period of time that I will never get back. I saw it as an enemy to be fought with without ever giving up until it was dead and gone. My son, I believe took the drug, because he saw his grandmother die and it was his first experience with looking at death. He was very close to his grandmother and it was one day before his 18 birthday when she died. While coping with that grief 6 months later I got diagnosed with breast cancer and he had that to contend with that situation. I use to be very rigid in my thinking about anyone who took drugs BEFORE it happened to us. Now I am more compassionate and understanding. Drug taking can happen to ANYONE'S loved one for whatever reason.

Drug induced psychosis or other mental disorders: We use to feel like we were walking on egg shells. It is just horrible and frightening to see someone you love acting like they are a monster while under the control of a drug. You literally are dealing with a split personality. The one YOU know is a gentle and sensitive person and then when the drug, in our sons case it was ICE, is in control you are dealing with a very angry, aggressive and foul mouthed stranger.

I hope this submission will be helpful.

Please do all YOU can in your position of POWER AND AUTHORITY in helping those organizations like Family Drug Support.

In anticipation of your assistance