

Evidence-Based Approaches to Methamphetamine Treatment

A conversation starter for substance use service providers



Methamphetamine use is affected by both neurobiology & social and environmental influences. There are health and medical consequences and complications of methamphetamine that are important to understand and quickly act upon. Taking into account these factors, interventions should focus on:

- » Maximizing access to treatment
- » Offering respectful, person-centered care
- » Addressing ambivalence in the person using methamphetamine
- » Taking into account sex, gender, race/ethnicity and other social determinants of health
- » Having treatment plans that can be enacted quickly

Along with medical care, there are well-documented **psychosocial interventions** that address these factors. This sheet provides an overview of these approaches, and how they can be used in practice.

Contingency management (CM) is used to reinforce positive behaviours by providing incentives.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) focuses on coping mechanisms (i.e., dealing with cravings), resilience, and problem-solving skills (i.e., assertiveness in refusing substances). CBT is often used in conjunction with motivational interviewing techniques.

PnP & Me at Health Initiative for Men (HIM) in Vancouver is a 16-week group counselling program with a contingency management structure for gay, bi, queer men, and gender diverse people who use meth. The program offers a monetary incentive for attendance at each group counselling session, and additional vouchers that can be used for prizes or monetary rewards for achieving personal health goals.

Project Tech Support has used a variety of text message-based CBT and MI programming, including text messages from Peer Health Educators and automated text messages that are adaptive to individual needs and focused on health promotion and referrals, and have found promising results in reduced methamphetamine use [1].

Motivational interviewing (MI) involves identifying motivations that would facilitate a person to make change. This technique addresses ambivalence and builds on a persons' strengths.

Community reinforcement approaches address strengthening the determinants of health, such as employment, housing, family, and social networks.

Mindfulness practices focus on helping people reduce methamphetamine use and improving overall health and well-being. They involve meditative practice, awareness, and staying in the present moment.

Physical exercise can be a successful approach as an intervention for methamphetamine and stimulant use in general, as growing evidence suggests [2].

Thorne Harbour Health in Australia offers therapeutic programs for LGBTI community members living with HIV including **Re-Wired**, an 8-week program for men who have sex with men, that incorporates mindfulness with nutrition programming, relapse prevention, and education about methamphetamine and the brain.

Culture as intervention integrates Indigenous knowledge and practices as the basis for health and wellness. This approach holds that sharing of traditional culture is essential to the development of identity, healing and recovery.

Options BC offers a Family Enhancement Program that emphasizes family support services to families of those with substance use issues. The program brings together a multidisciplinary team to offer family-focused, strengths-based education, clinical counselling needs, and community supports such as child care.

Family-centered approaches to treatment involve family members in the recovery process, and offer methods that respond to family needs, such as childcare and transportation [3].

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) combines aspects of CBT and mindfulness, emphasizing being present, feeling emotions instead of avoiding unpleasant experiences, and ultimately accepting oneself. This can promote the pursuit of one's values and goals, shifting away from negative self-talk which can lead to craving and more substance use [4,5].

Honouring Our Strengths: Culture as Intervention in Addictions Treatment offers a national framework and approaches to offering culturally-based interventions in substance use addiction treatment.

ACON's Substance Support Service in Australia is delivered within a harm reduction framework combines ACT, CBT, and MI to tailor treatment needs and respond to individual treatment goals that differ i.e., reduction of or managing use. ACON offers programming tailored to sexuality and gender diverse individuals, and research has shown a significant reduction in methamphetamine use in their programs [6].

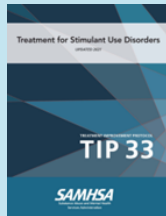
There are a number of evidence-based psychosocial interventions for methamphetamine use that can be used in conjunction with one another or on their own to address the biological, social, and environmental factors associated with methamphetamine use. Read the following conversation starters, *Methamphetamine Use & Trauma Informed Approaches*, *Mindfulness Approaches for Addressing Substance Use Concerns*, and *Methamphetamine Use & Sex and Gender Informed Approaches* to learn more.

Reflection questions:

These evidence-based treatments offer elements that can be adapted and helpful in all levels of treatment and intervention. We invite you to explore what might be successful in your practice and how those elements could be integrated.

- » Are there aspects of these evidence-based approaches that you currently use in your practice?
- » Which of the elements do you think would be most successful in your practice?
- » How might you incorporate some new aspects into your practice?
- » What practical steps might need to be taken in order to do so?

Resources:



[SAMHSA \(2021\) *Treatment for Stimulant User Disorders: Treatment Improvement Protocol TIP 33.*](#)



[SAMHSA \(2015\) *Matrix Intensive Outpatient Treatment for People With Stimulant Use Disorders: Client's Handbook.*](#)



[Thunderbird Partnership Foundation \(2012\) *Honouring Our Strengths: Culture as Intervention in Addictions Treatment.*](#)



[Centre of Excellence for Women's Health \(2019\) *Mothering and Opioids: Addressing Stigma - Acting Collaboratively.*](#)



[Drug Policy Alliance \(2008\) *A Four-Pillars Approach to Methamphetamine: Policies for Effective Drug Prevention, Treatment, Policing and Harm Reduction.*](#)

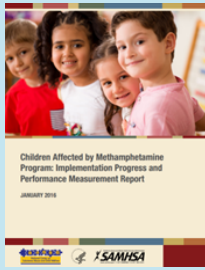


[Here to Help \(n.d.\) *Methamphetamine* \[website\].](#)



[Children and Family Futures \[website\].](#)

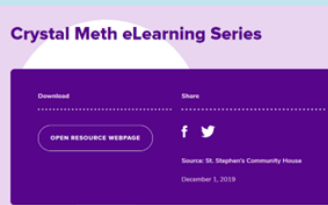
Resources:



[National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare & SAMHSA \(2016\) *Children Affected by Methamphetamine Program: Implementation Progress and Performance Measurement Report.*](#)



[Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services \(n.d.\) *Oklahoma Methamphetamine Prevention Toolkit.*](#)



[Ontario Harm Reduction Network \[webinars\].](#)



Methamphetamine Research Center

[OHSU Methamphetamine Research Center \(Oregon Health & Science University\)\[website\].](#)

References:

1. Reback, C.J., et al., *Theory-Based Text-Messaging to Reduce Methamphetamine Use and HIV Sexual Risk Behaviors Among Men Who Have Sex with Men: Automated Unidirectional Delivery Outperforms Bidirectional Peer Interactive Delivery*. *AIDS and behavior*, 2018;2019. **23**: p. 37-47.
2. Bu, L., et al., *Acute kick-boxing exercise alters effective connectivity in the brain of females with methamphetamine dependencies*. *Neuroscience Letters*, 2020. **720**: p. 134780.
3. Rodi, M.S., et al., *New Approaches for Working with Children and Families Involved in Family Treatment Drug Courts: Findings from the Children Affected by Methamphetamine Program*. *Child Welfare*, 2015. **94**(4): p. 205-232.
4. Ghouchani, S., et al., *Effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) on aggression of patients with psychosis due to methamphetamine use: A pilot study*. *Journal of Substance Use*, 2018. **23**(4): p. 402-407.
5. Bahrami, S. and F. Asghari, *A controlled trial of acceptance and commitment therapy for addiction severity in methamphetamine users: Preliminary study*. *Archives of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy*, 2017. **19**(2): p. 49-55.
6. Lea, T., et al., *Methamphetamine treatment outcomes among gay men attending a LGBTI-specific treatment service in Sydney, Australia*. *PLoS ONE [Electronic Resource]*, 2017. **12**(2): p. e0172560.

