

Developing the education of professionals in the attitude, knowledge and skills of substance use prevention and care

The workgroup for substance use prevention and care is a part of the Department of the Services for the Municipalities of the National Centre for Research and Development of Social welfare and Health. The aim is to enhance the qualifications of the municipal officers to prevent and minimise the harm of substance use in the municipality.

The Workgroup collects, produces, mediates and adapts national and international information and know-how for the prevention and minimising of the harm caused by substance use.

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MINIMUM CONTENT FOR TRAINING IN SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION IS AIMED AT GIVING STUDENTS:

Background

A specific joint committee of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland has issued recommendations on developing training in substance abuse prevention and treatment. The recommendations propose a minimum content for training in substance abuse prevention and care aimed at providing a basis for planning and implementing education and training in the area.

The minimum content is applicable at all levels (vocational qualifications, degrees of the universities of applied sciences and university degrees) and in all relevant fields (particularly social and health care, sports, church welfare work, youth, education and police work), with specific emphases and further elements where needed. The recommended training can be incorporated in the existing courses or study units. It is important to clearly specify the share of training in substance abuse prevention and care and the recommended target levels of knowledge in the curriculum.

The purpose of the minimum content is to give students an understanding of alcohol- and drug-related harm as a risk to public health. The students will also be aware that high-quality multi-professional prevention and minimisation of alcohol- and drug-related harm will reduce suffering at individual and family levels, improve well-being, work capacity and functioning in communities and in the population at large, increase security in society and reduce the costs to society. A shared understanding of basic issues creates favourable conditions for multi-professional co-operation in preventive activities.

The minimum content is divided into three areas of competence: professional approach, knowledge, and skills.

AIMS OF THE MINIMUM CONTENT CURRICULUM

- 1) Basic knowledge of alcohol and drugs, their use and related risks and harm;
- 2) Awareness of their own attitudes to substance use and an open professional approach to related problems and problem users;
- 3) Knowledge of relevant legislation on alcohol and drugs, and of the regional multi-professional service network in substance abuse prevention, as well as basic knowledge of regional and local multi-sectoral activities to the extent to enable participation in them;
- 4) Ability to identify and encounter risk/problem users and their families and friends;
- 5) Awareness of the importance of early intervention and an ability to implement methods of early intervention in their own work;
- 6) Ability to help and support clients within the professional role and to refer them, where needed, for further assistance in the system of care and services for substance abusers;
- 7) An understanding of the importance of the prevention of alcohol- and drug-related harm at workplaces and an ability to intervene in substance use in their own work communities.

Abstract of the report of the Committee on Developing Training in Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (Reports of the Ministry of Education 2007:17), Finland