UNODC Family-Based Treatment Training Package (UNFT) for adolescents with drug and other substance use disorders including those in contact or at risk of contact with the criminal justice system

BACKGROUND

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in close collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), developed the UNODC Family-Based Treatment Training Package shortly after a technical consultation in 2018 on ‘Elements of Family-based Treatment and Family Therapy for Adolescents at Risk for Gang Involvement and Delinquency’ (BSFT). The package supports evidence-based family therapy and demonstrates its effectiveness for adolescents with substance use disorders. UNFT is based on the BSFT program, which was found to be effective in reducing drug use, crime and gang involvement among youths at risk. UNFT aims to support health and criminal justice settings around the world as part of continuum of care.

There is strong evidence that family therapy supports families and adolescents affected by a range of challenges including substance use disorders and other behavioral problems. As a form of psychotherapy, family therapy seeks to reduce distress and conflict by improving interactions between family members, and sometimes the wider community in a systemic way. Family distress is one of the risk factors for drug initiation and continuation, and as well as a risk factor for other behavioral problems such as violence. Family therapy has been developed in different schools of psychotherapy, such as in behavioral or more systemic approaches. Family intervention in the treatment of drug use disorders also varies in its ‘dosage’. Family interventions and common elements in family therapy, such as family engagement techniques, relational reframes, family skills training or in vitro family therapy, can be found in many evidence-based programs supporting the Community Development Model (United States). More recently, UNODC (2018) has produced evidence for the importance of family therapy to ‘dose’ treatment with family therapy and family engagement techniques. In the Commission of Narcotic Drugs (CND) Resolution 58/2, UNODC has described the importance of family therapy in the treatment of drug use disorders (UNODC, 2015). Family therapy is a positive means to prevent delinquency and violent extremism, according to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2015). There has been evidence for the importance of family therapy and family involvement in drug use disorder treatment (UNODC, 2018). UNFT has been developed around these core elements.

CONCLUSIONS

UNODC Family-Based Treatment Training Package (UNFT) is an evidence-based, comprehensive, and is specifically tailored for use with adolescents and their families. UNFT training materials were enhanced through a pilot training process and piloted in three regions in 2018, where 30 families from 10 countries were trained, and course learned were integrated into the final version of the UNFT training materials.

The results from focus group discussions from the pilot training process indicated the usefulness of the information and techniques. The most popular course topics were prevention, positive reinforcement, family bonding and role play, implementation barriers included lack of human and financial resources and supervision.

UNFT was globally launched at the 62nd Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 2019 and is now available at https://www.unodc.org/treatment-and-care/ftt.html. UNFT is intended to serve as a warm springboard that can resolve social and criminal justice problems working with families. UNFT skills can be used in a professional, or for any fields, as well as non-service settings around the world as part of a continuum of care.

REFERENCES


5. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in close collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO). UNODC Family-Based Treatment Training Package (UNFT) for adolescents with substance use disorders and other behavioral problems. UNFT aims to support health and criminal justice settings around the world as part of continuum of care. UNFT was globally launched at the 62nd Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 2019 and is now available at https://www.unodc.org/treatment-and-care/ftt.html. UNFT is intended to serve as a warm springboard that can resolve social and criminal justice problems working with families. UNFT skills can be used in a professional, or for any fields, as well as non-service settings around the world as part of a continuum of care.