

“Literally lifesaving and transformational”: Key stakeholders’ views of an assertive outreach support pilot

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Introduction and Aims: Assertive outreach is an innovative treatment modality which aims to identify people and their families experiencing significant AOD related harm who have not successfully engaged in treatment. It utilises assertive collaborative case management and supported referral into and out of tailored local services to encourage “treatment resistant” clients into assessment and treatment. An evaluation was undertaken to examine key stakeholders’ perspectives of a novel assertive outreach support program (AOSP) pilot in South Australia.

Design and Methods: A survey comprising closed- and open-ended questions was administered to representatives from organisations who referred clients to AOSP, members of the AOSP Governance Group, and staff involved in delivering AOSP. Questions sought stakeholders’ perspectives on four key areas of the program: referral processes, collaborative case management, service delivery, and impact. A focus group was additionally held with AOSP staff. Descriptive analyses were conducted on quantitative data and key themes extracted from qualitative comments.

Results: Stakeholders reported positive perceptions of AOSP across all four areas of program development and delivery. Key strengths were seen to be its innovation and flexibility, assertive client follow-up, cultural appropriateness, provision of transport and advocacy, and multi-disciplinary teamwork. Program implementation and delivery was noted to have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussions and Conclusions: AOSP was seen to be a “one-of-a-kind” and “out-of-the-box” program. Stakeholders perceived the pilot to result in excellent client outcomes across multiple life domains and were supportive of its continuance and expansion.

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